

1-1-2010

The Road Less Taken: A Qualitative Inquiry of Christian Homeschooling in Taiwan

Wei-chen Tung
University of Denver

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd>

Recommended Citation

Tung, Wei-chen, "The Road Less Taken: A Qualitative Inquiry of Christian Homeschooling in Taiwan" (2010). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 662.
<https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/662>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact jennifer.cox@du.edu, dig-commons@du.edu.

The Road Less Taken:
A Qualitative Inquiry of Christian Homeschooling in Taiwan

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Morgridge College of Education
University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Wei-chen Tung
November 2010
Advisor: Dr. Bruce Uhrmacher

© Copyright by Wei-cehn Tung 2010

All Rights Reserved

Author: Wei-chen Tung

Title: *The Road Less Taken: A Qualitative Inquiry of Christian Homeschooling in Taiwan*

Advisor: P. Bruce Uhrmacher, Ph.D.

Degree Date: November, 2010

ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study is to examine how Christian homeschooling works in Taiwan by investigating the intentions, implementation, challenges and implications of homeschooling practice. With regard to homeschooling as an increasingly popular educational option in Taiwan, particularly among Christian families, the following research questions are used to guide this study: (1) What are the reasons and goals of Christian parents in Taiwan to choose homeschooling for their children? (2) What does their homeschooling look like in practice? (3) What do the Christian homeschoolers perceive to be the advantages and challenges of homeschooling in Taiwan? (4) What are the implications of the Christian homeschooling movement for education in Taiwan?

Based on the qualitative research method of Elliot Eisner's educational connoisseurship and criticism, this study presents a vivid description and analysis of Christian homeschooling experience in Taiwan. Four homeschooling families were studied: two in Taipei City and two in Hsinchu City. A conceptual framework incorporating six dimensions of schooling is used to guide the data collection; these dimensions include the intentional, the structural, the curricular, the pedagogical, the evaluative and the school-community relationship.

In the homeschooling literature, a wide range of studies have been conducted to investigate homeschooling in the United States; however, only a few studies found are related to homeschooling in the East Asian contexts. Through this qualitative inquiry, it helps readers better understand how Christian homeschooling is practiced in Taiwan.

Several important themes emerged from this study, including learning by homeschooling, family involvement, uncertainties about the future, and the combination of family, religion, and education in homeschooling, among others. Furthermore, this study indicates the challenges of homeschooling and discusses this educational choice as the road-less-taken in Taiwan.

Acknowledgements

.....*for the battle is not yours, but God's*.....

II Chronicle 20:15

The completion of this dissertation is worthy of thankfulness. It is based on the constant help and support from my dear family, my committee members, my professors and classmates at DU (especially from the C&I program and Religious Studies program), all my church friends, and my homeschooling friends in Mujen. Special thanks to Dr. Bruce Uhrmacher, Dr. Karin Dittrick-Nathan, Dr. Cynthia McRae, Dr. Margaret Thompson and Dr. Edith King, for all your help and precious advice for this work.

To my dear mentor Hilary Burg, thank you for your constant encouragement and prayer support in this journey!

Thanks to all who are involved in this study, especially the four homeschooling families and Mujen's Director, for all your continuous support and sharing your experience with me openly!

Thanks to Dad, Mom, Grandpa, my dear brother Allen, Otosan & Okasan in Kobe, Angela Wu in New Zealand, Naomi Inoue in Nagoya and Naomi Pruitt in CO, Han-xin in DU, the Lee family in Chiba, En-ling in CA, Serena in TX, Takeuchi sensei in WA, Haruka in TN, the Whitt family in MI, Jenna & my friends from Moody in IL, the Tuey family in China, Pastor John & Elaine Kuo, the Sorteberg family, and all my church friends from Galilee South Community Church, Micha, Maymay, Claire & Flora in Taiwan, my beloved friend Jun and Brother Roger in Heaven, those who have loved me, have encouraged me, and have prayed for me, and all my friends who have helped me learn more about English & Japanese, I'm so blessed to have all of you in my life.

Special thanks to Uncle Stephen & Aunt Mae and the Rempel family, for your hospitality and your support in the time of transition.

I've come to realize that there are too many people to thank on this page; however, my ultimate thanks go to my God, who is the source of my strength, my life and my love for education.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction and Rationale.....	1
The Researcher’s Experience.....	3
The Significance of the Study.....	4
Purpose and Research Questions.....	6
Definition of Terms.....	7

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Overview of Education and Culture in Taiwan.....	10
Confucian Traditions.....	10
Religious Education in Taiwan.....	13
Political Factor.....	13
Cultural Factor.....	14
Overview of the Homeschooling Movement in the USA.....	15
A Christian Homeschooling Pioneer.....	16
Legal Requirements for Homeschooling in the USA.....	19
Overview of the Homeschooling Movement in Taiwan.....	22
Christian Homeschooling in Taiwan.....	22

Chapter Three: Methodology

A Qualitative Inquiry.....	25
Data Collection.....	28
Recruitment of Participants.....	30
Data Analysis.....	31
Validity.....	32
Interactive Process.....	35
Timeline.....	35

Chapter Four: Descriptions of Christian Homeschooling in Taiwan	
Family #1: Family as the Foundation of Education.....	37
Family #2: Fighting against the World for the Time with Children.....	66
Family #3: Raising Godly Children through Homeschooling.....	82
Family #4: Faith as Top Priority in Education.....	101
 Chapter Five: Research Finding	
Overview of the Study.....	120
Discussion of Emergent Themes.....	121
Response to Research Question #1.....	134
Response to Research Question #2.....	136
Response to Research Question #3.....	141
Response to Research Question #4.....	148
Future Research.....	150
 References.....	152
 Appendices.....	158
Appendix A: The Population of Obtaining Homeschool Approval in Taiwan.....	158
Appendix B: The Chinese Texts of the Aims of Mujen Association.....	160
Appendix C: Interview Guide for Homeschoolers.....	161
Appendix D: Informed Consent Form (English Version).....	165
Appendix E: Informed Consent Form (Chinese Version).....	167
Appendix F: The Reasons to Homeschool for Family #1.....	168
Appendix G: Weekly Schedule of Family #1.....	169
Appendix H: Token Chart.....	173
Appendix I: Weekly Schedule of Family #2.....	174
Appendix J: Weekly Schedule of Family #3 (Alice’s).....	176
Appendix K: Weekly Schedule of Family #4 (Charlotte’s).....	178
Appendix L: Weekly Schedule of Family #4 (Carolyn’s).....	179

List of Figure

Figure 1: Relationship between Religion, Education & Family in Homeschooling.....131

List of Tables

Table 1: Summary of homeschool regulation in USA.....	20
Table 2: The backgrounds of each family	31

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Introduction and Rationale

Among various kinds of alternative education in the USA, homeschooling has been prevalent for decades. Between 1999 and 2003, both the number and the proportion of homeschooled students increased: there were approximately 1,096,000 homeschooled students in 2003, an increase from the estimated 850,000 students in 1999 (Princiotta & Bielick, 2006). According to the recent data from the National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES), there are estimated 1.5 million (1,508,000) homeschooled students in the United States in the spring of 2007 (Bielick, 2008). The homeschooled students continued rapid growth, representing a 74 percent increase since 1999 and “*twelve times* the increase of public school students over the same period” (Kunzman, 2009a, p.1). Over three decades, homeschooling has gained considerable ground in the USA: in 1980, it was prohibited in 30 states; however, it had been legalized in all 50 states by 1993 under pressure from homeschooling organizations (Blok, 2004).

These homeschooling organizations are mostly composed of or supported by engaged homeschoolers all over the country. Since parental motivation is one of the most influencing factors for choosing homeschooling, several studies have been conducted in an effort to identify why parents decide to homeschool their children (Collom, 2005).

According to the statistical analysis report published by the National Center for Education Statistics, the most frequently mentioned reasons for homeschooling are: (a) parents are concerned about the school environment including safety, drug, or negative peer pressure; (b) parents wish to provide religious or moral education; (c) parents are dissatisfied with academic instruction at public or private schools (Princiotta & Bielick, 2006). Collom's study indicates academic and pedagogical concerns remain as important as ever, but religion is highlighted as one of the most important reasons for parents to homeschool their children. Thus, homeschooling has served as an ideal substitute for these parents who are dissatisfied with traditional school education.

As a relatively new educational phenomenon, homeschooling calls for more research among different types of non-public schools (Yang & Kayaardi, 2004). In addition to the fact that it is a popular educational choice in the USA, homeschooling has caught my attention because it is totally outside my educational and cultural experience. As an international student from Taiwan, I do not know any Taiwanese students who have received homeschool education. Based on the teaching of Confucian educator, Mencius (372-289 BCE)¹, parents should let someone else teach their children, because it can avoid tensions between parents and children in the teaching process. In addition, education in Taiwan emphasizes socialization so much that children may be considered aberrant if they do not go to school with their peers, which is in contrast to individualism highly valued in American society.

¹ Mencius is regarded as the greatest Confucian thinker after Confucius himself. His teachings have been very influential on the development of Confucian thought and Chinese culture up to modern times. References: *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mencius/>)

Investigating Homeschooling in Taiwan:

The Researcher's Experience

In order to explore more about how homeschooling may work to reach the goals of homeschooling parents in the USA, I studied two American homeschooling families in Colorado in 2008 and presented my paper in the 2009 American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting in San Diego, California. The research findings showed that homeschooling of both families is quite effective in accordance with their original intentions for a better Christian education. The parents can offer their children a Christian-based education by selecting their own curricula in homeschooling. Besides, homeschooling is highly flexible for the families and increases more quality time for the families studied. My previous studies of American Christian homeschooling families triggered me to further think about the questions: how is Christian homeschooling carried out in Asian contexts? How about in Taiwan?

At the end of 2008, I went back to East Asia, including Japan and Taiwan, for the winter break. At the same time, I tried to collect information about homeschooling in these two Asian countries. The homeschooling movement just started around a decade ago in both countries. With the interests of religious education and homeschooling, I attended two Japanese Christian homeschooling conventions and a homeschoolers' monthly meeting in 2009. There I met several Japanese Christian homeschoolers who were open and willing to share their experience with me. I noticed that the general homeschooling movement in Japan has been supported enthusiastically by the Christian homeschooling organizations and homeschoolers.

Both Japan and Taiwan have been influenced deeply by Confucianism and emphasize socialization in education. Thus, I started to wonder what homeschooling may be like in Taiwan, where I was originally from. Similar to American homeschooling movement, many Taiwanese homeschoolers choose homeschooling² for a better religious or moral education (Lee, 2005; Kung, 2005). Moreover, a majority of the homeschoolers for religious reasons are from Christian backgrounds, particularly Protestants.

In 2009, while looking for information about homeschooling in Taiwan, I made a connection with the largest Christian homeschooling association in Taiwan this year. Founded in 1998, Mujen Home Educators Association is the oldest homeschooling organization in Taiwan. It has been actively aiding hundreds of Taiwanese homeschoolers (including Christian and non-Christian parents) to homeschool since then. As a Taiwanese Christian female myself, I am interested to explore how homeschooling is practiced to carry out the educational purposes of those Christian homeschoolers. In addition to the asset that I know the language and the culture in Taiwan, I've got good access to homeschooling families through the help of the homeschooling organization and other homeschooling friends from Taiwan.

Why Christian homeschooling in Taiwan?

The Significance of the Study

Numerous studies have been done on homeschooling in the United States since 1919, according to Dr. Robert Kunzman's review (2009b). However, through the

² In Taiwan, another group of parents who use homeschooling are for the reason of special education. According to the Statute of Enforced Enrollment (強迫入學條例, 2003), children with the age of 6 to 15 should be enrolled in a school for elementary through junior high education. However, those parents are allowed to education their child/children who are disabled, abnormal or diseased at home based on the Article 12 of the Statute (<http://law.moj.gov.tw/Scripts/Query4A.asp?FullDoc=all&Fcode=H0070002>).

database of ProQuest Dissertation & Theses (PQDT), the most comprehensive collection of dissertations and theses in the world, only few studies found are related to the homeschooling in the Asian contexts, particularly in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan³.

In the PQDT database, only two dissertations found are related to homeschoolers with Chinese or Taiwanese background in the USA: One is “*Dare to home school: Faith and cultural experiences of Chinese Christian mothers*” (Sun, 2007) and “*Family social networks: Taiwanese immigrant parents’ homeschooling experiences*” (Tsai, 2008). Both studies are conducted with a focus on the homeschoolers with Chinese/Taiwanese backgrounds in the American society. In addition, all the participants recruited in both studies are Christian. It indicates the increasing scholarly interest in homeschooling among parents with Asian and Christian backgrounds.

Through the search of Electronic Theses and Dissertations System of National Central Library in Taiwan, more than 40 homeschooling studies were found; however, almost half of them focus on special education, especially for children with disabilities or serious diseases like cancer. It was not until about ten years ago that more case studies of homeschooling in Taiwan were conducted to investigate why parents choose homeschooling for their children who are without any disabilities.

In Taiwan, the past studies primarily focused on homeschooling for special education or case studies of homeschooling in general. There is little empirical research conducted

³ By the end of 2009, the only dissertation found about Japanese homeschooling is “*A case study of the drop out problem in Japan and homeschooling as a possible policy response*” (Aso, 2005), which is case study that suggests Japanese educational policy makers should consider homeschooling as an alternative to alleviate the persistent drop-out problem in Japanese schools. The only dissertation found about Korean homeschooling is “*Contested motherhood: Self and modernity in South Korean homeschooling*” (Jung, 2008), which is an ethnographic study of how the homeschooling mothers transform their motherhood and develop their potentials through homeschooling in South Korea. There is no homeschooling study found in relation to homeschooling in China or North Korea in the East Asia area.

to examine the practice of Christian homeschooling in Taiwan. Therefore, this study is designed to examine how Christian homeschooling works in an Asian context like Taiwan and what kind of challenges the homeschoolers face in their homeschooling. It attempts to reveal the practice of Christian homeschooling in Taiwan and will hopefully contribute towards the enrichment of the relevant literature.

Purposes and Research Questions

With regard to homeschooling as an increasingly popular alternative for public education among Christian parents in Taiwan, the connection between homeschooling and Christian education is an issue worthy of notice. Through an in-depth qualitative inquiry of homeschooling in Taiwanese Christian families, this study attempts to examine the motivations and implementation of the homeschoolers along with the outcomes and challenges of their homeschooling in Taiwan.

The primary purposes of this qualitative study are to describe and explain Taiwanese Christian homeschoolers, who choose homeschooling in order to provide their child/children with a better religious education, are targeted in this study. The research purposes of this study include the following: (1) to identify the motivations and goals of Christian education viewed by the Christian homeschoolers in Taiwan, (2) to observe how the intended Christian education is implemented through homeschooling in Taiwan, (3) to examine the strengths and weaknesses of homeschooling in Taiwan, and (4) to investigate the educational implications of Christian homeschooling for education in Taiwan.

In order to guide and narrow the focus of this study, the specific research questions are proposed:

1. *What are the reasons and goals of Christian parents in Taiwan to choose homeschooling for their children?*
2. *What does their homeschooling look like in practice?*
3. *What do the Christian homeschoolers perceive as the primary advantages and disadvantages of homeschooling in Taiwan?*
4. *What are the implications of the Christian homeschooling movement for education in Taiwan?*

Definition of Terms

- Homeschooling: refers to the education of school-aged children at home rather than at a public or private school (Basham, 2001; Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007). In Taiwan, some homeschooled children go to school for certain classes, while they can also benefit from the freedom of homeschooling. For instance, one of these combinations of both homeschooling and schooling is termed “half-half” in this study.
- Christian homeschooling: refers to the homeschooling practice of Christian parents, particularly from evangelical Protestant backgrounds.
- Homeschooler: in this study, homeschoolers specifically refer to the parents who homeschool their child/children, instead of the homeschooled children who receive homeschool education.
- Mujen Home Educators Association (中華基督教慕真在家教育協會): founded in 1998, it is the oldest homeschooling organization in Taiwan. The association helps

both Christian and non-Christian homeschoolers dealing with homeschooling affairs. Another English translation of it is “**Mujen Chinese Christian Home Educators’ Association**”, which is the word-by-word translation of its Chinese name and used in the website of Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA)⁴. The broader translation, “**Mujen Home Educators Association**”, is used; it is abbreviated as “Mujen” in this study.

- Religious education: is defined as “the education with contents about religious canon, disciplines and doctrines.” (Shi, 2002: 260-261; Chou, 2000:687). There are four primary types of religious education (Tung, 2004): (1) confessional religious education: as the most primitive and traditional type of religious education, it is to discipline believers to be more committed to a particular religion with its doctrines and moral teachings; (2) vocational religious education: it is to train the clergy or monks to work for the religious groups to manage religious affairs; (3) academic religious education: it is to educate academic researchers in religious studies; (4) general religious education: it is to instruct about religion with both religious knowledge and religious experiences. In this study, religious education does not refer to vocational or academic religious education. It specifically refers to the combination of confessional and general religious education, including the doctrines, moral teachings, knowledge and experience of Christianity.
- Parenting styles⁵: the definitions of the four parenting styles proposed in the interview are as follows: *authoritative* parents are assertive in providing rules without being

⁴ It is in the international homeschooling section of HSLDA’s website. (<http://www.hslda.org/hs/international/Taiwan/default.asp>)

⁵ These definitions are mainly based on the basic parenting styles identified by the developmental psychologist Diana Baumrind (<http://www.faqs.org/childhood/Ar-Bo/Baumrind-Diana-b-1927.html>)

overbearing; *authoritarian* parents are highly demanding and they expect unquestioning obedience from their children; *indulgent* parents are more responsive than demanding, allowing children to do whatever they want; *neglectful* parents are indifferent and they often disregard children's needs or feelings.

- Enrichment classes or extra-curricular classes: refer to the classes homeschoolers choose to enrich or develop the talents of their children. The Chinese translation of these terms is “才藝班”, which literally means “talents classes” in Chinese.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Overview of Education and Culture in Taiwan

Located in East Asia, Taiwan is an island⁶ with a population of more than 23 million people⁷. With the ethnic structure of 84% Taiwanese, 14% Mainland Chinese, and 2 % aboriginal, more than 19 million local Taiwanese residents are the descendants of Chinese immigrants from Fujian (福建) and Guangdong (廣東) provinces of Mainland China in the 18th century (Tsai, 2008, p. 66). In addition, during the Chinese Civil War, an estimated 2 million of Chinese refugees fled from Mainland China to Taiwan with the KMT (Kuomintang) party's retreat in 1949. These Chinese immigrants and refugees did not only bring many national treasures⁸ and valuable artifacts to Taiwan, they also brought the Chinese culture to this island at the same time.

Confucian Traditions

Without being buffeted by the rapid and sometimes violent policy toward Chinese traditional culture and values, as it was during the Cultural Revolution in Mainland China

⁶ The area of Taiwan is 35,980 km². The climate is marine tropical; typhoons and earthquake are common natural hazards (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tw.html>)

⁷ According to the data from the Department of Statistics in the Ministry of Interior, there are 23,098,049 people (Male 11,632,252; Female: 11,465,797) in Taiwan by October, 2009. (<http://sowf.moi.gov.tw/stat/month/list.htm>)

⁸ Many national treasures and artifacts are stored in National Palace Museum in Taipei (<http://www.npm.gov.tw/en/about/tradition.htm>).

(Altbach, 1991), Taiwan has been highly shaped by the traditional Chinese cultural heritage. On the other hand, the Chinese traditional culture has been passed on and preserved on this island. Especially under the ruling of KMT since 1949, Taiwan was considered to be a strong base of both political recovery and cultural restoration of China. In contrast to the Cultural Revolution, for instance, the KMT government with Chinese intellectuals in Taiwan called for the Chinese Cultural Revival Movement (中華文化復興運動) in 1967. In schools, students started to learn more about Chinese classical literature and Confucian ethics in order restore the tradition of Chinese culture.

Confucianism can be one of the most important components in the Chinese culture and also is considered to be the foundation of Chinese education. During the Han dynasty⁹ (200 B.C.-200 A.D.), Confucianism became the dominant intellectual power in the Chinese society and was studied by all “who hoped to matriculate into government positions” (Smith, 1911, p. 7). In other words, if a Chinese intellectual desired to be a civil officer or get a job in the government, studying Confucian literature was the way, almost the only way for common people. The combination of public civil servant system and education (learning of Confucian classics) were closely linked in China for thousands of years. Being outstanding in academic achievement could mean success in a future career which might bring glory to one’s family, get one promoted in social classes or even gain one real political power.

Education has played a fundamental role in Asian tradition ever since the time of Confucius (Sun, 2007, p. 36). Chinese people are particularly famous for their emphasis

⁹ Particularly under the ruling of Emperor Wu of Han (漢武帝 156 B.C.-87 B.C.), Confucianism was adopted to be the code of ethics for his centralized empire. The Confucian classics became the standard materials for Chinese intellectuals to study and follow since then.

on education. Education is seen as the path to success and prosperity for the future. A well-known Chinese proverb, “All undertakings are lowly; studying is the only noble thing to do” (萬般皆下品，唯有讀書高), also reveals this traditional cultural ideology of emphasizing education, i.e. the studying of books and obtaining diplomas as a proof of education. As reported in the China Post (2009 b), the emphasis on studying books still remains the noblest of undertakings even after the Empires crumbled. Even in Taiwan today, most people simply regard education as the studying of books and obtaining diplomas. It is not uncommon for parents in Taiwan to strive for providing their children with the best education they are able to offer, and support their children to receive as much as education they can.

More than the function of literacy, education also serves as a code of ethics to maintain the social harmony. Confucius himself advocated the significance of education given that education is the basic training for a cultivated, moral gentleman (Junzi, 君子). Through education, people can learn to play different roles properly and deal with different social relationship respectfully in the society. The integration of the individual and society is highly emphasized in education. As Lin (1983) points out that “the social purpose of education is emphasized on the ground that the development of the individual takes place in social environment” (p. 111). In short, it is difficult to take students out of schools for homeschooling because education puts high emphasis on academic achievement (the studying of books) and social development under this tradition.

In the West, religion has been the foundation of civilization, at least since the early Middle Ages; however, in China, education has been the foundation of moral civilization and the ballast for social progress (Smith, 1991, p. 54).

Influenced by Confucianism, education has interwoven the intellectual, moral, and social aspects of Chinese culture. Accordingly, bound in the culture without a specific religious affiliation, schools in Taiwan tend to skip religious education for various reasons.

Religious education in Taiwan¹⁰

In Taiwan, the Christian population is a minority community, compared with the mainstream of members of Buddhism and Daoism¹¹ in the society.

In addition, to apply the separation of church and state to schools, religious education is officially prohibited in public schools in Taiwan (Huang, 1994), not to mention Christian education. It is common for Christian parents to face tremendous pressure and limitations if they want to provide their children with religious education in this social context, which has been shaped by the political and cultural factors in Taiwan.

Political Factor:

The Separation of Religion and Education

Since Taiwan was colonized by Japan in 1895, religious education had been under the strict control of the government. Even after Taiwan was restored by KMT¹², activities of religion and all religious education were still restrained from public spheres because of the authoritarianism regime (Lin, 1994; Chang, 2003). To prevent the powers and

¹⁰ In this section of literature, since the primary materials (including the books, dissertations, and theses from Electronic Theses and Dissertations System of National Central Library in Taiwan) are written in Chinese, the texts and the titles of the work is translated into English by the researcher if there is no English translation available.

¹¹ In Taiwan the mixture of Buddhist and Taoist is 93% of the population, Christian is 4.5%, and other is 2.5%, according to the information provided by CIA (2009) (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tw.html>).

¹² KMT is the abbreviation of Kuomintang, which was the ruling party of Taiwan from 1945 to 2000. After being the biggest opposition party for 8 years (2000-2008), KMT came into power again after winning the presidential election in 2008.

resources of religious groups from expanding, the new government also purposed to separate religion from education strictly (Huang, 1994:94-95). Education should not serve one specific religion. For instance, one of the educational policies in Taiwan shows this political control over both religion and education: the degrees conferred by seminaries, Buddhist schools, Daoist schools, or other religious institutes have not been acknowledged by the government.

Even today, the degrees conferred by specific religious educational institutes still remain officially invalid. If a university intends to set up a department of religious studies, it must be supervised by the following rules: First, it cannot teach or focus on only one particular religion; second, the purpose of education cannot be for the clergy training (Fang, 1998). In the government's view, the development of religious education or religious studies may be interpreted as a way to expand their religious power in Taiwan.

