

HOME SCHOOLING: A SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL
ANALYSIS OF AN EMERGENT CULTURAL
SHIFT IN CONSCIOUSNESS

By

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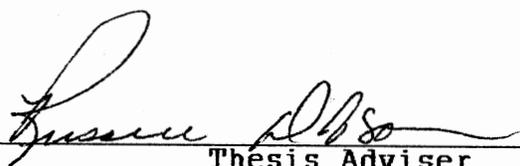
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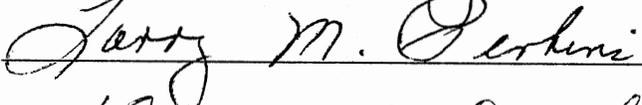
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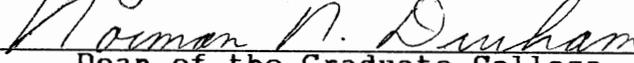


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PREFACE

The reader should be informed that the names of the home schooling parents involved in this study have been omitted to ensure anonymity.

B.L.S.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study is an exploration of home schooling. The majority of ideas, reflections and findings that will be presented in this study grew out of a two and one half year period of participant observation with a local group of eight home schooling families. What began as a rather simple unambitious desire to satisfy personal curiosity about the emergence of home education, has grown into this rather ambitious documentation of an attempt to make sense of the myriad of personal and social factors contained within this form of schooling.

Nature of this Study

The original intent of this research was simply to describe the motives and educational approaches of the local group of eight home schooling families. As time progressed, it became increasingly apparent that the decisions for home schooling constituted much more than disgruntled reactions against public schooling by a fringe group of parents. The reasons for home schooling and the decision to undertake this responsibility seemed increasingly less an idiosyncratic endeavor, but rather more of a synchronous response to a

powerful set of sociocultural conditions: rapid social change, shifts in the structure and function of the family, loss of cultural meanings and the continuing struggle of the individual to define himself in relationship to the collectivity.

The basis for this assertion originated in and grew out of the two and one half years involvement with the local group of home schooling families. Therefore, the features and dynamics of this particular group will be presented as central to this study. Because a sense of this group's embedment in a larger cultural drama grew out of the process of participant observation, this aspect of home schooling that is "beyond" the concrete factors of the local group will also be presented.

A photographic metaphor seems to best describe the nature of this study. One perspective which this study seeks to convey is similar to that of a "big screen" picture captured through the use of a wide angle lens. This perspective will constitute the "ground" in a fore-ground distinction. This will include a discussion of both home schooling as a growing national movement as well as the broad sociocultural factors that seem relevant to its emergence.

The second perspective which this study seeks to convey is similar to that of a detailed close-up captured through the use of a zoom lense. This will include the depiction of the local group of home schooling families which constitutes the

foreground in this study. The process of this research has embodied a constant movement between fore and ground: comparing the features of the local group with features that are known about home schooling at large; connecting central issues of the home schooling controversy to the elements of conflict and stress that can be noted in large scale cultural crisis and change.

Findings of this Study

Several findings have been generated through this process of dynamic interplay. Each finding listed here will be supported and explored in subsequent chapters. The most distinctive and overarching finding derived from this process serves as the foundation for the presentation of this study:

- (1) The home schooling movement provides a means for looking at one facet of broad social transformation. It is one example among many of an increasing trend toward decentralization, self-help and grass roots networking. These trends can be noted in a host of other movements in such fields as alternative birthing, nutrition, holistic health and peace and ecology. Taken together, these trends add up to significant cultural change. But interestingly, the home schooling movement is not only one example of such trends in sociocultural change, but the movement itself provides a microcosmic view into the

most basic elements of conflict and stress that are propelling social change at large.

- (2) As a social movement, home schooling deviates in some notable respects from the prototypical features of social movements described in the literature. In light of this, it may represent an emergent form.
- (3) Journalists and others who investigate home schooling often describe home schooling as highly individualistic: independent minded do-it-yourselfers (Henderson, 1987), fiercely independent (Knowles, 1987), new pioneers (Divoky, 1983). Individualism does indeed seem to be a central feature of home schooling. Consistent with this perception of home schooling parents, a recent body of literature has commented on the pervasiveness of individualism society wide. For example, in Habits of the Heart, Bellah (1985) portrays America in the eighties as characterized by increasing atomistic individualism; as a place where the pursuits of self interest has surpassed social commitment. In many notable ways, home schooling parents in this study were found to have forged lifestyles around self-sufficiency and individualism and yet to deviate significantly from, even to contradict the type of individualism described in such recent literature. Based on a comparison to

the literature, these parents point to the emergence of a new form of individualism.

- (4) Perhaps the most fascinating feature of home schooling is the existence of two distinct "camps" of orientations within the movement. While one orientation could be described as progressive, and secular, the other orientation which constitutes the antithesis of the first could be described as conservative and religious. Rather than simply constituting a curious and coincidental mixture of opposites, these contrasting orientations seem to signal the development of an emergent social thesis that represents the convergence of distinct ideological extremes.

Organization of this Study

This study is organized into seven chapters. Chapter I provides a description of the nature and intent of this study. In Chapter II, a broad overview of the home school movement will be attempted through a survey of the literature which has been written to both advocate and to describe the practice of home schooling nationwide. Chapter III will describe the research methods of participant observation which were employed in this study. Chapter IV will move to a foreground look at home schooling through an ethnographic presentation of a local group of home schooling families. Chapter V will move once again to a large view and will seek to place the local

group within a broader cultural context. This chapter will present home schooling as one response to massive cultural shifts and rapid social change that has been felt most strongly within the institution of the family. Chapter VI will present the dynamics of home schooling as a social movement, noting in which ways this movement conforms to and deviates from the prototypical features of social movements. A case will be made that the notable variations in this movement indicate home schooling to be one indicator of a widespread shift in consciousness. The final chapter contains a summary and will discuss the implications of the home schooling movement for public education.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: A NATIONAL DESCRIPTION OF THE HOME SCHOOL MOVEMENT

It is apparent that home schooling is experiencing a major revival throughout the United States. Its numbers have grown steadily. Patricia Lines (1987), policy analyst with the U.S. Department of Education, estimates the numbers to have grown from 10,000 - 15,000 in the early seventies to more than 260,000 in 1987. If for no other reason than the rather sudden explosion in numbers, the phenomenon of home education is often referred to by popular journalists as "the home school movement."

One assumption upon which this study is based is that home schooling is indeed a social movement, albeit a movement of a distinct and emergent form. In order to place the small local group of home schoolers which this study focuses on within the context of a larger social movement it is important to first describe the features of the movement at large. Any description of a national phenomenon will, by its nature, be broad and general. This broad, general picture of home schooling will be set as a backdrop for a closer, detailed and

intimate "slice" of the movement when a local group's odyssey is presented. As of yet, few large scale, let alone national studies, have been conducted on home schooling. In the absence of such, the best way to gain a composite picture of home schooling nationally is through a broad survey of the literature.

An extensive survey of all the available literature on home schooling is the basis for the broad description and characterization of home schoolers at large offered in this section. There currently exists a wide variety of types of literature in reference to home schooling. Pitman (1986) has identified three existent categories of home schooling literature: advocacy and resource, legal works, and research.

Any survey of this literature will quickly reveal that the overwhelming majority of existent publications have been written with the intent of promoting home education. A great deal more has been written by and for home schooling parents than about them.

Little attention to the legal literature will be given in this study. A large subset of literature deals with the legal aspects of the home school movement. An examination of it would constitute a study in its own right. Instead what will be offered for the purposes of this study is a brief overview of the nature of the compulsory laws which currently color the home school movement.

Next, a survey of the advocacy literature will be examined and finally a summary of the few existent data based studies of home schoolers will be offered.

A Brief Look at the Legal Status of Home Schooling

States regulate home education through compulsory education laws. Until recently, several states did not recognize home instruction as a way of satisfying compulsory laws and in these states parents were prosecuted for teaching children at home. By the end of 1986, every state permitted some form of home schooling (Lines, 1987, p. 514). However, there is great variance in these state laws; some are restrictive, others are vague. Often the legitimacy of home schooling is influenced more by local attitudes than by state laws. Currently, twenty states require home schools to be approved by local school districts or school boards (Henderson, 1987, p. 85).

Some of the most restrictive states such as Iowa, Michigan and North Dakota require that home education be led by a certified teacher. This law is currently under litigation in all three states. Other states have few restrictions such as Illinois and Oklahoma which have no restraints beyond teaching basic subject matter and keeping attendance.

Almost all states stipulate that home schoolers must keep attendance records and hold school for a specified minimum

number of days. Many states require "equivalent instruction" although this requirement has been difficult to enforce as "equivalency" has been hard to define.

Eleven states require standardized testing of home schooled children. Some families in states such as California and North Carolina have succeeded in home education by declaring themselves a private school. Enrolling in correspondence courses has simplified the legal controversy in some states. Colorado and Virginia, for examples, publish a list of schools with state approved independent study programs (Henderson, 1987, p. 85).

The emergence of home schooling has clearly touched a nerve in American society. While compulsory laws are commonly assumed to be "truancy laws", the home school phenomenon points to the inaccuracy of this assumption. In addition to the technical variance in compulsory laws that are applied to home schooling, it is important to note the intent behind the application and enforcement of these laws. Lines (1985) has pointed out that the enforcement of truancy laws is not directed at the five million school aged children who simply do not attend school. Rather, she contends that enforcement efforts appear to be directed at families who place their children in unapproved educational settings, more than at truants who are either enrolled or on the streets.

This aspect of the home schooling controversy points to its being much more than simply a confusing legal problem.

This certainly points to the sociocultural aspects of this movement that lie beneath the legal questions involved.

Advocacy and Resource Literature

A majority of the writing in the "advocacy and resource" category is comprised of narrative descriptions and testimonials written by home schooling parents themselves. The common content that is recounted in these narratives are stated reasons for beginning home education, anecdotal accounts of successful experiences with their children and often, the sharing of ideas and information with other prospective or current home schoolers. Much of this type of literature appears in popular magazines and newspapers as well as in specific home schooling association newsletters.

Also in this category of literature is the more formalized advocacy writings typified by national spokespersons such as John Holt, and Dorothy and Raymond Moore which will be examined at length within this chapter.

Included as well in this category are the many resource and "how to" manuals on home education that have begun to appear. The First Home School Catalogue: A Handbook and Directory (Reed, 1982) was written by a Canadian home schooling family and friends, was among the first to appear. The Complete Home Educator (Pagoni, 1984), The Home School Manual (Wade, 1984) and Better Than School (Wallace, 1983) are other examples of books which offer practical suggestions on how to begin and proceed with home education.

Because the advocacy and resource type of literature consists largely of self-reported narratives of home schooling parents themselves as well as from active "leaders" in the movement, it yields the greatest insight into the people who comprise this movement. From this body of literature can be drawn some sense of the kind of persons likely to be home schooling, their motives and intentions, as well as the general educational practices involved.

The legal and research categories of literature offer important insight into the issues involved with the movement at large although they are somewhat less useful in providing a description of the people themselves.

Much of popular writing about home schooling contains a common sentence in the introductions, something to the effect of "Home schoolers are a varied lot - there are not 'typical' home-schooling families." Despite this professed disclaimer by home schooling proponents, the remainder of this chapter will be devoted to making such a generalized description of home schooling families, or at least, a composite description of the movement at large.

Most descriptions have characterized home schoolers into two or three camps. Any initial attempt at description of home schooling would, perhaps at the least, result in an awareness of a "conservative" or "religious" element reflected in the literature compared to a "liberal" or "progressive" element reflected in the rest. This perception is echoed in the words of a popular journalist (Cushman, 1986) who declared

these identifiable groups comprising the movement to be "strange bedfellows . . .," she further claimed that "when home schooling families meet for mutual support, they are an odd mixture of ex-hippies and straight arrow conservatives" (p. 30). While this characterization is on one level undeniable, several other writers have aimed for more detailed categorization. VanGalen (1987) identified two categories of home schoolers. The first she classified as Ideologues, "whose goal in keeping their children home is to teach them an alternative ideology (strong religious convictions, a conservative political and social perspective, and an emphasis on the importance of the family) than that which they believe is being taught elsewhere" (p. 94).

VanGalen classifies the second camp Pedagogues whom she describes as being more interested in creating an alternative pedagogy for their children than is available in the schools. She also points out that while these divisions do exist, they are by "no means discrete.." (p. 95).

Pitman (1986) describes home schoolers as falling into three broad categories: religious, progressive and academic, or alternatively, "Fundamental Christians, New Agers, and the Harvard - Bounds."

These distinctive categories are easily distinguishable in the advocacy - resource literature. The writings of John Holt best represent the views of home schooling parents whose concerns are primarily academic or whose orientation would be termed progressive.

Beginning in 1964 and continuing throughout the sixties Holt was among the most passionate critics of public education and was one of the most ardent proponents of humanistic school reform. Throughout his writing, Holt characterized schools as places which fostered passivity and indifference, as places where natural curiosity and love of learning were reversed. By 1981, Holt had become disillusioned with reform efforts and was instead urging nonparticipation in schools. Holt's, Teach Your Own: A Hopeful Path for Education, (1981) advocates home schooling for all parents "who love and trust their children."

Holt's recommendations for home schooling grows out of his earlier nondirective pedagogical views which emphasized childrens' natural curiosity, resourcefulness and competency (Holt, 1964, p. 26). One chapter in Teach Your Own is entitled "Learning in the World" and another is entitled "Learning Without Teaching." In these, Holt's approach to education is most clearly expressed. Holt claims that even in "free" or "alternative" schools teachers still did what conventional schools had always done. Instead of letting children have contact with more people, places, tools and experiences in real life, alternative schools had too often only "jazzed up" the conventional process of cutting the world up into little bits called subjects and curriculum (Holt, 1981, p. 168).

Likewise, Holt's advocacy of home education emphasizes the home as the place where the "learning without teaching -- learning by doing, by wondering, by figuring things out" might

take place (Holt, 1981, p. 208). Holt further defines this naturalistic approach when he cautions that the term "home schooling" may be misleading.

What is most important and valuable about the home as a base for children's growth into the world is not that it is a better school than the schools but that it isn't a school at all. It is not an artificial place, set up to make 'learning' happen and in which nothing except 'learning' ever happens. It is a natural, organic, central, fundamental human institution ... (1981, p. 346).

Clearly, Holt's definition of and approach to education expressed here typifies the views and orientations of the "progressive" segment of the home schooling movement. Growing Without Schooling (GWS) is a bimonthly newsletter edited by Holt Associates out of Boston, Massachusetts. GWS provides a forum for home schooling parents to give testimonials of their experiences teaching their children at home. Also included is current state-by-state legal information; updates on educational ideas, resources and research; and a directory of home schooling families.

Most of the testimonials in GWS are accounts of the happy experiences and successful outcomes achieved through allowing children to pursue their own interests and personal time tables. In addition to this preferred educational orientataion, GWS seems to cater to a particualr lifestyle preference as well. Many of the book titles advertised in GWS and through John Holt's Book and Music Store pertain to such topics as ecology, peace, holistic health care, organic gardening, breast feeding and cooperative economics. The

"ecological" or "new age" lifestyle orientation that is reflected in the advertisements of GWS seems inseparably connected to the naturalistic educational orientation of this segment of the home schooling population. How closely or to what extent the advertisements in GWS reflect the lifestyle preferences of its subscribers can only be based upon estimation. But certainly the anecdotal reports in GWS give a strong indication that these parents are at least committed to providing a more informal, personalized and responsive style of learning. There is clearly an absence of religious rhetoric that is found in a contrasting and distinct vein of home schooling literature.

This progressive, non-religious vein in the home schooling movement finds its views regularly described and supported in such popular periodicals as Country - Journal, East - West Journal, Mother Earth News and Mothering.

The Religious Motive

Historically, there has been a long standing religious tradition that has preferred what is now termed home schooling: The Amish, who have removed their children from schools after the eighth grade and Mormons who operate "Kitchen Schools" for a few neighborhood children aged five to seven (Lines, 1987, p. 1). Seventh-Day Adventists have traditionally delayed formal schooling for their children until the age of seven; waiting until the ages between eight and ten is recommended. Today, home schooling has grown

beyond these historic groups to include a broader base of religiously motivated parents, most of whom could be described as conservative and/or fundamentalist Christians.

Just as Holt speaks for the secular progressive segment of the home school movement Raymond and Dorothy Moore are the most visible advocates representing both the traditional and religious segments of the movement. The Hewitt Research Foundation, founded by the Moores, is a major source of materials for home educators.

The Moore's involvement in home schooling originated in their early research on school entrance age (Moore and Moore, 1979a; 1979b). The Moore's research findings concluded that there was genuine risk in enrolling children in formal schooling before the ages of eight to ten when they become neurologically mature. Their writings have argued that compulsory laws have played a part in declining literacy rates and increasing reading problems in young children. From these origins, the Moores have become prolific writers and advocates for home schooling (Moore and Moore, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984).

The Hewitt - Moore Foundation in Washougal, Washington publishes a Christian-oriented curriculum for preschool through grades twelve. Compared to much of the current religious rhetoric on education, the Moore's position is fairly moderate. Their curriculum is comparatively flexible and individualized and is one of the most widely used of the dozens of Christian correspondence courses available. Because the Moores stress delayed formal schooling, their views, much

like Holt's, stress informal, normal life experiences as the focus of early home education. Unlike Holt, the Moores heavily stress routine, organization, cleanliness, discipline and the development of character traits as the central ingredients of home education (Moore and Moore, 1984). The works of Raymond and Dorothy Moore have proven attractive to many other visible conservative champions. They have collaborated with the Free Congress Research Education Foundation in Washington, D.C., Phyllis Schaffley's Eagle Forum and other conservative groups in their research, publication and consultation activities (Pitman, 1986, p. 13).

James Dobson, popular conservative psychologist and author, has enthusiastically endorsed the ideas of Moore. Between 1980 and 1984, Dobson's weekly radio program, Focus on the Family, featured home schooling in twenty three of its half-hour segments (Dobson, cited in Shepard, 1986).

What most of those from the traditional, religious perspective have in common is an emphasis on Biblical instruction and most noticeably traditional family values. Many from this perspective, have in major contrast to the "unschooling" orientation represented by Holt, transformed their homes into very traditional school-like environments. In one section of The Home School Manual (Wade, 1984) entitled "making home school special" a home schooling mother exemplifies this contrasting orientation:

- name your school together ... make a banner with the school name on it.

- set up a schoolroom... It may be a corner of a room or an entire room. Bookshelves, globe, flags and desks make an impressive array.
- desks symbolize school. They make a good place to keep supplies and look important.
- look forward to the first day of school. Buy school supplies, even a lunch pail for trips. Don't just buy new shoes in the fall buy 'school shoes.'
- father may not have any teaching responsibilities -- so he and the family may think. But when you (correctly) name him the Bible teacher and identify Bible as the most important subject, things take on a new perspective.
- have different classes in different rooms or areas in your house. Say, 'Let's go into our math room now.' instead of 'Let's go into the kitchen.'
- if Father is given the title of 'Science Teacher,' or 'Science Consultant,' when questions come up at odd times, mother can say, 'Let's ask your science teacher about that. I'm sure he knows how to find the answer.' This gives credibility in a child's eyes to the parent as his teacher.
- Give report cards. These do not have to show letter grades, but can praise and encourage work that is being done and character that is being developed (p. 116).