Cultural Factor:

The Diversity of Religious Cultures

In addition to the political context, the diverse religious cultures in the society also counts for the impediment of religious education in Taiwan. Not only because it is hard to reach the balance of being fair to all religions, but also because it may cause a power struggle between various religious groups (Chiu, 1995). According to the Manual edited by the Ministry of Interior (2001), there are at least 16 prevalent religions in Taiwan, which include Buddhism, Daoism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam, and I-Kuan-Tao (一貫道). Among Protestant churches, there are more than 24 denominations. Moreover, syncretism and inclusiveness are typical religious attitudes of most Taiwanese.

Without a state religion or a specific folk religion, various kinds of religious cultures coexist in the Taiwan's society (Zheng, 2003).

It was not until the end of the Martial Law Era in 1987 that the policies toward religions and education gradually became somewhat liberal. The legitimizing of I-Kuan-Tao is one of the examples. The issues of religious education began to catch the attention of the society from then on. As a trend, some religious universities and colleges began to apply for admission to the Ministry of Education to have the departments or graduate institutes of religious studies¹³. In fact, religious education has been omitted consciously as “null curriculum” in schools (Gong, 1998, p. 53)¹⁴. All religious education is still limited in most K-12 schools, because the educational policies and attitudes toward religions should remain neutral in Taiwan.

Overview of the Homeschooling Movement in the USA

Homeschooling has been widely accepted as a legal alternative to public schooling in the United States. As mentioned above, homeschooling became more popular among American families: In 2007 there was an estimate of 1.5 million homeschooled children in the United States (NCES, 2008). In the homeschooling study of Van Galen (1986), two broad types of homeschooling parents are identified: the first one is identified as the Ideologues, who homeschool because they think the values which public schools teach are anti-family and anti-Christian; the second type is as the

¹³ The very first school allowed to have a religious studies department was the Catholic Fu Jen University (輔仁大學) in 1988, with strong support from their Faculty of Theology. Nevertheless, it was still under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. It means that the Department was not allowed either to focus on one particular religion or to train the clergy for the religion. Then after almost a decade later, the second Religious Studies department was admitted: Graduate Institute of Religious Studies at Hsuan Chuang College of Humanities and Social Sciences in 1997 and it became Hsuan Chuang University in 2002 (Tung, 2004).

¹⁴ The material is originally written in Chinese and is translated by the researcher.

Pedagogues, who choose homeschooling mainly because they believe their children can learn better in the home environment. Each type of parents identified are more aware of the importance of education and are seeking a better education for their children by means of homeschooling. In Gaither's analysis of American history, he mentions that the homeschooling movement was thoroughly a "grassroots movement" in the USA (Gaither, 2008, p. 141). He further indicates that in the late 70s and the 80s, homeschoolers quickly organized themselves into various support groups across the country.

A Christian Homeschooling Pioneer:

Raymond Moore

Similarly, Lyman (1998) agrees that homeschooling is a grassroots movement of parent educators in the USA, with two historical strains. She points out that one is a countercultural-left thread inspired by John Holt with concerns about the lack of humanity toward children in the government schools, while the other is a religious-right thread inspired by Raymond Moore with emphasis on religious values in education. For both liberal and conservative parents, the home has become the focus of education (Knowles, Marlow & Muchmore, 1992, p. 197). Though speaking from different perspectives, both Holt and the Moores (Raymond Moore and his wife, Dorothy Moore) grew critical of public education and schooling (Gaither, 2008, p. 134) and then came to advocate for homeschooling to educate children.

As a specific way of homeschooling, "unschooling" was a neologism coined by John Holt in *Growing Without Schooling*, the first newsletter aimed for homeschoolers in the USA. It was published in August 1977 and ceased publication in December 2001.

Unschooling refers to allowing students as much freedom to learn in the world as their parents can comfortably bear (Holt & Farenga, 2003, p. 238); it eschews most traditional structures of formal schooling by resting on a philosophical belief that “children learn best when the focus and course of study emerge in response to natural interests and needs” (Kunzman, 2009a, p. 3).

With his academic credentials¹⁵, avowed Adventist faith, and good communication skills, Raymond Moore became “an ideal spokesman for Christian home education” (Stevens, 2001, p. 172). Known as “the Grandparents of homeschooling movement”, Raymond and Dorothy Moore proposed “the Moore Formula”¹⁶ for homeschooling:

1. Study from a few minutes to several hours a day, depending on the maturity of the child.
2. Manual work and entrepreneurship, at least as much work in family or other business as study.
3. Home and/or community service, an hour or so a day, focusing on the interests and needs of the child.

This Formula focuses on the readiness and the interests of children in their study. This kind of child-directed pedagogy began to gain popularity among Christian homeschoolers in the 1970s. In addition, with a series of interviews with the well-known evangelical psychologist James Dobson in the *Focus on the Family* radio program aired on radio stations nationally, Raymond Moore along with homeschool education were given more

¹⁵ Raymond Moore earned his Ph.D. in developmental psychology and teacher education from the University of South California in 1947 and founded a research institute, the Moore Foundation, in 1961 (Gaither, 2008, p. 129).

¹⁶ Reference: Homeschoo.com (2009) <http://www.homeschool.com/advisors/moore/default.asp>

legitimacy through Dobson's endorsement (Stevens, 2001, p. 26). Accordingly, the Moores became the most widely known Christian homeschooling leaders and the pioneers for homeschooling movement in the USA (Gaither, 2008). Different from John Holt's "unschooling", the Moores emphasized the significance of Christian values, biblical morality, and the responsibility of education on parents, especially on mothers.

Moreover, the homeschooling movement in the USA has been upheld by two constitutional freedoms: one is the parents' right to direct the education of their children, and the other is the parents' religious freedom to obey the dictates of God concerning their children's education (Taylor, 1993, p.1). Influenced by this movement, more Christian parents started to choose homeschooling for their child/children for a better education. After analyzing the results of the National Household Education Surveys (NHES) of 1996 and 1999, Bauman (2003) points out that more than a half of homeschoolers surveyed answered their reason for choosing homeschooling is that homeschooling "can give child better education at home" (50.8%) and the second highest reason for homeschooling is for religious reasons (33.0 %). The religiously motivated homeschooling parents seemed to believe that ".....although religion was a major part of the American culture, public schools failed to take religion seriously" (Edwards, 2007, p. 41; Wagner, 2008, p. 14). Besides, these religiously motivated parents tend to consider secular humanism and student immorality as characteristics of public schools, so they choose to take the responsibility of education and intend to counteract by operating home schools as a better educational environment for their children (Knowles, Marlow & Muchmore, 1992, p. 196-197).

It is estimated that by 1990 between 85 to 90 percent of the homeschoolers in the USA were conservative Christians (Gaither, 2008, p. 142). In Kunzman's recent study on six Christian homeschooling families, he also indicates that most observers acknowledge that conservative Christians¹⁷ constitute the largest subset of homeschoolers in the USA (Kunzman, 2009a, p. 2). In Taylor's analysis (1997), she also concludes that for most Christian homeschoolers homeschooling combines a Christian lifestyle, plenty of family time, individual attention, and academic pursuits, which public schools may fail to offer sufficiently for each child.

Legal Requirements for Homeschooling in the USA

As a majority of the homeschooling population in the USA, Christian homeschoolers, advocates, researchers and relevant organizations have been playing an essential role in this grassroots movement of homeschooling for the past three decades. Founded in 1983 by two Christian lawyers, Michael Farris and Mike Smith, Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) is one of the most important Christian homeschooling support groups in the USA. Through annual membership, HSLDA helps homeschooling families to defend and advance their constitutional right for home education with their professional attorneys, all of whom are also homeschooling fathers¹⁸.

On the HSLDA's website (<http://www.hslda.org/>), a variety of resources and information are provided, including introduction to homeschooling, homeschooling laws of each state, homeschooling research, curriculum markets, national homeschool

¹⁷ Conservative Christians refer to an umbrella term covering various groups within Christianity. Kunzman (2008) explains one of the reasons to use this term is that it includes most of fundamentalists and it also extends to many evangelicals in a broader sense (p.2).

¹⁸ Reference: Home School Legal Defense Association (2009) <http://www.hslda.org/about/default.asp>

organizations, international homeschool organizations and homeschooling information in other countries etc. Based on the information from HSLDA, 10 states in the USA require no notice, 14 states with low regulation require only parental notification, 20 states plus the District of Columbia requires parental notification, test scores, and/or professional evaluation, and 6 states with high regulation ask for parental notification, test scores, and/or professional evaluation, plus other requirements for homeschooling. The states with different levels of regulation for homeschooling are listed within Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of homeschool regulation in different states¹⁹ (HSLDA, 2009)

Homeschool Legal Requirement	States
States requiring no notice	Idaho (ID), Alaska (AK), Texas (TX), Oklahoma (OK), Missouri (MO), Illinois (IL), Indiana (IN), Michigan (MI), Connecticut (CT), New Jersey (NJ)
States with low regulation (requiring parental notification only)	California (CA), Nevada (NV), Utah (UT), Arizona (AZ), New Mexico (NM), Wyoming (WY), Montana (MT), Nebraska (NE), Kansas (KS), Wisconsin (WI), Mississippi (MS), Alabama (AL), Kentucky (KY), Delaware (DE);
States or district with moderate regulation (requiring parental notification, test scores, and/or professional evaluation)	Washington (WA), Oregon (OG), Colorado (CO), South Dakota (SD), Minnesota (MN), Iowa (IA), Arkansas (AR), Louisiana (LA), Tennessee (TN), Georgia (GA), Florida (FL), North Carolina (NC), South Carolina (SC), Virginia (VA), West

¹⁹ In terms of territories of the USA, Guam (GU) and Puerto Rico (PR) require no notice for homeschooling; Virgin Islands (VI) requires only parental notification; Northern Mariana Islands (MP) and American Samoa (AS) are with moderate regulations. Reference: <http://www.hslda.org/laws/default.asp> (latest retrieved: 11/8/2009)

	Virginia (WV), Ohio (OH), Maryland (MD), District of Columbia (DC), Maine (ME), New Hampshire (NH), Hawaii (HI)
States with high regulation (requiring parental notification, achievement test scores, and/or professional evaluation, plus other requirements, like curriculum approval by the state, teacher qualification of parents, or home visits by state officials)	North Dakota (ND), Pennsylvania (PA), New York (NY), Massachusetts (MA), Vermont (VT), Rhode Island (RI)

No matter it is with low legal requirement or high regulation, homeschooling has been a legal educational choice in all 50 states of the USA (Blok, 2004). Parents may easily find plenty of resources and assistance for their homeschooling on-line. If Christian parents in Colorado want to homeschool their child/children, for instance, they may resort to the local homeschool organizations like Christian Home Educators of Colorado (CHEC) to get started. CHEC holds events (such as state conferences, graduation ceremonies, and introductory seminars etc.), publishes free quarterly magazines (*Homeschool Update: The Heart of Homeschooling*), connects Christian homeschool support groups, and offers various resources and services for homeschoolers. In addition to CHEC, there are more than 30 local homeschooling organizations in Colorado listed on the website of Homeschool World²⁰. From obtaining the homeschool approval to advices and tips for homeschooling in practice, in the USA parents can easily get the support from local/national organizations, support groups, and a variety of homeschool websites and programs on-line.

²⁰ Reference: <http://www.home-school.com/groups/CO.html>

Overview of the Homeschooling Movement in Taiwan

Homeschooling in K-12 education is legal and has been a commonly accepted educational practice in the USA; however, parents in Taiwan are only allowed to homeschool their children through 9th grade. In the past, only parents whose children are with disabilities were allowed to educate their children at home in Taiwan (Wu, 2006, p. 145). According to the Article 4 of Civil Education Law (國民教育法) amended in 1999, it is legal for parents to choose homeschooling as one kind of “non-school type experimental education” (非學校型態之實驗教育) during compulsory education (Kung, 2005, p. 32; Wu, 2006, p. 134; Hsu, 2007, p.3). However, even though homeschooling has been legal in Taiwan since 1999, the regulations about homeschooling still remain vague and depending on how the local educational administrative authorities interpret the regulations and process the homeschooling application cases.

Influenced by traditional Confucianism, the studying of books (going to schools) are highly valued in the Taiwanese society. For Taiwanese parents who are dissatisfied with public education, they may consider other educational alternatives such as sending their children to private schools (including Christian schools) or sending them to study abroad (particularly to English-speaking countries) if they are appropriate and affordable. Nevertheless, some parents still choose homeschooling for their children in spite of the cultural expectations and other common educational choices in this society.

Christian Homeschooling in Taiwan

According to the analysis of research on homeschooling in Taiwan, two important factors of the homeschooling movement are concluded as follows: First, the emphasis of

child-centered educational approach: compared with conventional schools, homeschooling is more appropriate to meet the interests and needs of individual student; second, the influence of religious belief: most of homeschooling families in Taiwan have religious beliefs, and the majority is of Protestant backgrounds (Hsu, 2006, p. 13-14).

Except for special education, homeschoolers in Taiwan can be divided into various groups. Some divide Taiwanese homeschoolers into three main groups: the first is for moral discipline (品德派), emphasizing the character discipline of the church life; the other is to promote the reading of the classical literature (讀經派), emphasizing the study of Chinese classical literature and Western classics; the third is for family harmony (家庭合一派), chiefly from Protestant families in Mujen Home Educators Association (Lee, 2005; Kung, 2005). Chang (2005) also identifies that the two primary types of homeschoolers can also be found in Taiwan: the left with their educational ideals emphasizing humanism and the right with their religious ideals emphasizing religious education or morality.

The majority of homeschoolers in Taiwan are religiously motivated and concerned, particularly of Protestant backgrounds. The start of the homeschooling movement in Taiwan is also related to Christianity: Mujen Home Educators Association was founded by Christian homeschoolers in 1998. As the oldest homeschool organization in Taiwan, the mission of Mujen is to consolidate marriage (鞏固婚姻), to unify family (合一家庭), and to raise faithful children (教養敬虔後代)²¹. Their proclamations and purposes include (1) believing that raising children is a parental responsibility and

²¹ It is cited from Mujen's website and translated into English by the researcher (Reference: http://www.mujen.org.tw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2&Itemid=34 11/10/2009 retrieved). Please see Appendix B for the original Chinese texts.

mission dictated by God, and this responsibility should not be taken over by the government or schools (2) encouraging parents to lawfully homeschool their children full-time (3) encouraging parents to follow the Bible as their highest guidance of every aspect in life, to set a good example, and to teach with “faith,” “virtue,” and “knowledge” (as in II Peter 1:5-7) for raising faithful descendants (4) believing the homeschooling is a life-reforming movement to build blessed families based on the truth and to have positive influences within the society.

Without explicit regulations, abundant resources and wide support, homeschoolers in Taiwan have to strive for their right to homeschool and to work hard for the practice of homeschooling. In 2005, there were approximately 600 homeschooled students in Taiwan (Lee, 2005, p. 151; Kung, 2005, p. 32). The number increased to about 1,200 homeschooled students in 2009 (see Appendix A). As a religious minority in Taiwan, Christianity with its culture, history and teaching are easily overlooked or ignored in the mainstream public education. In order to reinforce and restore their religious heritage, some Christian parents resort to homeschooling for a better education.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

A Qualitative Inquiry

In homeschooling literature, qualitative research methods are commonly used to investigate the experience of homeschooling families. This study attempts to provide an in-depth description and explanation of why Christian parents in Taiwan choose homeschooling and what their homeschooling looks like in practice. Four specific research questions are proposed for this qualitative inquiry.

First, what are the reasons and goals of Christian parents in Taiwan to choose homeschooling for their children? This question includes what motivations and goals that these Christian parents have to homeschool their children. In order to answer this question, I conducted semi-structural interviews with the Christian homeschoolers in each of the families. An interview guide inspired from the study conducted by Taylor (1993) is in Appendix C; some questions remain exactly the same but some are modified in order to better fit the cultural context in Taiwan and the research questions in my study.

Second, what does their homeschooling look like in practice? The following are some sub-questions relevant to this research question: What is a typical day of homeschooling? What kind of curriculum materials are they using? What kind of instructional style do they have? Are the parents' intended aims reached in

homeschooling? In addition to interviewing the homeschoolers, I also stayed with each of these Christian families to observe their homeschooling practice in order to collect the first-hand data.

Third, what do the Christian homeschoolers perceive as the primary advantages and challenges of homeschooling in Taiwan? This question includes what the primary advantages of homeschooling may be from the parents' perspectives, what challenges that Taiwanese homeschoolers may encounter, and why some Christian parents continue homeschooling in spite of these challenges in homeschooling. Interviews with parents were the main source of data to answer these questions; moreover, the data collected through observant-observation and the analysis of documents shared by the parents were also used as triangulation.

Last, what are the implications of the Christian homeschooling movement for education in Taiwan? Following are the sub-questions related to this research question: What is the importance of Christian homeschooling in Taiwan? Will it contribute any insights to Taiwan's education? After analyzing the data, I examined the educational significance of the Christian homeschooling movement to the education in Taiwan.

In order to answer the research questions proposed above, a conceptual framework incorporating six dimensions of schooling were used to guide this study. The first five major dimensions are termed as "the ecology of schooling" by Elliot Eisner (Eisner, 1998, p. 72) in the qualitative research method of educational connoisseurship and criticism. The sixth dimension is inspired from Kim's study on three charter schools. In order to have a better understanding of what is going on in the schools, he added the dimension of school-community relations to his educational connoisseurship (Kim, 2002).

In Taiwan, social relations are highly emphasized; thus, I included all these six dimensions, the intentional, the structural, the curricular, the pedagogical, the evaluative (Eisner, 1998) and the school-community relationship (Uhrmacher and Matthews, 2005) for a more comprehensive analysis of the data in my homeschooling study.

The *intentional* dimension examines the aims and goals of homeschooling. The *structural* dimension examines how time and space are organized in homeschooling. The *curricular* dimension considers the selection of the curriculum materials and knowledge in homeschooling. The *pedagogical* dimension investigates how the content is taught through homeschooling. The *evaluative* dimension explores the ways that homeschoolers use to assess and evaluate children's learning. The *school-community relationship* dimension refers to the quality of interaction between homeschooling families and larger communities including their family relatives, friends, neighbors and/or their support groups.

This study also used Eisner's educational connoisseurship and criticism for data analysis. This method requires the researcher to play both roles: to appraise the qualities of homeschooling as *an educational connoisseur* and to make the appraisal public as *an educational critic* (Eisner, 1998). With the six dimensions of educational connoisseurship above, the four aspects of educational criticism, including *description*, *interpretation*, *evaluation*, and *thematics*, are applied to appraise and disclose the information of homeschooling. Besides, the qualitative research strategies of interviews and participant-observation were primarily employed in this study. Along with the interviews and observations, the results of email correspondence may also be used for data analysis.

More than being field focused, qualitative research is characterized by relating to the researcher as an instrument of seeing and interpreting (Eisner, 1998). The researcher of a qualitative study is “in charge of making meaning”, of making sense of the data collected (Ely, 1991, p. 143). Though it is not unusual to present research results in a personalized way, it takes high self-awareness to conduct a qualitative study without bringing in former personal biases. It is similar to *bracketing*, i.e. being aware of and putting aside one’s assumptions, preconceptions, and feelings (p. 50). With no homeschooling experience myself before²², I personally hold a neutral attitude toward homeschooling (neither an opponent or an advocate). Just because I don’t have many presumptions about homeschooling, I have been motivated to explore it ever since I studied the two American homeschooling families in 2008 as a pilot study for this dissertation study. In addition, being born in Asia and educated in the USA, a researcher such as myself is able to provide a cross-cultural perspective in studying those Taiwanese Christian homeschooling families by looking closely at the cross-section of homeschooling practice, religious education, and Asian culture.

Data Collection

When it comes to the fieldwork, two qualitative research techniques, interviews and participant observation, were mainly used in this study. Since “home schoolers are traditionally a difficult group to study” (Mullady, 2006, p. 41), the family’s willingness to participate is a key factor in research. Four voluntary homeschooling families were

²² I went to a local public school for my elementary education and then my parents sent me to a prestigious private school in Taichung city. After graduating from the high school, I was admitted to the top university in Taiwan (National Taiwan University) for my higher education. Thus, I did not realize the legalization and the possibility of homeschooling until I came to the USA in 2006.

willing to participate in my study. I explained and proposed to each family about a plan of conducting interviews with the parents and doing participant observation (20-30 hours over a week) in their families.

Besides, the mutual trust between the researcher and the participants is another essential factor for successful data collection. Thus, I tried to explain the motivation, purposes and procedure of my study to the homeschooling families involved, in order to increase their understanding about this study and their trust in me as the researcher.

This international study did not start officially before the researcher received the IRB approval from the University of Denver and the consent of the homeschooling families. In Taiwan, like most of other East Asian countries, oral consent is a more commonly appropriate way than a written one to obtain informed consent from participants. Nevertheless, a copy of the written informed consent form (See Appendix D) was given to the participants for their record and it was translated into Chinese by the researcher (See Appendix E).

At the end of February in 2010, right after the Chinese New Year (Spring Festival²³), I tried to establish a more frequent connection with the families recruited. During the Festival, it is the busiest time for most Taiwanese families to enjoy their holidays and have family reunion; it also symbolizes the new start of a year. Thus, it was a good timing for me to contact and visit the families and observe the start of their homeschooling after the Festival. In early March, I got a chance to attend an annual homeschooling camp conference held by the Mujen association. I met some more Christian homeschoolers and also recruited one family in this event.

²³ The New Year's Eve was Feb. 13, 2009. The Festival lasts for fifteen days after the first day of the New Year according to the lunar calendar.

Recruitment of Participants

I recruited four voluntary Christian homeschooling families to participate in this study: two of them were introduced by the director of the Mujen association and the other two were recruited during the study process in Taiwan. Two of the families are in Taipei (台北), the largest city and the capital of Taiwan; the other two live in Hsinchu (新竹), a northwest city famous as the base for high technology industry in Taiwan. All of the families are from an evangelical Protestant background and have dedicated their homeschooling to a better, influential Christian education for their children.

Before I went back to Taiwan for the fieldwork, I started to contact the families introduced by the director via email and international calls. In the first place, four families were interested in participating in my study. However, after I went back to Taiwan, I realized that one of the families might not be appropriate for my study, because they got some changes in their homeschooling (their children went back to school for many more classes this year). Later, another family who I had planned to visit had new dynamics all of a sudden: the mother just found out that she was pregnant at that time. Though they were very supportive and friendly to help me out, I was concerned that my visit might interrupt their lives more or less (especially to the pregnant homeschooler). After discussing with the parents, I decided not to visit this family and looked for another substitute family. Fortunately, I recruited one family in joining a study group with the first family; I found the other family while attending the Bible camp with the second family.

* The backgrounds of each family are shown in the table below (Table 2):

	Parents	Children (in the order of birth)	Homeschooling years
Family #1	Phil & Chelsea	1. Cindy (♀): 13 year-old, 7 th grade 2. Lily (♀): 10 year-old, 4 th grade 3. Jimmy (♂): 7 year-old, 2 nd grade 4. Tony (♂): 4 year-old, preschool	2000-2010
Family #2	Zach & Sophia	1. Esther (♀): 11 year-old, 5 th grade 2. Paul (♂): 9 year-old, 3 rd grade	2005-2010
Family #3	John & Opal	1. Alice (♀): 13 year-old, 7 th grade, 2. Benson (♂): 9 year-old, 3 rd grade 3. Connie (♀): 7 year-old, 1 st grade	2009-2010
Family #4	Chandler & Lucy	1. Charlotte (♀): 17 year-old, 12 th grade 2. Carolyn (♀): 14 year-old, 9 th grade 3. Simon (♂): 5 year-old, kindergarten 4. Andrew (♂): 3 year-old, preschool	2001-2010

Data Analysis

The structure of my data analysis is based on the four dimensions of education criticism: *description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics*. Through description, it “enables readers to visualize what a place or process that the critic attempts to help them understand” (Eisner, 1998, p. 89). Description helps readers see and understand what has been investigated in the field. An educational critic does not give an account of

everything happening in the field, but focuses on and writes about what is chosen to be attended to (Eisner, 2002, p. 227). On top of description, interpretation explains the meanings of what is observed and written. Interpretation is a meaning-making process, giving an account for what is described. Then evaluation further assesses and judges the educational value of what is interpreted. Finally, thematics identifies the recurring messages or themes (Eisner, 1998, p. 104-105), as a guide for us to find pervasive qualities in analyzing the data. By means of analysis of D-I-E-T (*description, interpretation, evaluation, thematics*), this study attempts to help readers develop a deeper understanding of what Christian homeschoolers in Taiwan think and do through their homeschooling.