Although it cannot be assumed that all parents who home school for primarily religious motives adhere to an approach similar to the one described above, it is clear that the home schooling literature of a religious nature overwhelmingly describes and or advised very traditional and structured approaches. In contrast to the progressive home schooling element represented by Holt who emphasizes the child as a natural, self-directed learner and parent as facilitator, the religiously oriented literature stresses the role of parent as Teacher. Wade (1984) summarizes this distinction:

Some would advise just letting children do what they feel like -- following whatever motivation they happen to have -- as long as they don't injure anyone. The idea is that the standard for right and wrong develops from within the individual and that, in time, good will emerge. I disagree. First,

people just don't get better by following natural inclinations. And second, I believe parents have a responsibility not only to love and provide for their children but also to guide them -- to help them develop a sense of right and of priorities (p. 62).

Typically, spokespersons in this vein stress the role of parent as teacher as requiring the skills of commitment and organization and tend to emphasize the parent as both a model and a disciplinarian. Similar to Holt, writers in this category de-emphasize the need for parents to have specialized or professional training in teaching. Proponents from both categories point to the fact that no research evidence indicates that students receive any better instruction from certified teachers than from uncertified ones (Wade, 1984, p. 56; Holt, 1982, p. 52).

Proponents from both religious and secular orientations describe the parent as having original obligation (conferred either by natural right or God - given dictum) to oversee the education of their young. One extension in this line of thinking is that a "bad" home is better than a "good" school. Some claim this on the logic of numbers alone. Raymond Moore claims:

There are many beautiful teachers, men and women alike - warm, thoughtful, very special models for our kids. But not even the best of them can do as much all day for a normal child in his class of 20 or 30 or 40 peers, as a reasonably loving and consistent parent can do on a one-to-one basis in an hour and a half to two hours at home (Moore, quoted in Merril, 1983, p. 16).

Many religiously motivated home schoolers see this

obligation originating not in natural right which implies choice, but in Scriptural mandate. Often cited is Deuteronomy 6 which directs parents to teach their children "when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up." Many parents take this to be a literal charge for home instruction. As one mother who takes this mandate seriously explains:

Even if there were a Christian School down the block, we wouldn't send our three. Teaching them is our job ... We rely on the scriptural promise that parents are qualified to bring up children in the way they should go (Merril, 1983, p. 17).

Should any parents with a religious motivation for home schooling doubt their own qualifications, there exists dozens of correspondence study programs and, "umbrella" schools. "Umbrella Schools" are local schools who agree to oversee instruction in the home. The first instance of umbrella schools grew out of the alternative schools in the 1970's. Both the Santa Fe Community School and the Clonlara School of Ann Arbor, Michigan had begun in the 1970's to carry the names of students on their enrollments who were not in actual attendance. For a fee, students would be listed on attendance records and receive curricular advice and materials.

Umbrella schools have made their way into the Christian sphere of home education as well. Greg Harris, director of Christian Life workshops, encourages parents who are interested in home education. Through workshops held around the country, Harris helps local churches set up plans for supervising home schools (Wade, 1984, p. 75). There seem to

be advantages of such an arrangement, especially in states where compulsory laws are stringent. Most obviously, in some states this easily satisfies legal enrollment and attendance requirements. Often, a visiting professional teacher is provided as well as provisions for evaluation. Probably more common is the use of correspondence studies.

Christian Liberty Academy appears to be the largest of the religiously based correspondence organizations (Lines, 1987, p. 513). This particular organization, for example, provides home schoolers with an individualized package of textbooks and workbooks. Families may send tests and other materials to Christian Liberty Academy for grading.

Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) out of Lewisville, Texas is another widely used correspondence course. The ACE Program offers a complete self-instructional curriculum for 12 grades that "supports and teaches the word of God." The lessons are highly structured and divided into individualized packets that students work through at their own pace. The materials consistently show two parent families and traditional gender roles. Criticism of ACE materials have labeled the program, "skeletal, slanted and distorted." Its critics have pointed to the anti-communist and authoritarian approach of the history and social studies packets (Flemming and Hunt, 1987, pp. 518-523).

Not all correspondence companies produce religiously oriented materials. The Calvert School is the oldest of the organizations enrolling home-educated children. Since 1908,

Calvert schools have provided correspondence courses for American families living overseas; missionaries, military and diplomatic personnel, people working in foreign offices of American firms, etc. Most school districts have routinely accepted a year of study under Calvert as equal to a year of study in school. Calvert now uses a comprehensive set of workbooks, supplemented with other readings, mainly classics. Their materials may be purchased with or without the services of a correspondent teacher.

The estimate of the number of home schoolers nationally is based largely on the enrollment of students in correspondence courses and umbrella schools. It must be pointed out how rough these estimates are. There have been attempts by such researchers as Lines to distinguish between the number of home schooled students who are enrolled in correspondence studies and those who plan their own curriculum and are not enrolled in any such program. This proves to be a very difficult task. For example, The Home School Legal Defense Association randomly sampled 300 of its membership files (about 3,000 total) and found that 72.33% of its members said they planned their own curriculum and that 27.67% said that they used a correspondence program (Lines, 1987, p. 512).

However, the recent growth of such correspondence organizations as Accelerated Christian Education and Christian Liberty Academy has led Lines to claim that the largest growth of home schooling seems to be among "devout Christian parents"

(Lines, 1987, p. 510). Although this may or may not be correct, it is very difficult to establish. While the segment of the home schooling population who utilize correspondence courses are easy to count, there seems to be no reliable method of calculating the number of people who do not utilize such services and who are otherwise not listed with any formal organization.

It seems safe to assume that those home schoolers who would be characterized as humanistic or progressive would not be inclined to rely on pre-packaged curricular materials. It is conceivable that the progressive segment could be experiencing a comparable growth rate to the Christian segment although they may be less visible and thus less easy to count.

Demographic Characteristics

The literature from the advocacy category lends itself to a greater depth of insight into the people involved in home schooling, but it allows for little demographic sense of the movement as a whole. Demographic and otherwise data based studies of home schooling are just beginning to be produced.

The majority of the data-based studies on home schooling consists of either self-report survey data which seeks to describe home schooling parents' views, procedures, motivations and sociodemographic variables, or case studies of one or more home school families (Pitman, 1986, p. 16). Further, studies of this sort have been focused on state and

regional areas only. No such national studies currently exist.

Three such studies have revealed similar profiles of home schooling families. Two 1984 studies by Green (1984) and Wartes (1984) are the most broad in scope to date. Green profiles the families of 88 students enrolled in Alaska's Centralized Correspondence Study Program. Based on a 47% response rate of a stratified sample of 189 students, Green concluded that the majority of families home schooled by choice rather than from necessity. Only 33% lived in isolated rural areas. Most (58%) chose to home school because it allows for the teaching of religious and moral values, the integration of daily life skills (52%) and is more consistent with lifestyle values (30%) (Green, 1984, p. 32). She further found the mother to be the primary teacher (92%) and to have had some college education. Schedule flexibility and individualized learning were listed as advantages. Children were described as having access to peer group activities, though frequency of such association was listed as a disadvantage.

Wartes (1984) offers a similar profile in a descriptive study of 426 home school students in western Washington. He found the typical family in this region to be a two parent family (93%) who earned a little more than \$25,000 yearly. He found the parents to be somewhat above the state average in level of education and found the mother to be the primary teacher (89%). A majority of the parents (62%) attend a home

school support group meeting at least once every two months. Reasons for home schooling were primarily related to religion or philosophy, but only barely so. Other common reasons given (in order of importance) were the avoidance of peer pressure, greater parent/child contact and enabling a better self concept. Parents also indicated their children to be in organized community or other peer-age activities a median of 20 to 29 hours per month.

Gustaven (1981) surveyed a sample of 150 families from a 3,000 name list supplied by the Hewitt Research Foundation. As the Hewitt Research Foundation caters to a primarily religious constituency, Gustaven's sample is not as broad in this regard as the samples of Green or Wartes. He found home school parents to be "regular church goers and politically conservative, and to be especially concerned about excessive governmental control. Families averaged two children and once again, mothers were found to be the primary educators. Family income was between \$15,000 and \$20,000 per year. Reasons for home schooling were listed to be moral concerns, poor quality of public schooling and the desire for closer parent relationships. Approaches to schooling were described as informal, flexible and directed by the child's interests.

A few studies have addressed the achievement levels of home schooled children. There are three instances of systematically collected data by State Department in Arizona, Alaska and in a Los Angeles suburb. The study of children in a home tutorial network in Los Angeles showed that children

scored higher on standardized tests than did peers in Los Angeles Public Schools (Lines, 1987, p. 513). Wartes (1986) found in his Washington based study that as a group 426 home schoolers scored as well or better than their peers across the nation on virtually all six test scales measured by the Stanford Achievement Test scores. In her Alaskan based study, Green (1984, p. 18) found home schooled students to outperform their classroom based peers in both verbal and math achievement at all grade levels. She also found that the longer the child is in a home based program the more likely he or she is to perform better than those in the program for a shorter period of time.

Lines (1986) has been one to cautiously conclude from such data only that "home schooling seems to work" (p. 26). Wartes (1984) has also mentioned in regard to his assessment of Washington students that the data "should not be used to make home school - conventional school comparisons" (p. 13). As Wartes points out, it is difficult to determine whether the higher scores are a result of the delivery system (home schooling) or some other variable such as parental support. Another cautious note is added by Marie Della Bella, Director of Private Education in Connecticut (quoted in Lines, 1987, p. 513) who points out that 90% of Connecticut children who begin a program of home instruction are already at or above grade level.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using the method of participant observation, also referred to as field research. Before a detailed discussion of the setting and strategies particular to this study are presented, a more general discussion about the nature of participant observation is necessary.

Subtle and not so subtle distinctions abound regarding the intent and scope of field research. Whatever else it may be, participant observation represents a commitment on the part of the investigator to participate as intimately as possible in the experience of those he studies. The field researcher depends upon being accepted into the community or group he wishes to study. Reciprocally, the researcher must, to the best of his abilities, learn to view the world from the perspective of those persons he studies. This intent demands a flexible and relativistic stance on the part of the researcher. Preconceived assumptions must be abandoned before entering the field.

Although field methods focus on observation and interview, many qualitative investigators have advocated the use of a variety of methods alongside each other to reveal all the

relevant aspects of the phenomena at hand. In this vein, Schatzman and Strauss indicate:

Field method is not an exclusive method in the same sense ... that experimentation is. Field method is more like an umbrella of activity beneath which any technique may be used for gaining the desired information, and for processes of thinking about this information (1973, p. 14).

In addition to the fact that participant observation may employ the simultaneous use of many methods, the research process is also likely to be a complex one. As Burgess (1985) has noted, in recent years there has been a shift away from the notion of "stages" in social research to a situation in which data collection, data analysis and theorizing are intimately related. Whereas the ideal-typical pattern of research begins with a hypothesis or conceptualized problem, moves to sampling, then data collection and finally to data analysis, field methodology is rarely such a linear process. As Bechhofer (1974) has stated: "The research process ... is not a clear cut sequence of procedures following a neat pattern but a messy interaction between the conceptual and empirical world, deduction and induction occurring at the same time" (p. 73).

The Limitations and Possibilities of Field Research

Ethnographies are primarily descriptive in nature. In Anthropology ethnography means literally, "a picture of the

way of life of some interacting human group (Wolcott, 1975, p.112). Because field research places a great premium on capturing the essence of and faithfulness to culture as it is found, ethnographies often resemble finely detailed, richly descriptive portraits.

A possible weakness in ethnographies is that such immersion in a culture leaves the researcher with little more than volumes of rich description and a host of interesting stories. The extent of concentration on the construction of meaning of those persons under study has enabled this form of research to emphasize the uniqueness of the group to the extent that the linkages and interconnections to the larger social world may go unnoticed.

Denzin (1978) warns that "If sociologists forget that the major goal of their discipline is the development of theory, a process of goal-displacement can occur such that operational definitions and empirical observations become ends in themselves" (p. 42). Such a cautionary note reminds the researcher of the richness that lies beyond observation and description.

Because the participant observer enters the field with few preconceptions, research typically begins in an open-ended spirit. Although a researcher may and often does enter the field with a particular theoretical perspective, rarely is a simple matching of theory against data possible. As Woods (1985) explains, "Rather the theory provides guidelines for interpreting the data. Characteristically, the theory helps

so far, but no further, at which point one must refine or develop the theory" (p. 62).

Given its nature, field research is useful in verifying, refining as well as generating theory. This last use, the generation of theory is the most exciting possibility inherent in field research.

The Nature of Grounded Theory

Because field research may begin without a priori assumptions, it allows by its nature, for the possibility of discovery. The work of Glasser and Straus (1967) in The Discovery of Grounded Theory has provided the most extensive treatment of this aspect of the research act. Glasser and Straus make the case that an overemphasis in current social research on the verification of theory has led to a de-emphasis on the discovery of theory. Such a concern with verification, they believe, has increased the division between theory and method. Glasser and Straus offer a series of useful strategies for generating grounded theory; that is, theory discovered from systematically obtained data. They contrast the generation of grounded theory with theory that is logically deduced from a priori assumptions. Generating theory from data is described as a process of research in which hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research.

A clear advantage of grounded theory is its ability to narrow the gap between theory and methods. Although an original theory may be used when entering the field, the methods of research may alter the theory, just as the theory may alter the methodology.

The central strategy in the development of grounded theory involves the use of comparative analysis. Through the comparison of theoretically relevant groups the researcher is able to note relationships between and within groups. These relationships can then be integrated into a comprehensive theoretical whole.

The relevant groups or categories are noted and analyzed. Concepts emerge from the field and are checked and rechecked against further data at which point they may be compared with other material, strengthened, or perhaps reformulated. Through this process, a theory gradually comes into being.

Commenting on this original formulation by Glasser and Straus, Woods (1985) has noted that "Theory does not simply 'emerge' or 'come into being'. Though it has been argued that it is grounded in the facts of the situation, it is not immediately revealed. However detailed and perspicacious the observations, at some state there must be a 'leap of imagination' as the researcher conceptualizes from raw field notes" (p. 52).

This "leap of imagination" constitutes the most personal moment in the research act and is that realm which defies description and analysis. This moment seems to require

certain attitudes and qualities of creativity. C. Wright Mills (1959) has most eloquently spoken to this moment of creativity, terming it the "sociological imagination." Mills claimed that such an imagination is essential to grasp what is going on in the world and to "understand what is happening in themselves as minute points of the intersection of biography and history within society" (p. 7). Mills describes the nature of this imagination:

The sociological imagination ... in considerable part consists of the capacity to shift from one perspective to another, and in the process to build up an adequate view of a total society and of its components. It is this imagination that sets off the social scientist from the mere technician. Adequate technicians can be trained in a few years. The sociological imagination can also be cultivated; certainly it seldom occurs without a great deal of routine work. Yet there is an unexpected quality about it perhaps because its essence is the combination of ideas that no one expected were combinable say, a mess of ideas from German philosophy and British economics. There is a playfulness of mind back of such combining as well as a truly fierce drive to make sense of the world, which the technician as such usually lacks. Perhaps he is too well trained, too precisely trained. Since one can be trained only in what is already known, training sometimes incapacitates one from learning new ways; it makes one rebel against what is bound to be at first loose and even sloppy. But you must cling to such vague images and notions, if they are yours, and you must work them out. For it is in such forms that original ideas, if any, almost always first appear (pp. 211 -212).

The views of Glasser and Straus and of C. Wright Mills best typify the spirit of the research process in this study. One of the most notable features of methodology in this study is its relatively open-ended beginning and its subsequent organic or unfolding process. A second notable feature of

this research is its development through the application of what C. Wright Mills has termed the sociological imagination. That is, as concepts emerged, great effort was made to view these concepts through multi-perspectives. The intent of shifting perspectives has been to view findings from the study in a light that allows for a greater grasp of the interplay between biography, history and society.

Methods of a Field Study: A Local Group
of Home Schooling Families

Entry

Although I had been living for three years in a city with an active home schooling group, I was unaware of their existence until I became acquainted with one of the mothers who was mutually involved in a local peace network. As it happened, this particular woman was the unofficial "leader" in the local group. That is, she was a pivotal force in arranging group field trips and other common get togethers. When I expressed a desire to study home schooling, this mother sought permission from the other families for me to accompany them on the next group outing. From this initial contact, I was introduced to eight mothers and their 25 respective children who comprised the "core" of the local group. I felt warmly accepted by the group; all but one of the mothers consented to give formal interviews. Before I conducted formal interviews, I spent a two month period of more informal participant observation. That is, I was invited to social

gatherings and group instruction periods with the home schooling families. In addition, I agreed to be a driver, chaperone for an out-of-town field trip. In following months, I was invited by some of the families to teach both Spanish and Conflict Resolution courses for their children through an educational co-op over two summers. Through these activities I was able, to some degree, to participate more directly in the lives of these home schooling families. After these periods of participant observation, field notes were recorded.

Formal Data Collection

Seven of the eight mothers consented to formal taped interviews that were conducted sporadically over a period of two and one half years. Most interview sessions took place in the families' homes; sometimes in public places where we agreed to meet. They spanned one to three hour periods, after which they were transcribed.

The primary advantage of sporadic interviewing was that it enabled a dynamic view of the group. Over the two year period, notable changes occurred. Some members stopped home schooling while others began during this time; others notably altered their views and practices. All in all, the two year span of attention focused upon the group has allowed for a sense of movement; this group has emerged as more of a process than a "thing" which is static in time and space.

Triangulation of Methods

To gain as complete a "feel" for this subject as possible a concerted effort was made to view the members of the group from as many perspectives as possible. One method for interviewing that yielded positive results was to reverse the implicit role structure common to most interview settings. Whether or not intentional, many interview settings attribute some level of expertise to the part of the researcher or interviewer who comes equipped with note pad and tape recorder in hand. Generally, the interviewer is central in setting the tone of the interview through the posing and directing of questions. In order to reverse the "rules" common to the interview procedure, I sought to put the home schoolers in a primary position and myself in a lesser position of importance. Over the five academic semesters of this research, I invited members of the group to be guest lecturers in a university education course that I teach. During these times, the mothers prepared their own presentations and spoke to the class about their motivations for home schooling and their views about education in general. This placed the home schooling mothers in the expert role diminishing the usual gulf between researcher and the "researched."

In addition, this approach yielded insight into an unanticipated dimension. The students in this particular class were all education majors and prospective teachers. The vast majority of these students were unaware of the existence

of the practice of home education prior to the visit by the mothers. Their reactions to home education were quite varied between agreement and disagreement. Often, students would express intensely negative reactions against home schooling. Other students became extremely interested in home education and pursued their own further research of it.

In this way, I was able to observe the reactions of over 300 people who could be described as supportive of public education. This enabled me to gain some sense of a "public" perception of home education which was an invaluable perspective. This perspective stimulated some lines of inquiry that would otherwise never have arisen, had my eyes been the only lens through which this group was viewed.