Validity

To support the validity of this study, I used the following three ways which an educational critic can employ. First, *structural corroboration*, similar to the process of triangulation, is “a means through which multiple types of data are related to each other to support or contradict the interpretation and evaluation of a state of affairs” (Eisner, 1998, p. 110). The data of this study came from the in-depth interviews with the homeschoolers. Multiple and different sources of data collection helped increase the validity and trustworthiness of this study (Ely, 1991, p. 96-97). The data collected through the direct observation of the homeschooling practice and the homeschooling portfolios shared by each family were also used as triangulation.

Second, *consensual validation*, is “agreement among competent others that the description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics of an educational situation are right”

(Eisner, 1998, p. 112). During my stay in Taiwan, I attended a homeschooling camp held by Mujen. After talking with a few other homeschoolers and joining the parents' talk time there, I found what the parents in the camp revealed is in accordance with the data I collected from the homeschoolers who participated in my study, especially in perceiving the primary advantages of their homeschooling and the challenges they face. In addition, I visited the Mujen office in Taipei and interviewed the Director of Mujen. I consulted with him about the homeschooling movement in Taiwan and also found what he shared support the finding of my study. This process of constructing consensual validation may be like member-checking (Ely, 1991, p. 165; Creswell, 2007, p. 208-209) in general qualitative research. During organizing the field notes and analyzing the data, I also followed up and double-checked with the families about things unclear via email, Skype or international phones.

Third, *referential adequacy*, which is the most important criterion for assessing the validity of educational criticism, refers to a major function of expanding the perception and enlarging the understanding of the readers about the subject matter (Eisner, 1998, p. 113). After reading a referentially adequate educational criticism, according to Eisner, readers should be able to locate in its subject matter the qualities and the meanings that the critic addresses and ascribes to them (p. 114). Through presenting the Christian homeschooling practice from the six dimensions of educational connoisseurship (the intentional, curricular, structural, pedagogical, evaluative, and community relationship), this study should be able to expand my readers' perception and enlarge their understanding of this educational practice in Taiwan.

The interactions with other homeschoolers and children I met during the study were also important. Before attending any activities, such as different study groups, I always asked for approvals/agreement from the homeschoolers. Through my data-collection process, all the homeschoolers I met were generously friendly and kind to help after knowing my background and study. Some homeschoolers even gave constructive suggestions to this qualitative study. For instance, one of the homeschooling mothers participated in my study suggested that it would make my study more complete by adding a critical question: “*when you feel burned out, what would you do?*” Based on her experience and observation, she noticed that many families could not continue homeschooling because they had not dealt with this problem properly. Thus, I included this question in this study on her recommendation and further learned more about their homeschooling experience.

In addition, I have been aware of the privacy of all the homeschoolers and children I met. When I wanted to take photos in the study groups, I would ask the permissions from the homeschoolers as well. A mother in one of the study groups I attended was concerned about her privacy, for example, so she requested me to have montages on her face if I wanted to use any of her photos. I appreciated her openness and directness; meanwhile, I would be more careful in sharing the data collected. In order to honor anonymity, pseudonyms are also used for the names of the participants in this study. In describing the data from the field, such as sample homeschool days of each family, I chose to present the parts which are most appropriate and comprehensive for data analysis in this study.

A Qualitative Inquiry as an Interactive Process

Attempting to protect the privacy of the homeschooling families studied, I kept in touch with the parents and confirmed with them whenever I was not sure whether it would be fine to provide some details about their backgrounds. In most of the cases, they would say yes and were glad to answer or share further information with me.

As for the researcher-participant relationship, I would characterize it as a comfortable friendship instead of a distant guest-host relationship. I found that all of the families have been kind and open to share with me about their homeschooling experience.

After interviewing the first family, the mother suggested to me to add a critical question in my interview for other homeschooling parents: “When you feel burned out in your homeschooling, what would you do?” She has seen many homeschooling families who couldn’t continue because they did not deal with this problem efficiently. On her suggestion, I included this question in my qualitative inquiry of homeschooling and it turned out to be an important part of my study.

Timeline

Dec. 2009 –Jan. 2010: Defense of the proposal & IRB approval

Feb.– Apr. 2010: Data collection in Taiwan

May – Sep. 2010: Data analysis; writing of dissertation

Oct. 2010: Defense of dissertation

CHAPTER FOUR

Descriptions of Christian Homeschooling families in Taiwan

In order to present what homeschooling of these four families look like, I divided the descriptions into the following sections: (1) a general background introduction to each family, (2) sample homeschool days (3) the motivations for homeschooling, (4) the practice of homeschooling, and (5) the community relationship. The first section provides readers with a contextual description of each family's background. The second section is the chronicle description of sample/typical homeschool days for each family in the chronicle order. The third section uses Eisner's intentional dimension of schooling to explain the reasons and the goals for the homeschoolers to choose and continue homeschooling. The fourth section further utilizes the curricular, pedagogical, structural and evaluative dimensions of schooling to describe the homeschooling practice in each family. The last section describes the relationship between the homeschooling families with the larger communities, such as schools, relatives, friends, neighbors or other support groups.

Family #1

Family as the Foundation of Education

Background Introduction

The first homeschooling family (Family #1) I visited lives in the city of Hsinchu (新竹), a northwest city famous as the base for high technology industry in Taiwan.

Through the introduction of the Mujen association²⁴, I started to keep in contact with this family via email before I went back to Taiwan. There are four children in this family:

Cindy (♀): 13 year-old, 7th grade;

Lily (♀): 10 year-old, 4th grade;

Jimmy (♂): 7 year-old, 2nd grade;

Tony (♂): 4 year-old, preschool²⁵.

The homeschooling mother, Chelsea, graduated from a prestigious teachers' university (National Taiwan Normal University) and was working as a music teacher before she became a full-time homeschooler. Phil has his master degree in technology and is working as a manager in the research and development division of an information technology company. Both of the parents became Christians (Protestants) when they were in college. They started to homeschool their two girls when Cindy was 3 year-old and Lily was one-year-old in 2000. The parents heard about homeschooling from their friends, during then time when their friends stayed with the couple in Hsinchu for a church conference the year before in 1999.

²⁴ Mujen Home Educators Association: Founded in 1998, it is the oldest homeschooling organization in Taiwan. It is abbreviated as "Mujen" in this study.

²⁵ In the description of Family #1, since Tony is still in his preschool stage, "the homeschooled children" refer to the three older children, Cindy, Lily, and Jimmy.

The Turning Point to Homeschooling

In 1999, the couple hosted some friends coming to Hsinchu for a one-week conference which was held by the Mujen association. “It was our first time to hear about ‘homeschooling’. We were very surprised to know that....how could it be possible to homeschool! So we would like to know why,” Phil said.

After learning more about homeschooling, the couple started to think about the possibility of homeschooling their own children after listening to the sharing and teaching of an American missionary (Pastor Steve Hake²⁶) in the conference. “The conference was an eye-opening experience for us, letting us know it’s not impossible to homeschool! We just never thought of another choice....especially for Christians, I believe the educational responsibility is on parents....so we started to think about doing homeschooling ourselves,” he emphasized, “It’s great to be at home!”

The couple decided to start their homeschooling together. Chelsea mentioned that it was really a blessing that both she and her husband could hear about homeschooling at the same time, so they did not have to spend time to communicate or negotiate. She knew many wives who wish to do homeschooling, but their husbands don’t feel the same way, which may cause tension in the family.

A Typical Homeschool Day

I spent almost the whole week with this family (3/8-14, 2010). The family lives in an apartment of a community with about 300 households in the city of Hsinchu. A big lovely garden is right in the center of the apartment buildings of the community. It was a rainy morning when I first visited this family. Phil came to pick me up in the early

²⁶ Pastor Steve Hake (王海文牧師) is an American missionary in Taiwan and an expert in family education.

morning with his oldest boy, Jimmy. We arrived at their home slightly earlier than 9 am. Phil had to head to the company right after dropping us off in the parking lot. So I followed the 7-year-old boy to take the elevator up to their place.

Outside their apartment door, a sign with the words, “Grant me serenity to accept what I can't change; grant me courage to change what I can change; grant me wisdom to distinguish both.” was placed on the wooden shoe cabinet.

Chelsea opened the door for us. She seemed to be a little bit shy when we first met, but she came to be more comfortable with my visit as we talked more about their homeschooling experience.

In their living room, they have a set of sofa, a piano and audio equipment. I noticed there was a board showing “Christ is the Lord of this house” on the wall in the right center above the sofa. At 9:00 am, the music alarm clock was ringing (it rings hourly as a timer for their homeschooling). All the children were working on their own study in different places: Cindy in her bedroom, Lily in the study room, and Jimmy in the dining room (Tony was still sleeping then until 10:00 am). The peaceful atmosphere made me feel warm and secure in that damp cold morning in Taiwan.

Chelsea told me the three kids (Cindy, Lily & Jimmy) used to be separate in different rooms, but Chelsea felt kind of tired to take care of each of them in dissimilar spaces, so she tried to have the two elementary kids together in the dining room the week before I visited. However, during my visit, they restored the way they worked before to study separately, “Last week we tried to get them both to the dining table to study together, but only for 2 days, then Lily wanted to be back to her study room because she didn't want to be under the control of Mom...” Chelsea explained, “As long as they can

finish their work, I think it's fine. Lily is more autonomous and self-disciplined. She can always come to the dining table to ask questions at any time." So the two older girls stay in their rooms for study, while Jimmy remains studying in the dining room.

After looking around the home for a while, I was sitting diagonally across from Jimmy at the dining table. Jimmy was working on his abacus calculation alone. He has three books of abacus calculation and he needs to finish a total of 60 practice questions per day. Jimmy has a timer right next to him to measure how fast it takes to finish the task. Phil is certificated as the first level in abacus calculation, so he teaches Jimmy abacus calculation in addition to mathematics. Chelsea explained they didn't have abacus calculation in their homeschooling in the first place until recently they saw some other homeschooling families include this subject in their performance, and since Phil is able to instruct, they started to have it in their curriculum.

As for math, Jimmy has to finish 10 pages of math textbook each day. Those math questions are for practice with simple concepts. Last week they just got these textbooks from a local public school, but no answer keys or teacher's guides are provided for homeschooling families.

Multiple Tasks of the Homeschooler

Chelsea was occupied with multiple tasks: she was doing housework in the kitchen at first, then she came to correct Jimmy and Lily's homework when they were finished, and later she walked to Cindy's room to ask whether she was doing alright. Chelsea explained that the subjects are heavier (more serious) for Jimmy and Lily in the morning, such as Mandarin, math, and abacus calculation, so they can be more relaxing in the afternoon. Chelsea usually spends more time accompanying Cindy at night.

Around 9:55 am, the telephone was ringing. Chelsea answered the phone and finished the talk quickly. At 10:00 am, the clock was playing music and the older children knew that it was time to wake their youngest brother up. So the three siblings went into the bedroom together to wake Tony up and played with him. Ten o'clock was also the exercise time for the girls; Chelsea just had a new assignment of exercise for the two older girls: 10:00 am running and 4:00 pm jumping rope for everyday plus a table-tennis class on Friday night. Chelsea explained, "I've found the older the kids are becoming, the less exercise they seem to do." Chelsea reminded them, "Do not delay!" Then Cindy and Lily went downstairs to run around the courtyard for two circles. They came up with some tiny flowers in their hands and shared with their brothers when Tony was having his breakfast.

Chelsea continued to check Jimmy's math homework at 10:25 am. He got an answer wrong and he had to correct it. However, Chelsea found he was distracted, so she said to the boy, "You have to be focused, Jimmy. You are getting slower now!" Chelsea explained to me that if Jimmy doesn't finish the assignment in time, he can't go down to play in the afternoon, which is very important to him.

Then Cindy spoke out loudly from her room, "Mom, I don't know what to do now!" Chelsea replied from the dining room, "I'll come and tell you right away," and assigned her work.

It was 10:35 am, Chelsea tried to get Jimmy for his violin practice, "Be prepared for the practice in two minutes.....(Jimmy was still playing around with a glove in his hands)... now one minute had passed." Then Jimmy had a new request, "Mom, I wanna go to the bathroom." Finally Jimmy got his violin ready and Chelsea started to play the

piano as his accompanist. Chelsea studied music in college: her major is piano and minor is violin. She said to Jimmy as he was a little bit too hyper, “You are not supposed to be badly behaved when Aunt Grace is visiting us!”

In the middle of the practice, Lily came out of her room to ask Chelsea how to write certain Chinese characters. Tony was sitting on Chelsea’s lap and tapping the keyboard during the break. Jimmy continued his practice with Chelsea, while Tony started to jump rope in the living room by himself, not bothering the music practice.

Around 11:03 am, Chelsea told Jimmy to practice again by himself while she walked away to get something from the bedroom. Jimmy stopped and played with Tony in the living room for ten minutes and then came back to practice his violin again.

After finishing Jimmy’s music practice, it was Lily’s turn to practice the piano. Jimmy was sitting to write his Chinese for a while and then, distracted, he went to see his sister playing the piano. A few minutes later he went to the kitchen. Chelsea noticed his inability to be focused, so she asked him, “Are you tired? Why not take a break?” In response to that, Jimmy took a ten-minute break since he seemed to be unfocused. He automatically came back to practice his Chinese characters after the break.

Teaching in Daily Life

When Jimmy was working on his Chinese, the doorbell was ringing all of a sudden. It was the neighbor who brought the homemade dumplings to Chelsea for lunch. Jimmy opened the door and Mom reminded him “Don’t forget to greet!” And Chelsea came out of kitchen to chat with the neighbor for a couple of minutes and then went back for cooking.

Jimmy also went into the kitchen and asked what Chelsea was doing. Chelsea said, “I’m peeling beans. Do you want to help?” While Chelsea was washing peas, she spoke out loud “Does anyone want to see a live caterpillar?” The other kids and I went into the kitchen to see the caterpillar. Chelsea said, “I found another caterpillar in the beans!” They were excited to see real caterpillars in the sink.

Then Jimmy and Tony stayed in the kitchen as Chelsea was cooking the dumplings for lunch. While Jimmy was talking to Chelsea, she replied, “Dear, I was thinking about something, so when you talked with me. I might not be able to respond immediately, it’s not because I was not hearing.” Chelsea was like as a multiple-task instructor doing cooking, keeping an eye on Tony, listening to Jimmy and instructing him how to help in cooking at the same time.

We had beef noodles and dumplings for lunch (12:40 pm -1:20 pm). We said the grace together and talked over the meal with the family. After lunch, all the kids were doing the chores and cleaning the apartment together. Cindy was mopping the floor, Lily was washing dishes, and Jimmy was folding the clothes, while Chelsea was hand-washing the clothes with Tony in the balcony. The children rotate their chore duties every 1-2 months.

After finishing the chores, it was naptime for Tony and Chelsea (2:30-3:10 pm). Other children kept studying: Cindy was reading her geography, Lily was working on her drawing, and Jimmy was reading English books in their rooms quietly. Around 3:30 pm, Chelsea started the English class with Jimmy at the dining table, while Lily was listening to her English CD (*Let’s Talk in English*) in the living room. Chelsea was not sure of the pronunciation of the word “grandpa”, whether “d” is pronounced or not, so she and

Jimmy looked the word up in the dictionary together. At 4:15 pm, three older kids were jumping rope in the living room, and Tony was playing with them there. Ten minutes later, it was snack time, so all the kids shared the pineapple cakes together at the dining table.

Around 5:00 pm, Chelsea started to teach Lily the piano lesson, while Tony was playing around by himself in the living room. I asked Chelsea whether they had a fixed time for breaks, and she replied, “No, it’s not fixed, just approximate. We are not holding the timer as another homeschooling friend is always doing with her three kids at home.

At night, 6:00-6:30 pm was time for the children to watch their favorite programs. The family does not have a television at home; they only have a projector for children to watch certain TV streaming programs in the living room. The children were watching a program called “*Follow Me after Classes*” (下課花鹿米), which introduced different kinds of knowledge through traveling and adventure; they could also watch a cartoon before dinnertime during weekdays.

When all the children were watching in the living room, Chelsea was preparing for dinner and we had a free talk in the kitchen. I left the family after dinner on that day and came back to stay with them for the following few days.

Intentional Dimension of Homeschooling

Chelsea intends to mold her children’s character and to develop their talents through homeschooling, “I hope my children can be used by God. They can be like sharpened swords in terms of their character, will, faith, knowledge and attitude of service.” She firmly believes that it is God’s calling for her to homeschool, so she

continues doing so, “God has called me to do homeschooling. I’ve been praying for that for a long time. Especially when I was struggling whether to continue homeschooling Cindy for the junior high school level, we had to pray a lot for that decision.But even when I felt like quitting, I’d see a sign in the bathroom of the church saying, ‘Don’t quit!’”

As for the father, Phil used a metaphor of putting stones of different sizes into a bottle to explain his idea about homeschooling: the order should be big stones first, then small ones, and last sand. “During the homeschooling days, we can put the biggest, the most important stones as the foundation first. Both my wife and I feel that we don’t put the big stones properly in our children’s lives yet,” Phil said. When asked what the big stones are, Phil pointed the following out: good character, loving relationship among siblings, passion for learning, and development of individual talents.

Phil continued explaining, “We know that homeschooling days are not long. Perhaps our faith is not big enough.....in Taiwan’s environment, we may not be so helpful with the senior high curriculum. So our current plan is that our kids will be back to school for the senior high school study. So we have to make good use of this opportunity and take good advantage of our homeschooling days to shape our children.”

After interviewing the homeschooling parents and analyzing the documents from their teaching proposal for homeschooling (Appendix F), I have summarized their homeschooling goals as follows (not in the order of importance):

- (1) to build faith-based character;
- (2) to have good relationship between siblings;
- (3) to learn happily, to have fun learning;

(4) to discover and develop the children's talents.

Echoing Phil's goals, Chelsea pointed out her primary goal for homeschooling is to raise godly children so that they can be used by God some day. The secondary goal is to discover their children's talents without wasting time at home, "I have to confess that I still expect them to be outstanding. I didn't realize this hidden expectation until later. Both of my parents are teachers, so I was asked to be excellent since I was young...." She shared that the most pressure of homeschooling is from herself, not from the society. Sometimes she feels pressured by her own expectations to see her children's progress in homeschooling.

The journey to homeschooling is not always straight. Chelsea shared with me some notes she took during the time she was struggling whether to continue her oldest girl for junior high school. Her oldest child, Cindy, went back to public school for a year when she was in the 6th grade. The rest of the children remain at home. During that one school year, Chelsea noticed some changes in Cindy's life as the following (I've summarized in the numeric order, not in the order of importance):

1. The relationship between the girls became alienated (bad) because of their different schedules
2. Cindy got many pimples for the school's lunch was too greasy compared with meals at home (not intended but good control in nutrition)
3. Cindy did not continue memorizing the verses during that year.
4. Cindy spent lots of time working on her school homework because she is a slow-work person. At that time, she stopped all her music and art classes.

After spending a year in public school, Cindy came back for homeschooling, though she did not dislike the life in school. The primary reason for her to choose homeschooling was she did not want to give up the extra-curricular classes (enrichment classes, such as piano and drawing classes) she is interested in. However, from the parents' perspective, the major reason for them to continue homeschooling Cindy even in junior high school was that they did not want to give up the part of religious education (faith and life) in her study. They noticed that there is some tension between what they have learned from school and at home. Some children refused to go to church in their teenage years. Chelsea said that she had been praying for this homeschooling decision for two years (since Cindy was in the 5th grade).

Chelsea mentioned the process how she looked for God's guidance for homeschooling Cindy in her junior high level. Based on our talks during the cooking time and the notes she shared, Chelsea had prayed to God for the following five clear signs (in the order in which she said):

1. First of all, she prayed for the support from their family relatives.

The grandparents on both sides initially opposed the decision that Chelsea would give up her teaching career to be a full-time homeschooler, as Chelsea explained, "They would think it's a great waste for a lady who has received higher education to give up her career for the family."

Later after seeing the children's growth and progress, Chelsea's mother accepted and agreed with her homeschooling plan; however, her father doesn't support nor oppose until now because he is worried that the homeschooling mother would be overloaded

with work. As for her mother-in-law, she is supportive of their homeschooling especially after seeing their results (her father-in-law passed away).

2. The parent-child relationship needs to be improved: Chelsea once had tension with her oldest daughter, Cindy, for a time, and she prayed if their relationship was not improved, it would be really difficult, not to mention homeschooling. And later their relationship did get better.

3. Cindy would be better in time management and not procrastinate.

4. Chelsea would be renewed with God's strength as eagles.

5. Phil's work would not be too busy so that he could help homeschooling.

Chelsea frankly expressed that sometimes she feels powerless and unconfident especially after Cindy started her junior high study. She received a biblical vision of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness: "We have to pray a lot for our decision of homeschooling, especially after junior high school stage. The Lord has given me the promise that He'll make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert (Is. 43:19). God always made a way for the Israelites in the wilderness and He made rivers in the desert. The Israelites were wandering in the wilderness for forty years, but they had nothing to want."

Starting from junior schools, most school students in Taiwan receive much more training in test skills by taking numerous exams in schools for the competitive school entrance examinations (for high schools and for colleges/universities). In other words, the primary goal of the school students in Taiwan is simply academic study, no matter they are in a public or private school. Thus, according to the parents, one of the biggest advantages of homeschooling is that the homeschooled children are provided with more

relaxation, freedom and chances to explore their interests in their study. For the parents, they plan to homeschool their children through junior high school, but they will do it step by step (evaluate their homeschooling year by year).

The parents feel that the values taught in school are different from those taught at home: academic achievement is the top priority in school and all school training is meant to get high scores; furthermore, the relationship between classmates is mostly built on examinations. The parents think life is not limited to academic work: they hope Cindy can develop good characters and her talents through homeschooling. Besides, their goal is to develop Cindy's passion for learning, not simply waiting to be fed with knowledge or standard answers. As Chelsea shared, "Whenever I think I can form and shape my children, it's great to do homeschooling. We evaluate homeschooling every year. We'd be more cautious in junior high level, depending on different children's personalities.... I hope that they can be more independent and self-motivated in learning"

Practice of Homeschooling:

Curricular, Pedagogical, Structural, and Evaluative Dimensions

Curricular

The family has basic subjects and extra-curricular classes in their homeschooling. For the basic subjects in the elementary school, such as Chinese and math, they just follow the school's curriculum; they also go over the textbooks quickly for natural science and social science in 5th and 6th grades. However, they chose their own materials for English: Jimmy is using *You & Me* and Lily is using *Let's Talk in English*. Chelsea explained that the book *You & Me* came with a CD and interesting games, which are

attractive to kids. They also have the Bible study and the Chinese classical literature, the subjects that are not available in schools.

For junior high school, they cover almost all the subjects in school, especially for the subjects required in the high-school entrance exams. These subjects include Chinese, English, mathematics, social studies (history, geography and civel education), natural science (biology for 7th grade; physics and chemistry for 8th and 9th grades) and writing. Cindy's curricula are taken from the local school. Both the parents and Cindy are quite aware of the importance of exams in their homeschooling. On top of the subjects for the exam, they add extra-curricular classes for Cindy based on her interests. For instance, Cindy is good at art, so she takes extra classes for drawing and calligraphy.

Extra-curricular classes.

As a former schoolteacher, Chelsea found in some elective classes, like music, students simply listen to music and sing songs in school. In contrast, the family has different directions for music education: the parents provide their children opportunities to learn a musical instrument. The girls, Cindy and Lily, are learning the piano; Jimmy is learning the violin (Phil is a violin player and also taking a violin class with his son). The parents also chose a soccer course for Lily and Jimmy, since they are talented in sports.

In order to discover the children's potentials and develop their talents, the parents arranged the following extra-curricular classes²⁷ for their children in homeschooling.

* Cindy: Math, Chinese classical literature, Chinese essay, calligraphy, drawing, piano²⁸, and table tennis.

²⁷ Tony is only 5 year old so he does not attend any specific classes yet.

²⁸ Chelsea taught Cindy piano at first. But Chelsea found that Cindy did not take it seriously and not practice the piano regularly, so she paid for a piano tutor to teach Cindy. Nevertheless, Chelsea keeps teaching her second daughter (Lily) piano at home.

* Lily: Chinese essay, calligraphy, drawing (in the study group), piano, table tennis, and soccer.

* Jimmy: violin, table tennis, soccer, and drawing (in the study group).

In addition to the children's interests, they also chose their extra-curricular classes based on the availability and convenience. On Friday night, all the children (except Tony) go to a table-tennis center near their church during the time when the parents participate in a family group at church. Chelsea shared:

Sometimes God has given us opportunities. For instance, we've just got appropriate teachers around while the time and location also work for us. Since I don't drive, transportation is another issue for us. Our violin teacher is able to come to our place to teach. As for the table-tennis class, a table-tennis center just opened around the corner from our church. And we have our church group meeting on Friday night. Since we've got so many children, we parents discussed and agreed to send our children to learn table tennis, so that we don't have to worry about babysitting either.