Another variation on the interview format that I experimented with was to arrange group interviews. The group interviews were friendly and sociable affairs. Through these relaxed, round-table discussions, many ideas and comments arose through group interaction that probably would not have arisen in a one-on-one interview setting. This also provided an optimal setting for me to present and check my perceptions and findings with the group.

The Unfolding of a Research Process

The initial participant observation in this study was initiated with a very general focus and few assumptions. For a two month period I accompanied the home schooling group on field trips, and observed some group instruction sessions. At

this time I was most interested in noting impressions and perceptions of a descriptive nature. Only the most general questions of motivation for home schooling and the nature of educational practices were pursued at this time.

Despite the general focus, notable features of the group began to emerge fairly quickly: similarities in lifestyle and a split in professed ideologies were among the most striking. The interplay between striking similarity as well as apparent contradiction within the group became the first substantive concept to emerge and to be held up in relationship to formal theory.

At this point, the research process centered for a time on combining concepts and hypotheses that emerged from the data with existing theories that seemed useful and applicable. As the research progressed, the conceptual questions seemed to grow broader in scope; that is, question of a more generalized nature became paramount: why was home schooling emerging as a preferred method of education at this particular moment in history?, what sociocultural conditions were most relevant to this movement's birth?, why were such seemingly opposing factions drawn to a common understanding?, did this movement constitute a curious and inconsequential eruption in the social fabric or did it signal some sort of upcoming cultural shift or trend?, was it in anyway connected to other social movements past or present?

Large questions such as these led to an examination of macro theories concerning social change, social movements and

the evolving individual. An effort was made to compare findings with established theory and to see at what points, if any, there were intersections and commonalities. Some intersection of theory and data was found; other aspects of the data resisted such matching and were noted as contradictions. Some issues which seemed to contradict existent theory were explored and rechecked by going back to the field for follow-up interviews. Some were compared with other bodies of literature and reformulated; others seemed best left as contradictory findings and have been developed into relatively new analyses of the home schooling movement.

CHAPTER IV
CHARACTERISTICS AND DYNAMICS OF A LOCAL
HOME SCHOOL GROUP

The depiction of the home schooling group that follows is largely focused upon mothers as the pivotal characters in the home schooling drama. Although home schooling is not always overseen by mothers, in this particular group, it was. The fathers in each family had been part of the decision to begin home schooling and were supportive of it, but the mothers in each case were primary in its design and undertaking.

Even though the word "schooling" most immediately conjures up images of children, home schooling is certainly an "occasion of adults" just as much as it is an "occasion of children." While much of the public controversy over home schooling centers around expressed concerns for the welfare and rights of children, such concern misses a central point. Although the phrase "children's rights" has become a common one, there is something misleading about the phrase. As Berger and Berger (1984) have pointed out, "In practice, the question resolves itself, when it refers to younger children, into a conflict between parents' rights and rights of miscellaneous professionals; in other words, what is at issue is a quarrel between differing categories of adults" (p. 70).

In one sense, any study of schooling, of whatever form, is largely a study of adult preference. When children are the focus of educational research, they are most often looked at in regard to some outcome of the educational experience; achievement, adjustment, self-esteem and the like. It is a rare piece of educational research that inquires directly into the nature of the child's experience of school; even more rare is research that inquires directly into the world of the child himself.

While many educational measures purport to tell us something about the child, they may tell us more about the success or failure of the schools adults create than they tell us about the child. Certainly, this is not an either/or situation. It simply bares pointing out that educational measures of children are always context bound. Adults create schools. Adults are the key force in determining the nature of life in school; adults largely set the tone and create the climate in schools. They choose the content, select the materials, devise the methods, dictate the experiences, then measure the outcome of the child's interaction with these. Although it is not usually conceived in such a way, the preferences and input of the adult looms most largely in this scenario. Because the experience of schooling is overwhelmingly of adult conception and creation, this "adult dimension" of schooling in general merits close attention.

Such is also the case with home schooling. If questions of whether home schooling is "good" or "bad" for the children involved can be suspended, other observations about this form of schooling more readily spring to the fore. Probably more apparent than in mass schooling, the "adult" dimension of home schooling is readily observable. Central to the modern convention of sending one's child to public school is a rather automatic "cutting of the apron strings"; a turning over of one's child and subsequent diminishing of the parental role. The decision to school one's child at home sets this modern convention on its head. The parental role is emphasized by this action. Whereas the realm of "adult preference" is implicit in public schooling, it is explicit in home schooling. Most parents who send their children to public school do so rather automatically; parental preferences figure very lightly into the majority of the public school experience. In contrast, home schooling is a very intentional act; parental preference is the basis for its inception; parental preference unabashedly directs the nature of the experience.

(In regard to home schooling the public eye is most naturally fixed upon the children. The most natural questions that first arise about home schooling center around its "effectiveness"; do children taught at home learn better or worse than children taught in schools? Related to this question is the other most commonly expressed concern: Do children schooled outside of the group experience gain

sufficient social skills to enable their membership in the larger society?) Although these are important questions, an exclusive concern with outcomes and effectiveness yields insight into only one miniscule aspect of the total home schooling phenomenon. Because a more "total" picture of home schooling was desired in this study, the perceptions of the parents rather than those of the children seemed most crucial in gaining a larger view.

As mentioned earlier, in this group; mothers specifically, opposed to parents generally, were identified as the key figures. Therefore, in this study, the bulk of research effort was focused upon mothers in the group. All of the interviews were conducted with mothers as the parent who had assumed responsibility for the day to day education of their children.

Notal Features of a Home Schooling Network

The fact that mothers in this group were the primary teachers in each family comes as no surprise; this is consistent with findings about home schooling families at large. Many other features were quite similar to the national picture of home schoolers as well. The women ranged in ages between late twenties and late fourties. Each family contained between two and five children. In each case, the father was the primary wage earner and each family could be described as middle class.

Also consistent with features that are known about home schooling at large was an observable ideological mixture within the group. Some mothers expressed a primarily religious motivation for home schooling while others expressed more philosophic or pedagogical motivations. This mixture was observable on other levels as well. One mother was the wife of a Baptist minister while another was a practitioner of Ananda Marge meditation while yet another professed herself to be a staunch atheist. A few were Reagan devotees while two others described themselves as politically radical and were actively involved in the nuclear freeze movement. They were diverse in other ways as well. Some had a long list of educational credentials; others were high school graduates.

Despite the vast differences among these mothers, they had molded themselves into a friendly cooperative network. But unlike most organizations which are usually sought out and joined, this group of women formed a network after "finding" each other. Each family had independently come to the decision to home school. Only one family in the group was acquainted with another home schooling family before deciding to home school themselves. Because home schoolers rely extensively on the public library, many of the mothers became familiar to the city librarian who began introducing one home schooling mother to another. Some families became aware of other home schoolers through the introduction by mutual friends. Over the period of a few years these eight families gradually became connected.

Realizing that home schooling resulted in some degree of isolation for their children they first began arranging occasional group outings and field trips. They soon began meeting in an informal support capacity to share ideas and concerns about home schooling. They began a group subscription to the Holt association newsletter, Growing Without Schooling. After some time, different parents would periodically offer classes in their area of expertise for interested children in the group. During the span of this study, short courses in French, public speaking, logic and chemistry were initiated by different parents.

These common activities defined the home schooling mothers and their children as a group. The group was very loosely structured and highly informal. The mother who had been home schooling the longest could be described as an informal leader, but only in the sense of being the most inclined to initiate and organize group activities. There was no definite regularity to their meetings. They met together for outings about once a month to every other month. Group instruction was offered as parents were inspired and inclined to do so. Despite some notal differences in the families, they had bonded into a friendly and cooperative group. Despite some dramatic difference in professed religious and political ideologies, these differences seemed suspended within the arena of home schooling. The mood of gatherings was always relaxed and congenial. In group meetings the conversation would often quite naturally drift into topics of

educational beliefs and practices. Although diametrically opposing beliefs and orientations would be expressed, never did the conversation move to debate or argument. An atmosphere of tolerance, of "agreeing to disagree," seemed always to prevail.

Motives and Methods: A Study in Contrast

The expressed motives for home schooling among the group covered a broad spectrum. Two of the mothers in the group began home schooling for reasons that were more practical than philosophic or ideological. In both cases, the decision was based on difficulties that one child in each family was having in school. In both families the child with the problem was taken out of school while other children in the family remained in school. One of these children, a boy, was the victim of gang violence. After repeated contacts with school officials failed to diminish the attacks, the parents saw no other option but to withdraw their 12 year old son from the school. Because a transfer to another district would have been very costly, the mother decided to school her son at home. In a less dramatic case, the other parents whose motives were more practical reportedly withdrew their daughter because she was painfully shy and was miserable in school. They felt she would be happier and function better at home. They too let their other children remain in school.

The remaining mothers expressed motives that were steeped in some deeply held belief of either a religious, social or

pedagogical nature. For these remaining mothers, the decision to begin home schooling was based on some dissatisfaction with and rejection of public, mass schooling. In contrast to those mothers whose motives were of a practical nature, these mothers schooled all of their children at home.

Two of the mothers felt that schools had become too permissive. These mothers perceived the schools as having lost all means of discipline and control. They both expressed a belief that the federal courts had so extensively detailed students rights as to dissolve teacher's position of authority. As one mother explained:

How can a teacher be expected to control the classroom when they are virtually unable to spank a child. It's only through home schooling that a child today can learn submission and obedience.

For both of these mothers, their concern with discipline and control was reflected in their similarly structured pedagogical preference. Both utilized the correspondence curriculum of Christian Liberty Academy, which is self-paced and Biblically based.

However, a somewhat more common perspective among the group contended that schools were too rigid or too authoritarian. This class of objection did not, however, translate into an identical orientation to home schooling. Several mothers from this perspective expressed motives that were primarily pragmatic, while others expressed motives that were more purely idealistic. These motives could be expressed as a continuum from more pragmatic to more idealistic. Also, those

mothers whose motives were more pragmatic also expressed a preference for a more structured, directive method of instruction. The more purely philosophic or idealistic the motive, the less structured and directive was the expressed methodological preference.

The mothers of a more pragmatic orientation did not express intensely critical views of public school. Rather, they tended to view schools as simply illogical or impractical or inefficient. These mothers felt that the one-on-one instruction available through home schooling was simply more logical than the mass nature of public schools. As one mother stated:

I respect any person who will venture into a classroom with 30 kids, but I just don't understand how they could possibly think they could attend to the needs and interests of each child.

The practical orientation expressed by these two mothers simply found home schooling to be more sensible. The mother could tailor instruction to the needs of the child; never need the child experience unnecessary repetition. On the other hand, the child could remain at a learning task as long as necessary without being rushed to the next.

The two mothers from this practical orientation relied on the Calvert Correspondence Curriculum as the core component of home instruction. They did not however, adhere to these materials solely or rigidly.

Mothers in this vein did seem to place a premium on the notion of pace and time in general. One of their criticisms

of schools centered on the amount of wasted time. As one of these mothers who was in her first year of home schooling explained:

We've found that we can cover our materials in 2-3 hours. We don't take recess, lunch breaks, P.E. or art class. If you looked at schools you would find that 2-3 hours is all they spend in actual, solid instruction. My daughter constantly complained of her whole class having to put their heads on their desks for 30 minutes as punishment for one student misbehaving. That's inexcusable! On top of practices like that, she had to ride the bus an hour to school and an hour home. This is all such a waste of time.

These two mothers were not so much at odds with the content or values they saw promoted in schools. In fact, the subject matter they covered was similar to a basic school curriculum. Their major complaint against schools centered on its inability to allow for individualized instruction and its inability to be responsive to individual needs in general.

Still yet, other mothers in the group expressed more purely idealistic or philosophic motives. Connected to this motive was a more complete rejection of the institution of public schooling. These mothers tended to pursue home schooling in a way that bore little resemblance to schooling as it is usually conceived. Mothers in this category expressed a desire to develop in their children an attitude that learning is synonymous with living. These mothers were inclined to describe education in a wholistic fashion, emphasizing process over products and results.

One mother who typified this orientation described her approach as "free flowing." She claimed that her goal was to

"get out of her children's way" in regards to learning by providing a rich environment and allowing them to self select subjects and projects of interest. Coupled with this clearly articulated educational philosophy was an equally clear rejection of schools as places where this philosophy could never be realized. Much more so than mothers whose motives were centered on some dissatisfaction of a logical or practical nature, the motives of these mothers were connected to a near total condemnation and rejection of schools. Mothers in this vein expressed open suspicion of the political purposes they saw inherent in compulsory schooling. As one mother explained:

How can young adults of seventeen or eighteen be expected to make independent decisions about compulsory service to the state (the draft) if they have been essentially stripped of their rights by the same state for twelve to thirteen years of their lives, and told how to think, what to learn, what to wear and how to behave if they want the juicy plums? How can real learning take place in an atmosphere of obligatory confinement?

In addition to rejecting schools because of their perceived political purposes, these mothers felt that children were not only academically stifled but emotionally damaged in schools. In contrast to those mothers who objected that schools did not meet their purposes sensibly or efficiently enough, these mothers felt that schools were all too successful in meeting their purposes. As one mother quite passionately declared in a written editorial:

Home schooling is one of the few alternatives to the prevailing factory-style approach to learning, an approach which has produced a curious

amalgamation of well-oiled, passive and obedient human parts on one hand, and an increasing number of psychically disintegrated rebels on the other. What is truly remarkable is that a few individuals do emerge relatively unscathed.

Curiously, the suspicious, angry denunciation of schools translated into a rather trusting, gentle approach to home schooling. Resonant of John Holt's views, the mothers of this orientation explained that trust in the nature of humans guided their practice. Both mothers in this category explained that children are born with the natural instinct and capacity for integrated learning and growth. On many occasions these mothers would talk about the myth of learning disabilities which they described as resulting from the imposition of structures and learning regimes that run counter to the developmental needs of the child.

Both of these mothers used little prepared curriculum. Instead, they were inclined to develop curriculum around real life experiences. They maintained that children will thrive in a loving, relaxed environment, acquiring all of the skills necessary for successful living. As one mother described through an example:

I do teach basic skills but I always try to do this through an every day activity. My oldest son learned to compute area when he had to figure the amount of wire he would need to build rabbit cages or how much compost he would need for a garden 40 feet by 20 feet. My younger son learned fractions by measuring ingredients when cooking. I always include them when I work on the books for our family business.

The same mother allows her children to select areas of interest and to immerse themselves in the subject until they

have reached a point of self-determined closure. Her adherence to this approach is based on the belief that any interest pursued deeply and fully will result in making connections with many other areas. She reported this illustration:

When my son was seven he became interested in maps. He began my making a map of our property. Next he drew a map of the city drawing pictures of stores and buildings he knew. He later became interested in the states and by the middle of the year he could name and locate all of the fifty states. From there he became fascinated with the globe and could soon name a majority of the countries and oceans; we looked up information about the ones he was most interested in. By the end of the year he had drawn a picture of the earth as it would look from the perspective of the sun. He drew over a hundred maps that year.

The contrasting motives for home schooling translated into equally contrasting educational goals and practices. These motives and practices were so distinct as to be antithetical: mothers of a religious orientation perceived schools as too "loose"; mothers of a wholistic orientation perceived schools as too "tight." While the mother of the most religious orientation often described what she saw as rampant secular humanism, ironically, the mothers of the most philosophic orientation would well fit the description of "secular humanists." And yet, despite the fact that each of these mothers were the embodiment of the other's "nightmare", they had forged a cooperative relationship.

There seemed to be something beyond professed motive, beyond political or religious beliefs that was central in the decision to home school. There seemed to be some realm of

commonality among the group that transcended ideological differences and that bound them together.

Visions and Values: A Study
in Similarity

In any group gathering of the home schooling mothers, the conversation would, at some point, quite predictably drift into a recantation of the "ills" of public schools. Despite a host of differences, these mothers were united in their construction of schools as a societal "foe."

While these mothers often expressed fervent objections to schools, the objections were most often generalized and non-specific. In six of the eight families, the objection to schools and subsequent withdrawal of their children was not based on a particular incident or even series of incidents but rather on a visceral, felt sense ("too rigid," "too lock-step," "impersonal," or the opposite; "not enough authority," "no values," "rife with secular humanism.")

During this recantation ritual of each group gathering, the mothers would often compare "horror" stories of life in school. These ranged from stories of teachers painting their fingernails in class, to stories of children being required to bring food to teachers for good grades. Also common were stories which pointed to the anti-intellectual snobbish, status-seeking, herd mentality of the peer group.

The accuracy or inaccuracy of these stories was less important than the regularity and intensity with which they

were told. The story telling ritual seemed to serve a self-defining function. These stories were told in what seemed to be an attempt to illustrate the decadent value base of public schools. By constructing a vivid picture of what they were not, they were more able to define what they as a group were.

The act of constructing and embellishing a common foe provided insight into what bound this otherwise unlikely group. This act of projecting onto the school "that which is different than us" did provide insight into the common ideology of the group. The term "ideology" here refers to an observable core of beliefs, values and orientations to life held in common by the group.

And the group was united in their embrace of a particular set of values. There were striking similarities in each family's lifestyle, if not their educational practices. Five of the eight families lived in rural locations. Two lived in areas inaccessible by car on rainy days. Five of the eight families operated their own businesses. All of the mothers stayed home as the primary care giver. All of the mothers had stepped out of successful careers or postponed career entry in order to rear children. The issue of home schooling began to emerge, not as an educational issue, but as a salient feature of a unified lifestyle consistent with a common value orientation among the group.

Self-Sufficiency

All of the mothers were united in their belief that schools diminish childrens' capacity for self-sufficiency. The parents themselves seemed to have created lifestyles centered around self-sufficiency in the midst of a world that they perceived as being too technological and/or too institutionalized. This value was manifest in a multitude of ways among the group. Two of the eight families planted and harvested the bulk of their food. One family generated income through selling gems and jewelry making. Three of the mothers birthed their children in the home. Two sets of parents were largely self-educated themselves. One mother described this self-reliant orientation:

I dropped out of high school when I was fifteen and went to the Dean of Admissions at the University of Iowa and was accepted without a high school diploma. I went there for three years and found that I still wasn't learning what I wanted. I found I could learn a lot more by working in a crisis center than I was learning in counseling classes. My husband designs computer hardware and he never graduated from high school. He never had formal training in computers; he's just interested and picked it up.

The majority of parents in this group stressed the desire they had for their children to learn how to learn rather than what to learn, the latter of which they felt was stressed in school. This feeling was expressed by most parents regardless of the type of curriculum materials they utilized. These parents felt that a major skill they wanted to develop in their children was the ability to obtain the information they wanted. All of these parents believed that this skill had

been a prerequisite in creation of their own self-sufficient life styles.

One mother in the group remarked that there were two types of parents: service brokers and service providers.

Most parents today see themselves as service brokers. If they see a need in their child they contract services or negotiate resources for someone else to meet that need. Service providers actually provide services for their kids themselves. They're liable to think first about what they can do before they seek outside help.

Self-reliance was a commonly expressed value among all the members of the group. As one mother explained:

I see a common thing among us in this group. We all regarded ourselves as active learners. Before we had children all of us actively studied childbirth. We wanted to feed our children healthy foods. Most of us did extended studies of nutrition. If you think of yourself as an active learner, you naturally want your child to be one too.