Chelsea further shared with me about the economic aspect of homeschooling, as it always takes money to have a tutor or attend extra-curricular classes. Thus, the family has to take good control of their budgets. Besides, the children do not have tutors for the basic subjects, they have to figure out ways to study independently and to study the subjects they may not be interested in. Chelsea found that homeschooling pushes her children to have the right attitude of study and develop the ability to learn all the subjects by themselves eventually.

The family has various books in the study room (it's also where Lily studies most of time), including history books, children's books, books for learning English and Chinese literature, for children to read during their leisure time.

In order to suit their children's needs, Chelsea has changed the curricula or

original plan in homeschooling. For example, she was planning to have Jimmy to memorize all Analects of Confucius, “but it seems to be too difficult for him. I didn’t want him to study it for too many years either. So I changed my plan: I ask him to read the verses 20 times carefully instead, and choose some popular verses to have him recite by heart.”

Religious education.

Reading the Bible and memorizing biblical verses on a daily basis have become an important part of their homeschooling. The children have been reading the Bible since they were little. In the preschool years, Chelsea taught her children to recognize Chinese words by reading the Proverbs in the Bible. Chelsea expressed her expectations for more time in religious education, “In homeschooling, the part of religious education is quite limited because of the academic pressure; however, I think we’ve still got more time and chances to read the Bible than school students.”

More than a part of intellectual education, the parents attempt to establish Bible-based, good characters through religious education.

For the Bible study, they tried to use the Bible study material, *Chinese Precepts* (恩言善導), as a family together; however, they did not finish it because of the age differences among the family members. Chelsea shared, “For instance, the oldest kid already finished all the questions and started to feel bored, while the younger ones were asking how to write this or that Chinese word.” It was difficult to work on the material as a family together.

Thus, the family changed their Bible study to be individual-based and Bible-based: they started to read the Bible in accordance with their individual schedules. All the

children are required to read the Bible and to memorize the Biblical verses on a daily basis. They also attend the Bible Camp held by Mujen annually for advanced Biblical study.

Lily and Jimmy share the same Bible-reading schedule (about 1-2 chapter per day). However, Chelsea would adjust the schedule based on their individual progress. The oldest, Cindy, has a tighter schedule, so hers is different; she follows the schedule of church. Good at memorizing versus, Lily has to memorize 12 Biblical verses per week; Jimmy is required to memorize 8 verses per week. They have to recite the verses by heart and be tested by Chelsea every Friday.

As for Cindy, she has to memorize one biblical verse everyday because of her heavier academic duty. Besides, both the parents noticed that Cindy seems to be less motivated to memorize the biblical verses after she spent a year in public school. During that one year in school, Cindy did not keep memorizing the verses.

Similarly, the family was also using the curriculum of character education translated from English and published by ATI; however, after completing the first series, the parents found it did not fit naturally as they realized character education required more practice in daily life. Thus, they did not continue using the curriculum but instead started to teach children to establish good character in their daily life. For example, the parents plan to teach kids “how to respect” this year. Phil also led a discussion on “how to teach children good character” in the adult Sunday school at church. The parents also attend a family-focused fellowship group every Friday.

Every weekend, the whole family attends the Sunday service and Sunday schools at church together. The church has around 300 people in the congregation in the city of

Hsinchu. The two older girls are currently receiving the training (including worship and memorizing biblical verses) at church: Cindy serves as a group leader and a pianist in the worship team at church; Lily is under preparation for becoming a worship team member. They have to arrive at church by 9:00 am for the training, while the service does not start until 10:30 am.

During summer and winter breaks, the children participate in camps or activities held by the Mujen association, Prayer Mountain (禱告山), Youth Care Associations (青少年關懷協會) or other church organizations.

On top of the annual Bible camps and youth camps held by Mujen, church's resources are important in terms of religious education. For instance, Cindy spent five summer and winter breaks in the children's camps (each for 7-10 days) to receive the training in the Mountain Prayer (as the person in charge of the children's camps is the Sunday school principal in her church) Lily also attended some other camps to stay overnight as supplementary activities to their homeschooling.

Family Worship.

The family also has their own family worship every Sunday night. I was invited to join their family worship time on 3/14/2010. The one-hour family worship began with a card game as a warm-up activity. Phil also prepared cookies, ice cream and pudding on the living table. Then Phil asked all to share what they liked most about their home. Each of us shared something we enjoyed by turns. Cindy shared that she likes the bunk bed shared with her sister and the time of watching fish in the fish tank with Tony together. Jimmy mentioned his favorite was eating ice cream as a hint to have the ice cream soon.

Next, the family discussed the new rules of penalty in homeschooling; meanwhile, we started to eat the desserts. Last week the children had to run a circle for every 15 minutes, if they did not get ready for study in the morning (at 8:10 am). Chelsea reminded the children to stop haggling with her as they could not bargain with teachers in schools. They would continue the rule to prevent the children from being late.

At the end of the family worship, we closed the discussion with prayer by turns. Some children simply said one sentence of words to thank God or pray for family needs. Their family worship was composed of their family life, homeschooling and religious education altogether.

Pedagogical

When asked to describe her teaching style, Chelsea said it might not be easy to define: “I tried to be more creative, active, full of varieties, but later I found I’m not that kind of personality. So I just teach as who I am. But I’ll make changes based on my children’s learning progress. Sometimes I would stick with the teaching style I got used to, then my children would give me some feedback or opinions, and I’d make adjustments. So I don’t know which I should choose for my teaching style.”

Chelsea pointed out the biggest challenge she faces in teaching at home perhaps is less variety compared with the teaching in schools. For the oldest daughter, Cindy, she feels less stimulated at home; she likes variety and being challenged. As Chelsea described, “She (Cindy) knows what I would do next since we’ve been homeschooling for so many years. There’s more variety because she may meet different teachers in school. Also, being back to school may lessen stress for my children and myself, because perhaps I give them more homework to work on than in school. But I think there’s still

stress even if they all go to school, especially the time after they come back from school. When Tony was little, the kids were back to school for one month. I didn't get rest either. We just postponed the stress. We had to catch up on the school schedules too.”

Chelsea shared about her lack of confidence in teaching English and math, especially for the junior high school level. She often asked others who are more experienced how to teach English and other subjects. She would like to learn from others' homeschooling experience, but they're really few in Taiwan. Chelsea honestly let her children know her limitations, so when they encountered some questions or problems, they would turn it into an opportunity to learn and explore together.

Structural

Time.

In the past, the family had a schedule of “6 weeks of studying followed by a one-week break”, which cycled over the course of the year (i.e., after the six-week of study, they had a whole week of break, and it cycled in a year). Later Chelsea found she was exhausted and was not able to get enough rest even during the break week, as she indicated:

During that week, while my children did nothing, I had to catch up on the housework that I couldn't do well during the six-week study time. We didn't have summer or winter breaks as regular schools do. One time my children had to write their homework during the Chinese New Year, and my father did not feel good about that. Later we changed it and we no longer do that now.... In the past, we didn't have summer or winter breaks, but now we tend to be more like schools. During breaks, we usually do something to make my children and myself happy, such as baking, making arts and crafts, writing calligraphy.

Now the family basically follows the school schedule, dividing the school year into two semesters with summer and winter breaks in-between. During summer and

winter vacations, the family still keeps some basic lessons, although it's lighter workload, like the Bible, music (piano and violin), and math, abacus calculation. In addition, the family also arranges different types of lessons, like cooking, church camps, arts and crafts, reading in Chinese and English, in order for children to have more fun and relaxation.

For the daily schedule, Lily and Jimmy have heavier subjects in the morning, including Mandarin, math and abacus calculation, so they may feel more relaxed in the afternoon. As for the oldest girl's schedule, she has serious subjects (like math, English) and less intense subjects (like reading, music) mixed together. For instance, 11:00 am-12:00 pm is scheduled for Cindy to play the piano; she can use this time with flexibility. On the day I visited them, for example, she started to play the piano around 11:45 am.

Every hour, the music alarm clock near the dining table rings to indicate it's time to change subjects.

Chelsea said that Cindy likes reading, "when I crossed out three reading classes last week, I found she was not doing better. Instead she was not motivated to study hard, her efficiency of study became lower." And reading can be used to motivate Cindy's study. The daily schedule of this family is shown in Appendix G.

The family used to write down all the to-do lists on their schedule and crossed them out when they were finished, but later they became more organized by using a timed schedule in order to complete duties in a timely manner.

Space.

The dining table is the primary space for homeschooling to take place. In addition, Chelsea usually does English and piano classes in the living room. The family uses space with flexibility, "Yesterday it was because Lily was listening to the English CD in the

living room, I did the English class with Jimmy at the dining table. Sometimes we'd bring the blankets to the living room to study English. It's very comfortable!" I recalled on the second day of my visit, I did see Chelsea read English with Jimmy with blankets on the sofa. It was so cold and humid with only 50 F (below 10 C) without heater. Making a comfortable and warm environment for children to learn is highlighted in their homeschooling.

For homeschooling, the family designed a bigger dining table with drawers. They also posted a big whiteboard right next to their dining table. Besides, Chelsea mentioned the main reason for their family to move to this current community is for our homeschooling, "It has good public utility and space for study groups on the 1st floor. We prayed for a better living space for homeschooling. This basement and the first-floor are good for sports and PE activities. We only have to pay a little amount of utility fee for using the public space for our study group. We apply for it annually." Chelsea and her husband prayed for a place with public utilities and large space for study groups, and they found their current apartment to fulfill their needs in homeschooling.

Chelsea sometimes takes the children downstairs to the library room in their community, but not often. "All the kids are together, it's too much attraction. Also, there're so many books around them. It is a great temptation for my kids. It makes them less motivated to focus on and so their homework. So I seldom do so now." The family may go to their friends' home to do homework as well, but it is limited because of the transportation issue. Cindy can bike to the youth center for her essay class; however, Lily and Jimmy have no freedom to bike yet. They also like to go to the youth center for reading books and doing their homework.

Evaluative

Discipline.

When asked what her parenting style is (authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent or neglectful), Chelsea answered, “It’s hard to choose, perhaps mine includes them all. It’s hard to always keep one style, depending on my energy level. When I have more energy, perhaps it’s authoritative; at night, when most of my energy is consumed, it’s easier to be authoritarian. To the youngest (Tony), we are often neglectful, like asking him to play by himself when I’m teaching the older kids. But something is for sure that we’re not indulgent. Many things are not decided by children in my home. For instance, Tony has been trained to ask for my permission, like ‘May I open the fridge?’ or ‘may I take this or that?’ I’ll take control if the kids want to eat candies.”

Being hard working, being active to help, showing politeness, and being honest are the behaviors children will be rewarded for. As for the stickers are more for academic work rather than children’s character or behaviors.

Chelsea has trained the children to pay attention to their daily life details as they’re old enough, and she can be more focused on the children’s academic part. “We started a new policy since the end of last semester, since two months ago. I set up three positions (幹部), one is to take care of cleanness and hygiene, such as making the bed and brushing tooth, and one is to confirm that everyone drinks sufficient water. One is to check whether each kid finishes the assigned cleaning task; each child is responsible for cleaning a specific area at home.” Chelsea also uses token and stickers to reward the children if they finish their duties in a timely manner. “If we don’t have stickers, some kids will forget to make beds. If we do give stickers, they will finish the duties. If they

are doing good in their positions, they will get 10 points. Once we get certain points, our family will go for traveling together. The best in doing cleaning tasks will get 10 dollars.”

Saying dirty words, telling a lie, fighting, or not doing things in the right time are the behaviors forbidden. Cindy likes to read books, for instance, but sometimes she reads extracurricular books during her study time, and she would procrastinate. In that case, Chelsea had to forbid Cindy from reading irrelevant books in her study.

In terms of punishment for forbidden behaviors, as Chelsea learned from other families, she would spray vinegar on their tongues if the children say dirty words in order to let them know the flavor of what they say is as terrible as the spray. When they say good words, the children may be given honey to eat. It seems eating honey was only practiced for only a few days, but spraying vinegar has lasted for years.

She also shared how they discipline a child after the kid was found to be cheating:

One of our kids cheated in doing abacus calculation, but didn't confess it right away until I showed the evidence. The child was punished not to have dinner and to stay with us during the family group meeting. The child couldn't play with other kids during the meeting time. The kid was obedient and quiet sitting with us, even though falling asleep during the meeting. So Dad allowed the kid to have some snacks before sleep. Then the cheating behavior never happens again.

Chelsea mentioned it was not easy for her children to get up in winter, for example. Thus, when the children are late and can't make it by 8:10 am, they will receive the punishment: they have to run for one more circle, if they're late by ten minutes.

Chelsea said, “It works better than taking out ten dollars from them.” Furthermore, she explained if the children do not finish all their study work or duties (including running) during the weekdays, they have to catch it up on the weekend. And it would be a torment for them, because the children love to enjoy their weekend time without study or duties

remained. In addition, I noticed that sometimes they have catch-up time at the end of a day. For instance, I went out for dinner with the family on the second day of my visit. After we came back from dinner around 9 o'clock, the following two hours became their catch-up time before sleep: Cindy was reading and correcting her English, Lily was working on her math with the help of Chelsea at the dining table, Jimmy was doing his English, and Phil was practicing the violin in the study room.

I found a token chart (with the allowance, See Appendix H) made by Chelsea for rewards and discipline. They use different symbols for each child: A heart for Cindy, a feather for Lily, a crown for Jimmy, and a snowman for Tony.

Though Chelsea does some housework when the children do their self-study, all the children will do chores together after lunch (1:30-2:00 pm). The division of housework among the parents is as follows: Phil is responsible for making breakfast and grocery shopping (getting food from markets), while Chelsea is in charge of making lunch and dinner on top of homeschooling.

Teaching.

In homeschooling, it is easy to evaluate the learning progress of the children, Chelsea shared, "whether they can recite verses well, fast or slow, whether they know how to calculate or not. I ask them to recite and to read verses, to calculate math questions, to spell words to me, so I can evaluate their progress." However, it is more difficult to evaluate characters, "which we can not quantify." In terms of evaluating the teaching, "I myself am the one who evaluate my own teaching most strictly." Chelsea said.

For Lily and Jimmy, Chelsea takes test sheets (monthly standardized tests) from schools to aid measure the children's progress of math and Chinese. After being the 7th grade, Cindy is required by the school to take the monthly exams in school every month. Chelsea mentioned that the educational administrators did come to visit them, but they were friendly and simply came for understanding their homeschooling instead of doubts or criticism.

Chelsea shared the advantage of doing homeschooling is that the parents can have more time with the children and cover religious education in their homeschooling, "The time children stay home is longer and we can have more influence on their lives. It is good for education of faith, because we can have more training of religious education for children. If the kids are in school, the leading of education is not in parents' hands. After the children finish their school homework, they're exhausted and time is almost consumed."

However, Chelsea mentioned that both parents and children should be good at self-discipline in homeschooling; otherwise, time is easily passed or wasted. "It's also a challenge in our homeschooling. Sometimes I feel that we're always catching up on the assigned work." Besides, Chelsea shared that lack of varieties might be a disadvantage in their homeschooling:

For us, we don't have much variety, we seldom go out. But I think it may differ based on different homeschoolers' personalities. Some of my friends like to go out and have various activities, at least seven different kinds of activities outside. Besides, we have more solid basis in basic subjects. We like to practice regularly for certain subjects. But some other homeschooling friends are very flexible in teaching and learning. They would spend all their time in English, for instance, while they may skip math for the whole year.... We'd like to be balanced in our teaching and learning of all the subjects.

The Community Relationship

Before the family started homeschooling, the parents were not sure whether it would work. They did not have strong support from their relatives either. As the parents shared, they thought it would be impossible to homeschool since they never thought of homeschooling as a choice of education. However, after they started to homeschool, the environment became more and more friendly: because the children are doing well in homeschooling, most of their relatives tend to be more positive toward their homeschooling.

Chelsea's father would think that it could save lots of time simply to send the kids to schools and Chelsea doesn't have to be so occupied with homeschooling the children. However, the grandparents are all positive about the effects of the family's homeschooling. For instance, Chelsea's mother is more positive and less worried about their children than Chelsea's brother's two kids, who are sent to school. As Phil said:

My mother-in-law is very positive about the results of our homeschooling; my father-in-law is simply concerned about my wife's burden, for he loves her so dearly. As a homeschooling mother, my wife has to take care of kids for 24 hours a day. As for my mom, she is very supportive but just concerned about whether it's too much work for us. We have more responsibilities and work in homeschooling, compared to simply sending kids to school.

The family's relatives, friends and neighbors generally feel positively about their homeschooling. After I finished the interview with Phil, I was impressed by an incident. We ran into one of his neighbors on our way back home; the neighbor patted Tony's head and praised Phil, saying that his kid was well educated and taught. As for the educational administrative officials in their city, Chelsea thinks they simply came to help, not to doubt or pick on their homeschooling.

Chelsea shared, “People around me are pretty friendly. However, my dad often asks me when my kids want to go back to school. He may think it’s not a normal educational way, so he lacks a sense of safety. He is also concerned that I’m too busy, tired or too hard-working. My mother is very positive. My mother-in-law is only concerned that I’m too busy. They notice that the youngest is sometimes neglected because I’m too busy with homeschooling with the older kids.”

Chelsea has a positive and friendly attitude toward schoolteachers. She thinks schoolteachers are resource persons for their homeschooling. She also consulted with Cindy’s teachers about how to teach Chinese, for example, and the schoolteacher suggested her to give Cindy some more practices. Chelsea shared, “Schoolteachers might think that we chose homeschooling because we were excellent at teaching. Thus, they often felt honored or even amazed when we consulted with them about teaching. And they were also generous to share their teaching with us.”

Chelsea has been a member of Mujen association for 10 years (since Cindy was three years old) and a part of the Dandelion study group for the past five years. The homeschooling mothers often share experiences with one another in the study groups. According to Chelsea, “I’ve learned to do the homework in the morning from another mother. So our styles may be similar in some ways.” She also added:

If we went out or traveled during the school year, people we met often asked us why our children didn’t have to go to school. We used to explain a lot for our homeschooling. Now we simply answer it quickly: “We’re doing homeschooling”. For instance, if Lily goes out for grocery shopping with Dad during the weekdays, people would be very curious and ask why she is not in school...Now most people would just say “It’s incredible!” in response to our homeschooling.

Socialization

When it comes to socialization, both the parents shared an important concept of socialization in homeschooling: Once you can get along with your family and your siblings, whom you can't choose, you are able to get along with your friend who you may choose to make.

It is an advantage for this family to have four children and they go to church so that their children also have interactions with their peers. As Phil said:

We're privileged that we're in church and we have many kids. I think the relationships at home are the most difficult. At home, you can't choose and abandon your family members. The time is very long and the family is always direct to one another. If you don't get along with people outside your home, you may not learn enough at home. Also, I'd refer to the Chinese classical saying which also indicates that if you want to govern the nation, you have to start with your family (治國要先齊家).

Thus, they highly emphasize the family relationship as the foundation of their homeschooling, as Phil indicated:

When we talk about homeschooling, what people are concerned most about is about socialization. Based on my observation, there's no problem at all in my family. We have four kids. The older kids are naturally paying attention to younger kids and babies. Cindy was doing well in school too, getting along with her classmates after she went back for a week. Siblings are the best friends. You may choose friends, but you can't choose your brothers and sisters. So if you can get along with your siblings who you can't choose and solve the problems with them, you can surely get along with any friends who you may choose.....In contrast, Cindy and Lily were not as close as they are now when Cindy went back to school in the 6th grade and had a different schedule from the rest of the kids.

Among the children, they have to learn to share the space. For instance, when Cindy was practicing the piano in the living room, Tony was playing with his toys quietly by himself. In the meantime, two other children (Lily and Jimmy) were studying in spite of the sound from the piano.

Family #2

Fighting against the World for the Time with Children

Background Introduction

I found the second family in the Dandelion study group, which I went to with the first family on Friday morning. I met a Christian mother, Sophia, and we had a good time talking during the lunch break of the study group. I shared with her about my dissertation project and then stayed in touch afterward. After knowing more about my study via telephone and email correspondence, Sophia told me that I would be welcome to visit her family the following week.

There are two children in the family: Esther is an 11 year-old sweet girl in the 5th grade and Paul is a 9 year-old strong boy in the 3rd grade. Paul looks a little bit taller (2 cm) than his sister. Both kids look happy and healthy.

The father, Zach, is a professor teaching in a nearby university and was studying in the United States for five years for his doctoral degree; Sophia received all her education through college in Taiwan and has been a full-time homeschooler since 2005.

The Turning Point to Homeschooling

The family officially began their homeschool since 2005. Both of their kids have stayed home ever since they were born. The couple started to think about homeschooling positively and keep praying for that when they saw a good homeschooling example in their church. The mother shared, “We’ve got a church friend. All his four children are homeschooled. I noticed that they are quite different, especially their attitudes, from other young people....”

She mentioned that the behaviors of the homeschooled children caught her attention: once she was sitting behind the friend's youngest son in a classroom. An adult told the little boy "if it is too cold, please turn off the air conditioning." The boy was dressed in a suit; in order to test the real temperature, he took his suit jacket off. Since he felt cold without his jacket, he went turning the conditioning off. Then he put on his jacket and sat back to his seat. Sophia said, "...I really envy their family education and hope to raise my children by homeschooling one day..." She added, "We know that kids are influenced mostly by those whom they spend most time with. So when kids are little, we hope that they can spend more time with family. If we send kids to school, our life would be pretty much based on school schedules."

Sample Homeschool Days

On a spring Monday morning, when school students are supposed to be sitting in the classrooms for lecture, we went to pick plums in a nearby university with Sophia and her two kids. The university garden is full of plum trees and grass. People can come to pick up plums in the season when plums are mature. Sophia taught the kids how to pick up plums effectively and without being hurt by sharp branches. Esther worked with me to pick and collect the plums in small bags. I simply enjoyed the breeze and the beauty of the nature.

Around 12:30 pm, we had lunch in the cafeteria of the university. At first, Paul said he did not want to eat lunch for he was not hungry. Sophia did not blame him nor force him to get any food at first. After all the ladies (Sophia, Esther and I) chose the food and sat at the table, Paul said to his mom that he would like to have something to eat

softly. Sophia did not say anything but took him to get some food. Esther looked excited and liked to talk to me. After lunch, we spent some time in the bookstore downstairs on campus. Esther showed me how to select different stationary stuff, such as cards and wrapping paper. Paul was reading books by himself. The kids enjoyed their time there until Sophia asked them to leave for home.

We passed the highways and mountain roads to drive back to their home in the suburb of Hsinchu City. The house is surrounded by mountains and grass, full of the smell of nature. I felt refreshed by the beauty of the nature when I visited their place. Compared with 300 households in the community of the first family in Hsinchu City, there are only 74 households living in Sophia's community. The family moved to this current house in 2007. The house is nearer to Zach's school and also they wanted to have a larger space for homeschooling.

Around 2:00 pm, we arrived home and settled down within a half hour. Sophia showed me around their house and the guest room. It is a three-floor house surrounded by the grassland and mountains. They have the kitchen, dining room and the study area on the first floor; three bedrooms on the second floor; the guest room, the living room and Zach's study room on the top floor. Their home is decorated with the artwork their children made and various Bible verse ornaments.

I noticed a board written, "As for me and my household, we'll serve the Lord!" outside their bedrooms. On the wall of the stairs intersection another poster (sign) with the Lord's Prayer as follows,

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,

As we forgive our debtors.

And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

Amen.

Since their house is so close to the mountains, the humidity is usually quite high around the area. It felt so damp that Sophia tried to mop the floor in order to make it dry faster. It was Sophia's turn to prepare dinner for the Naples Community study group on that Monday night. She was cooking in the kitchen. Meanwhile, Paul was sorting the plums for making juice at the dining table and then he helped Sophia cut bean curds and carrots for dinner. Sophia was teaching him how to cut the materials into chunks and pieces well. Esther was writing her Chinese homework for the study group.

Around 3:30 pm, the kids went upstairs to the third floor to watch the English program, *Let's Talk in English*, through the projector. Esther told me if they finish all their daily work, they could have three more minutes to watch through the MOD²⁹. There is no TV set in the living room, but a sofa, a piano and a small billiard. The family can

²⁹ The MOD is a ADSL multiple media service provided by the Chunghwa Telecom Company (http://www.cht.com.tw/ou_web/cht_om/MOD/p1.htm).

watch the programs they like anytime through the MOD without being limited to the broadcasting time as watching traditional television.