A commonly expressed value among the group was a desire to lessen their reliance on professional expertise. As noted, there was a strong preference in the group for self-employment (five of eight families). There was also an observable preference for self-health care among the group, as exemplified by the mothers who were committed to home birthing. Two mothers in the group were hesitant to seek medical care for anything other than emergency treatment. Instead, they emphasized personal responsibility for health through careful nutrition and proper lifestyle. One mother summarized this orientation among the group:

I see ourselves as part of a movement away from a reliance on professionals; not disconnected or isolated, just self-reliant - taking more

responsibility for the common things in life. It's really a reaction against the hugeness and impersonalization of institutions.

A Challenge to the Socialization Argument

The nature and degree of childrens' social interaction is a major issue in the home school controversy. A major tenet of compulsory schooling is the belief that the socialization of children in groups is essential; that only through peer-group schooling can children learn to get along in a highly interdependent society. Further, a cornerstone of liberal thought has held that the mixing of children from different backgrounds, from families of differing beliefs and values is vital to peace in a pluralistic society.

It is well recognized that the United States has a compelling interest in developing an enlightened citizenry. This stated interest has been affirmed by the compulsory school laws which have, until recently, remained virtually unchallenged. The general public has also until recently retained a largely unquestioned view that schools are essential in the general socialization of children. Critics who may concede the adequacy of the home as a place to learn academic subjects do not concede its adequacy as a place for children to grow socially.

While Americans have traditionally placed great faith in the potential, if not actual efficacy of public schooling, home schoolers represent an emerging view that the

collectivity provides an inferior ground for personal, social and intellectual development.

The mothers in this group reported that the most common criticism they face is that home schooling deprives children of the necessary social interaction for adequate development. In response, these mothers contended that proper socialization through the schools is a myth. One mother explained:

I really question the school's claim on socialization because it just isn't happening there. The average kid, unless he's a trouble maker gets only a few minutes of the teacher's time each day. Well then who's doing the socialization? The kids are getting that from other kids. Are those kids properly socialized? They're not; you would assume that socialization is giving kids the ability to deal in society and you cannot get that ability from other kids who do not have that ability themselves. The thing that I think determines good socialization is if kids spend a maximum amount of time with adults that are effectively functioning and then being able to spend time after that in interaction with their peers; then they have a chance to test out what they've learned and fit it to themselves. As it is we do it backwards. We expect our kids to learn those things somehow magically from being around their peers and then wonder why they don't learn them.

All of the mothers expressed a distrust of the peer culture they saw as dominating life in schools. This was the single most intensely held criticism that all of the mothers leveled against the schools. Among the most commonly mentioned negative values mothers described the peer culture as perpetuating were materialism, competition and anti-intellectualism. These mothers were united in the view that children could adopt a suitable set of values only if they were isolated from these influences.

All of these mothers were sensitive to the charge of being over protective, as this was a common criticism directed against them. In response to this criticism, these mothers contended that it is simply a wrong-headed idea arisen from industrialized society that young children should be separated from their parents. As one mother stated:

It's a misconception to project this overprotection on home schoolers. But it's understandable that if you live in a society where most parents work full time and nobody is home, it's going to be hard for them to accept that we're not being overprotective. It's unacceptable for working parents to think their kids might need more protection. It was really hard for me when I worked full time. In the back of my mind, I was uncomfortable but I had to think of ways to justify that day care was a positive experience for my son; that it was good for him to be away from home at an early age because that's what I had to do. When a majority of women have to work all day it's not hard to understand how they look at us.

This type of thinking was common among the entire group. Many of the mothers foresaw that, at some later age, their children might enter public schools. Most of the mothers believed home schooling to be most vital in a child's pre-adolescent years. Some of the group emphasized the early years as being most important in formulating a value base. These mothers wanted to delay school entry until such a time they believed that their children were better able to deal with the pressures of school life. Other mothers wanted to delay school entrance because they believed formal instruction to be developmentally inappropriate for young children. As one mother explained:

One of the problems with our society is that we push young kids into situations where all their values come from the group. If you take your kids out of

school until they're about 13 you solve that problem. By then they've formulated solid values. I'm hoping that my children, by allowing them more time to formulate values, will have positive self-images and have a strong sense of what they believe is right and wrong.

At first glance, the act of removing one's child from the group to pursue education in private connotes a distrust if not distaste of the collectivity. This act is most generally perceived by critics as somewhat fanatical; as an act of isolationism. While these mothers did maintain a critical view of either peer culture or school culture, their desire in home schooling was not to isolate themselves or their children from the rest of the world. Rather, for all the mothers in this group, the question was not if the child would enter into the broader social world, but when. The act of home schooling did not represent a desire for seclusion or isolation as much as it represented a desire to challenge the early separation of child and parent that has become conventional.

The Idealized Mother Figure

It has been well documented in studies of home schoolers in other states that mothers are generally the primary parent responsible for home schooling (Green, 1984; Wartes, 1984; Gustaven, 1981). On one hand this fact seems fairly insignificant because it is so consistent with both traditional employment patterns and gender roles. But on another hand, the decision to take full daily responsibility for the education of one's children in the home stands in distinct contradiction to the image of the modern educated woman.

While the mother's role as home educator might seem consistent with the New Right familism, a majority of mothers in this group did not adhere to a politically right ideology. In fact, some of the mothers described themselves as feminists or sympathetic to feminist ideals. No one in the group espoused a view that "a woman's place is in the home." And yet, all of the mothers in the group indicated that being a mother was among the most important facets of their lives. Each mother's understanding of her role as mother seemed highly significant and central in the decision to home school.

Each of these women had either never entered into a career or had stopped working as her children were born. There was a distinct orientation among the group to approach mothering more intensely and more fervently than it is commonly conceived. For instance, one mother reported that for the last thirteen years she had either been pregnant or nursing without intermission.

These women maintained that the home (in this case the mother) was the only institution that could be genuinely concerned with the welfare of the child. The mothers felt that the schools have increasingly adopted a posture of claiming to know what is best for the child. This perception of schools aroused greater passion among the mothers in this group than did any other. They expressed a belief that maternal affection and concern qualify them to be a superior judge of what is best for their children.

When each mother was asked if she believed the state should have any right to assess the adequacy and/or quality of a home school, all were united in saying the state should not hold this right. These mothers agreed that such an assessment constituted measurement against an arbitrary, impersonal and possibly incorrect standard. One mother asserted that the state's right to inspection was based on a faulty assumption that some consensus definition of a quality environment existed. These mothers claimed that such a definition does not exist even among educational experts. They further claimed that the condition of being a parent conferred upon them a natural right to rear and educate their children as they saw fit.

Motherly love and parental right were held by these women to override any claim of state interest in the schooling of their children. They claimed that the State's interest in compulsory schooling is not based on concern for the child's best interest, but is instead an issue of who should have control of children's lives. One of the mothers, who formerly worked in conjunction with public school truant officers, had this to say:

We had kids who had been truant from school off and on for years ... In all that time I worked in that system the State refused to take one parent to court for truancy. This was the same time that the courts were sentencing parents in the western part of the State to jail for schooling their kids at home. I finally realized that the issue was not an issue of whether kids are getting quality care or quality schooling, but is an issue of who is in control.

All of the mothers in the group, whether they described themselves as politically conservative or politically progressive, were united in denying the state any right to intervene in the way a family decides to educate its children. They all reflected John Holt's belief that unqualified malintended people simply would not choose to educate their children at home. "If they do," he observes, "such families are likely to find home schooling so unpleasant that they will be glad to give it up" (Holt, 1982, p. 57).

In many ways, at the heart of the controversy in home schooling is the tension between state's rights and individual rights. Very often conflicts between individual and states rights evolve around a perception that a state requirement in some way impacts or violates an ideological or religious belief of the individual. But none of the mothers in this group described the state as violating such neatly categorical rights. For instance, none of these mothers, even those who home schooled out of a religious motivation, claimed that compulsory laws were in any way a violation of their religious rights. Instead they understood the compulsory laws of the state to be a generalized violation of their "natural" or "organic" rights as parents. The mothers tended to see the institution of the family as a private realm of life that is simply unrelated to any state interest and is therefore beyond the scope of state control.

For most of the mothers in this group, the compulsory school laws did not pose a threat in the sense that the

teachings of school would contradict or impede the teachings of the home. Instead, the mothers felt that compulsory school attendance posed a threat in the sense that it was an encroachment into the private realm of family life. Although parents strongly objected to many aspects of life in schools, their objection to the state's authority in family matters was a stronger objection. While parents objected to schools for a variety of reasons, their objections to state control in family matters was consistent and unified.

A conflict between school values and family values was indeed central in each mother's decision to home school. But a conflict in beliefs and values did not completely explain each mother's motives for home schooling. Each mother was asked if she would send her children to school if she could find one that was consistent with her values and beliefs about schooling. Most of them replied that they would not. Obviously, conflict in beliefs did not fully explain the decision to home school. There was some variance on this question although the orientation was very similar. One mother said, "I just don't want my kids gone a majority of the day. I want them with me."

Other mothers constructed a less encompassing view of their role, but expressed similar needs to maintain closer bonds with their children than sending them to public school would allow. As another mother described:

I would be willing to send my children to school one or two hours a day for specialized classes that I can't offer, but only if I could choose what those classes would be.

The most expanded view of the mother's role was expressed by yet another woman:

I'd be perfectly happy to develop a community school with people who had the same values I have. If I could find five families in which each of us could teach one day a week, where we could pool resources, that would be great.

Underlying all the various objections to schooling among mothers in the group was a strong feeling that their children belonged at home and not in an institution. This was the most deeply held belief that cut across ideological boundaries in the group. This common view that exalted the sanctity of the home and emphasized the mother/child bond was the strongest cement that bound the diverse group.

The emphasis on the mother/child bond constituted the most identifiable group ideology. Mothers in this group emphasized the truth and necessity of this bond. Through a closer bond with their children, these mothers believed their children would grow up more secure, more independent, more fully developed. In these mothers' eyes, the negative qualities that they attributed to the peer group were directly tied to the shabbiness of the parent-child bond in contemporary society.

All of the mothers in the group perceived their children to be thriving under home instruction. Most of the mothers described some or all of their children as accelerated; standardized tests scores substantiated that most of the children were above grade level. These mothers perceived

their children's success as related to the extended period of protection and nurturance that home schooling permitted. One mother described this belief system common to the group:

Many people say that if you do extended breast feeding and the family bed ... your children are going to grow up dependent. I think just exactly the opposite is true. The more they have of you, the closer you are, the more independent they will be.

A mother whose fifteen year old son had just entered public school for the first time reported that his teachers perceived him as much more self-directed than students who had attended only public schools. She explained:

Outsiders who observe kids who've been schooled only at home often say that these kids are more self-reliant, more independent. It's a paradox because they've stayed home and been "overprotected" and yet they're more open and independent when they're older.

It was a common belief among the group that most children today, especially those who are sent to early education programs and day care centers, are not given the security needed to grow up stable and independent. As one mother explained:

Most children are not given the security they need to become independent. It's interesting to look at the kids in public school who've been through day care - they're sarcastic and disrespectful. Those kids we used to call "hoods" are now the leaders - they're looked up to.

Individual Process and Group Shifts

Because the participant observation in this study spanned a two and one half year period, changes in the mother's

orientation to and practices of home schooling were noticeable. Changes in the structure of the group itself were also noticeable. In the beginning, this study focused upon eight mothers and their children. At the end of the first year one of the original eight mothers stopped home schooling and her children returned to public schools. This mother home schooled out of the most purely religious motive. Three new families joined the group after the first year. One of the new families home schooled for only one year. At the close of the study, three of the families, who in the beginning were schooling all their children at home, had enrolled one or more of their children in school while continuing to teach one or more at home. Conversely, one mother who schooled only one of her sons at home in response to his particular problem, had by the close of the study taken her other child out of school because she felt home instruction to be superior.

In addition to the compositional changes in the group, there was an observable shift in the ways the individual mothers talked about and approached home schooling. For all the mothers in this group, the approach to home schooling followed a very common progression. It was note worthy that each mother had independently come to the decision to home school. That is, all but one mother in the group began home schooling before she personally knew of anyone else who was pursuing home education. Two mothers were familiar with the writings of John Holt prior to deciding to home school. One mother was likewise familiar with the writings of Raymond

Moore. But other than familiarity with advocacy literature, each mother in the group knew of no family members or friends who were home schooling. As far as each woman knew, she was the only person in her area to be doing so. Some mothers described the decision to home school as a rather spontaneous decision. Others described the decision as "natural," as something they had always known they would do when their children became school age. As one mother who decided fairly spontaneously described:

I began home schooling when my oldest son was in the middle of second grade and broke his arm. I just didn't send him back. I always wanted to do this but I didn't trust myself. From the beginning, I always wondered about those things you were "supposed" to do if you're a good mother. I wondered, "am I really supposed to give my baby this ugly mixed up cereal because the doctor told me to do?" The nurse said, "You'll be a better mother if you take this Demerol ...". I had heard of home schooling. I thought Holt's views were great. But it was like nursing a baby - I had never seen a baby nursed before in my life. I had my 1950's parents standing over me saying, "that is disgusting." It's the same way with the things we ate and the way we had our babies. I didn't personally know anyone who did these things. I was influenced by the things I read and began them on my own.

In the initial phase of home schooling each mother reportedly felt somewhat unsure of her ability to teach her children. Each mother reported that as time went by and as she became more confident, she moved to a less structured, less directive style of teaching. In the beginning, most mothers utilized correspondence materials for their children. All of the mothers reportedly either stopped using correspondence materials altogether or used them much less as time

progressed. None of the mothers had previously had any formal teacher training. Each described feeling somewhat "lost" in the beginning and had chosen a prepared curriculum as an initial structure with which to begin. Each mother described a process of coming to trust her own abilities and of coming to trust her children's abilities as well. This progression was described by each mother regardless of her initially preferred goals and methods. As one mother described:

I was so hard on the first one. I've gotten so much easier on them. There's no comparison in the way I teach the younger ones. I finally realized that they learned to read so much better when they could read what they wanted to.

Other mothers described a process of progressively adapting home instruction around real life situations, needs and interests. Each of the mothers reported that they increasingly allowed their children to self select their subjects of study. Mothers commonly described that they increasingly allowed older children to teach younger siblings. Mothers also reported connecting their children with other adults who had expertise in areas their children wanted to pursue. Many mothers described their home schooling to increasingly "flow" with the rhythms of their individual lives. As one mother reported:

In February my husband had a difficult surgery and was out of commission for a couple of months ... I had to take a very active role in our business, while my 13 year old and nine year old took over most of the household work and younger child care. "School" was very unstructured as real life took over.

Despite the move to a more child directed approach, each mother reportedly experienced a continuing dilemma that is similar to a dilemma faced by many public school teachers. In the initial phase of home schooling, most mothers reported experiencing a nervousness about their children's progress; they commonly wondered how their children were faring compared to their public school counterparts. At some point, each mother had her children assessed by standardized tests. While each mother was committed to her children progressing at their own rate, and to differing degrees, committed to her children following their own interests, each mother also placed a great value on her children being at or above "grade level."

In this regard, each mother, to some degree, pursued home education in relationship to public schooling; never completely independent of it. Each mother was always conscious of the need to prove home schooling's adequacy through her children's comparable or superior test performance. One mother expressed awareness of this paradox:

It's a real dilemma whether or not to teach in such a way that is directed toward testing. You know there are many more interesting things to do that are conducive to human development but aren't testable. There is always this subtle oppression in the back of my mind - What if I die or get sick? What if they are put back in school tomorrow? What if I get taken to court?

At the close of this study, the older children from three families had entered public schools. In each case, the decision to enter school was a joint one between parents and the child. Two boys were entering the sixth grade; one was

entering fifth grade and another was entering the ninth grade. Each boy had expressed a desire for greater peer contact. Mothers of two of the boys expressed a belief that their children had progressed beyond what they were able to offer. The mother of the ninth grade boy reported that her son was eager to pursue advanced mathematics which neither she nor her husband could teach. Both of the sixth grade boys were accomplished musicians and expressed a desire to be in school band. The entry of children into public school signaled yet another phase in the process of home schooling.

When each of these three mothers were teaching all of their children at home, their rhetoric was more dogmatic and more critical. When home schooling was newly undertaken, each of these mothers spoke of home schooling more religiously. Mothers tended to describe home schooling in absolute terms: as being the only hope for an adequate education; as the only place a child could develop intact, creative and stable. Schools were described just as fervently: as chaotic and wild or conversely as impersonal or worse, as inhumane.

There was a notable shift in each mother's rhetoric as her first child entered public school. These mothers tended to speak of home schooling in a more relative fashion: as being an option, as being more appropriate for some families. School entry did require an extensive period of transition and adaptation, seemingly more on the part of the mothers than on the part of the new students. Many of the taken for granted aspects of school life seemed curious and foreign to

the mothers of the new students. Each of the mothers reported that one of the most difficult aspects of transition was related to schools near total emphasis on extrinsic rewards. These students were not accustomed to working for grades. For the mothers, the question of control continued to be a sensitive and problematic issue:

I couldn't believe the rules they sent home on attendance. If you want to take your child out, you must call the school first stating your reasons. If your reasons are 'justified,' the absences will be excused. I was really insulted. I thought, who's in control? Why can't I just walk in and say I'm taking him out for today and leave it at that?

On the other hand, the mothers, while not fully enthusiastic with school life, felt optimistic about their childrens' future there:

My son is back in school because he wants to be there. He's going because he knows he can learn more. He's going for an education while other kids are going because they have to go there - they've always gone there. But my son also has an alternative: he knows if he wants, he can come home.

Even to the mother, who had in the beginning expressed the most fervent political and philosophic objections to school reacted positively to her fifteen year old son's school entry:

I have to say in all honesty that my experience has been positive. The first week the school sent a welcome letter asking for parents to help in several areas: tutoring, chaperoning, sharing skills in the classroom. They honestly seem to welcome parent involvement.

For one mother, her son's successful entrance into school was a conclusive validation of her efforts. His positive

experience in school allayed her reoccurring uncertainty; her concern if what she was doing was really best for her children. Gone was the early posture of self-convincing bravado. At this point, she expressed both a feeling of relief and of self-assurance:

I have to say now that they're in school, there's no question that what I did was right and that they're better for it by far. They were able to stay home until sixth grade. I look at it like I bought them some time.

Concluding Statements on a Local Group

Many factors that can be discerned about home schoolers as a group nationally matched the characteristics of this group of home schoolers. Most noticeably consistent was the central role of mothers in the home school experience. As other researchers have noted, this group had created lifestyles around the values of self-sufficiency and individualism. Distinct categories of home schoolers that have been described were also observable in this group. Also consistent with previous findings about home schooling is the fact that these children were faring well academically.

Other observations made about this group may or may not be consistent with home schoolers in other areas. There is no way to know if the converging of families from such contrasting orientations into common support groups is typical or atypical. It is also unknown if the developmental progression of the home schooling experience described by mothers in this

group is a progression commonly experienced by other home schooling parents.