We left home around 4:20 pm for the study group in Hsinchu City. However, when we were driving on our way, Sophia received a call reminding her that the study group was cancelled (It was originally announced through emails, but Sophia was too busy to check her emails that week so she was not aware of that until she got the call.) Almost one-third of the homeschooled children in the study group were attending a youth camp held by Mujen on that day, so the homeschoolers decided to cancel the classes in the study group on that day.

Upon hearing the cancellation of the study group, both kids showed great disappointment. I was surprised and started to wonder: how would school students react if they knew their class was cancelled. Would they be disappointed or more than happy to have their classes cancelled?

In response to the sudden change of the schedule, Sophia took us to the university nearby where her husband works. We walked around the campus and talked about their homeschooling experience and the soccer class Paul attended. Again, upon children's requests, we dropped by the campus bookstore to look for stationary and books.

We went back home and then enjoyed a big supper, since Sophia made plenty of beef and bean curds for the study group originally. Zach was teaching night classes in school so he did not have dinner with us then. Esther was enthusiastic to talk to me during the mealtime. She liked to talk with me when we were on the ride as well.

After dinner around 7:35 pm, Esther was doing her study, while Paul started reading the Bible with Sophia at the dining table. They were reading the chapter 8 in the

Book of Mark of the Bible. Around 8:00 pm, Esther started to practice her flute in her room on the second floor, while Paul was doing his homework in the study area downstairs. At 9:30 pm, they went up to Zach's study room to play the computer game (Mole Garden) together. Then the kids went to bed in their own rooms around 10:20 pm.

The second day (3/16), we had breakfast around 9:00 am. After breakfast, Sophia read the Bible for Esther and Paul at the dining table.

Esther went upstairs to practice her piano for an hour and half (10:15-11:45 am) before we had lunch. Esther had two music classes (Flute class: 2-3 pm; Piano class: 3:30-4:30 pm) on that afternoon. They made the change because the family was going to attend the Bible Camp later that week. Before leaving for the classes, all of a sudden, Esther told Sophia that she didn't feel like to take both classes on the same day, "it would be extremely exhausting!" Sophia tried to calm her down by explaining to her that she should say it the day before, in advance. Sophia said, "How do you know that you can't make it, Esther? It's not good to change at the last minute. Let's try and see how it goes." So they left for the classes around 1:34 pm and came back before dinnertime.

Intentional Dimension of Homeschooling

When asked what the goals they hope to reach by homeschooling, the father replied, "We hope to have more time and interactions between parents and children. We are fighting against the world for the time with our children."

Zach also mentioned during the elementary school stage, homeschooling can protect the children from the negative influences in schools, like bad words or behaviors from their peers. They also hope to keep their children from watching too much TV as the

influence of pop culture. “Children go to church on the weekends and they learn the right way there,” Zach continued, “They can get the access to the faith, of course it’s their individual choice to accept the faith, but we’d like to provide them with the opportunities to have access to the faith.” I was wondering whether their children were sheltered from all non-Christian friends. Zach explained that most their relative are not Christians, so the children do have interactions with non-Christian kids as well.

The parents hope that the life of their children can be family-centered through homeschooling: “We don’t want them to have too much time pressure because of a super tight school schedule. I heard school kids have to rush for school and when they come back, they’re exhausted and ignore something really important, such as reading the Bible and interactions with family members” Sophia continued, “One more thing is that we emphasize the life skills like laundry and cooking. If they stay home longer, we can have more time to teach them. I’d invite them to participate in cooking for lunch if there’s no special appointment.” Being family-focused and less time-pressured are the reasons for the parents to choose homeschooling instead public or private schools for their children.

Nevertheless, homeschooling is not simply a choice of the parents, the children’s willingness to participate in also matters. Zach shared, “When it comes to whether we’ll continue homeschooling or not, we’ll consider whether our kids want to be homeschooled or not. They are not forced by us. In Esther’s second grade, for example, she actively asked to be back to school for a semester, once a day (Tuesday morning through noontime for a half day).” Sophia added, “Esther is an easygoing child, so she gets along with the school classmates easily. After that, we asked her whether she wanted to go back to school, and she didn’t say it any more.”

Practice of Homeschooling:

Curricular, Pedagogical, Structural, and Evaluative Dimensions

Curricular

The family's homeschooling covers subjects including Chinese, English, math, natural science, society, music, sports, the Bible, art, and gardening. The parents select the curriculum used by regular schools because it covers the Grade 1-9 Curriculum assigned by the Ministry of Education (教育部所訂之九年一貫的課程項目). They can get the textbooks from a local school (Although they are homeschooling, they still need to pay textbook fees whether they use the textbooks or not). Sophia said the school staff is friendly, but they don't offer help or resources actively to the homeschooling family. Similar to the first family visited, Sophia also mentioned that since they are not schoolteachers, it's difficult for them to get the teacher's guides from school. The parents also include other supplementary curricula for their children, such as the Bible study and gardening etc. As for the Bible study, the family is usually able to finish their church's quarterly schedule in a month. Therefore, they have their own family schedule for the rest of the quarter.

Religious education.

In addition to regular daily reading of the Bible, the parents participate in a weekly couples' fellowship, and the family goes to Sunday service together every week. Religious education for the children includes the daily Bible reading, Sunday schools, and family altar (worship) on Wednesday.

I observed how Sophia accompanied Paul while he was reading the Bible. After dinner, Esther was doing her own study, and Paul started reading the Bible with Sophia at

the dining table. They were reading the chapter 8 in the Book of Mark of the Bible. In the beginning, Sophia prayed for Paul to have a heart of learning. Then they read the verses by turns, one verse each person, including me.

The Bible reading was also a process of learning Chinese words for Paul. I noticed that Paul was not sure of several Chinese characters in reading the verses. For example, he hesitated to pronounce a word “勸” (in verse 32) but ultimately said it correctly. He mistook the word “救” (jiu-4)³⁰ as “求” (qiu-2) in verse 35 and he pronounced the word “淫” (yin-2) as “因” (yin-1) in verse 38. Nevertheless, Sophia did not correct his pronunciation when wrong; she just let him read it through.

After reading over the passage, Sophia asked Paul, “Do you have any thoughts to share?” Paul replied, “Nothing.” Sophia continued, “Do you have questions?” Paul also replied, “No.”

Then Sophia said to him, “Ok, then I have some questions for you. I’ve got three questions: First, how many people did Jesus feed? Second, how did Jesus heal the blind? And third, what is the most frequent appearing word in the verses of 34 to 38?” Paul answered the questions right respectively. Later Sophia asked him to recite the verses (of Mark 4:14-15) by heart according to the church schedule. Paul recited the verses but did not make it perfectly so Sophia asked him to recite them again. When Paul argued with her that there were only few words different, Sophia simply replied, “If you want to recite, please recite it well. It is not telling the summary.”

Paul did it again. It seems he was so eager to get Sophia’s signature on his assignment sheet, for he kept asking Sophia to sign for him. After the recitation, they had

³⁰ The letters show the pronunciation in Pin-yin and the number followed indicates the tone for the word.

a closing prayer by Paul, “Jesus, please make us to know Your Words more, and know You more~ Amen!” Finally he got the signature of completion approval from Sophia.

Family Worship.

Their family worship is usually on Wednesday nights, but it was changed to the Tuesday night because of the Bible Camp (Wednesday through Friday of that week). Zach was leading the family worship and started the worship with a prayer. Then we were singing two hymns as Sophia led us. A song with the lyrics, “Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of Christ³¹,” and the other song saying, “though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet the Lord’s love will never leave us.³²”

The kids were playing with each other in the beginning for a few minutes. As the worship continued, they calmed down and listened to Zach attentively. Zach asked all to share something that we might feel thankful for that week. Paul replied “nothing” in the first place, but Zach reminded him of the new Bible he just bought and the completion of his three-month tooth treatment.

Sophia continued to share, “We’ve been so busy last week, but God has been protecting us.” Then she paused and told Esther not to play the play money on the table, as she was supposed to learn to be respectful. Esther started to be attentive followed by her mother’s reminder to mind her manners. After sharing, we took turns to put what we shared into prayer of thanksgiving. Sophia started and Zach ended. Esther and Paul simply said one or two sentences.

Then Zach read a biblical verse from Proverbs 20:12 “Ears that hear and eyes that see—the Lord has made them both.” Zach asked all to recite the verse after him loudly

³¹ The lyrics refer to the biblical verses of Romans 8:35-39.

³² The lyrics refer to the biblical verses of Isaiah 54:10.

and memorized it together. The title of Zach’s sharing was “Listen to the right voice”. Zach began the sharing with reading a story. It used a metaphor of tuning in to the right frequency on the radio, as we should tune in to God’s voice. Then we have time for petition. Sophia was taking notes for what the family shared about the thankfulness, petition, and prayer requests.

The family shared their prayer requests respectively. Paul shared his prayer request for a good weather for his birthday party the next week; he would invite his best friends to come. Esther Sophia shared to pray for the biking event which the Dandelion study group was going to have in about three weeks and for the health of a friend who was hospitalized. Esther shared about the coming music contest. Zach would like to pray to be healthy and energetic enough so that he can play table tennis with Paul and pray for wisdom to arrange the conference programs smoothly.

After sharing the prayer requests, we prayed aloud for the one sitting on our left side.

Sophia Esther

Dad



Paul Grace

Then it came the offering time. The family has had a special offering for an evangelic magazine since last December for a year (December 2009-December 2010).

While giving the offering to the piggy bank, we were singing the song, “I give my offering, for Jesus loves me; I give my offering, for I love Jesus.”

Their family worship was composed of Bible message, prayer, family life, and learning of good manners.

Pedagogical

Sophia is the primary figure in charge of homeschooling in the family. She has been a full-time housewife since she got married. Zach received his PhD. in the USA and is currently working as a professor in a nearby university. Though Sophia doesn't have teaching licensure, she took educational courses from church and ATI (Advanced Training Institute International)³³ and read quite a few books about parenting how to raise children with good characters.

Sophia would say her teaching style is child-centered, focusing on the needs of each child. Furthermore, she would also adjust or change the teaching strategies based on her children's progress and responses. Though being child-centered may be time-consuming, Sophia thinks most of the basic subjects in elementary school are not too difficult, so they would keep teaching the children with patience based on their individual needs. Sometimes she even watches teaching demo videos with her kids and learn together. For the elementary school stage, it doesn't take much time teaching, probably 10-15 minutes for a new unit. The kids spend most of their time practicing what they have learned in math or Chinese.

Sophia teaches most of the subjects, but if she is busy doing housework (like cooking) or the children have advanced questions in English or math, they would ask Zach for help (Zach is teaching economics and was living in the USA for 5 years). He also leads the

³³ Advanced Training Institute International is a Christian training institute providing curriculum and training for home education. (Reference: <http://ati.iblp.org/ati/about/>)

family worship on Wednesday night and takes the family out for outdoor activities, like going to museums or art galleries.

Both of the parents showed gentleness and calmness when they talked about their homeschooling. Sophia shared, “If my children’s progress is slow, I’d think that we were all like that in the process, so it’s not too serious...For instance, once I taught Esther division in math, she couldn’t understand no matter how I tried to explain. So I decided to skip it at that time. Then three months later, when I taught her again, she easily got it then. So I found sometimes we have to wait for our children with patience.”

Then Zach further shared, “I don’t care too much, so I don’t feel too frustrated. Since I’m a teacher, I don’t think it’s all teachers’ responsibility. Teachers should try best to help them learn; students have to be self-motivated as well. Like myself, I didn’t enjoy learning at young age until I became older and more mature.”

Structural

Time.

Sophia said that their study schedule is arranged based on children’s learning situation and progress. Their school year is divided with more flexibility, so their breaks are not as obvious as in schools. They have some activities during the school days, for example, going picnicking, attending a concert, or taking a medical leave of absence.

Zach expressed the advantages of these arrangements, “it is good to have more time for interactions between parents and children, and to avoid negative influences from school,” while he joked, “There’s nothing bad about homeschooling or sleeping too late.”

Sophia further explained that their family life is in accordance with the nature, for example, they get up earlier in summer, while they sleep longer in winter. However, there

is risk of chaos in their homeschooling if without self-discipline, and procrastination may become a habit, “children may finish sooner, if it is asked by someone else. But if Mom asks, they’d haggle a little bit.” The schedules of their homeschooling (for Esther and Paul) during the week are shown in Appendix I.

Space.

Since their house is surrounded by grass, they need to be careful to shut the doors properly; otherwise, mosquitoes may fly in, especially in summer. The reasons for moving to the suburb of Hsinchu include Zach’s work transfer (from Taipei to Hsinchu), being able to keep the pets (they have two dogs in the backyard), and the need for larger space for their kids to explore in homeschooling.

The children’s study area, two big desks for Esther and Paul with bookshelves around), is next to the kitchen and the dining table on the first floor. There is no concrete wall between these areas as separate, concealed rooms. Sophia often accompanies her kids for their individual teaching and writing practice next to their desks. Their homeschooling also takes place in their dining table (with a huge whiteboard over the wall of the stairways) and kitchen from time to time. Sometimes Sophia takes them out or allows the kids to play in the backyard or grasslands outside their house.

Evaluative

Discipline.

Among the four parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent or neglectful), Sophia said that theirs would be authoritative. If the children are honest, are responsible to finish work on time, or show mercy to beggars, for instance, they may receive rewards from their parents. Sophia uses different rewards including oral

compliments, playtime plus and pocket money to encourage children's good behaviors. On the weekend, the children are free to play the video games for about a half hour. If the children complete their daily duties on time, they will be given two more minutes to play the computer game (Mole Garden). Sophia gives out two kinds of allowances³⁴: one is "allowance of grace", meaning no matter how they perform, the children will get the money freely per week; the other one is pocket money earned by their work.

Sophia asks the children to bring their "accounting books" for receiving their allowances and rewards: the children keep track of all their income in their accounting books and be sure to give their tithes offering.

However, if the kids say something bad or denounce others, they will receive punishment. For example, if Paul calls his sister an idiot, Sophia will punish him by beating his palms. Esther and Paul are close in age (two years of difference), but when they have, Sophia rarely interferes but let them solve the problem by themselves.

Teaching.

As for the evaluation of teaching, after teaching a unit or explaining a new concept, Sophia usually gives the children some quizzes or practice questions to evaluate their comprehension and her teaching as well. Once a year, the educational administrators, teachers, and the homeschooling committee members of the city would come to evaluate her teaching and homeschooling. Though they don't offer practical help, Sophia thinks they are generally friendly, supportive and not threatening.

³⁴ Esther has 20 NTD for the basic weekly allowance plus rewards; Paul has 10 NTD plus rewards per week. All their daily duties are divided into 10-20 kinds. If the children finish any two kinds of their duties and study, they will get \$ 1 NTD as rewards per day. The children will get 5 dollars for reading every 100 pages of assigned books; if they write beautiful handwriting in Chinese, they'll be awarded 1 dollar for every five words.

The Community Relationship

Through the homeschooling resources from the Mujen association, Sophia feels competent to homeschool her children. “Since Mujen is mostly composed of Christian homeschoolers and are close to our ideas of homeschooling, so we didn’t find or join other homeschool associations in Taiwan.... We’ve been looking for resources by ourselves as well. So far, we don’t feel lack of anything we need in homeschooling.” Sophia brings the kids to participate in two study groups every week: the primary one is the Dandelion study group on Friday morning and the supplementary one is Naples Community study group on Monday afternoon.

The grandmothers (both on Zach and Sophia’s sides) are currently supportive of their homeschooling especially after seeing their children’s healthiness and growth in body, mind and spirit. Zach’s mother is not a Christian, but she respects her son and daughter-in-law’s educational choice. However, Sophia’s mother, though being a Christian, did not support their choice of homeschooling in the first place. She did not understand why the couple wanted to choose homeschooling that might be very tiring with lots of work. Later she saw the differences and became more supportive. As for the neighbors and friends, Sophia said they are respectful and even envy their homeschooling. Some of their friends are so curious of their homeschooling, Zach said, “maybe it’s a way to influence others, to stimulate them to see, to think, and to try another educational practice.”

Family #3

Raising Godly Children through Homeschooling

Background Introduction

The third family I visited is in Taipei City. I met the homeschooling mother, Opal, during the Bible Camp I attended with the second family. Once I walked with Opal from the conference room to the restaurant for lunch, we were surprised to find that we are both alumni of the same high school. At the end of the Camp, she was generous to give me a ride back to Taipei from Hsinchu. I shared with her about my homeschooling study and kept in contact with her via email and telephone. After receiving the permission of Opal and her husband, John, I visited the family and joined them in some activities.

The family lives in an apartment of a tiny lovely community in Taipei City. John and Opal have three children: Alice is the oldest girl (in the 7th grade), Benson is the second kid (the 3rd grade), and Connie is the youngest girl (the 1st grade). Alice and Benson go back to school for some classes along with their homeschooling, and Connie goes to school, for a half day each day during the week. Opal is a full-time homeschooler and John is working as a security manager in a private information technology company.

During my visit, Opal invited me for some special events (not in their typical schedules) with the family, including the first-review meeting of their homeschool application by the local school staffs, a special lunch date with other homeschooled kids on Thursday, and the public hearing of homeschooling laws on Friday. The following Monday, I took the high-speed train with Alice and Linda (another homeschooled girl) from Taipei to Hsinchu for a study group (the Naples Community study group). The very next day (Tuesday night), I was even unexpectedly entrusted to babysit Opal's three

children at home, while the parents had to go out for a family emergency.

The Turning Point to Homeschooling

Before the family started to homeschool officially in 2008, Opal had observed and learned about homeschooling for many years since 1999. The reason for her holding the homeschooling application is because her husband did not agree to do homeschooling as she hoped. Opal considered the waiting experience as an opportunity for their future homeschooling preparation, “I didn’t wait wastefully for the past few years. I believe God will guide me through my husband’s willingness. Also, I don’t think homeschooling is the only way to raise faithful children.”

John pointed out the concerns he had before he finally agreed to support his wife’s homeschooling: “I was not strongly motivated at first. I thought as long as you are willing to learn, you can do it anywhere. Also, my mother is still opposing our homeschooling now. Older people are concerned if children can really learn something at home.”

John further pointed out the importance of obtaining diplomas in the Taiwanese society: he thinks it is significant to receive all kinds of diplomas from educational institutions, unless the children have special talents or have decided to be a clergyman or priest in the future. In his opinion, it remains competitive to get a job in the society of Taiwan and it is more likely to survive with diplomas.

Sample Homeschool Days with Various Activities

On a rainy day I took the train and transferred bus to visit the third family. Alice came downstairs to welcome me, because Opal was driving John to the company for it

was raining. Around 10:00 am, Benson prepared to leave for the school across the street by himself, checking that he had his key and dining utensils in his bag. A quarter hour later, Alice also put on her uniform and left for school for biology and history classes on that day.

As I was sitting at the dining table, I saw a plaque written, “CHRIST is the HEAD of this house; THE UNSEEN GUEST at every meal; THE SILENT LISTENER to every conversation” hung over the door of the children’s bedroom. After Opal came back home that morning, we talked about homeschooling for a while when the kids were all gone to school. She mentioned that Benson had some ADD symptoms when he was three years old. Opal keeps trying to look for the best way to help him learn. Now he is in the third grade and he can learn well most of the time.

The First-review Meeting

Around noontime, Connie came back home after her half day in school . So Opal, Connie and I rode together to the local junior high school where Opal was going to present her report to the district school as the first review of her homeschooling application (12:35 pm-1:35 pm).

The school principal, the school staffs, the teachers and the parents of the four homeschooled students were attending the first-review meeting. The four homeschoolers (all were mothers) shared their homeschooling reports by turns. Opal showed the PowerPoint which Alice made with Movie Maker; however, we could not hear the sound because there was no speaker in that meeting room.

The PowerPoint slides showed the activities that Opal’s family had in one of the study groups her children joined. Opal shared that Alice is a well-organized child and

good at designing as well as leading the activities in the study group. Alice also took care of the younger kids as one of the older children in this mixed-age study group of 20 homeschooled students.

Opal expressed her appreciation for the principal and the teachers' support to her homeschooling. However, she pointed out the biggest challenge in homeschooling is to find an appropriate place for the study groups, "I've been observing the homeschooling movement since ten years ago. I noticed one of the biggest challenges troubling the homeschooling families is to find the space that we can use. Last year we rented the place from a church in Taipei. This year our study group is still waiting for the permission from the church."

In response to Opal's concerns about space, the principal suggested that the homeschooled students might be able to use the empty classrooms or labs from the school as long as they are available. He indicated that the resources of the school should not be limited to the school students. Then the home-room teacher of Alice's class, Ms. Lee, talked about Alice's performances, "Alice comes back to school for my biology class. Her learning attitude is very active. She gets along with other classmates, and the classmates are also eager to know her more. There seems to be no problem in her academic work and social relationship."

Alice, Connie and I were the only participants who were neither parents nor teachers. Nevertheless, the principal tried to include the homeschooled student's voice in the meeting by asking Alice, "What do you feel?" Alice simply answered, "I'm good." The principal gave thanks to all in the end to close this first-review meeting of the homeschooling applications in his school.

Special Lunch Date with Other Homeschooled Children

After the first-review meeting, Opal took us to a special lunch date with other homeschooled students. It was especially for a homeschooled child who just completed her high school equivalency diploma test recently. The reason that Opal's children could have this special date was because their violin teacher was undertaking a surgery on that day, so all their violin classes on that afternoon were cancelled.

Two homeschooling mothers and six homeschooled children (from three different families and all of them were girls except for a five-year-old boy) plus I were together for lunch. All of the children had participated in the camps held by Mujen for the past few years. I listened to them sharing their family life and study during the mealtime. Then when we had the desserts, Opal asked the children³⁵ whether they cared about how people think of them as homeschooled students. One of the children shared that homeschooled children are still a group of minority in the educational environment in Taiwan, so she couldn't help but care about others' opinions. Two other girls echoed, even after they have been homeschooled for so many years, it is still hard for them to overlook others' opinions, especially because some schools view homeschooling negatively.

Then another girl pointed out that school students can just follow what teachers say to them, and they do not have to think too much nor make their own choices for education; however, homeschooled children have to think for themselves and make their own educational decisions much earlier than school students. If possible, she honestly

³⁵ Connie and the five-year-old boy were playing in the garden of the restaurant after finishing the main dish.

said she would like to take some tests for checking her levels and also proving her competence as a homeschooled student.

We had a decent meal in a French restaurant and enjoyed our talking until the restaurant had to close at 4:00 pm. Then Opal drove us and two others girls (as they live near her place) back home and started to prepare for dinner. Opal lived near her mother-in-law in the same community, so they always have dinner together in her in-law's place.

After dinner, Benson went out to see the dentist; Alice went swimming in the nearby public swimming pool with her friend; Connie was working on her homework. Then I prepared to conduct an interview with the parents. But a few minutes later Connie started to cry all of a sudden, because she felt like taking a break from writing her homework. Opal tried to reason with her and asked her to think it over, "Connie, we were in the Bible Camp last week. And we had the lunch date this afternoon, so aren't you supposed to study now?" Being calmed down, Connie further asked Opal to help her write her Chinese homework. Alice voluntarily said that she could help aiding Connie during our interview. The interview ended around 9:50 pm. When Connie showed what she wrote to us, we were amazed to see her creative work with the help from her sister.

The children took showers around 10:00 pm and Opal read a story about a legendary Christian figure for them before they went to bed.

The Public Hearing

On the following morning, I attended a public hearing with Opal. Opal picked up another homeschooled mother on our way to the location. I saw this homeschooling mother in the first-review meeting the day before. On our way, she talked with Opal about her son's school life as he splits his time partly in school and partly at home. She

mentioned that homeschooled children seem to be more naïve compared with school students, and sometimes her son is easily influenced by his peers in school; nevertheless, his son gets along with his classmates and his academic performance is top five in his class.

The public hearing was open for discussion about laws and policies of alternative education in Taiwan. The representatives of some alternative or holistic educational organizations, such as Waldorf schools and ARCO schools, many homeschoolers and parents attended the meeting. Though some of these participants (most of them were parents) were highly enthusiastic and sounded ironical or even radical, they were overall concerned about two major issues: First, they petitioned that the government would loosen the educational administrative limitations on alternative education, including establishing new alternative schools and approving homeschooling applications. Second, they petitioned that the government would protect the educational rights of all these students by making it easier to be connected with the regular educational system, especially for high schools.

Revisiting

I revisited the family in the following week (I went to the Naples Community Study Group with Alice on Monday afternoon and then stayed overnight with the family). The next morning (Tuesday), Connie was awakened by Opal at 7:00 am and John drove her to school quickly. Thirty minutes later, Alice got up and started to review her biology while having her breakfast. Opal played the CD of songs played by cellos. The low sound of the instruments brought us a sense of peace in the morning.

Though the children have Bible Study for most of days, Alice did not have Bible study on that morning. Opal explained the reasons for Alice to skip the Bible study: One is that she got back home from the study group late after 10:30 pm on Monday night; the other is that she had to attend the biology class in school on Tuesday morning.

Around 8:10 am, Alice left for her biology class in school, and Benson just got up and had his breakfast. Then Opal reminded him to study the Bible, and said, “because of my reminder, I’m afraid you can’t get the sticker this time.” Opal explained that stickers are used to reward her children for performing their academic tasks actively and in a timely manner. Benson brushed his teeth first and then Opal double-checked and helped him clean his teeth again, because he had the brace on his teeth.

Opal made a phone call to another homeschooling friend but could only leave a voice message. In regards to this, she shared with me that many homeschooling mothers use answering machines to manage their time more efficiently, so that their homeschooling would not be interrupted by unexpected phone calls.

Benson has to read a passage (from Psalms) in the Bible every day and choose one verse from the passage to write down in his notebook. After he finished his copying a verse from the Bible reading, he started to read a science comic book on the sofa in the living room. Meanwhile, Alice just came back from school.

Around a quarter after 10:00 am, Alice was practicing the violin in the living room, while Benson was working on his Chinese writing at the dining table regardless of the sound from the violin. After the practice, Alice went to the dining table to read the magazine, *National Geography*, in Chinese.

After Connie came back from school and had lunch with the family together, she started to read her Bible for that day. Meanwhile, Alice was writing her English essay homework for her English class in the afternoon. The three children were doing their work quietly most of time in the afternoon.

After dinner around 8:00 pm, the parents had to go out for some family emergencies. I stayed at home with all three children. Benson was working on his Chinese homework: he recorded his voice with a digital recorder and wrote the Chinese texts down by listening to his own voice. Connie was studying her English, and Alice was writing the report about Leonardo DaVinci after attending an art exhibition. I was surprised to know that she was not required to write the report by anyone, but simply self-motivated to learn more about DaVinci by looking for resources online.

I accompanied the children all night. The parents came back late and all the children already went to bed. Opal explained what they were busy for on that night, and further shared with me again about her very motivation of homeschooling is to raise godly children and offer her children to God. She wants to make good use of their time in homeschooling, she feels that homeschooling the children is also a precious learning experience for the parents.

The next morning at 7:30 am, Connie left for school in a hurry for she slept until 5 minutes before the time to go to school. Benson got up and started his Bible study (he copied and wrote a verse from Psalm 58:11 as he does everyday). Alice was doing laundry for the family as her duty of housework.

After brushing his teeth, Benson started to play the piano in the living room instead of doing his math as he was supposed to do then. Benson does not learn the piano

but he was curious to play. While washing the dishes in the kitchen, Opal reminded him, “Benson, be aware of the priority of doing things. You play the piano well because you’re good at reading the music scores. But now it’s not time for you to play the piano. You may play it more next time.”

Opal continued to vacuum the apartment, while Benson kept reading and Alice was learning Chinese idioms from the internet. Then Opal checked Benson’s math work and helped him writing an essay, A Letter to DaVinci.

Since it was my last day with the family, Opal allowed me some more time to ask questions and clarify some points in our interview. We were talking in the host’s room. However, Benson started to haggle with Opal emotionally; he wanted Opal to accompany him then because he did not know how to write the essay. Opal told him to try writing by himself first, “Benson, you are able to do it yourself. If you were in school, you wouldn’t act like this. You can’t haggle with your teachers! Now, I am the teacher! ”

Opal shared with me that Benson often expresses his inability to do some things as emotional reactions, while Connie sometimes does so because she has higher expectations for herself, using her older siblings as her standards. Opal concluded, “However, compared with school students, our children can express all these kinds of emotional reactions or their anxiety naturally at home.”

Intentional Dimension of Homeschooling

Based on his learning experience in his school days, John mainly hopes that his children are able to learn happily in homeschooling. Opal resolutely intends to raise godly children who can be used by God through homeschooling. However, the couple’s

most concern about homeschooling in Taiwan's educational environment is the future connection to the normal educational system with homeschooled children. So in their homeschooling, they are doing "half-half", as John terms it: the children return to school for some classes so that they can make use of the schools' resources, while they can also have the freedom and benefits of homeschooling. The parents think it is fine to homeschool their children through junior high school (up to the 9th grade).

Opal mentioned that she does not think homeschooling is "the only way" to raise faithful children; however, she thinks highly of homeschooling for it can be an effective way to raise godly children for her family. The parents always keep praying for the visions of homeschooling, so they may be able to hold on to the foremost goal for raising godly children in their education.

Practice of Homeschooling:

Curricular, Pedagogical, Structural, and Evaluative Dimensions

Curricular

Their homeschooling covers the subjects of basic competence and also includes extra-curricular classes. The basic competence subjects are Chinese, Math, Society, Natural science, English, and PE. These basic competence subjects are chosen because they required by school and future exams. They also choose several extra-curricular classes based on children's interests, such as table tennis and violin. All of the three children are violin players.

In their homeschooling, Opal chose the Grade 1-9 curriculum materials that are also used in school. Opal thinks the school curriculum is good and the materials already

cover the learning goals set for future exams, so she can evaluate how her children are doing via school curriculum and measurement. In addition, it helps save time selecting curricula by using the curriculum used in school.

Even though they use the school curriculum at home, Opal gives her children supplemental materials or makes adjustments when she finds the content of the curricula does not go with the Christian teaching. When they were studying the definition and divisions of gender roles (like homosexuality) in the social study curriculum, for example, Opal gave her children supplementary materials from a biblical perspective. They also take good advantage of resources around them for supplementary curricula. The family goes to various exhibitions, such as art exhibitions or historical exhibitions in museums. I observed that Alice was spontaneously writing a report and did research about Leonardo da Vinci's paintings after attending an art exhibition.

Religious Education.

The homeschooled children have their Bible Study for most of days. However, Alice skipped the Bible study on Tuesday morning, because she got back home from the study group late on Monday and she had to attend the biology class in school on Tuesday morning (8:00 am). For Benson, his day starts with the Bible reading. In reading Chinese, he also may jump from this word/paragraph to another; it's one of ADD's symptoms. Benson didn't take the official measurement of ADD, according to Opal. Opal came to realize that her son had some symptoms of ADD, like impulsiveness and overly stubbornness, when Benson was seven year-old, as she was also fighting with the mild ADD symptoms herself. Before that (in preschool) she spent a lot of time and efforts to train Benson to learn how to be obedient, especially when he was impulsive and stubborn.

Now Benson can be calm and teachable in learning, in contrast to some school students with ADD who are still running around in classrooms. Opal also mentioned this as another reason to do this homeschooling project for tailoring it to Benson's needs.

Each child has his or her own individual schedule for reading the Bible. They read one chapter in both the New Testament and the Old Testament per day. After finishing his scheduled reading, Benson has to choose one verse to copy (word by word) in his notebook. Similar to what he does in reading Chinese, Benson sometimes jumps from this verse to another in reading the Bible. Nevertheless, Opal asked him simply to write down a verse from the Bible per day; at the end of the year he would feel very fulfilled when he finished the one-year task, as Opal revealed.

Pedagogical

Opal thinks "teaching in accordance with children's aptitudes" (因材施教) is the core principle of her homeschooling. For instance, Alice is good at self-discipline and well organized, so Opal gives her more freedom to arrange her own time schedule. Benson needs more aid with some ADD symptoms since he was three years old, so she has tried different ways to help him manage his time and finish his duties most efficiently. Benson goes back to school for the subjects he is good at, like music and sports. As for the subjects he is weak or not good at, Opal chose to look for ways to teach him in homeschooling, including Chinese, math and English. Opal shared, "We've found that using multiple media is an effective way to help him study languages, like Chinese, for it's important for him to have fun in learning. So my teaching is mainly based on individual's special talents and needs of my children."

Benson often read loud the Chinese texts and recorded his own voice, and then he would write down the texts by listening to the recording. It works well for Benson to learn and practice his Chinese.

Though it is time-consuming to accompany each child and keep an eye on their individual differences, teaching in accordance with children's progress and aptitudes can help increase the effectiveness of learning for each child kid. Besides, her teaching can be more creative and diverse. Opal said she herself doesn't like monotonous, unchanged schedule. Instead, she enjoys a creative lifestyle, so she hopes that her children's lives are full of creativity and fun, including in their study.

Opal pointed out that Benson is not organized nor self-disciplined, but very sensitive and relaxed: "Relaxation may develop creativity. Why should we train him to be nervous so early as in school?"

In the morning, after reading the Bible, Benson would read Math afterward because he likes Math better than Chinese. Opal said it would be best to give him free space and time: if he is interested, he would be very focused until he is satisfied.

In terms of challenges of teaching children at home, Opal mentioned if they have a small group of kids studying together, it helps raise the effectiveness of leaning for some subjects. However, it's not always easy to find homeschooled students of the same ages or similar levels. Also, activities of their homeschooling study group are often limited to space available. The problem of space has been an issue to solve for organizing and running their study group among homeschooling families.

Structural

Time.

The school year of homeschooling is divided into two semesters along with a summer and a winter break. During the weekdays, the family typically follows the curriculum selected from school curricula along with PE (exercise time) in their homeschooling. The kids are allowed to have breaks set by themselves, such as big or small breaks (longer or shorter time of break). On weekends, they usually do not have study plans because it is mainly for family activities. Sometimes the family has unexpected activities to join or events to attend. Opal thinks these are good opportunities for children to learn to be flexible, maneuverable and able to adjust their schedules according to their priority of values. All these help train the kids to make good use of their time independently and to be responsible for their duties.

Opal believes once the kids have learned to take responsibility, they can be self-responsible and independent. However, since the schedule is not preset at all times, Opal has to keep an eye on the children and accompany them to finish their work in a timely manner. Sometime she has to push the kids a little bit forward but sometimes she has to let go and give them more time freedom, “either to push or to let go....., it’s not always easy to strike a balance between these two ends for children’s learning experience.”

I noticed that Opal wrote down a list for Benson on the whiteboard outside the children’s bedroom.

For Benson

Bible

Breakfast

Clean face

Math
Chinese writing
Reading
Violin
English
Showering
Tooth brushing
Make bed
Chores

In contrast to Benson, Alice seems to be very well organized and self-disciplined. I saw a to-do list on the white board written by Alice to remind herself the work that she had on that day. Opal considers the difference between the siblings is by birth. As a result, one of the biggest challenges for homeschooling parents is to find out the best way to educate children, in Opal's opinion. As she said, "During the searching journey for the best way, we've got pressure. We do not know whether the way we try is effective; meanwhile, we have to face doubts from others. But we have faith in God, so we can have more peace and stability in educating our kids."

Alice's weekly schedules are shown in Appendix J. She calculated the percentage of study hours she completed every week.

Space.

The family's dining room is designed to be a place for study: They put two big tables together with white boards on the wall and closets. They combine the function of their dining tables and study desks together. Their homeschooling may take place in different places, including libraries, parks, museums, and church. They have many books about Christian parenting, marriage and the Bible study on their bookshelves. In their

living room, there is no television. They have a sofa, a piano, a CD player with CD stacks and bookshelves in their living room. Their home is decorated with their family photos, paintings and Bible verse ornaments on the walls. The apartment, though not large, is a cozy and clean little space with a fresh smell in the air.

Evaluative

Discipline.

The parenting style of the parents is authoritative but also democratic (開明權威). Their discipline is based on the teaching of the Bible, with the principles of truth and grace. In our talks, Opal often indicated the significance of parenting from the biblical perspectives. For instance, she strongly recommended me that I read a Christian parenting book, *Parenting by the Book: Biblical Wisdom for Raising Your Child* (聖經的教養智慧), written by a family psychologist John Rosemond. Attempting to help Christian parents raise respectful, responsible and obedient children, Rosemond argues against the “postmodern psychological parenting”, which he considers to be a hybrid of “three antagonistic schools of psychological thought: Freudian, humanist, and behavioral (Rosemond, 2007, p. 31), with Bible-based advice in his book. Opal found it useful to raise her children with the Bible as suggested in many Christian parenting books.

Opal rewards her children for showing good character and taking good care of themselves independently. The rewards include giving compliments, having dates with one kid at a time and bringing kids to dine out for a big meal. The provoking and rebellious behaviors are particularly forbidden in the family. In the past, the parents might resort to corporal punishment (beat on the kids’ palms or butt), but now they use the cancellation of rights or standing as a punishment more often.

I observed the children's behaviors to be compliant with good manners. For the youngest, Connie, when she came with Opal to a friend's place for lunch, she asked whether she could have the last piece of meat and all the guests appreciated her thoughtfulness. She also asked the hostess whether she could play with the toys with other kids and would follow the playing rules as a guest.

Many Taiwanese parents would take care of all the housework, so their children can save the time for study, such as preparing for exams or doing schoolwork. In contrast, all three children in this family have to do housework on a daily basis, as they are responsible for all the laundry (washing, drying, and folding) as a part of their homeschooling.

Teaching.

In terms of measuring the children's study, the parents simply ask the children to do their best, rather than setting up a specific score for children. Opal uses standardized tests to find out where her children do not comprehend or understand yet. It is convenient and effective to evaluate the progress of children's learning. For her own teaching, Opal checks it by whether the kids are motivated to continue learning and make adjustment based on their responses and feedbacks. Opal evaluates her teaching by self-reflection and discussion with John. In Taiwan, some educational administrators may come to evaluate the teaching of the homeschooling families. Nevertheless, it varies from city to city with different policies. Opal told me so far none has come to evaluate their homeschooling from the school district and local administration, while a family in the southern Taiwan could not pass the first hearing of their homeschooling until last year.

Normally the homeschooling applications can pass without problem in both the first examination and the reexamination unless both parents are working.

The Community Relationship

Opal's husband was not supportive but later agreed to homeschool, but her mother-in-law does not agree with this decision. Opal's parents don't show any opinions toward their homeschooling. Opal said that she has even got more support and acceptances from her friends and old classmates in high school (she went to a Catholic girls' high school).

Opal's family lives in the same community as her mother-in-law. Though living in different floors of the same building, they usually have dinner together every day. Opal shared that she has to learn to draw a healthy boundary between her family and the relatives; otherwise, everyday they have to face that stress, as her mother-in-law does not support their homeschooling even now.

Opal thinks the support for homeschoolers in Taiwan is not sufficient, and the most urgent issue is the space problem, to find an appropriate location for homeschool activities and study groups. The children participate in two major study groups: one is in Hsinchu City on Monday and the other one is in Taipei City on Wednesday. However, the second study group was once paused for the homeschooling mothers were trying to look for a space to use.

Mujen association plays an important role in Opal's homeschooling. It helps her deal with the burnout situations when she can get support from and have the fellowship with other homeschoolers in Mujen.

Family #4

Faith as Top Priority in Education

Background Introduction

The last family I visited is also in the Taipei city. This is one of the families I kept connection with via email even before I went back to Taiwan. The homeschooling parents, Lucy and Chandler, have four children:

Charlotte (♀): 17 year-old in her 12th grade;

Carolyn (♀): 14 year-old in her 9th grade;

Simon (♂): 5 year-old;

Andrew (♂): 3 year-old.

Lucy is a full-time homeschooler; Chandler works as a vice manager for business and engineering development in a company of electronic products. Lucy said she felt moved to homeschool first but she waited for four years until her husband agreed and supported homeschooling. Lucy also indicated that her husband's work has influenced his idea about education. In his work, he saw many Taiwanese companies mainly do OEM (original equipment manufacturer) parts; however, he came to realize that more creative personnel with good work attitude is wanted to develop new products, instead of merely satisfying the needs of customers. As Lucy pointed out that her husband thinks it is important to develop children's character and creativity in education, rather than simply studying for diploma in school.

Since 2001, the parents have been homeschooling their two older girls for the past nine years (Charlotte was in her 4th grade and Carolyn was in her 1st grade at that time). Lucy first heard about homeschooling from church friends in 1997. But it was not until

four years later, both Lucy and her husband have had the same vision and decided to do homeschooling in agreement. The couple discussed with their two girls about homeschooling and they were willing to try. Thus, they applied for homeschooling as one of the earliest homeschooling families in Taiwan. Lucy told me though they have been interviewed several time since the girls were in elementary school, it was their first time to be observed and have a researcher staying with them.

The Turning Point to Homeschooling

Lucy described her experience of learning about homeschooling:

I used to go to a cross-denominational mothers' group composed of several Christian mothers. One day some of the mothers said they wanted to visit a lady in Hsinchu to learn more about homeschooling. This lady has been homeschooling her children in the States for years and just moved back to Taiwan at that time. I asked my husband whether it was ok for me to go, but he didn't say anything about it. So I didn't go with them to Hsinchu on that day. Anyway, some of the mothers started to homeschool since then, and these homeschooling families became Mujen fellowship and later the Mujen association.

Lucy only attended the Mothers' group for about 1-2 years; nevertheless, she learned about homeschooling from these mothers. Lucy discussed the possibility of homeschooling with her husband but they were not sure of it yet. During 1997-2004, Lucy kept praying for doing homeschooling. "At that time I was not sure either but kept praying. I feel more and more passion to do homeschooling. But I simply kept praying and waited until my husband felt the same and made the decision."

Sample Homeschool Days

On a rainy Friday, I took MRT and then followed Lucy's phone instruction to transfer bus to a stop near her place. Lucy came to find me with her youngest son,

Andrew. On our way walking back to her place, we dropped by a grocery store to buy some curry. I simply mentioned that I like milk puddings, and Lucy said we could make it together later. She bought a gallon of milk and we talked about homeschooling while walking back home.

We arrived at their apartment around 11:30 am. The family did not have a television; there were a set of sofa, a piano and two desks with two computers in the living room. The living room is divided in two major areas: the area around the sofa is where the two little boys like to play, and the study area is for the older girls to work on the desks. The boys' toys were spread over the floor in the play area. I felt a relaxed atmosphere combined with a sense of order as well.

On that morning, Charlotte was studying Chinese, English and math in the room by herself, while Carolyn was also self-studying Chinese and math there. The sisters share the same bedroom as their study room too.

A few minutes later at 11:35 am, it was time for the boys (Simon & Andrew) to watch cartoons online. Carolyn came out of room and said to them, "if you guys don't clean up your toys, you can't use the computer." After they cleaned up the living room, Carolyn asked them what they wanted to watch and helped find the cartoon *The Sleeping Beauty* in English from Youtube.

After lunch, Charlotte and Carolyn kept studying in their room. I talked with Lucy in the dining room, while Simon & Andrew were playing in the living room. Then Andrew came to Lucy, whining for some seaweed to eat. Lucy replied, "Look at me, Andrew, and say it clearly, not whining." Then Andrew said, "Mommy, may I have some seaweed?"

Around 4:30 pm, we started to make milk puddings and Carolyn went into kitchen to help Lucy. Simon and Andrew were talking and playing puzzles at the dining table. Charlotte came out to the living room to study her English with the computer. Chandler came back from work around 5:30 pm and greeted his children happily. We had dinner together and talked about homeschooling over the meal.

Carolyn left for her drawing class right after dinner and Carolyn was doing her study in the living room. I was interviewing the parents at the dining table, while Simon and Andrew were playing in the living room.

Second Day

The next day, I arrived at their apartment around 10:50 am. The boys (Simon and Andrew) were very enthusiastic to show their toys and drawings to me. I remembered Simon was very shy when I first visited their place. While the boys were playing with their toys in the living room, Charlotte was learning English there, too. So she kept reminding her brothers to lower down their voice from time to time. Carolyn was reading her history in the room based on the schedule.

Around 11:32 am, all of a sudden, the two brothers had a quarrel over their toys; Charlotte asked what the guys were fighting for, “What happened?” Then Lucy came out of the kitchen and asked gently, “What are you guys doing? Are you acting a play?” And she also reminded them, “Simon, Andrew, can you lower your voice a little bit? Charlotte is doing her study. Otherwise, do you want to come to the dining room?”

Then Carolyn came out to use the computer in living room to type her Chinese essay. Andrew was humming a song (Lucy said Andrew is a carefree kid enjoying

singing), and Simon was singing freely with his brother. This was a song made up by Andrew (the melody and lyrics), and it ended with the word “Amen.”

At 1:00 pm, Charlotte told Carolyn to start preparing the dining utensils for lunch and clean the table. After lunch, Lucy talked with me about education and homeschooling. Then Simon said to Lucy that he wanted to listen to the CD (*Candy Story*); however, Andrew also wanted to listen to music CDs. Lucy intervened that they should listen to CD by turns. Lucy taught them, “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” She also told Simon that his story tracks would take longer than Andrew’s, so he should listen to fewer tracks in order to be fair to Andrew. And finally both of the boys were willing to listen to the stories and music in turn.

Lucy shared with me her idea about diploma versus God’s plan for each of us. She thinks that education is to accept and appreciate the individual differences of each child from God’s perspective in homeschooling. The diversities are designed by God, as she told her daughter Charlotte, “If God wants to give you a diploma, don’t you think He is well able to do it?”

I was ready to leave around 5:00 pm. I left earlier because it was also the wedding anniversary of the parents on that day. The youngest Andrew insisted to follow Lucy as she was going to show me where the bus stop was, so he put on his shoes by himself and carried his little umbrella to follow us.

Intentional Dimension of Homeschooling

Lucy mentioned there are two types of homeschooling in Taiwan: one is parents simply move what students do in schools back to home for entrance exams, such as the

Basic Competence Test, 基測³⁶; the other one is parents want to spend more time with their children, especially during the elementary schools. She found the older the children become, the less influence the parents may have on them. As for their family, the primary reason to homeschool is their faith, “we are willing to put spiritual education in the priority of our education. I’d like to provide my children the things that they can’t get from schools. This is our priority. That’s the same reason why we don’t choose public schools, private or Christian schools for our children,” Lucy said.

In their homeschooling, they select the curriculums based on their children’s individual interests and progress. They also emphasize the character training prior to the study of knowledge. “The character training is based on the Bible.” Lucy explained, “I hope my children can be a God-loving person who is responsible and enjoys learning for life....I believe the priorities in life should begin with reading God’s words.”

Once asked by schoolteachers what the most difficult to teach, Lucy answered, “to have the right sense of value and to make right value judgments”. So the most important goals of their homeschooling are to teach the children the right sense of values and to develop the good relationship with God. Lucy further explained, “we can try our best to provide a good environment, but their relationship connected with God is the work of Holy Spirit.” Lucy hopes to raise her children to be a person who knows the right value of life, knows one’s own talents and interests, and makes positive contributions to the society. The mother went to public schools all through college and she did enjoy her school life; the decision of homeschooling is not because the parents are opposed to school. The family continues homeschooling because the parents found it is a calling

³⁶ The Basic Competence Test for Junior High School Students to enter senior schools (<http://www.bctest.ntnu.edu.tw/>)

given by God and it has been appropriate for their family, as the family can learn and grow together.

Practice of Homeschooling:

Curricular, Pedagogical, Structural, and Evaluative Dimensions

Curricular

The family has spiritual education, character education, and subjects of basic knowledge covered in their homeschooling. The reason to include these educations is based on the consideration of priority, as she further refers to the verses from the Bible: “**5** For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; **6** and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; **7** and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. **8** For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (II Peter 1: 5-8)

Learning knowledge and Bible-based character education are important; however, she thinks faith (spiritual education) should be in the first place of education as in the order mentioned above (of faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love).

Religious education is the primary reason for the parents to choose homeschooling, as Lucy sometimes terms it as spiritual education or education of faith. She pointed out, “In school, faith is ignored and there is no spiritual education. Only

learning of knowledge is put in the first place. In terms of spirituality, children can't receive any education of faith in school at all.”

In addition to the Bible for their spiritual education, Lucy selects curriculum materials including on-line learning curriculum, extracurricular books, and textbooks from school (but no teacher's guides available). I often saw Charlotte follow on-line instructions by the watching on-line curriculum videos, which are also used among school students to boost their study skills.

Lucy mentioned three criteria for selecting the homeschooling curricula: First of all, it should be Bible-based; secondly, it is arranged in the order of priority as mentioned in the Bible; last, it should be appropriate for individual child's development. Lucy would adjust their homeschooling curriculum upon the children's individual needs and differences. For example, one of the girls once quit learning the piano for two years until she was ready to spend more time practicing the music again. It was also because that the girl had something else to learn as her priority at that time: she would like to add some more hours for learning languages and art classes.