Despite the virtual impossibility of determining the typicality of this group, many of its particular features are noteworthy in and of themselves. Most noteworthy is the fact that members of this group began home schooling both simultaneously and independently. Even among a group of eight to ten families the synchronous undertaking of an activity as unconventional as home schooling is fairly remarkable.

Other features of this particular group defied common sensical perceptions and assumptions. In an era marked by high levels of conflict and polarization, it seems unlikely that representatives of such polarized positions would not only be drawn to a common conclusion, but would engage in a cooperative relationship and undertaking. One of the richest insights that emerged in looking at this group was an awareness of just how connected they were despite the differences in their political and philosophical orientations. There was a remarkable consensus among these women on a set of core issues that functioned as an unifying group belief system and which transcended personal ideologies:

1. Children belong to the parents, not to the State. The State's interest and the best interest of the child are distinct.
2. Family life is organic and sacrosanct and is beyond state control.
3. Modern life has suffered from excessive bureaucratization, specialization and impersonalization.
4. Life in bureaucratic institutions is incompatible with individualism, autonomy and self-sufficiency.

5. Child rearing and child development have been jeopardized by the convention of early parent-child separation.
6. Children belong in the home, not in institutions.

It was this common value base and belief system that underlay these parents' objection to schools and subsequent decision to home school. But the orthodoxy that is comprised of this objectional value base is characteristic not only of schools but of the culture in general. The act of home schooling presented itself not only as an educational criticism but as a social criticism. The unified value orientation of this group of parents pointed to home schooling being more than an issue of schooling. More than just a concern with the methods and content of schooling, the parents demonstrated a greater concern with how one ought to live in the world. For these parents, the issue of home schooling seemed to be a symbolic act as much as a practical act. Home schooling seemed to be one attempt to fashion a life consistent with deeply felt values; with a vision of how one ought to live. It seemed to be an attempt to build a life around a set of values that are increasingly difficult to maintain in a bureaucratic, technological world.

It was a warm and satisfying experience to be allowed into the lives of virtual strangers and to have been extended the gift of their time and patience. For it is a long and often difficult process to gain some approximation of another's reality. The members of this home schooling group

were indeed patient in communicating their vision of the world; more specifically they were willing to disclose the beliefs and values most essential in the construction of their lives and their lives with their children. To a degree, this interaction resulted in a fair level of closure. A fairly complete sense of home schooling as experienced by this group had been gained. And yet, the research process raised as many new questions as it had answered. Most of the unanswered questions seemed to be the type of questions on which the group members could only speculate. The rather spontaneous and simultaneous emergence of the local group certainly raised the question of why such an activity is manifesting at this particular time in history. Group members could only speculate as to why they as well as other visible groups of parents are suddenly abandoning the generation long convention of public schooling.

This question was further complicated when considering the nature of the dissenting families in this particular group. While dissenting groups are a constant fact of social life, a particular counterculture picture is usually associated with dissention. In contrast to a counterculture group, these parents, by appearances and behaviors, were not people who would stand out in a crowd as "unusual" in any way. The members of this group donned most of the symbolic garments of mainstream society as evidenced by the homes they lived in, the cars they drove, the forms of entertainment they enjoyed and the fads and fancies common to youth in which their

children were participants. Although the group was significantly less materialistically oriented than is characteristic of the urban middle class and while many of them strove for a more simplified lifestyle, this difference did not manifest itself in a dramatic contrast to mainstream culture. By in large, these were relatively "ordinary" people; people who would not raise eyebrows in the grocery store or movie theater. But they were people who had soundly rejected a major social institution and who were engaging in an activity both controversial and unconventional. The "normalcy" of this group stimulated yet another unanswered question. Why was this dissention occurring largely among fairly ordinary middle class families who were themselves educated in public schools?

Questions such as these necessitated placing the group's expressed views and concerns as well as the act of home schooling in a broader sociocultural context. These questions inquired into a dimension of which the home schooling parents themselves were largely unconscious. Most of them perceived their decision to begin home schooling as an individual and isolated one. Most did not see themselves as a part of any "movement." Many of the families began home schooling rather suddenly. As one mother reported, she decided two weeks into August not to enroll her children the following week when school opened. No one in the group had pondered the rather remarkable genesis of their network. No one expressed surprise at how they had independently yet rather spontaneously undertaken a common activity. Home schooling was

something personal; something they were busy doing with their children. They were less inclined to reflect on how they or others had come to begin home schooling.

In many ways it seemed as if these parents were somewhat surprised to find themselves home schooling. For many of the mothers the decision was described in a way that indicated the decision to be more intuitive than rational. This is not to imply that their decisions were irrational in the sense of being badly reasoned. It is only that for many of the mothers, the decision seemed based on an intuitive, felt sense as much as it was based on logical, practical factors.

The initial question of why families began home schooling seemed to catch the parents somewhat unaware. As noted earlier, most parents gave generalized responses instead of pointing to specific reasons or incidents that had made school problematic or intolerable. Parents seemed to have developed almost stock replies about the inadequacy or inferiority of schools or more commonly about the decadent peer culture. Observing the stock nature of these replies is not meant to imply that the responses of these parents were either untrue or superficial. Rather, beneath all of the complaints of bad schools or the decadent peer groups seemed to be a host of less easily articulated perceptions. Further into the study it became apparent that the decision to home school represented a rejection of many central values of cultural life generally as much as it represented a rejection of school life specifically.

These parents could fairly be characterized as holding strong views. Many of them expressed very particular political views; several members of the group were deeply religious and lived their lives in a very intentional manner. Although these people could be described as both fervent in their beliefs and intentional in their actions, it would be a gross exaggeration to describe them as fanatical. Many people in the group seemed amused that anyone would want to research them at all. They simply seemed to be going about their lives, trying to live by principles that made sense to them. They seemed foremost interested in rearing their children according to their vision of how the world should be more than they were interested in educating them to fit the world as it is.

CHAPTER V

HOME SCHOOLING - A DUAL RESPONSE TO MASSIVE CULTURAL SHIFTS AND RAPID SOCIAL CHANGE

There are two common courses for those who perceive the times as sadly out of joint: a conservative course is a return to the dogmas of the past in an attempt to regain loss of meaning and a sense of direction; a progressive course is to go about the creation of new cultural meanings and alternative futures. On the surface, home schooling seems overwhelmingly a conservative solution: it represents a desire by some to return to a pre-industrial, patriarchal family structure and to a colonial form of schooling. But in contrast, other parents seem invested in home schooling as a means of escaping worn dogmas; as a means for rearing children that are fit to enter a new world.

Stephen Arons, (1983) after discussion with dozens of home schooling families, was "struck by the fear of these parents that their children were growing up amidst a rubble of collapsed cultural meanings and dysfunctional social values" (p. viii).

Interestingly, people who can easily be labeled as traditional and conservative as well as people who can just as easily be labeled "experimental" and progressive are both

likely to experience such a "rubble and collapse" of cultural meaning. Both groups of people are equally likely to experience the larger social world as a moral vacuum: one perceives the social world to be lacking the familiarity of traditional moral and religious values; the other perceives the social world to be lacking vitality; to be dominated, by empty, worn dogmas.

Both camps of perceptions and experiences of the world are intensified in times of rapid social change. The split in traditional/progressive orientations among home schoolers is indicative of a dual response to social change - one rigid and reactive, the other emergent and proactive.

☞ Home schooling is undoubtedly an attempt by some parents to recapture meaning by returning to a simpler past: by embracing fundamental religious values and by strengthening the family unit. This class of parents express disappointment in the school's ability to preserve traditional and religious values.

☞ For other parents, home schooling is part of an attempt to create meaning by utilizing the family as a means of social experimentation. Many such parents, those that Pitman (1986) has termed "New Agers", perceive a paradigmatic shift taking place. They see the home as a primary institution for ushering the development of the new "spiritually whole, non-competitive, equalitarian, planet-connected" human beings. This camp of parents has given up the liberal's faith in

public education to effect genuine personal or social development. They express disappointment in the school's ability to inspire lasting, significant social change.)

It is interesting that both groups of people have turned their focus and faith onto the family. Both see the institution of the family as holding the greatest possibility for the creation of new meaning. Perhaps this comes from sensing the family's dynamic quality. For it is the institution of the family which has changed more dramatically and more rapidly than perhaps any other. It seems that each camp may be perceiving that the family has been required to make excessive adaptations. Perhaps the family has been so assailed by the forces of modernization that many parents perceive home education to be one means of maintaining the family's survival in the midst of a hostile economic and social environment. Others who perceive the family's malleability may see it as a more promising vehicle for desired social change.

Whether one assesses the family's future optimistically or pessimistically, it seems that persons from each perspective sense the family to be situated in a hurricane's eye of massive social change and cultural upheaval.

One way of understanding home schooling is to look at the historical and social factors that seem most connected to its arisal. At the heart of the home schooling controversy lie conflicting definitions of the family and of the family's relationship to the state. A more complete understanding of these conflicting definitions requires a grasp of their

historical developments and of the conflicting interpretations of these developments.

The Family: Conflicting Histories,
Conflicting Images

There is a widespread and general consensus that the family is in decline. This sense of malaise that the family is falling apart may be seen, in part, as a response to rapid and profound social change. The most obvious shifts can be seen in the realm of family life itself: the declining birth rate, the rising divorce rate, the increasing numbers of working mothers and the disappearance of the extended family. These facts have by the latter part of the 1980's become rather mundane observations. But they do indeed indicate the "giant plates of culture to be shifting relentlessly beneath us" (Yankelovich, 1981, p. xvi). The declining birth rate is reflective of large scale deliberate childlessness. Beginning in the seventies and continuing through the present, millions of Americans have chosen sterilization. The infusion of women into the workforce has remarkably altered the "traditional" family. Today only 15% of all families conform to the traditional image of a father who is the breadwinner and of a mother who stays home.

There is another less tangible basis for a sense of the family's decline. Bane (1976) indicates that many perceive the accelerated tempo of American life: obsolescence, transiency and impermanence to be the villains. She contends

that, "The lives of Americans are characterized by movement from place to place by goods designed to be used quickly, thrown away and replaced. The lack of permanence in material life seems to be carried over into emotional and social life...marriages and friendships are becoming more and more like automobiles, short lived and replaceable" (Bane, 1976, p. xiii).

Many observers are convinced of the family's decline by the statistics alone. The image of the family as becoming less whole, less stable and less satisfying lead others of this perspective to pronounce its demise. However, an examination of the literature of the family reveals a confusing web of contradictory claims and interpretations of both the family's history and its current state. Even in the face of statistical measures which indicate major shifts in the family's composition, there is an amazing lack of agreement on the family's health and status. Many family experts interpret the rapidly shifting configuration of the family to be an indicator of its fragility and its impending extinction. Other observers understand the changes to simply indicate that the family is in flux. They claim this to be an indicator of the family's adaptability and further testament to its viability.

The conflicting interpretations of the family's health and status arise from similarly conflicting historical interpretations. The most dominant historical interpretation is what Orr has termed "yet another form of the Garden of Eden

Story, which encourages a belief that our trek is always from an ideal state of affairs toward a future so impossible that we can hardly imagine it" (Orr, 1979, p. 379). This historical tradition holds that in the time preceding industrialization and modernization the family was larger, extended, more vital and more satisfying than at present.

In contrast, the recent revisionist historians have claimed the earlier family was neither as large nor as satisfying as initially portrayed (Skolnick, 1975). These newer historical analyses have challenged the notion that the family operated in harmony; they have emphasized the role of conflict in families and have described its often violent and corrupt feature. In short, revisionists hold that the family's golden past never was.

There is yet another area of theoretical disagreement over the family. While all social scientists agree in principle to the interrelatedness of all cultural forms and social groupings, the nature of this interrelatedness is not always clear. One view holds that the family has altered its form in response to changing economic, political and social arrangements; others argue that the family as we know it made possible these emerging arrangements. For instance, many analyses have noted the connection between the mobile, slim, private supportive, nuclear family and the requisites of urban capitalistic secular postindustrial Western societies. But which is cause and which is consequence is arguable (Tufte and Myerhoff, 1979, p.4). Depending upon whether one sees the

family as the hapless victim of historical forces or whether one sees the family as an initiator of historical forces, one is inclined to develop quite different postures on questions of family policy.

A Pessimistic History of the Family

Sociology's classical tradition has been most influential in seeding a more fateful, pessimistic view of the family. The transformation of society toward modernization was a theme common to the works of both Emile Durkheim in France and Ferdinand Tonnies in Germany. Durkheim described this transformation as a passage from "mechanical" to "organic" solidarity. Tonnies termed the same historical process as the change from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft. Both concepts refer to the change from an earlier solidarity rich society in which humans were tied together in an unquestioned sense of belonging to modern society in which belonging is limited and relationships are increasingly specified through legal contracts. Both pairs of concepts describe a move from a "moral order" to a "technical order." The term moral order is used to describe social units organized around sentiments of morality or conscience which arises in groups where people are intimately associated with one another. Technical order, in contrast, describes social units organized around principles of "mutual usefulness" and is based on "necessity or expediency" (Redfield, 1953, pp. 20-21).

The period of the nineteenth century saw family life shift from a moral order to a technical order. The move from a moral to a technical order is seen most clearly in the rise of institutions. Those range of human needs formerly attended to as a matter of family and community conscience became increasingly attended to by institutions: the hospital, the prison, the asylum, the school. The increasing institutionalization of life signaled a loss of function for the family.

In light of great loss of function, the nineteenth century family assumed a new character. Stannard (1979) says that during this period the family was left "with more subjective responsibilities, responsibilities that it parceled out to its individual members. The roles of father, mother and child became specialized" (p. 90). This "specialized" nineteenth century family assumed many characteristic features of the image of family held today. The father became the one responsible for productive labor in settings now removed from the home. As productive activity left the home, the cult of domestic activity entered. The quite specialized roles of the mother-wife arose. She became the creator of the perfect home: safe, secure and morally pure. Children came to be seen more distinctly as well. They were looked upon more tenderly and became recipient of unprecedentedly prolonged nurturance (Aries, 1962).

In contrast to an earlier era in which the family and community were more continuous, the modern specialized family became an increasingly distinct and private unit. The growing

schism between public and private realms became most emphasized in the division of "family life" and "the job." The family became a refuge. As Aries (1979) has described,

...the family tended to be rather hostile to the external world, to withdraw into itself. Thus it became the private domain, the only place where a person could legitimately escape the inquisitive stare of industrial society (p. 33).

The effects of privatization have been interpreted quite differently. Some historical views emphasize the cost of privatization to families while others emphasize the benefits.

One view of much consensus holds that the loss of its earlier economic and educational functions freed (or condemned) the family to take on a host of new functions, some of which never existed before. These new functions centered on the individuals in the family, their rights and their potential for self-realization. Berger and Berger (1982) note that at this time, the family became the locale for highly complex and emotionally demanding interaction between the spouses (p. 13). Demos (1979, p. 53) describes the new sets of interactions as often becoming overwhelming. The weight of success/failure now hung heavy over the head of husband-father as the sole breadwinner. The pressures of the mother-wife were also taxing. The ideal of the tranquil, cheerful, pure home constituted an impossible standard which few could realize. Children too, were described as acquiring a new set of difficulties. Demos (1979, p. 54) contends that the young, during colonial America were gradually raised, by a sequence of short steps, from subordinate positions within

their families to independent status in the community. He contrasts the process of maturation in the 19th century which had become "disjunctive and problematic." As the concept of childhood became more distinct, the transition to adulthood became longer and more painful.

Historians who emphasize the family as newly emerged network of highly individualistic, complex and difficult emotions tend to also present the family's increasing inability to cope. And the crisis worsens as the twentieth century approaches. Demos (1979, p. 56) metaphorically describes the changing social climates from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. If the family provided refuge from the "jungle" of the nineteenth century, by the twentieth century it now provides respite from the "rat race" or the "grind." Demos (1979) describes the additional functions of the twentieth century:

According to this standard, families should provide the interest, the excitement, the stimulation missing from the other sectors of our experience. If we feel that "we aren't going anywhere" in our work, we may load our personal lives - especially our family lives - with powerful compensatory needs. We wish to "grow" in special ways through our relations with family partners ... we want our spouses, our lovers even our children, to help us feel alive and invigorated - to brighten a social landscape that otherwise seems unrelievedly gray (p. 57).

This view holds that by the twentieth century the family has been called to provide more for each of its members than it possibly can. As Demos concludes, "the family must supply what is vitally needed, but missing, in social arrangements generally" (p. 59). It has become nearly a knee jerk response

to connect any current social problem to the family's inability to adequately meet its members' (especially its children's) emotional and social needs. The "weakened family" is assumed as an explanation for the rise in teenage pregnancies, runaways, child abuse, drug abuse and suicide. The "overburdened" family view has also been recently advanced to explain the increasing divorce rate. It has been argued that divorce is so prevalent, not because the concept of family or marriage is in decline, but because our expectations are so high that marriage and family "be all and do all."

In summary, the "decline" or "overburdened" view of the family has as its logical conclusion the recommendation for increased aid to this struggling institution. Most recommendations express a need for the expansion of helping services. Often this view is connected to a justification for increased family intervention. Others express a need for a comprehensive family policy. This view is heavily laden with a sense that the family is more and more unable to care for its own members. Not only is the family failing its own members, but privatization has resulted in a constricted capacity for extrafamilial caring and explains public indifference.

An Optimistic History of the Family

A review of literature on the history of the family reveals a somewhat more upbeat tradition as well. Historians and others of a more optimistic persuasion concur that the

family was greatly impacted by the process of modernization and that it did indeed suffer a loss of function. But this contrasting school of thought points first to the amazing continuity and resiliency of the family. As Berger and Berger (1984) have commented, "In a period of rapid and radical change in most aspects of economic and social life, it is odd that in many ways the family should have changed so little" (p. 89). Theorists such as the Bergers do not deny the influence of modernization but, insist on an explanatory model that includes both continuity and change.

Optimistic family theorists reverse the image of the family as victim or passive recipient of the forces of modernization. A large body of historical research into the origins of the family produced in the 1960's and 1970's revised earlier understanding. This body of research into the family found the nuclear family to antedate the industrial period by centuries (Stone, 1979; Laslett, 1971). The greatly romanticized extended family in both Western Europe and in Northern America has not existed since the Middle Ages. Berger and Berger (1984) have posited that it is possible that the nuclear family was a precondition rather than a consequence of modernity. To a great extent this assertion sets theories of decline on their heads.

One way in which the nuclear family acted as a conduit to modernization was to protect its members against the dislocations and transformations taking place in the larger society. In this view, the schism between work and home still

exist. But rather than emphasizing the negative tensions of this split, the optimistic view points to the creative potential in the split. Berger and Berger (1984, p. 88) have termed this potential a "creative schizophrenia" which allows the individual to be "modern" at work and "traditional" at home.

In addition to the family as a mediating structure for its members, optimistic theorists emphasize the family as providing the vehicle for the emergence of individualism.

Berger and Berger (1984) claim:

The bourgeois family as an institution made it possible to socialize individuals with singularly stable personalities ('strong characters') who were ready for innovation and risk-taking in a society undergoing unprecedented transformations (p. 117).