Lucy also has trained her girls to cook and share the housework. She plans to train her boys when they become older. In other words, the cooking training is not based on gender difference, but for both girls and boys in Lucy's opinion. The girls started to cook since junior high school; they are in charge of one meal every week.

On the last day of my visit, I heard that Carolyn was not allowed to use computer on that day because she left two pieces of bread in the oven the night before and forgot to take them out. So did Charlotte: she forgot to wash the pots the day before. Usually they

have 15 minutes to use computers freely in the afternoon every day. If they did not fulfill their duties, they were not allowed to use computers during their leisure time on that day. The sisters share the daily chores, including laundry, dishwashing, bathroom cleanup, and vacuuming. Lucy told me that doing housework could train her girls to take their responsibilities. First, Lucy showed them how to do chores, then, she did the housework with them, and last, she let them do the work independently. They also earn their salary (pocket money) by doing housework responsibly. Once the girls receive salary, they have to learn to give offering (tithes).

Religious Education.

The family has had the Wisdom Search time in the morning for 5-6 years. Chandler used to lead the time until three years ago: every month they had a topic to search in Psalms and Proverbs, like watchfulness, contentment, orderliness, diligence, and thankfulness. The father sometimes had to be out of town for business trips and sometimes his exercise time might be conflicted with Wisdom Search (he usually gets up early around 5:00 am and goes out for exercise). Thus, now Lucy is leading Wisdom Search instead and reading the Bible with the girls (8:30-9:00 am).

In elementary school, the girls would read a chapter or a passage from the Bible and write their responses down as their prayer. Lucy used the steps “to read, to think, to write, to pray” in their Bible study time. As the girls are getting older, they set up the Wisdom Search time and assign the girls to read 8 chapters of the Bible on a daily basis. By reading 8 chapters everyday, the girls could read over the New Testament in a month and the Old Testament in three months. When they finished their reading of the New Testament, for instance, Lucy would take them out for buffet. But after having buffets

twice, the girls asked Lucy whether they could save the money, so they received cash as rewards.

This year (2010), they changed to a different style of Bible study: they have the Wisdom Search time after breakfast (8:30-9:00 am), the girls have to read five Psalms and one chapter of Proverbs in their quiet time and the assigned Biblical study guides or books individually. Lucy said that Psalms were to help the children establish good relationship with God, while Proverbs were to teach them wisdom to get along with people.

The girls also continue reading the Bible, but there is no fixed time schedule, which is different from what they had: 8 chapters per day before. Lucy made a table for them, so they can cross out the chapters they've read to track their progress. Charlotte and Carolyn have shared the same progress schedule (進度). They evaluate and adjust their progress schedules every week. They also attend Sunday service, disciple training, and prayer meetings at church.

For now, Charlotte and Carolyn have shared the same progress schedule. The girls' current Bible study schedule includes the following three parts: First, Wisdom Search with Lucy in the morning; second, the reading of five Psalms & one Proverb from the Bible in their quiet time; third, Biblical guides or books: Charlotte is working on a Biblical study guide and Carolyn is reading the biography of St. Andrew.

Lucy believes Psalm is to help them establish good relationship with God and Proverb is to teach them wisdom to get along with people.

The family once chose a set of ATI curriculum, Wisdom Booklets³⁷, but they stopped using it after the girls decided to take the standard exams. Wisdom Booklets is a curriculum composed of 8 books a year with the following features, which I have summarized based on the parents' opinions:

1. it is Bible-based, written from biblical perspectives;
2. it is designed for mixed age, appropriate for the whole family (from 6 to 18 year-old)
3. it requires and stimulates exploration for no standard answers are provided;
4. it is holistic with combination of different subjects and fields; more than Bible study materials, the curriculum puts biblical verses into daily life and open for discussion.

The parents chose this curriculum with an attempt to learn about how to see this world with a biblical perspective and what God's expectations are toward them.

As for Simon, Lucy also has the Bible reading time with him every day. On the last day of my visit, the Bible story reading was originally scheduled at 9:30 am, but they made it up at 3:20 pm.

Lucy was reading a biblical story with Simon on the sofa in the living room. Sometimes Lucy reads the Bible stories with Simon in different places, such as at the dining table, on the sofa or on the bed. The following is the brief description of how their Bible reading worked on that afternoon: First of all, Lucy reviewed "the Ark of Covenant" they talked before for Simon. Andrew came near to listen for a couple of minutes and then left to play with his toys aside by himself. He was free to join or leave at anytime.

³⁷ ATI sample of Wisdom Booklets:
<http://ati.iblp.org/ati/about/curriculum/wisdombooklets/documents/wb4sample.pdf?size=6326890>

Lucy read the story for Simon and they discussed about the ark of covenant. Lucy told Simon, “Though Israelites did something wrong, God still loves them....just like when you fight with Andrew over toys, God will feel sad about that, but God still loves you guys....”

Simon listened to it attentively. Lucy asked Simon to pray with her, “Lord Jesus, thank You for being with the Israelites. Thank You also for being with us always. Thank you for Your everlasting love for us. In Jesus’ name~ Amen!” before they ended their story-reading time.

Pedagogical

Though the parents do not have teaching licensure, Lucy took counseling courses before marriage (not during her school days) and attended ATI seminars, parental education conferences held by Mujen, and Sunday school teacher training at church. Chandler said his role is more like the principal to lead the school, while Lucy is the teacher who is running the real schooling.

Chandler further pointed out a big advantage of homeschooling, “In school, it’s one teacher to many students, but it can be one-on-one at home... In Taiwan, the schools train students to master test-taking skills. It is not easy for children to have fun in learning at all.” Lucy did most of the teaching herself from preschool through the junior high phase. For five-year-old Simon, who was going to be the first grader this coming summer, he learned to calculate the numbers, recognizing Chinese words, and Bible story for his preschool education. As for senior high school, the parents are concerned that they may not be so helpful, so they found the online learning resources for Charlotte when she became 12th grade.

In their homeschooling practice, Lucy feels that sometimes she is not skillful enough. She tried to deal with this challenge by praying for that and also consulting with homeschoolers who have similar experiences. The parents concluded that they have learned much more than their children, as they have realized their lack of knowledge, in parenting and character training. For Lucy and Chandler, homeschooling is not only educating their children, but also learning and growing with their children.

When asked what she would say her teaching style is, Lucy replied, “We have lots of discussion in our homeschooling. Generally it’s child-centered, but sometimes there’s exception.I think children have to learn something basic, no matter they like it or they’re good at it or not. Like reading the Bible, doing housework, and basic subjects, such as Chinese, English and Math. Even for the basic subjects, I don’t push them too much as schoolteachers do in school.” Lucy found her children like this way of learning better and they can enjoy their study more. It’s easy to understand the children’s learning progress with the child-centered teaching style. However, it is time-consuming to prepare for the teaching. As a full-time mother, Lucy expressed that she still often feels her time is not enough.

While teaching her children at home, Lucy found it difficult to strike a balance between the double roles of being a parent and a teacher. In addition to this challenge of playing different roles in homeschooling, she pointed out that sometimes it is hard to develop each child’s individual talents in accordance with their family vision and schedule in reality. She explained, “For instance, when we parents wanted to study ATI curriculum as a family together, it would conflict with my children’s decision to take the basic competence exam and prepare for that. We asked ourselves whether we’d let our

children take a try, since we gave them the right to make the decision. We're wondering how we can assist them too. I think children are also eager to get support from their parents."

Structural

Time.

A typical homeschooling day is structured as follows: The family starts their day with their devotional time (reading the Bible), and then individual study, housework as a part of their routines in daily life. Lucy makes this arrangement based on the goals, priorities, and consideration of their family members' needs. The advantage of this arrangement is to have time flexibility; however, the disadvantage is that it is easy to be loose and behind the schedule, as Lucy pointed out. Samples of Charlotte's and Carolyn's weekly schedules (4/5-10, 2010) are shown in Appendix K and Appendix L accordingly.

The family divides the semester year into different parts; they also check their progress with their goals monthly and weekly. Lucy said, "I'd like to emphasize that the learning of our children is not limited to our schedule. It is flexible and can take place at any time."

Space.

Similarly, every corner of their house may be a possible space for learning, including kitchen, bathroom, and dining table. It depends on what kind of learning the children are doing and their needs. As I observed, the older girls often do their study in their room and sometimes in the living room for online learning or using the computers. Lucy mentioned even though her children have conflicts in using the space, it could be a

good opportunity for them to learn to give oneself up for one another's needs in the family.

In addition, the family also makes good use of study groups, community resources such as science museums, art galleries, zoos, and libraries, along with attending camps, conferences and seminars to enrich their homeschooling.

Evaluative

Discipline.

Lucy considers her parenting style to be authoritative. I noticed that Lucy often tried to explain the reasons, such as the Golden Rules, for the younger kids when they had a quarrel. When her children show good behaviors, Lucy usually reward them with oral compliments and encourage them to keep doing good behaviors. If the children do not respect others or they are not honest, Lucy would use "staffs" to discipline the children in their childhood. During the teenage time, Lucy would admonish them first and then cancel parts of their freedom or rights of doing something as punishment for forbidden behaviors. Lucy said, "Before the girls turned to be teenagers, we used 'staffs' to punish at home. But we would teach them the rules first."

Simon and Andrew spend so much time together playing, but if they had a fight, Lucy would separate them in different rooms for an hour (as time-out). This worked well to help the brothers be at peace with each other again.

Once I was ready to leave their home, the youngest Andrew wanted to see me off with Lucy. When we were on the sidewalk, Andrew was walking and running quickly ahead of us. Lucy called him to stop and wait for us. And Andrew stopped walking and was waiting for us in front of the crossing line.

Lucy said to him “I wanna tell you one thing”,

Andrew repeated after her, “I wanna tell you one thing.”

Lucy replied, “Go ahead!”

Andrew continued, “That building over there is so tall!”

Then Lucy said to him: “You didn’t cross the red line and you were waiting for us. You are great! Mom feels that you’ve been grown up!” as the immediate praise for his obedient behavior.

Reward-tithes.

Lucy gives her daughters “salary” as a reward for completing their duties and it is the way how the girls earn their pocket money. Lucy thinks that giving salary can help the girls learn the followings: First, to take their responsibilities (no matter whether they like it or not, they have to complete the duties in a timely manner); second, to give tithes as a duty of being a Christian; third, to become familiar with basic financial management. When the girls were little, they were given stickers as rewards after completing their routine duties. When Charlotte was in the 4th grade and Carolyn was in the 2nd grade, Lucy started to give them salary as they helped and finished the housework. The reward they have received is cash as their pocket money. The mother explained that the most important part of receiving the pocket money is that the girls have to practice tithing (giving one-tenth of the earning to church as a church member). Once they fulfill the duty of tithes, the girls have freedom to use the rest of their money: they are given three days in a month to buy whatever they want freely with their pocket money.

If the girls completed some special tasks, like reading over the New Testament in a month, Lucy would take them out for supper, such as to buffet or steakhouse. After

eating out twice, the girls said they would like to save the money and Lucy gave them cash as reward instead.

Teaching.

As the teacher in homeschooling, Lucy partly uses standardized evaluations for learning to help her and her children to understand their learning progress.

For the elementary school years, Lucy spent more time teaching the girls the basic subjects like Chinese and math, and established their reading and learning abilities. They attended the study groups for learning English together. But after 7th grade, the girls mostly do self-study independently, as I observed, while Lucy's role is more to support and aid them look for resources they need in the learning process.

Lucy sometimes uses the testing sheets taken from local schools to evaluate her children's learning progress in the academic subjects. The family also uses multiple evaluations like drama, art, attending activities (being volunteers to help minority groups) to represent what the children have learned from their studies.

Lucy said she did not evaluate her teaching much, perhaps too unorganized. And it is her goal to work on for the next stage. Sometimes the staffs from the school district or educational administrators would come and supervise their homeschooling. Every semester, the family has to present their homeschooling proposal application for the first review. However, it seems to be very formalized, as Chandler pointed out, "...Because most educational administrators don't know much about homeschooling, sometimes they do not know about homeschooling nor how to deal with homeschooling families. They even have different committee members every year.....The local schoolteachers should

come to observe our homeschooling twice per semester year, but they didn't really do so.”

For the past nine years, the educational administrators and teachers only visited the family twice when the girls were in the elementary school. Lucy said the policies of schoolteachers' visit to homeschooling families vary in different cities. In Taipei County (their neighbor city), for instance, it is stricter to have schoolteachers' visits every semester. However, the local schoolteachers and school administrators would contact Lucy irregularly via phone to keep her posted of new announcements of the school or educational policies related to homeschooled students.

The parents think it would be helpful for examining their homeschooling goals and progress if educational administrators come to observe their homeschooling. However, if the educational administrators ask them based on the standards in school (the formal educational system), it would make them pressured since the goals and environments of schools are so different from homeschooling.

The Community Relationship

The resources and supports from other homeschooling families and Mujen association altogether help Lucy feel competent to homeschool her children. Their children are involved in other educational activities, including the study groups, ATI conferences (培基講座), Mujen camps, and Sunday schools.

When asked whether their relatives, friends, church friends and/or neighbors think about their homeschooling, Lucy answered,

“Some doubt, some support, and some are simply watching (wait and see). My mother did not agree in the first place, but later she became positive toward our homeschooling. My parents-in-law do not have any opinions.”

Chandler also shared that his boss supports their homeschooling in the first place; however, one day he asked Chandler whether he would homeschool his two boys as well after they were born. It sounds like the boss thinks it is ok for girls to be homeschooled, but maybe not for boys owing to the gender prejudice.

When they started to homeschool, the parents decided to withdraw from some church activities. It was time when their church was expanding to more community service and ministry, so their pastor’s wife told them that it would be a great waste if they did not come out to be involved in the church serve. However, Lucy made the decision, “Because of the priority, I think family is more important than my church service.....Later the pastor’s wife even told me that many people asked her why the behaviors of my children are so different from other teenagers,” because she thinks family and education is the priority in her life.

CHAPTER FIVE

Research Findings

Study Overview

The purpose of this qualitative study is to describe and explore the practice of Christian homeschooling in Taiwan for a better understanding of the homeschooling experience in an East Asian context. Four Taiwanese Christian (Protestant) homeschooling families are studied and analyzed from intentional, curricular, pedagogical, structural, evaluative, and school-community relationship dimensions. By presenting and appraising the intentions and implementation of these homeschooling families, I also hope to provide further educational insights to general education in Taiwan.

After explaining my study to the homeschooling parents and then obtaining their consents, I spent three to six days with each of the families to interview the parents and to observe how their homeschooling worked. In addition to the scheduled visits, I was invited by some families to join their family activities (such as biking) and attend some relevant homeschooling events (like the first-review meeting of their homeschooling application in a local school). These experiences altogether enriched my data collection.

Discussion of Emergent Themes

All these Christian homeschoolers attempt to raise faithful children with good character and high motivations for learning through homeschooling. Besides, all these homeschoolers continue to homeschool for time flexibility, freedom to provide their children with religious education, and the fact that homeschooling is family-focused. Nevertheless, the homeschoolers are also concerned about their children's future in the educational environment in Taiwan because they expressed a sense of uncertainties for whether their children are able to go back to regular public schools without any problems with administration, particularly above the 9th grade.

After analyzing the data, several emergent themes are found in this study, including learning by homeschooling, family involvement, and uncertainties about the future (not in the order of importance).

Learning by Homeschooling

Homeschooling is not simply an educational experience for the homeschooled children; it is also a great learning experience for the homeschooling parents based on my interviews and the observations. In the fourth family, for example, Lucy and her husband emphasized that they have learned more than their children in our talks. They said it is a humbling experience to homeschool because they came to realize their lack of knowledge in parenting and character training through homeschooling; thus, they started to read more relevant books in order to be better homeschoolers.

The parents are also in the process of learning to better their homeschooling. In the third family, for instance, Opal shared that she had tried various methods to help her son study Chinese more efficiently, and later she found that it would be more helpful for

him to study Chinese when he read texts loudly. As for the homeschooling schedules, most of the homeschooling families had a less structural schedule when they started homeschooling, such as in Chelsea's family and Lucy's, as they used to cross out the items on the to-do lists (only the subjects were written). However, they found it would be more efficient if they added the timetables on their daily schedules, so their time schedules became more structural with both subjects and time written.

In addition, the parents can also learn something new from or with their children in homeschooling, literally. For instance, I noticed that Chelsea was learning skating from her daughter and Phil was learning the violin with his son in the first family. After my interviews with the parents in the third family, the youngest girl (Connie) read the writing she just finished with the help of her older sister. Both her parents and me were very surprised by Connie's creative writing and appreciated her older sister's voluntary help.

Family involvement-Housework

All of the homeschooling mothers (Chelsea, Sophia, Opal and Lucy) in this study are full-time housewives. Among them, only Chelsea kept working after marriage, but she quit her teaching job after the parental leave for her oldest child. Two of the mothers (Chelsea & Sophia) mentioned that they chose their current homes in accordance with their homeschooling. All of these homeschooling mothers think more highly of education and the time with their children than of their careers.

In all four families, the parents also train their children to do housework at home. For instance, Chelsea's children always do the housework together after lunch during the week; Sophia often teaches her children to cook in their homeschooling; Opal's three

children share the laundry work on a daily basis; Lucy asks her older girls to take care of cooking and laundry for the family. In contrast, it is not uncommon that many parents in Taiwan would do all the housework in order to save time for their children to study or do schoolwork. In homeschooling, homeschooled children are given more opportunities to do housework than schoolchildren.

By doing housework, these homeschooling mothers also attempt to teach their children to share the family responsibilities together as family involvement in their homeschooling. It is also demonstrated one of the Moore Formula described in Chapter Two that service which includes household duties should be part of homeschooling.

In the fourth family, I was wondering whether the homeschooling mother asks her two older daughters to do housework because they are female. The mother answered me that she would teach her the boys to cook when they are getting older (one is only 3 years old and the other is 5). The training of housework is not based on gender differences, but on age. Her daughters started to cook when they were in junior high school, and now they are in charge of one meal every week. The girls often assisted their mother to cook during my visit.

The homeschooled children in my study tend to have a positive and caring attitude toward other children. In the third family, the oldest girl, Alice, enjoys taking care of the younger children in one of the study groups she joined. When I was conducting an interview with her parents, she was voluntarily taught her little sister to write a Chinese essay, and the work turned out to be marvelously creative.

In the families who have four children in my study, the older children are active and willing to help their younger siblings, for example, when the youngest one wanted to

go to the bathroom (in the first family) or when the little ones had quarrels over toys (in the fourth family). Because the homeschooled children spend most of their time at home, they are given more opportunities to observe the growing process and the needs of a younger sibling. Homeschooling allows the children to be focused on the family and be familiar with the child development process.

Burnout Situations

On the recommendation of the mother in the first family, I added a crucial question about how they deal with burnout situations in homeschooling in my interview with all the homeschooling mothers. Chelsea, the mother who made the suggestion, indicated that many homeschooling families were unable to continue homeschooling because the parents did not deal with their fatigue in homeschooling properly.

In facing burnout situations, Chelsea said she would spend quiet time in the morning to regain her energy and refresh her motivations for homeschooling, “Every morning I have a walk and pray in the garden for about 30 minutes before kids get up by 7:00 am. If I’m too tired to get up earlier, I’ll take Tony [the youngest child] out for a walk in the evening instead. By doing so, it decreases my frustration and distress levels. It’s kind of exercise too.....” Chelsea also mentioned that on Saturday morning (except for the weekend I visited, because her husband attended a church event, Fathers’ School), her husband would take care of all the children, so she could go to the prayer meeting in church and renew her strength then.

As for the mother in the second family, Sophia shared that it is quite natural to get tired in doing homeschooling, “Since we spend such a long time with our children, it’s easy to get mad or tired. So I choose to get up earlier than my kids so that I can prepare

my heart and have quiet time reading the Bible first....” She is also inspired from reading the Bible. On a morning during my visit, for instance, I noticed there were some words written on the whiteboard in their dining room: “with integrity of heart; with skillful hands” It is quoted from King David’s Psalm (78: 72) in the Bible. Sophia later explained that the parents are the teachers in homeschooling, so as she was reading the verse, she was inspired to learn from King David who shepherded his people with integrity of heart and led them with skillful hands. She wrote down part of the verse on the whiteboard to remind herself not to be monotonous in her homeschooling.

Likewise, Opal, the mother in the third family, shared the similar way to deal with burnout situations. First, she would return to the presence of God; in addition, she keeps fellowship with other homeschooling mothers, so that she can regain energy and strength to keep going on. For instance, Opal has been involved in the Mujen association, which is essential for her to have the fellowship with other homeschoolers in Mujen and encourage one another as a support group.

In the last family, Lucy shared that she has come to realize that different people may restore their energy level with different ways, especially after reading a parenting book, *Different Children, Different Needs*³⁸. So when it comes to burnout situations, she would spend four hours for quiet time on the weekend to restore her energy level, while her husband may simply play sports to release his stress. Lucy said she needs her personal quiet time to be renewed (reorganized).

As an educational minority group in Taiwan, the homeschoolers strive to look for resources and support. They also have to keep strong motivation for homeschooling and

³⁸ *Different Children, Different Needs: Understanding the Unique Personality of Your Child.*

to deal with their burnout situations effectively, so that they can continue in spite of the challenges or pressure encountered.

Uncertainties about the Future

All the parents think highly of their homeschooling and they would like to homeschool their children through the 9th grade, if possible; however, it is found that they share a sense of uncertainties about homeschooled children's future education in Taiwan, especially for senior high school and higher education. In the first family, the homeschooling mother, Chelsea, shared that her oldest daughter went back to school in the 6th grade and then she graduated from elementary school with honors (as one of the top students in her class). Chelsea pointed out a fact: if the girl had remained homeschooled at that time, she would not have received any award when graduating from elementary school. Chelsea expressed her appreciation for doing homeschooling as a calling entrusted by God, but she is also concerned whether her children can go back to regular public schools without any administrative problems in Taiwan in the future. She even indicated, "I'm often wondering whether diploma is important or not, because it may be risky to homeschool in Taiwan. We're so concerned that our decision to homeschool may ruin my children's future."

In the third family, when the homeschooling mother had a lunch date with other homeschooled children, I heard their discussion about how the homeschooled children have to make a choice by themselves when it comes to education: whether they want to keep being homeschooled or not. In contrast, schoolchildren can simply follow what their teachers prepare for them: taking exams after exams and passing the centralized exams to get into top schools and receive diplomas as an advantage for getting a good job.

In Taiwan, it seems both these homeschoolers and the homeschooled children have to face the pressure of choosing homeschooling, as people around (relatives, schoolteachers, and the public) may think negatively (or do not understand) about homeschooling. Accordingly, they have to think their educational choice thoroughly; in addition, they need to keep clear and strong motivations for their homeschooling decision.

Support Groups

All these homeschooling families are participating in the Mujen Christian homeschooling association. In addition, all of them also join church services on Sunday and various church groups as well as activities, such as the family groups, the couples' groups or regular prayer meetings. It is noticeable that church life has become a crucial part of these homeschooling families both in their family life and homeschooling. Constructive aspects of the family relationships are reinforced, such as love, respects, obedience and responsibility etc.

For all of these homeschooled children (except for the preschoolers or younger ones), they participate in at least one homeschooling study group, like Dandelion study group and Naples Community Study Group described in Chapter Four. While waiting for their children in classes, the homeschooling mothers have also established the fellowship and share their homeschooling experience and resources with one another.

In the first family, Chelsea mentioned that she has learned more effective ways of teaching and discipline from other homeschoolers. For example, she's learned to prevent her children from saying bad words by spraying vinegar on their tongues if her children do so. She also consulted with more experienced homeschoolers how to teach certain subjects in more effective ways.

Family-Religion- Education are Combined Together in Homeschooling

All of the homeschooling families studied are from a Christian (Protestant) background. The primary reasons for homeschooling which were most frequently mentioned by these parents are religious education and family concerns. As discussed in Chapter Two, the religiously motivated parents in the USA tend to consider secular humanism and student immorality as characteristics of public schools, so they choose to take the responsibility of education and intend to operate home schools as a better educational environment for their children (Knowles, Marlow & Muchmore, 1992, p. 196-197). In a similar way, the Taiwanese homeschooling parents also shared the idea that the responsibility of children's education is in parents, not in the government.

Opal, the mother in the third family for example, mentioned that parents have to take the educational responsibility for children no matter whether they decide to homeschool or send children to mainstream schools. In her opinion, homeschooling can be a good way to take full control of children's education; however, even parents decide to send children to public or private schools, they have to take full responsibility of that educational decision for their children rather than placing all responsibilities on schoolteachers.