The problems identified by those who see the family as actor opposed to victim are also different. Theorists in this vein do see the family as experiencing great stress, but they do not see it as overburdened; they are instead inclined to see it as "under-burdened" and lacking in autonomy.

Christopher Lasch (1977a) was among the first to argue that institutionalized contemporary life had stripped the family of its sense of authority and competence. He argues that the family was seriously, perhaps even terminally weakened when the state and in particular the helping professions appropriated many of its functions. Rather than more policy, Lasch contended that what was really required was a "thorough going critique of professionalism and the welfare state" (Lasch, 1977b, p. 15). Although Lasch's views have

been criticized as nostalgic and uncritical he did counter the incompetent view of the family and did precede some subsequently more balanced views.

The "competent" family view has provided a necessary balance to the "professional voice" that speaks to family issues. Many recommendations for professional "help" have taken on a nightmarish quality as Carol Joffe (1977) describes:

We must deal with a more complicated reality which includes proposals for mandatory day care for children of welfare recipients, the licensing of all new parents, the diagnosis of "behavioral disorders" in preschool populations, required parental education in public high schools and the enrollment of infants in school affiliated programs (p. 2).

Berger and Berger (1984) summarize the fear of professional intervention:

The disenfranchisement of families by professionals in alliance with government bureaucrats becomes, in principle at least, unlimited. The professional - bureaucratic complex can legitimately intervene whenever the needs of any category of individuals can be better met outside than within the family (p. 35).

As the Bergers note, a concern with the development of an exaggerated individualism as well as a discomfort with a burgeoning professional bureaucracy form the basis for this camp's definition of the family's "problem."

This definition of the problem is a paradoxical one for the very qualities of rationality and individualism once understood to be the family's strength are now understood to be its undoing. The family's history from this perspective bears little resemblance to a Garden of Eden metaphor.

Rather, this historical version does contain a notion of progress. That is, the history of the family has been a move from a hierarchical, patriarchal structure to a progressively equalitarian structure. A predominant theme of modernity has been the development of reason and rationality designed to free people from the dominance of blind natural forces as well as oppressive tradition. A major consequence of the application of this theme has been the arising of a new individualism. Where as the earlier hierarchical structure recognized only the individualism of the male, a newer sense of individualism has been applied to females and children. If in the past, the fundamental unit of identification was the family, we have arrived to a situation in which the separate person is increasingly the central unit of identification.

An historical development to a state in which there is greater individual freedom is an improvement over the past. One is hard pressed to argue against freedom or individual rights. While these are not usually argued, a great many analyses have pointed to both the social costs of greater freedom as well as to the mutant forms of the "free individual" that have developed.

Berger and Berger (1984) describe this mutant formation as "hyper-individualism," which is an emphasis on the individual over against every collective entity, including the family itself which is the matrix of modern individuation. Given the individual's separation from the communal context, the process of self-definition becomes all consuming:

The recent rise of feminism is particularly important in this connection. The individual woman is now emphasized over against every communal context in which she may find herself - a redefinition of her situation that breaks not only the community between the spouses but (more fundamentally) the mother-child dyad, which, if anthropologists are correct, is the most basic human community of all. Thus the search for individual identity in isolation from all communal definitions becomes a central concern of life. This search, of course, has personal as well as political aspects, so that hyper-individualism orders the life-planning of individual, legitimating what quite frequently are brutal assertions of self against the claims of others (such as: notably, children and spouses). On the political level, hyper-individualism becomes an ideology motivating campaigns for legal and social reforms that would protect the individual against all such claims (p. 120).

The influence of modern psychology is undoubtedly connected to the birth and explosion of the "me decade." Psychologism has successfully perpetuated the view that the individual is the only reality. In light of this single reality, persons are condemned to a full time pursuit of self-development and self-realization.

A curious twist has occurred in this arena as well. Whereas the family was at one time understood to foster the growth of the individual, the family is now understood to block the growth of the individual. The theories of both Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers paved the path for the human potential movement. The movement had at its base the belief that socialization distorts an originally positive human nature which can be recovered and freed from the unnatural societal restraints imposed on it.

Society in general, the family in particular is seen as repressing, or at least failing to adequately support the

individual's journey toward self-realization. Under the principle "engineered" biographies, ties to one's family become contingent upon its ability to foster individual projects of self-development. If the family is unable to provide the necessary assistance, there exists no shortage of substitutes in the form of therapeutic, self-growth or support groups. The family becomes one of many freely chosen and easily discarded options for facilitating individual projects of self-realization.

In contrast to the "overburdened" view, which depicts the family as a hot bed of intense and unmanageable relations, this view depicts the family as a unit marked by indifference and contingency of relations. In a situation in which each member is in hot pursuit of self-attainment, a sense of members' responsibilities for one another declines.

James Coleman (1982) contends that as society has become more equalitarian it has also become less personal. As authority of one person over another has lessened, personal interest has lessened as well. Society has become colder as it has become more free.

In earlier hierarchical social arrangements in which people occupied fixed positions, lines of responsibility were easily fixed: authority over a person implied responsibility for that person. Coleman contends that as the old hierarchical structure has receded (and has receded most rapidly in the last half century) a vacuum of responsibility has occurred.

Various specialized institutions have been created to fill this vacuum. Most observable are those institutions that have arisen to care for the young and the old: the social security and school systems. What both of these compensatory institutions reflect is the end of an ancient system of life cycle interdependence in which the young were cared for by their parents who were in turn cared for by their children. Optimists of a rational orientation may see little cause for alarm in the breaking of this ancient, unwritten contract. They may argue that these newer institutions provide specialized, professional care for dependent members of the society.

Others question whether these specialized institutions are an improvement over the past. Critics point to the social as well as psychic consequences of declining interdependence. The psychic consequences have been described at length by writers who have observed a new personality to be developing consistent with new social structures. Generally these descriptions have characterized the new, freer individual as less willing to accept responsibility and the burdens of social organization. Daniel Bell criticized the new individual's "infatuation with the unrestrained self." Christopher Lasch termed the arising structure "the culture of narcissism."

But the social consequences of the decline in interdependence are more alarming. The consequences for child rearing have been the most dramatic. As productive activity has moved out of the home adults spend the major portion of

their waking hours in work settings where there are no children. Children spend the majority of their waking hours in their own age specific school settings. As age segregation developed in the work sphere, so did age segregation develop concurrently in the social sphere. Social activity which once focused around the family neighborhood or community became age specific and became centered around work associates. Baby sitters appeared on the scene along with cocktail parties and little leagues.

The consequence of segregated, age specific institutions has been the development of separate worlds for adults and children. As the worlds have become more distinct, each group has become less tolerant of the other. Children are most directly harmed by this arrangement for they have little exposure to the day to day elements of adult life. Having such limited exposure to adult roles, the transition into adulthood is more difficult and problematic.

James Coleman has determined that this development holds catastrophic possibilities. In The Asymmetric Society, (Coleman, 1982) he warns "We may become the first species to forget how to raise its young" (p. 144). Coleman believes that society's survival depends on raising new generations in close proximity with adults engaged in their daily, functional roles in society.

In addition to the polarization between the worlds of the child and the adult, other problems exist in our contemporary social arrangements. Coleman (1982) contends that the

specialized institutions which have arisen to care for dependent members are not necessarily better. He claims that, "these legislatively developed institutions can be ineffective, incomplete or inappropriate, or all three" (p. 126). Coleman's words are testament to the increasing awareness of the young, the old and the infirm who get administratively lost in "the system"; to those who suffer from neglect that is sometimes deliberate and sometimes accidental.

Despite a widespread public hostility toward large scale bureaucratic institutions, there still remains an equally widespread faith in the professional specialization that this form of organization permits. Despite the fact that an institution's ability to respond humanely often decreases in proportion to its size, the faith in institutional specialization remains. But it is becoming more apparent that greater specialization and greater expertise does not translate into greater commitment. Because we know better how to raise children or how to care for the elderly does not mean we will do so. Urie Bronfenbrenner (1978) contends that rational specialization alone is insufficient to insure proper care. In summarizing the known necessary conditions for the emotional development of children, Bronfenbrenner's first requirement states: "In order to develop normally, a child needs the enduring, irrational involvement of one or more adults in care and joint activity with the child" (p. 773). In Bronfenbrenner's words, the neglect and inattention

characteristic of large scale institutional care stems from the absence of enduring, irrational involvement.

In summary of the more optimistic family view, it is clear that this perspective also understands the family to be facing difficulty in the clutches of modernity. But in contrast to the declining or overburdened family perspective this camp holds the family's greatest problems to be that of exaggerated individualism and a declining sense of commitment and responsibility. However, the greatest contrast lies in the nature of the proposed solutions as much as in the definition of the problem.

The family's incompetence in the face of complex economic and social forces is not the problem. Rather, the family is plagued by emotional evacuation and loss of function. The functions historically provided by the family simply cannot be fully met by compensatory institutions. Rather than more intervention or further institutional compensation, a rethinking of contemporary social organization is in order. A further extension of this argument holds the necessary solution to lie one step further in the development of a new ethic of commitment.

The Incompetent Family View and the Rise of Compulsory Schooling

Nowhere is the tension between competing images of the family more clearly observable than in the arena of education. The issue of family competence/incompetence has been central

to the development and continued justification for compulsory schooling. The issue of rising individualism closely parallels the development of the state's right to control individuals apart from their families through education. The question of whether families have retained their autonomy, or whether they have been victimized and undermined by the state also finds a convenient framework for examination within the history of education. The home schooling controversy in particular is clear evidence that these historic tensions have not been resolved. In fact, these questions and tensions find their most contemporary expression within the home schooling movement.

Home schooling is a contemporary embodiment of the optimistic, competent family view. The act of schooling one's own children is a public statement of self-perceived competence. Such a statement of personal competence has evoked a dual response from the public at large. Many observers perceive home schooling parents to be heroic champions; others perceive them to be misguided fanatics. Either way, the significant fact is that home schoolers stand out in such apparent distinction. The dual sentiments of applause and suspicion that home schoolers evoke indicate how ingrained the incompetent family view has become. Those families who assert their sense of competence through home schooling constitute an odd minority. One aspect of public sentiment finds hope in this minority expression. To many, home schooling is a symbolic affirmation that such values as

individualism, self-reliance, and personal connection are still possible in a world that finds their expression more and more tenuous. To others, home schooling stands in too great a contradiction to the realities of modern life. The realities of modern life seem so antithetical to the values of individualism, self-reliance and connection that persons who strive for these appear at best, hopelessly naive, at worst, fanatical.

CHAPTER VI

THE DYNAMICS OF HOME SCHOOLING AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Problems in the Study of Social Movements

Because of its visibility and its growing momentum, home schooling is widely referred to by the media and by many participants as "the home schooling movement." Home schooling is by virtue of its visibility and momentum a social phenomena, but whether or not it is a social movement in a technical or scholarly sense is open to interpretation. The desire to analyze and classify is not a reason in and of itself for the study of a social movement. Of greater concern is determining whether the movement is an isolated phenomena or if it is a strand in multilinear change at large.

The Problem of Naming

One problem in the study of movements is that they often defy easy naming. Movements may undergo many name changes in their history. Gerlach (1986) explains that, "These changes reflect both the non-institutional and irregular nature of movements and their dynamism" (p. 12). Gerlach's study of

movements which began in the 1960's, has followed their transformations through the 1980's:

What was Neo-Pentecostalism in the 1960's became the charismatic renewal in the 1970's and some of those who call themselves Charismatics may also accept the popular label, "Born Again." Thus, Black Power evolved from "Negro" Civil Rights as new, more militant Black activist groups emerged in the 1960's. The term Ecology Movement was used interchangeably with Environmentalism and both emerged in the late 1960's from what was called the "New" Conservation, an upstaging in the mid-1960's of traditional conservationism (1986, p. 12).

Home schooling has, in its short history, also exhibited a similarly irregular and dynamic quality. Even the term "home schooling" was not used in reference to the earlier occasions in which parents removed children from formal group schooling. Howard Rowland's No More School (1975) is one of the first documentations of a family's experience in home education. The book recounts the Rowland's year abroad, in 1969-1970, and their attempt in that time to free their children of "teachers, textbooks, classrooms and routines." However, nowhere in his description does Rowland refer to this endeavor as anything other than "an experiment." In summary, Rowland suggests that, "some of the things that happened and worked well for our family could become part of the lifestyle of any family" (p. 296). No More School is a good example of the emergence of home schooling as a recognizable entity prior to its naming.

The fairly common use of correspondence courses for children not in public school is by definition, a form of home

education. But until recently the use of correspondence courses, often inspired by practical reasons, was not equated with "home schooling" as it is now conceived.

The emergent nature of home schooling can also be seen in the early connections to the alternative school movement. As mentioned in Chapter II, some of the earliest forms of home schooling in the 1970's were carried out through alternative schools, which developed "umbrella" programs. It seems that at this time, such schooling was thought of as an extension of the alternative school as much as it was thought of as an entity specific to the home.

In a dissertation, Steven Shepherd (1986) traced the development of home education as an out growth of alternative schools. He cites the Clonlara School of Ann Arbor, Michigan as an example. As early as 1971, the Clonlara School had begun to accept correspondence students unofficially in response to some parents who moved away from Ann Arbor but wanted their children to continue using Clonlara materials. By 1979 fourteen families requested information about home schooling at which time Clonlara developed an official correspondence program to cater to the needs of a more specific clientele calling themselves "home schoolers."

Even before alternative schools began to design umbrella programs, the alternative school movement set a climate for home schooling to emerge. One might even speculate that the alternative school movement has evolved into the home schooling movement. Much of the rhetoric of home schooling is

resonant of alternative school rhetoric of the sixties and early seventies. Alternative school advocates were the first to counter the necessity of certified personnel. Many alternative schools were developed to counter the objectional values of school life and the culture at large. In part, home schooling may be the outgrowth of the alternative experiments of the sixties and seventies, and may be a concession to the great difficulty in maintaining alternative programs in competition with institutionally financed schools. Home schooling is, in many cases, a streamlined, more easily maintained version of an alternative school.

The Problem of Designating a Group a Movement

Because movements (as the name implies) are characterized by momentum, their essence is difficult to capture and to solidify for the purpose of analysis. Another difficulty in the study of movements is deciding when a collectivity or a group becomes a movement. This is particularly problematic in the study of home schooling. Does the fact that growing numbers of parents are choosing to educate their children at home define these people and the act of home schooling as a social movement? According to the definition of social movements developed by Gerlach and Hine (1970), this fact alone is insufficient. Gerlach and Hine define a movement as:

.... a group of people who are organized for, ideologically motivated by and committed to a purpose which implements some form of personal or social change; who are actively engaged in the

recruitment of others; and whose influence is spreading in opposition to the established order within which it originated (p. xvi).

This definition identifies five key factors which Gerlach and Hine maintain must be present and interacting before a collectivity becomes a true movement: organization, ideology, recruitment, commitment, and opposition. The authors suggest that as these factors take certain form and interact, a collectivity develops along a continuum from interest group to full fledged movement. In order to analyze home schooling within this framework, a more extensive explanation of the five key factors is necessary:

1. Organization - a segmented, usually polycephalous, cellular organization composed of units, reticulated by various personal, structural, and ideological ties.
2. Recruitment - face to face recruitment by committed individuals using their pre-existing social relationships.
3. Commitment - personal commitment generated by an act or an experience which separates a convert in some significant way from the established order (or his previous place in it), identifies him with a new set of values, and commits him to changed patterns of behavior.
4. Ideology - an ideology which codifies values and goals, provides a conceptual framework by which all experiences or events relative to these goals may be interpreted, motivates and provides rationale for envisioned changes, defines the opposition, and forms the basis for conceptual unification of a segmented network of groups.
5. Opposition - Real or perceived opposition from the society at large or from the segment of established order within which the movement has risen (Gerlach and Hine, 1970, p. xvii).

An Application of the Five Key Factors
of Social Movements to the
Home Schooling Phenomena

The key elements identified by Gerlach and Hine provide a useful framework for examining home schooling. The phenomena of home schooling matches four of the elements described by Gerlach and Hine and deviates significantly only on the point of recruitment. An explanation of how home schooling matches the factors of organization, commitment, ideology and opposition will first be explored.

Organization

The organization of home schooling families on both a national scale as well as on a local scale precisely matches the organizational form described by Gerlach and Hine. They characterize movement organization as decentralized, segmentary (many different leaders or centers of direction), and reticulate (in the form of a fish net). Gerlach (1986, p. 18) has abbreviated this organization as SPIN, that is an organization which is segmented, polycentrical (Ideologically) integrated network. Gerlach's acronym enables an image of this organization as something dynamic and fluid, spinning out into the mainstream of society. SPINs stands in direct contrast to western culture's "sense" of organizational form which has been influenced by the model of centralized bureaucracy. It is the western tendency to equate organizational form with clear cut leadership, and hierarchical,

pyramidal, centralized administration. Those forms which do not conform to this image are thought of as loose, unstructured, inefficient or disorganized. This sense has permeated much of the thinking about social movements as well.

Many people may assume that popular mass movements must have a center of "command" or central direction determined by a small elite. Others may assume that movements are propelled by a single charismatic leader who directs a blind mass of true believers (Hoffer, 1965).

Home schooling networks do exist much in the form of a SPIN. Home schoolers seem to form into local groups that are loosely structured and equalitarian. Even the national spokespersons for home schooling have resisted the title of "Leader." John Holt in Growing Without Schooling, (1985) explains his resistance to the title of "Guru."

The March 25, 1985 issue of Newsweek carried a one column story about home schooling. It was generally accurate and favorable ... my one objection to the story is that they call me "the Guru" of the home schooling movement. This is in some important ways a mistake and misleading. I won't pretend that I have not been an important voice in the...movement, but the movement is in no way made up of Holt followers; many home schoolers do not think of me as a good guy, and many have never heard of me at all. This is all to the good. The whole strength of this movement and the reason why it has been such a remarkably effective instrument for social change is that it does not have a centralized leadership, and having none, is able to generate so much and so effective local leadership, people who learn not from some "guru" but from their own experience, and having learned, inform and support each other (p. 1).

Commitment

Gerlach and Hine (1970) claim that, "Deep personal commitment is one of the most widely noted and least analyzed aspects of movement dynamics" (p. 99). Similarly, home schooling mothers in the local group often spoke about their commitment process. Mothers in the group were quick to point out that, while home schooling resulted in many personal benefits, it also exacted great personal costs. As one mother declared, "Home schooling is not cheap emotionally or financially." She went on to explain that her family's lifestyle had been drastically altered when she left her career to pursue home education. But because her commitment to her children's welfare was greater than her desire for a higher standard of living, a decision for home schooling was made. All mothers in the group freely admitted that home schooling was demanding. Mothers testified to the strain of constant, daily interaction with their children and the lack of adult, social contact. But because commitment to their children's well being was described as a higher value, home education was continued despite the emotional and social strains.

Gerlach (1986) identifies the process of commitment to have three important components:

1. Individuals undergoing commitment have one or more subjective, highly emotional experiences after which they feel themselves to be different and to understand their relationship with others differently. There is a change, sometimes a significant one, in sense of identity.

2. The second component is an act or series of acts, which burn the doer's bridges to past patterns of behavior, which cuts them off in some significant way from the conventional social order or their previous role in it, and identifies them with other committed participants.
3. People are committed not only by risky acts and identity altering experience, but by the support of 'soul brothers and sisters,' who join them in defining their action in positive terms according to movement ideology (p. 24).

While these components of the commitment process may seem more akin to a conversion process characteristic of a religious movement, there are many similarities to the process of becoming a home schooler. First, several mothers in the local group described a "sudden spontaneous realization" that led to the decision to home school. Secondly, mothers also described a personal transformation occurring in themselves as they became home schooling mothers. For many a new identity of "teacher" in addition to "mother" developed in home schooling. Others described a more general process of coming to trust their abilities and intuition (as well as those of their children) through the course of home education.

Most mothers had also engaged in a mild form of "bridge burning" and "risk taking." During group get togethers, some mothers took great delight in recounting their first confrontation with school officials or the district attorney in which they successfully proclaimed their legal right to educate their children at home. These mothers also tended to perceive themselves as somewhat separated from the conventional social order. This could be noted in their use

of the word "outsiders" in reference to nonhome schoolers. Generally, the local network which they had formed functioned to support the act of home schooling and to reaffirm the positive value of this undertaking.

Ideology

Ideology is a highly charged word with many negative connotations. In American society, the word often connotes something contrived, distorted or false. To use the word in a more generic sense, however, is to refer to a system of ideals, beliefs and guiding principles. Anthropologists are inclined to speak of the importance of ritual expression, myth and symbol as means of codifying and communicating central tenets of the group or culture. Within movements, such codification is perceived by members as the "truth." To outsiders, the same codification is perceived as the "party line."

Gerlach (1986) maintains that movement ideology is "split level": that is, ideology informs the movement at both the macro and micro levels. At the micro level, local groups develop their own particular guiding principles. Also group factors arise over divisions in ideology. But at the macro level, ideology acts as an integrator for the segments of the movement. It provides the shared ideas which bind members together into a conceptual community (p. 30).

Group ideology and commitment combine into a certain degree of dogmatism or certitude. Committed participants

often display a high degree of certitude. As Gerlach and Hine (1970) note, "...a certain rigidity of belief structure is essential to motivate and support a radical attitudinal or behavioral change. The luxuries of tolerance, relativism, eclecticism and ambivalence are available to those who accept themselves and their society as given" (p. 159).

Dogmatism and certitude are connected to another feature of movement ideology which is the rejection of the ideal/real gap. In every society there is a lack of congruency between the principles that are espoused and their realization and enactment. Thus in America, the "land of the free," could slavery exist. Kenneth Kenniston (1968) claimed that in every society there occurs a certain "institutionalization of hypocrisy." As in the time of slavery in America, children were not only taught to respect the creedal values of the society, but to understand and tolerate the inconsistencies between values and actual practice. Such tolerance is a mark of maturity and normalcy.

Tolerance of ideal/real gaps is expected. The rejection of the ideal/real gap is usually seen as fanaticism. In fact, the rejection of the ideal/real gap most often takes the form of a protest movement.

Ideology is perhaps the most notable feature of the home schooling movement. Just as Gerlach and Hine describe, the ideology of home schooling exists on both micro and macro levels. On the micro level, there are many noticeable variations along the continuum from religious/conservative to

experimental/progressive. These factional ideologies are reflected in the contrasting expressed motives and pedagogical preferences. But on the macro level, there can be observed an overarching ideology that binds the most distinct factions. While ideological factions exist in the educational/religious domain, a binding ideology can be observed in a broader social domain. This ideology hinges on a common definition of the family as a primary, competent and private unit. This ideology opposes increasing state encroachment into private, family life, child rearing in particular. The binding ideology is one that affirms self-sufficiency and autonomy and opposes increasing bureaucratization (standardization, specialization and impersonalization). The binding ideology also contains an element of paradox. While this ideology affirms self-sufficiency and autonomy, it also seeks and affirms greater connectedness and increased commitment, especially in the realm of parent-child relations. In general the overarching ideology of the home schooling movement questions and opposes the contemporary assumptions of child rearing that hinge on age segregation and the institutionalization of young children.

The ideology of home schooling also points to an ideal/real gap that exists in the culture of schooling as well as in the culture at large. This ideal/real gap concerns the value of individualism. Much of the language of schooling speaks of "developing individual potential" or more commonly of "treating each child as an individual" or of "meeting

individual needs." Such language reflects how deeply ingrained the value of individualism is in the American consciousness. But home schooling parents who pursue home education because of the school's inability to respond to their child's individual circumstance or need highlight the contradiction in this espoused value. While schools espouse a commitment to the individual, it is clear that such a value is incompatible with the reality of institutional life in schools. Schools tend to provide for categories of individuals such as "gifted," "special," "handicapped," "remedial" even "basic" or "regular" but not for individuals as they exist outside of these categories. Even "individualized" instruction, where it has been attempted, has come to mean individually paced instruction. The only individualized factor in this type of instruction is the pace or level at which one moves through a common, institutionally determined content.

Home schooling parents who seek an individualized, personalized education for their children make us conscious of the gap between individualism as it is expressed and as it is practiced. As Gerlach and Hine point out, home schooling parents by rejecting the ideal/real gap appear fanatical. In rejecting the gap between individualism as it is espoused and as it can be realistically enacted in institutional life, home schooling parents are perceived by those who tolerate and affirm the gap as exaggerated individualists engaging in an anti-social behavior.

Opposition

Gerlach (1986) states that, "... a movement grows with the strength of its opposition much as a kite flies against the wind. Opposition, real or perceived, is necessary to promote a movement, to provide a common enemy against which it can unite its disparate segments to offer a basis for its commitment process" (p. 40).

Such opposition, both "real and perceived" operates in relation to the home schooling movement. In several states that have stringent compulsory school laws, heated legal battles have ensued between home schooling parents and school officials. In these cases, the opposition is quite real. Stephen Aarons (1983) states that the media often presents local conflicts as a "David and Goliath battle, which in some ways it is ... under these circumstances some people come to identify with the families as underdogs standing up for themselves against the oppressive pressures of institutions..." (p. 119). In states where the legal pressures against home schooling are the greatest, there seems to be reciprocally greater organized opposition to the laws. In these cases, as the conflict becomes public and as public sentiment identifies with parents as underdogs, the momentum gains and the movement is propelled. In other states, in which compulsory laws are less stringent, home schooling is undertaken with less opposition.

The local group of home schoolers in this study resided in Oklahoma, a state which places few restrictions on home

schooling beyond keeping attendance records and teaching basics. For the members of this group, opposition from school officials was minimal. A few parents reported being contacted by school officials when they withdrew their children from school but described the contact as a fairly nonthreatening inquiry. Other parents reported that school officials in their district were ignorant of the state compulsory laws and tried to convince the parents that they were in violation of the law in one case, and in another case, told the parents that they had to have their educational plans approved by the local district, which they successfully challenged. While Oklahoma's compulsory laws do not expressly prohibit home education, there is no implicit provision for it either. Because of this, there exists a fair level of confusion and ambiguity on the part of school officials in some districts. Despite some ambiguity, home schooling in Oklahoma is undertaken with relatively no legal conflict. Conflicts usually arise when a school official is called to interpret the compulsory laws the first time home education is encountered.

Although home schooling parents in this study faced no legal opposition, the issue of conflict was apparent in other ways. In a sense, members of this group were called upon to create opposition in light of its absence. Members of this group did spend considerable time in group gatherings constructing their local schools into a "foe" through the ritual of story telling. The telling of school horror stories

allowed for a "we - they" sense to arise. Opposition was created by clearly delineating the value base of school in contrast to the value base of home schooling. While a quite contrary value base does exist in fact, the constant naming and emphasizing of these distinctions seemed a highly important function of the local home schooling group.

Recruitment

Gerlach and Hine (1970) claim that recruitment is one of the most obvious but overlooked factors in the analysis of social movements. As they point out, for a movement to grow, new adherents must be gained. As common sensical as this assertion may seem, earlier analysis of social movements as well as popular belief has assumed that people are drawn to mass movements through exposure to the media, or because of mass hysteria or the influence of a charismatic leader (Hoffer, 1965). Typically, adherents of a movement like to think the movement grows as people are rationally drawn to the truth of its position. Adherents to a religious movement may deny claims of rational conversion but may speak instead of being "filled with the Spirit," or being "led to the truth."

Gerlach and Hine (1970) however, have countered both conventional perception as well as adherents description of how they have come to participate in a movement.

... no matter how a typical participant describes his reasons for joining the movement, or what motives may be suggested by a social scientist ... it is clear that the original decision to join required some contact with the movement ... We found few cases, ... in which the original contact was not

a personal one. This contact almost always involved a significant pre-existing relationship - a neighbor, an influential associate of some sort with whom the new convert had had a meaningful interaction prior to recruitment (p. 33).

Central to the thesis posited by Gerlach and Hine is the assertion that a movement grows exponentially as each new recruit in turn recruits others to the cause. Gerlach and Hine's description of how movements grow through recruitment is both well documented and plausible. And according to their analysis of movements, recruitment is a feature which must be present for an interest group to be considered a movement. This assertion, however, contradicts the findings of this study pertaining to how people come to be home schoolers. This study found that people in this local group began home schooling before they personally knew anyone else who home schooled. Seven of the eight mothers, comprising the original group, home schooled in isolation before she discovered other mothers who were likewise home schooling. None had been recruited through a pre-existing relationship. Neither did any of the mothers seek to recruit others.

Depending upon how one frames this fact, it could be concluded that (1) these local families do not constitute a part of a "real" social movement or (2) they indicate an emergent form which deviates from other social movements on the point of recruitment.

It must first be noted that the local group in this study may simply represent a peculiar or unique contradiction to a norm. It must also be noted that there is indication that a

particular faction of home schoolers are in fact recruited much as Gerlach and Hine describe. Such is the case among some religious communities. For instance, Greg Harris, director of Christian Life workshops encourages parents to home school. He has been instrumental through workshops held around the country in helping local churches set up mechanisms for supervising parishoners' home school. This undoubtedly constitutes a clear example of recruitment as described by Gerlach and Hines.

But rather than dismissing the local group's nonconformity to the vital issue of recruitment as an anomaly, a primary interest of this research has been to explore this important variation. This variation on recruitment is important because (1) if Gerlach and Hine are correct, without recruitment, the movement will quickly diminish, (2) home schooling may not be a movement as such, but may be an isolated phenomena incapable of significant influence.

It seems however, that because so many features of home schooling closely conform to the noted characteristics of social movement, it must be considered a movement. Therefore, the line of reasoning which will be pursued is one of attempting to explain why home schooling exhibits this distinctive characteristic.

While the model developed by Gerlach and Hine emphasizes that social movements are loose, segmented and evolutionary, their emphasis on recruitment inspires a sense of such movements being somewhat more rational and mechanical than

seems to be the case in home schooling. There are several plausible explanations of how parents come to be part of the home schooling movement in the absence of recruitment.

A Heightened Sense of Risk

Gerlach (1988) maintains that social movements are not explained by pre-existing conditions as much as by the perception of risk. In other words, people faced with a common threat (economic, technological or environmental threats are prime examples) organize against it. In doing so, they develop characteristics of a movement slowly, step by step.

Likewise, the perception of threat, of risk, is an important driving motive in the decision to begin home schooling. In the case of home schooling, parents for quite different reasons, are concerned about their children. For these parents the culture of school and its influence on their children is perceived as a threat to their way of life. Often the school's agenda for pupil development is seen as being diametrically opposed to those values and goals held by the parent. For other parents, the perceived threat is not only experienced in regards to concerns about the child's growth and development, but in regards to concern about their family's maintenance and survival as well.

As Gerlach emphasizes, many people who experience a common technological or environmental threat such as the contamination of a common water supply, or the construction of

a power line crossing several farms, organize themselves against the commonly perceived threat. In the case of perceiving a threat to one's family, the threat is against an individually "owned" entity opposed to a collectivity owned or shared entity, such as a town's water supply. While all things in a culture, even the family, are socially defined, the definition of the contemporary family in particular suffers from a great lack of consensus. The definition of the family employed by home schooling parents (organic, sacrosanct, autonomous and competent) is a particularly rare definition of the situation. Because home schooling parents' definitions of the family and of the social situation is somewhat idiosyncratic, they do not have the luxury of a collectively supported response.

While many parents in this study expressed high levels of concern for things outside themselves (involvement in educational and food co-ops, peace movements, religious work, political work) the motivation to pursue home education was not steeped in a concern for all children but in a concern for their children. While many of these parents seemed willing to invest their energies in collective and cooperative undertakings in various realms of their life, the family seemed to constitute a distinct realm in this regard. These parents, mothers specifically seemed to have identified the private family (their children) as the realm of life in which to devote the bulk of their time and energy.

These parents tended to view the cultural and world situation with critical and concerned eyes. The articulated concern varied with the different ideological orientation and ranged from a sense of moral decay and religious decline to technological domination and ecological deterioration. The sense of threat inspired by these perceptions is global and pervasive; there is no one identifiable source of any of these modern problems. Each is a strand in the fabric of contemporary life. The sense of alarm inspired by pervasive, global crisis leads to hopelessness and despair because it defies remedy; it is too big to counter. Perhaps the only antidote to despair under such circumstances is working for a solution within one's sphere of influence. Many home schooling parents seem to sense the family to be the only remaining sphere in which significant influence and control may be exercised.

A Missing Link in the Theory of Social Movements

So far, an attempt has been made to demonstrate that home schooling does constitute something more than an isolated individual phenomena. Because it conforms so closely to the identified characteristics of other social movements it must be considered something with a life of its own. As any other social movement, its existence as such must be considered capable of influencing and impacting the culture at large to some degree.

But because in this one study home schooling has been shown to differ significantly on the point of recruitment, an interesting question arises that is not commonly pursued in the study of social movements. The notions of how people come to join social movements assumes that prospective "converts" are "asleep" until "awakened" by some external agent: a charismatic leader or mass hysteria (Hoffer, 1965) or by recruitment through a pre-existing relationship (Gerlach and Hine, 1970). While these explanations undoubtedly accurately reflect an observable reality, they leave no room for the possibility of original and self-conscious thought and volition. Such an explanation implies that individuals are not aware until they are made aware, or it implies that individuals never decide to break with convention or act innovatively unless they are led to do so.

Such assumptions are not held in this paper. The group of home schoolers in this study is evidence that persons do make individual as well as social assessments of their lives and of the world. Individuals are inclined to develop personal innovations and experiments for dealing with self-perceived danger and risk. In short, individuals may be awake and responsive as individuals first, as members of a collective, coalescing group second.

The study of social movements is important because it allows us to understand the process and mechanisms by which social movements spread through and change the society in which they arise. To a great extent, the study of a phenomena

as a social movement is most concerned with the dynamic, the process, the how of social change.

This line of inquiry which seeks to understand the mechanism of change rather than the cause of change has been both fruitful and instructive. Too often, earlier studies of social movements which sought to explain their cause concluded movements to be the result of the pathological, weak-willed or otherwise disoriented characteristics of the participants (Hoffer, 1965; Janis, 1954).

While earlier approaches to the study of social movements may have erred in an emphasis on causality, current studies of social movements seem to emphasize the mechanisms of change and propulsion without adequate regard for the conditions that give rise to movements. It seems desirable to explore both the how and the why of a social movement. Such is clearly needed in regards to the home schooling movement. The question of why home schooling in conjunction with the how of home schooling becomes particularly important in the cases of those families in this study who began home schooling independently and spontaneously without benefit of recruitment. They point to the necessity of understanding the force and intensity of those personal perceptions and social factors that lead individuals to make abrupt and dramatic changes in conventional behaviors. This question becomes more pressing when we note that not just one family, but several families in a common locale simultaneously made such abrupt shifts in perception and in behavior.

Both the causal model of social movements which points to individual disorientation and models which rely solely on participant recruitment to explain movement formation are unable to account for the individual shifts in consciousness and behavior noted in this study.

Transformational Theory

Transformational theory is not a concrete or identifiably distinct field of study. Transformation theory is perhaps more of an attitude; a basic assumption that underlies investigations of the world. There is, however, both a past and a presently growing body of literature which is concerned with rapid and massive transformation in the broad arenas of life: punctuated evolution in personal and collective consciousness, paradigm shifts in science and philosophy. Writers in each field have pointed to both the rapid and revolutionary shifts occurring in all disciplines. Taken together, these writers point to the current era being yet another great historical watershed - an historical turning point when old assumptions and perspectives are replaced with radically new ones.

Thomas Kuhn in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1962) introduced the term "paradigm shift." Kuhn explained how new scientific perspectives emerge and are resisted. Kuhn explains that new paradigms almost never prevail, despite their superior power and scope because a new paradigm cannot be embraced until the old one is completely discarded. Kuhn

claims, "Like the gestalt switch, it must occur all at once" (p. 149).

In The Aquarian Conspiracy (1980), Marilyn Ferguson contends that individuals experience paradigm shifts in the form of sudden new insights, broadening of beliefs. She likens such shifts to the discovery of hidden pictures in a children's magazine:

Nobody can talk you into seeing the hidden pictures you are not persuaded, that the objects are there. Either you see them or you don't. But once you have seen them, they are plainly there whenever you look at the drawing. You wonder how you ever missed them (p. 30).

As George Leonard in The Transformation (1972) points out, "It is difficult to know just what aspects of conventional wisdom will eventually come to be perceived as outrage" (p. 100). It is even more difficult to understand how radically new world views come to be accepted.

The phenomenon of the "hundreth monkey" provides insight into how radical shifts in awareness are achieved. An explanation of the phenomena is recounted by Watson (1980) in Lifetide.

The Japanese monkey, *Macaca fuscata* has been observed in the wild for a period of over 30 years. In 1952 on the island of Koshima scientists were providing monkeys with sweet potatoes dropped in the sand. The monkeys liked the taste of the raw sweet potatoes, but they found the dirt unpleasant.

An 18 month old female named Imo found she could solve the problem by washing the potatoes in a nearby stream. She taught this trick to her mother. Her playmates also learned this new way and they taught their mothers, too.

This cultural innovation was gradually picked up by various monkeys before the eyes of scientists.

Between 1952 and 1958, all the young monkeys learned to wash the sandy sweet potatoes to make them more palatable.

Only the adults who imitated their children learned this social improvement. Other adults kept eating the dirty sweet potatoes.

Then something startling took place. In the autumn of 1958, a certain number of Koshima monkeys were washing sweet potatoes - the exact number is not known. Let us suppose that when the sun rose one morning there were 99 monkeys on Koshima Island who had learned to wash their sweet potatoes. Let's further suppose that later that morning, the hundredth monkey learned to wash potatoes. Then it happened.

By evening almost everyone in the tribe was washing sweet potatoes before eating them. The added energy of this hundredth monkey somehow created an ideological breakthrough. But the most surprising thing observed by these scientists was the habit of washing sweet potatoes then spontaneously jumped over the sea - colonies of monkeys on other islands and the mainland troop of monkeys at Takasakiyama began washing their sweet potatoes (p. 147-48).

The story of the hundredth monkey is an example of the potential for rapid shifts in conscious awareness. It further demonstrates the notion of a critical number needed for collective shifts to occur. When enough people gain a new awareness, a new energy field is created allowing many more to accept new ideas.

Transformational thinking assumes that rapid periods of awakening, such as exemplified in the hundredth monkey story, do occur. George Leonard (1972) states, "Awareness is the Transformation and there is no force that can stop it ... during periods of explosive change ... the greatest danger lies in the fact that the awakening doesn't happen to everyone at the same time" (p. 100-110).

Transformational thinking is one way to understand that home schooling parents do seem to represent an emerging consciousness. Whereas dominant models of social movements envision people "joining" or "being brought to movements," home schoolers represent a case in which people of changed consciousness find "each other and come together."

While the home school movement may point to the difficulty in maintaining support for public schooling in light of shifting consciousness, it may also point to a solution. Gerlach and Hine (1970) explain:

Social movements are like tracer elements coursing through a social system, illuminating its deficiencies and weaknesses. They serve to identify the points at which radical social change must and will take place. Members of the established order who genuinely want to create a social system free of those particular flaws can use the same mechanism for mobilizing energy as the protesters use to reveal the flaws (p. 217).

Those who are committed to maintaining a system of mass public schooling would be wise to consider home schooling as a "tracer element" which serves to illuminate stress points and deficiencies in both the social and educational systems. One does not have to agree with home education as a preferred method of schooling to learn from the substantive issues that give it rise. Gerlach and Hine contend that:

Those who are neither committed to a movement nor definitely opposed to it, who have escaped the so-called polarization, occupy what might be called the interface between the movement and the established order...accelerated social change occurs at the interfaces of the human world - just as geological shifts occur along the fault line (p. 216).

The audience to which this study is directed is composed of educationalists who most likely occupy the interface. Most likely being neither committed to nor strongly opposed to a movement such as home schooling, such an audience is capable of considering the implications that this movement raises for public education.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

Summary

The purpose of this study has been to move beyond an evaluation of home schooling toward an interpretation of its personal and social meanings. Thus far, a case has been made that home schooling is one social movement among many which is indicative of a widespread and rapid shift in consciousness. The themes of emergent consciousness noted in this study center on a rejection of bureaucratization and institutionalization. The synchronous shifts in personal consciousness noted in this study embody a move toward both autonomy and connectedness, toward greater simplification and personalization. It is a move toward value explicitness opposed to value compromise. It is finally a move which seeks to create meaning and to recover control over the most vital aspects of personal life.

The interpretations of home schooling central to this study originated in and grew out of the process of participant observation. Rather than testing a priori assumptions, about home schooling, this study has been characterized by a

process of unfolding. Throughout the first stage of the field study, an attempt was made to pursue and clarify the salient features and substantive issues that emerged throughout the process of participant observation.

The second stage of the research process entailed situating the emergent concepts within a broader socio-cultural context. An attempt was made to weave together observations, and field generated hypotheses with existant theories of social change and the evolution of consciousness.

A primary value in this study has been to strive for a constant movement between fore and ground: between micro and macro levels, between the personal and the social. Through a survey of literature pertinent to home schooling a composite description of home schooling nationally was established. A comparison of home schooling on a national and local level revealed many similarities and consistencies. The most noticeable similarities included the fact that mothers were the primary parent responsible for home education, families were predominately middle class, and the children fared well academically. Also consistent with the national picture of home schooling was the existence of distinct categories or philosophic camps: a few parents home schooled out of a conservative religious motive, others home schooled out of a more philosophically progressive motive, while yet others expressed more practical motives.

Some relatively new findings about home schooling not apparent in a national view emerged from a prolonged period of participant observation. It was noted that despite distinct, even antithetical philosophic factions within the local group, they were bound by a common value base that transcended ideological differences. The unified value orientation among the group was one which held family life to be organic, sacrosanct and beyond state control and which emphasized the need for a greater parent child bond than is permitted in current social arrangements. Further, it was a value base which esteemed autonomy and self-sufficiency.

It was also found that there was a common developmental progression in the approach to home schooling among the members of the local group. Each mother described moving toward a less directive, more fluid, more child centered approach. In general, the common developmental progression combined with a common transcending value base pointed to a certain synthesis of polarities.

In order to more fully understand the meaning and significance of these findings about home schooling, the findings were placed within a socio-historical context for analysis. Home schooling was described as one means utilized by some parents for dealing with rapid and disconcerting social change that has been felt most poignantly within the institution of the family.

Because home schooling is widely referred to as a movement, an attempt was made to compare the phenomena of home

schooling with the prototypical features of social movements. It was stated that an analysis of the "movement" features of home schooling was necessary to determine its viability for social change and influence. It was determined that home schooling does constitute a social movement although it exhibits a unique characteristic on the point of recruitment. This important variation was interpreted as representing a growing shift in consciousness that draws people together rather than requiring that they be recruited. In this sense the home schooling movement may be understood as evidence of a shift in consciousness as well as a vehicle for change.

Implications

Home schooling has been presented throughout this study as not only a practical but a symbolic act. The act of home schooling presents itself as both an educational and social criticism. This fact contains great significance for education. It serves as a reminder that schooling is never simply a practical or technical matter. The fact that home schooling is simultaneously an educational and social criticism serves as a reminder that schooling is embedded in a cultural context. As Jules Henry (1963) has stated, "Education bears the burden of the cultural obsession. American classrooms like educational institutions anywhere express the values, preoccupation, and fears found in the culture as a whole" (p. 285).

If Henry's words are correct, we must wonder how schools are to proceed when cultural values have become fractured. If the most fundamental purpose of schooling is the transmission of the culture, it is easy to understand the current conflicts over education when we consider that the present is a time of great cultural uncertainty and transition.

In times of rapid transition it is natural that shifts in consciousness would first manifest within both the family and the schools as the two most basic, institutions. While shifts may be "felt" first within the schools, they may go unrecognized or unacknowledged. But because education is the most common cultural experience, it more than perhaps any other institution has a finger on the "pulse" of the culture. That is, educationalists are in a unique position to be "readers" of the culture. If school people could become aware of this fact, we could move from schooling as the unconscious transmission of culture to a more dynamic function of reading, responding to and co-creating culture. In an era of rapid social change in which the cultural symbols are no longer intact, it may not only be desirable but necessary that schools move from a static transmitting function to a more adaptive, responsive, creative function.

The home schooling movement can be described as a profoundly human, intuitive response to a world that has become empty; for some, through a secular triumph; for others, through a rationalization and impersonalization of all areas of life. The desire to recapture the family may be seen as an

attempt to recreate a smaller world within a larger world that has lost its center. The world is one whose symbols have been fractured. It is one in which no symbols have emerged around which to build consensus.

The home schooling movement is one example which points to the inadequacy of a legislative solution to the collapse of consensus. As Durkheim (1893/1902) illustrated, a precontractual moral solidarity precedes any formal social contract. Legal coercion is incapable of creating or maintaining a moral consensus and social cohesion. The home schooling movement points to the fact that public compulsory schooling hinges upon a sufficient measure of moral consensus as well.

In a pluralistic society such as ours, consensus will certainly always be a fragile thing, even in the best times. But in times when consensus and cohesiveness drop below a certain necessary level, schools more than any other institution reflect this state of loss and confusion.

Yankelovich (1981) speaks to, "the high stakes resting on the outcome of this time of great confusion and turbulence" (p. 261). Times of transition always hold a dual possibility. Societies may emerge in a state of collapse, more fractured and anomic, having lost a "compelling purpose that draws out authentic participation in life" (Elgin, 1982, p. 77). Or, societies may emerge in a healthy state of adaptation with a renewed sense of sustaining purpose and direction.

Home schooling is a fascinating phenomena for it seems to function as a holographic image of the contemporary cultural turbulence. A hologram is a type of three dimensional "picture" produced by lenseless photography. A remarkable feature of a hologram is that any piece of the hologram will reconstruct the entire image. As Ken Wilber (1986) explains:

A hologram ... can best be described by an example: if you take a holographic photo of a horse and cut out one section of it, e.g. the horse's head, and then enlarge that section to the original size, you will get, not a big head, but a picture of the whole horse (p. 2).

Applying a holographic metaphor to the home schooling movement allows us to consider that his movement may not be just one piece of the society which exists as an individual statement of its self but a piece that contains within it complete information of the whole.

Situating the home schooling movement within the holographic paradigm enables us to understand it as not only a symptom of the contemporary cultural dissonance, but also as providing insight into its solution. This assertion is consistent with the view that social movements act as tracer elements highlighting weak points in the social fabric which must and will change.

In conclusion, the features and dynamics of home schooling described in this study will be presented in a fashion which highlights both the symptomatic and solution aspects of the movement.

Symptomatic Aspects of the
Home Schooling Movement

As previously noted many times within this study, home schooling indicates a shift in consciousness among a portion of the general population. Home schooling is symptomatic of an insurmountable gulf between present institutional consciousness and emergent consciousness. The highest values of the emergent consciousness center on the connectedness between autonomous individuals, personalization, rejection of specialization, and value explicitness. Each of these values stand in direct contradiction to the values and possibilities of bureaucratic institutions.

Further, the home schooling movement highlights our greatest institutional contradiction - while schools espouse these values they seem incapable of enacting or permitting them.

Most important, the home schooling movement points to the inability of the present educational system to allow for value explicitness. It further points to the inevitable failure and destructiveness of widespread projects of value neutrality.

Within the last decade, it has been increasingly difficult for educational institutions to maintain the faith, support and commitment of the community. Perhaps as much or more so than other social institutions, education has been drastically effected by rapid social change. In times such as these, great conflict exists over what should be passed on and what schools should be. Even among the educational community,

there is not agreement as to the purpose of school. Because of this lack of consensus, schools have been the victim of pendulum like swings in pressure from decade to decade.

The loudest voices during the sixties proclaimed that the schools were killing our children; people attempted to bring pluralism and alternative views into the schools. Eyes and hearts were turned toward greater equality. Humanism and relevance were the hallmark of the day.

Now at the close of the eighties, the rhetoric of equality has been replaced by the rhetoric of educational excellence. Raising test scores is paraded as the new consensus although we rarely stop to question what we are testing. Greater standardization and centralization are the movements of the day. The textbooks used in schools have been uniformly condemned by the left and the right alike for inaccuracies and superficiality. In an attempt to be all things to all people the schools have become nothing very identifiable (Fitzgerald, 1979; Eckland, 1986).

In response to an era of declining consensus and increasing conflict, schools have, perhaps naturally, followed the path of least resistance. The outcome of walking the tightrope of pleasing all while offending none has been the filtering out of the most obvious elements of diversity and controversy.

The home schooling movement reflects the most diverse elements of the school constituency pulling out. On one hand, the conservative/religious faction perceives the school's

value neutral position on religious matters as a hostile devaluation of the Judeo-Christian heritage. On the other hand, a more leftist faction is equally dismayed in their perception that schools are absent of any critical orientation; that the curriculum serves the interests of the military/business complex. It is interesting that such opposing factions could be so equally dissatisfied with the same system.

It is not an interest of this study to assess which of these perceptions is more accurate. It does seem, however, that such antithetical perceptions could be possible only in a setting so vague and compromising that both positions would contain some element of truth. As Aarons (1982) has described:

... the prevailing orthodoxy in most public schools is a negative one. There is order, but there is no community. Many schools are not simply moral vacuums, they are culturally confusing and devoid of significant shared values. Superficial parameters of behavior are imposed by the school bureaucracy in an effort to maintain control, while the possibility of generating real cohesion and meaning for families and teachers is systematically eliminated (p. 71).

The definitively articulated value base from which most home schooling parents live stands in stark contrast to the compromising position of value neutrality from which public schools seek to operate.

Solution Aspects of the
Home Schooling Movement

At the base of the assertion that the home schooling movement indicates a solution to current social and educational turmoil is a belief expressed by Yankelovich (1981) that, "...out of the present disorder something vital and healthy is struggling to be born" (p. 11). He continues:

... those engaged in their own search for fulfillment are at the same time doing society's necessary work, conducting experiments with their lives that will in the long run benefit society (p. 37).

Home schooling is a social experiment that seeks to come to grips with some of the most difficult complexities and contradictions of contemporary social life. An observation of this movement reveals some promising indicators. Foremost among its promising features is an observable synthesis which is taking place on several levels.

Synthesis of Old and New Individualism. The thrust of most recent commentaries on the condition of the self in American society has focused on pervasive individualism. In most such analyses, the individual is self-serving, narcissistic and impulsive (Turner, 1976; Reisman, 1961; Bennis and Slater, 1968).

At first glance, home schoolers are characterized as "rugged individualists." Critics claim that home schooling is an act which carries an expressed lack of concern for the social good (Franzosa, 1984). Inherent in this criticism is a

vision of the "me" generation. But this criticism does not accurately describe the type of individual found in the home schooling movement.

In contrast, these parents exhibit a high degree of concern for a greater social good. This concern is evident in the ecological orientation the vast majority of this group embodies. The majority of the group is involved in several community cooperatives (an educational cooperative and a food cooperative most notably). Two of the families are actively committed to lobbying for peace and environmental issues; one mother is the past president of a local chapter of The League of Women Voters. And of course the people of a religious orientation are involved in a plethora of church related organizations and activities. Despite their orientation to self-sufficiency, these people also exhibit a desire to join and to belong. Rather than reflecting a type of individualism that is most often associated with alienation--powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation, normlessness and self-estrangement, these people embody the antithesis (Seemans, 1959). Their exhibited form of individualism seems rather a reaction against an institution characterized by these.

By many indicators, the individuals within the home schooling movement seem to represent a "second stage" in the evolution of individualism; a synthesis between an "old" and "new" individualism.

Yankelovich (1981) describes such a synthesis to be occurring. He observes a new "ethic of commitment to be unfolding:

From peoples life experiments, a new social ethic is gradually starting to take shape. I call it an ethic of commitment to distinguish from the traditional ethic of self-denial that underlies the old giving/getting compact, and also from the ethic of duty to self that grows out of a defective strategy of self-fulfillment. It will take several years before this new ethic emerges clearly from the confusion of the present (p. 12).

Home schooling seems to provide a means for achieving both autonomy and a closer human bond. Betty Friedan (1981) notes this synthesis to be a necessary step for the women's movement as well:

Personal choices and political strategies of women today are distorted when they deny the reality of either set of needs: women's need for power, identity, status and security through her own work or action in society, which the reactionary enemies of feminism deny; and the need for love and identity, status, security and generation through marriage, children, home, the family, which those feminists still locked in their own extreme reaction deny. Both sets of needs are essential to women and to the evolving human condition (p. 95).

While home schoolers are highly individualistic, self sufficient people, they also demonstrate a high measure of both social concern and a desire for connectedness. Home schooling mothers in particular seem to represent a synthesis of both traditional forms of commitment and a modern search for self-fulfillment. The issue of self-fulfillment and quest for meaning, is central to these mother's motivation for home schooling. But it is a self-fulfillment achieved through reconnecting opposed to self centering. The social aberation

that home schooling represents points to the great difficulty in achieving both of these things in modern life.

A Synthesis of Polarities. The most fascinating feature of the home schooling movement is the fact that its composition includes antithetical philosophic, political and religious orientations. This study has emphasized the existence of a unified world view which transcends traditional ideologies and which binds these factions into a common movement.

On this count, the home schooling movement provides a vitally important insight to a conflict ridden educational system which has been rocked between polarized pressure groups for decades. As noted earlier, the educational system has dealt with conflicting pressures by both (1) a certain measure of compromise and, (2) a filtering of the most obvious elements of controversy. This approach has served not to lessen conflict but to escalate conflict, and to increase both intolerance and alienation.

In contrast to projects of compromise and neutrality, the home schooling movement is conceived in value explicitness and emotional fervor. But unlike schools which seek to neutralize conflict through the avoidance of controversy, home schoolers seek no such avoidance. Despite the lack of any attempt to mediate conflict or filter controversy, individuals from conflicting positions and antithetical perspectives are drawn to a common movement and cooperate in local support groups.

It must be assumed that one factor which has fueled the home schooling movement is the inability of the educational system to deal successfully with diversity. It must be emphasized that this is no easy task; it surely remains as the school's greatest challenge in a pluralistic society.

Hopefully, the home schooling movement both highlights this weakness in the educational system while, at the same time, providing insight into a direction for desirable change.

The home schooling movement illustrates the fact that true acceptance and real change become possible when conflict is acknowledged instead of avoided. Real movement is possible when the legitimacy of all feelings and needs are acknowledged. Phillip Slater (1974) explains this concept more fully:

Tolerance implies a lack of connection between opposing views and a willful effort to soften that opposition. It is therefore as self-alienating as slavery, and can lead only to institutions that are indifferent to human feeling. Significant change must involve a fusion of opposites not a compromise between antithetical positions, but a response that meets the human needs underlying both positions, that senses both needs are, with widely varying intensities, universal (p. 148).

The home schooling movement provides one small example of the possibility for growth and change through fusion opposed to compromise. As observations of the local group of home schoolers in this study revealed, a group of diverse individuals with distinct ideological frames of the world, eventually perceived in each other enough commonality to forge a trusting, cooperative relationship. This may be the most useful insight to be gleaned from the home schooling movement.

Concluding Statements

Although the numbers of home schoolers nationally is relatively small (less than 1% of the total school-age population) the dilemma posed by the home schooling question is both a huge and complicated one. In the face of growing social and cultural diversity, is it possible to maintain a system of mass education that is palatable and acceptable to all? If not, what will be the effects of the fracturing of universal schooling into a kaleidoscope of individual and small group forms? Can society survive without some form of common educational experience that binds us together?

Of course, these questions are more academic than practical. Although the numbers of home schoolers are growing, it is likely to remain a small countervailing trend. The commitment of time and the necessity of one parent leaving the work force are concessions most parents are simply unable to make. Despite the fact that the indicators do not point to home schooling growing to a force that threatens or competes with public schooling, the numbers are viable enough to resurrect debate and inquiry into questions that have presented themselves anew in this movement. Most apparent is the question of state's interest versus parent's rights. The courts have consistently upheld that states have a legitimate interest in the education of children. Historically, this idea has evolved to be interpreted as a balance between the rights of parents and the interest of the state. In a society

marked by increasing pluralism and diversity, is such a balance possible? Home schooling parents uniformly express a belief that such a balance is not possible and not desirable. Such parents are inclined to a view that rights of child rearing and the education of one's child are organically based and are rights that should never have been assumed by the state.

While this study has not sought a detailed exploration of this question, the strength of objection expressed by parents in this study raises the question if the scales have not tipped too far in one direction. The strength of this expressed objection may also raise sensibilities and spur a rethinking of the family's role in the education of children.

The home schooling movement has seemed to parallel an increasing centralization and general "tightening" of educational agenda. Have schools become too large, too standardized, too much "top down?" The question may seem rhetorical but the existence of home schooling makes it seem at the same time very real in a new way. It seems on the surface that there is value, there is necessity in some type of universal educational experience for the members of a society. But this notion is also a paradoxical one in a pluralistic society. Perhaps for there to be unity there must also be diversity embedded in common experiences. And as the case of the local home schooling group illustrates, perhaps we can come to accept and affirm the position of different others

when their position is made explicit. The hope for schools to revitalize themselves, to once again develop bases of support may lie in moving in this direction.

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