In addition to the awareness that educational responsibility for children is on parents, these homeschooling families also emphasize a family-centered lifestyle. All of the families have regular family religious activities, including attending Sunday service together or weekly family worship time (such as the family worship in the first family on Sunday night and that of the second family on Wednesday night). For instance, the parents in the second family said that they are fighting with the world for the time spent

with their children and they chose homeschooling because the children's lives are following the family's schedule rather than schools. Almost all the parents in these families (Phil, Sophia, Opal and Lucy) mentioned or indicated the important influence of family on children while they are growing; therefore, they would like to take advantage of time with their children and to be actively involved in their children's education.

Furthermore, being family-centered and Bible-based are the two most fundamental characteristics of homeschool education in these families. In other words, homeschooling is chosen and developed by these families to be a holistic education merged with family-centered education and religious education. In terms of being holistic, most of the parents agreed that character training along with reading the Bible as a part of religious education is more significant than academic learning. As described in Chapter Two, the idea of "studying is the only noble thing to do" under the influence of Confucian tradition is still prevalent in the Taiwanese society; accordingly, school students place their main focus on academic study and receive test-taking skill training. Contrary to the focus on studying and test-taking in school, these homeschooling parents prioritize the character training and learning of the Bible in their homeschooling. To be more specific, their character training is primarily based on the teaching of the Bible.

Among three main groups of homeschoolers in Taiwan, including those for moral discipline (品德派), those for the reading of the classical literature (讀經派), and those for family harmony (家庭合一派), the third group are mostly from the Protestant families in Mujen Home Educators Association (Lee, 2005; Kung, 2005). This combination of family, education and religion also echoed what was found in the homeschooling study conducted by Taylor (1993) that the homeschooling parents put

emphasis on the Biblical authority. Moreover, religious education of these Taiwanese homeschooling families is not limited to studying of the Bible. In addition to the cognitive part of Bible reading, their religious education also expanded to behavioral (character training) and spiritual (religious faith/spirituality) parts. Among various kinds of good character, for instance, one of the religious virtues, **obeying authority**, is often referred to by the parents in character training. As it is taught in the Bible, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’, which is the first commandment with a promise, . . .” (Ephesians 6:1-2, also Hebrews 13:17). Therefore, the homeschooling parents highlight the importance of obeying authority as part of character training in their homeschooling, to counteract the lack of religious education or secular humanism in public schools.

It is noticeable that the decision to homeschool is always an educational choice made by the agreement of both sides of the parents in each family studied. In some cases, such as in the third and the fourth families, the two mothers (Opal and Lucy) heard about homeschooling earlier than their husbands; they also had stronger motivations to do homeschooling than their husbands in the first place. While attempting to get the approval and support from their husbands, they kept praying for their spouses and continue learning more about homeschooling. Both of them did not start homeschooling their children until their husbands agreed their homeschooling plans, because the wives wanted to obey their husbands as their heads in the family. As it is written in the Bible, “For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church . . .” (Ephesians 5:23).

For these homeschooling families, the decision to homeschool is more than an educational choice for each family; moreover, it also indicates the agreement of the parents (the couples) as a unity in educating their children. It is interesting this agreement between the parents effectively demonstrates the mission of the Mujen homeschool association: to consolidate marriage, to unify family, and to raise faithful children (p. 26).

The homeschoolers also have to cooperate and support one another throughout their homeschooling operations as they share the homeschooling duties as well as housework. In the first family, for instance, the father is responsible for teaching the children math and abacus calculation (along with grocery shopping and making breakfast), while the mother takes care of teaching the rest of the subjects, including Chinese, English, history etc., along with making meals and doing laundry. The divisions of homeschooling teaching may vary in different families; however, the leading of the family worship and the ultimate decision making are always done by the fathers in each of the homeschooling families, as they are following the teaching of the Bible.

In conclusion, the combination of education, family (family-centered lifestyle), and religion (Christian belief) in homeschooling can be illustrated as a Venn diagram below:

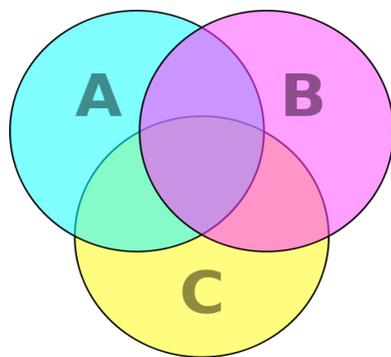


Figure 1: A: Religion; B: Education; C: Family; the center: Homeschooling

Social Relationship

On top of diploma issue, another commonly asked question is socialization when it comes to homeschooling. As the Director of Mujen indicated that this is one of the false myths about homeschooling, “because ‘homeschooling’ sounds like an exclusively closed environment for education at home.” On the contrary, he thinks homeschooled children may get more opportunities to different cultural and social stimulus in mixed-age study groups, travels, cultural events, family and church activities etc. Furthermore, he pointed out that the key to socialization is character training: “For good social development, it does not mean that you throw a child into a campus of two-thousand students and then the child will have good socialization.... A good social relationship is based on good character.” His words echoed the emphasis of character training in all the homeschooling families studied.

It is also found that none of the homeschoolers interviewed mentioned their concerns or worries about their children’s socialization development in homeschooling. Based on my observation, all of these homeschooling families have a positive parent-child relationship and that between siblings. One of the most important socialization lessons for the homeschooled children is to share the space with their siblings. In the first family, for instance, when Cindy was playing the piano in the living room, her youngest brother was playing with his toys quietly by himself. Meanwhile, two other siblings (Lily and Jimmy) were studying by themselves regardless of the sound from the piano. Similarly, in the third family, when Alice was playing the violin in the living room, her brother was working on his work at the dining table. There was no wall or door between

the living room and the dining room, so they had to learn to perform different tasks at the same time sharing the space.

Besides, I also noticed the homeschooled children would coordinate and communicate when there was time conflict in sharing the space. In the first family, for example, I observed when Lily was listening to the English CD by using the audio equipment in the living room, her brother Jimmy chose to work on his English at the dining table. Likewise, in the fourth family, when the older sisters were studying in the living room, the two younger brothers were also playing with their toys in the other corner of the living room. Sometimes the boys made loud noise, and the sisters would remind them to lower down their voices.

Most of the homeschoolers in my study agree that the foundation of social relationship is in family. As the parents in the first family indicated, they believe that once their children can get along with their family members who they can not choose, they can get along with any friends who they may be able to choose. Since homeschooling is a family-based education for these families, all of the families observed have a loving relationship and atmosphere at home.

In addition to good relationship at home, these homeschooled children in my study seem to have a good relationship in school when they were/are back to school. Cindy in the first family went back to school for a whole year and Esther in the second family went back for a semester. Both of them got along with their classmates then) according to their parents. As for Alice in the third family, she goes to school for two courses every week. In the first-review meeting, her home-room teacher also share that there was not a problem for her in social relationship.

As mentioned, all of the homeschooled children participate in at least one study group. In addition, all of these study groups are mixed-aged. In attending these study groups and relevant activities, the older children are exposed to many opportunities available for taking care of the younger ones as part of their socialization development.

Research Findings

With regard to homeschooling as an increasingly popular educational option in Taiwan, particularly among Christian families, the following research questions are used to guide this study: (1) What are the reasons and goals of Christian parents in Taiwan to choose homeschooling for their children? (2) What does their homeschooling look like in practice? (3) What do the Christian homeschoolers perceive to be the advantages and challenges of homeschooling in Taiwan? (4) What are the implications of the Christian homeschooling movement for education in Taiwan? Based on the findings of this inquiry, the responses to the questions are presented as follows:

Response to Research Question #1:

What are the reasons and goals of the Taiwanese Christian parents to homeschool?

Based on the analysis report on homeschooling in America, three reasons are most frequently mentioned: religious reasons, parents' dissatisfaction about academic instruction in school, and negative school environment or peer pressure in school (Princiotta & Bielick, 2006). In Taiwan, homeschooling is not as common as in the USA; nevertheless, the Taiwanese homeschoolers who I studied share similar reasons and goals

for educating their children at home. These reasons also include religious concerns, happy learning experiences and prevention from negative influences in school.

All of the families mentioned that their homeschooling is closely related to their religious belief. All of them have Bible study in their homeschooling. The homeschooled children have to read the Bible on a daily basis and each family also regularly attends church services together and participates in various church groups.

In the first family, the homeschooling mother, Chelsea, considered homeschooling to be a personal divine calling from God. She was earnestly seeking for God's guidance whether to continue homeschooling her oldest daughter in junior high school. By homeschooling, she intends to mold her children's character and to develop their individual talents, so that the children can be used by God as sharpened swords in terms of their character, will, faith, knowledge and attitude of service. Her husband, Phil, echoed her intentions and added "loving relationship among siblings" and "passion for learning" as the goals for their homeschooling.

As for the second family, the homeschooling father, Zach, emphasized that he and his wife hope to have more interactions with their children by means of homeschooling. As he said "we are fighting against the world for the time with our children." Being family-centered is one of the major reasons for educating their children at home. Through homeschooling, the parents also attempt to protect their children from negative peer influence in school and to provide their children more access to faith (Christian belief) and a less time-pressured learning environment at home.

The homeschooling father in the third family, John, simply hopes that his children can learn happily through homeschooling. His hope is similar to Nel Noddings' idea of

advocating happiness to be an aim for education, as she found that happy students learn better than unhappy ones (2003, p. 2, 122-123). However, his wife, Opal, is determined to raise her children with good character so her children can be used by God. The core principle of her homeschooling is to teach in accordance with her children's individual aptitudes so that each child's talents can be developed by means of homeschooling.

For the last family, the parents unanimously agreed that they wanted to give their children character training and religious education, which are absent in school, in their opinion. As the mother pointed out: the character training is based on the Bible and the reading of the Bible is prioritized to the learning of subjects in their homeschooling. She hopes that each of her children can be a God-loving person who is responsible and enjoys learning for life.

In conclusion, these Christian parents intend to provide their children with religious education and happy learning experiences through homeschooling; in addition, they also attempt to protect their children from negative influence in school by following a family-centered schedule in their homeschooling.

Response to Research Question #2:

What does their homeschooling look like in practice?

This question refers to the part of received curriculum in the homeschooling of each family. As proposed in Chapter One, this question covers several relevant sub-questions, including what their typical day of homeschooling looks like, what kind of curriculum materials and instructional style the parents have, and whether the parents'

intended aims are reached in their homeschooling. The last sub-question also indicates an evaluation for their homeschooling practice.

In Chapter Four, I described and analyzed the homeschooling practice of each family from the dimensions of curricula, pedagogy, structure, evaluation and community relationship along with samples of their typical homeschool days. It is found the two most fundamental characteristics of homeschooling in these families are family-centered and Bible-based. Most of the families use curriculum used in public schools (from the 1st grade through the 9th grade) and add supplemental materials, particularly the reading of the Bible or relevant books. As for Charlotte in the 12th grade, her parents' selected an on-line learning curriculum for her since she is above the 9th grade. All of the homeschooling families provide their homeschooled children a variety of extra-curricular classes, such as music (piano, violin, flute, cello), drawings, soccer, table-tennis, to enrich their homeschooling and develop their children's individual talents.

The four homeschooling mothers who are the main figures to teach their children at home share some similarities when they answered the question about their parenting and teaching styles, though they may have different personalities and backgrounds. Among the four common parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent or neglectful), most of the mothers considered their parenting style to be authoritative. Chelsea in the first family thinks hers is a mixture of all styles except for being indulgent, as she revealed that her children have to get the parental approval on many occasions. Opal in the third family thinks hers is the combination of being authoritative and democratic. All of them use compliments, tokens or pocket money to reward their children's good behaviors. Likewise, most of them refer to cancellation of rights as

punishment if their children do not finish their duties in a timely manner, including study and housework.

As mentioned in one of the themes emerging from this study, all these homeschooling families emphasize the importance of obeying the authority, particularly their parents at home. Nevertheless, the parent-child relationship is not hierarchical because none of the homeschoolers are authoritarian according to my observation. In most of the cases, the homeschoolers would explain reasons to their children patiently, even when the children sometimes were emotional or hard to reason with. When the youngest girl in the third family was unwilling to do her homework, for instance, her mother tried to explain to her that they had already gone for several activities recently and it was time for study.

Similarly, when Esther in the second family was suddenly reluctant to attend two music courses (flute and piano) as they had planned, her mother told her that she should raise the issue for discussion the day before if she was worried that she would be too tired with two courses in one afternoon. Her mother encouraged her to try and insisted that Esther should be responsible for the plans made; otherwise, the sudden changes in plans might bring inconvenience to others, such as her piano and flute teachers in that case.

In terms of teaching styles, these homeschoolers also share similarities including individualized instruction, exploring ways to learn with their children effectively, and helping children to be able to study actively by themselves eventually.

Individualized instruction is a considerable advantage of homeschooling in these families. With time flexibility in homeschooling, the homeschoolers are given more opportunities based on each child's interests and needs. The mother in the third family,

Opal, clearly indicated that teaching in accordance with their children's aptitudes is the core principle of her homeschooling. According to the principle, she gave her oldest daughter, who is well self-disciplined, more freedom to arrange her time and to study on her own. In contrast, Opal spent more time accompanying her son who needs more aids in learning languages. After exploring different kinds of learning methods, finally they found that the boy would study Chinese more effectively when he read the texts out loud.

As mentioned before, homeschooling can be a learning opportunity for both the homeschoolers and the homeschooled children. The mother in the first family, for example, when she was not positive of the pronunciation of a word "grandpa" (whether "d" is pronounced or not), she and her son decided to look it up in the dictionary together. Further, she also attempts to help her children develop the right learning attitudes (not simply for taking exams) and the ability to learn independently in homeschooling ultimately. In the same way, the mother in the fourth family, Lucy, also revealed that she would honestly tell her children that she was limited and might not know everything. Thus, Lucy tried to teach her children to look for resources actively. Besides, she also used lots of discussion in their homeschooling to help her children take an active role in their learning and exploring knowledge instead of simply being fed up with information by their parents.

In evaluating various schooling experiences, John Dewey identifies three kinds of experiences: noneducational, miseducational, and educational experience (Eisner, 1998). Overall, the homeschooling practices of all these four families were generally positive and constructive educational experience. Their homeschooling also reached their primary goals set for each family, including providing more character training and Christian

education for their children, preventing their children from negative influences in school with a family-centered schedule, and developing their children's individual talents in a less stressed learning environment at home.

Based on my observation, I found the feedbacks from the outside community (such as neighbors and schoolteachers) about the homeschooling families were positive and complimentary. During my visit in the first family, for example, I heard the praise from a neighbor to Phil for educating his children well. I also saw Phil's children play happily with their neighbors' children and get along with other children on various occasions, such as in the Bible camp, in the study group and at church. Besides, in attending the first-review meeting in the local school with the third family, I also noticed the comments from the teachers for the homeschooled children were positive. Alice's home-room teacher, for instance, indicated that Alice was doing well in terms of her academic performance and social relationship.

As for the relatives (especially for the homeschooled children's grandparents), according to the interviews with the homeschoolers, many of the grandparents did not agree with the decision to homeschool in the first place, because they never heard of this kind of educational choice before. Nevertheless, most of the grandparents became supportive after they saw the positive results of their homeschooling, including the children's happy growth, loving relationship, good manners, and holistic development in academic, religious, social aspects.

Response to Research Question #3

What do these parents perceive as the primary advantages & challenges of doing homeschooling in Taiwan?

This question includes what the primary advantages of homeschooling are as perceived from the parents' perspectives, what challenges that Taiwanese homeschoolers may encounter, and why some Christian parents continue homeschooling in spite of these challenges. Interviews with the parents were the main source of data to answer these questions; moreover, the data collected through participant-observation and the analysis of documents shared by the parents were also used as triangulation.

According to the parents who participated in my study, the greatest advantages of homeschooling are concluded as time flexibility and the freedom to include religious education and character training. It is noticeable the concern of socialization in homeschooling is not an issue or challenge mentioned by any of the families. In contrast, two of the families (they both have four children each) highlighted the advantage of close relationship between the parents and the children, and among the siblings, as all the family members spend most of their time together.

Time Flexibility

In the book, *The Christian Home School*, Gregg Harris indicates that one of the strong advantages in homeschooling is “the flexibility it allows in the educational process” as he explains, “In school, teaching is strictly confined to the classroom setting and the prescribed hours of attendance. In the home, however, there are constant learning opportunities” (Harris, 1995, 61). Likewise, time flexibility is demonstrated to be one of the greatest advantages revealed by the homeschoolers I studied.

The use of time can be individualized for children's learning. In the second family, for instance, Sophia mentioned that she once taught her daughter to learn the concept of division in math; however, her daughter just couldn't understand no matter how hard she tried to explain. In response to that, she decided to skip that part of the lesson temporarily. Three months later, when Sophia tried to teach her daughter the same concept again, the girl could easily get it then. Time flexibility is also related to the characteristic of one-on-one instruction in homeschooling. Chandler, the father in the fourth family for example, further pointed out individualized instruction to be a considerable advantage of homeschooling, "In school, it's one teacher to many students, but it can be one-on-one at home..." Compared with schoolteachers who have to take care of a class of students, these homeschoolers have more time flexibility for individualized instructions to fit each child's needs in teaching and learning.

In addition to time flexibility in learning, homeschooling is flexible for family time. As the homeschooling mother in the second family indicated: the focus of children is on the family and they are following the family's schedule, rather than the schools'. She shared that when her mother got hurt and had a cast put on in an accident last year, she could leave for visiting her mother with her children quickly because of homeschooling. As she said, "because of homeschooling, we didn't miss the time to be with our family members in time of need. We are fighting with the world for the time spent with our children."

Similarly, the third family is doing "half-half" homeschooling: the children return to school for some classes, while they can benefit from the freedom of homeschooling as well. The family has time flexibility for various family-centered activities; for example,

they have gone camping about ten times since last summer (since Alice was in the 6th grade) and they are also able to go to exhibitions during the weekdays. Besides, Opal indicated that the schoolteachers understand the family has applied for homeschooling, so they usually would allow the family to ask for a leave of absence if any time conflict occurs for their family plans.

Freedom to Include Religious Education and Character Training

In Chapter Two, it is analyzed that religious education has been omitted consciously as “null curriculum” in schools in Taiwan (Gong, 1998) owing to various political and cultural factors. In order to maintain the separation of church and state, religious education is officially prohibited in public schools of Taiwan (Huang, 1994), not to mention Christian education. Thus, many Taiwanese homeschoolers resort to homeschooling in order to provide their children a better religious or moral education (Lee, 2005; Kung, 2005).

In my study, all the parents interviewed also revealed the advantage of being able to cover religious education and character training in their homeschooling. Their religious education include daily reading of the Bible, memorizing biblical verses, attending Sunday services, joining church groups and activities, and giving tithes. These homeschoolers hope to mold their children’s character based on the teaching of the Bible through homeschooling. In three of the families studied, the homeschooled children are asked to give tithes, as one of the Christian religious practices for example, after they receive pocket money or salary. Moreover, all the parents also agree that the reading of the Bible along with the character training should be prioritized to the study of knowledge, as the homeschooled children have the Bible reading on a daily basis.

Most of the families simply use the school curriculum at home. They can get textbooks from local public schools for free, though they are not given answer keys or teachers' guides. Nevertheless, the homeschoolers have the freedom to select or change the content of the school curricula based on their needs or beliefs. One of the homeschooling mothers gave her children supplementary materials from a biblical perspective, for instance, when she found the definitions and divisions of gender roles (like homosexuality) in the school's social study curriculum did not go with the Christian teaching.

Challenges

As for the challenges, the homeschoolers interviewed mentioned several challenges they have encountered in homeschooling, including finances, lacking of varieties in teaching, time management and space issues.

According to the homeschooling law requirements by the Taiwan government, one of the Mujen's purposes is to encourage parents to lawfully homeschool their children full-time (p. 15). In most of the cases, it is the mother who would give up her career for homeschooling. In the same way, all the mothers in my study are full-time homeschoolers. Among them, at least two of the mothers indicated the challenge of managing the family budget carefully, especially when they can only rely on the fathers' income for the whole family. Compared with double-income families that are common in Taiwan, the homeschoolers have to give up some part of their family income for the decision to homeschool.

A homeschooling mother honestly shared that the possibility of lacking varieties in teaching is most likely to be a disadvantage in their homeschooling. Based on her

personality, her teaching style is very predictable, so her children always know what to expect next from her. For some of her children who like stability, it works well; however, for the children who like to have varieties in learning, they may easily get bored.

All of the homeschooling mothers agreed one of the greatest advantages of homeschooling is time flexibility. However, all of them also mentioned the challenge of time management in homeschooling. As the two sides of the same coin, time flexibility and freedom may bring a challenge in using their time properly. Chelsea, the mother in the first family for instance, mentioned that both sides of parents and children have to be good at self-discipline in homeschooling; otherwise, their time at home is so easily passed or wasted. As she said, “It’s also a challenge in our homeschooling. Sometimes I feel that we’re always catching up on the assigned work.”

Sophia, the mother in the second family, mentioned that their family life is in accordance with the nature, for example, the children get up earlier in summer, while they sleep longer in winter. By doing so in homeschooling, their children may feel less time-pressured than in school. However, there would be a risk of chaos or falling far behind the schedule without self-discipline. In addition, procrastination may become a habit, as Sophia revealed, “my children may finish their work sooner, if it is asked by someone else. But if it’s Mom who asks, they’d haggle a little bit.”

In a similar way, this kind of haggling situations occurred in other homeschooling families observed. In the third family, for instance, Benson wanted immediate help from his mother and started to haggle with her when she was not available right away. Opal reminded him of her role as a teacher on top of a mother in homeschooling, “If you were in school, you wouldn’t act like this. You can’t haggle with your teachers! Now, I am the

teacher!” It also happened to the first family when the mother tried to implement the new penalty for being late. In their discussion of this penalty (the children have to run a circle if they are late for every five minutes in the morning), the mother emphasized since she is the teacher in homeschooling, her children should abide by her words, as they would not bargain with teachers in school.

Challenge as a Chance for Learning

In the face of the challenge of lacking resources, the homeschooled children have to learn to solve their problems by looking for resources independently and actively. As Lucy, the mother in the fourth family explained, “My time, energy and ability are limited, so I have to teach my children to look for resources they need by themselves. I’ve taught my children to solve problems with limited resources and inconvenience. For instance, when my girls complained to me that their younger brothers were too noisy and they asked for a quieter space to study, I’d tell them to figure out solutions to solve this problem, such as going to the library, rescheduling their study time, or doing something else when the boys are playing. Another example is that, when Carolyn needed money for a camp, she raised her funding by making and selling homemade cookies. We don’t always give our children everything they ask for.”

Opal, the mother in the third family, also raised the problem of space for homeschooling activities in the first-review meeting for the homeschooling application. She pointed out that many churches have been supportive to homeschooling families in the USA; however, because Christians are a religious minority in Taiwan, Taiwanese homeschoolers do not always receive this kind of support or resources from the church. In terms of space, she suggested that if the resources from school can be shared with

homeschooling families, that would be great; for instance, some empty classrooms might be open to homeschooled children in times of need.

Nevertheless, later she shared with me that this problem was a chance for adjusting her attitudes of life and even turned out to be a personal experience for religious growth: “As for the lack of resources in space, it could be a good opportunity to adjust our attitudes to trust in how the Lord provides us with what we need. Now I’ve learned to be more patient for God’s provision. Last year, we just waited for God’s guidance and the church which we didn’t have any fellowship with before was unexpectedly willing to rent us the space. I think if we could not find appropriate space for the study group, it might be God’s will for us to do something else at that time.”

A Recurring Concern: Uncertainties about the Children’s Future Education

In my study, all of the homeschoolers studied show appreciation for their homeschooling; however, they also share a sense of uncertainties about their children’s future education. In a society emphasizing diplomas as proof of education in Taiwan, these homeschoolers choose a road less taken for their children’s education. As an educational minority group in Taiwan, these homeschooling families have to face the pressure of uncertainties for the future. As one of the homeschooling mothers shared, she is so concerned that the decision to homeschool might ruin her children’s future (including education and career). She would love to choose homeschooling in the long term; however, her biggest concern is about her children’s future education. As it is analyzed in the emergent themes, many homeschoolers are mostly worried about whether their children can get connected with the Taiwanese mainstream school system without any administrative problems in the future, especially for the senior high school and above.

Related to this uncertainty, another homeschooling mother indicated the fact that educational laws about homeschooling in Taiwan are not precise and complete. In her opinion, some educational administrative officials simply wait and see, because they do not have a deep understanding or acceptance of homeschooling. These officials are not supportive partly because they are worried if homeschooling becomes popular, regular schools may run short of students owing to the increasingly lower birth rate in Taiwan.

Response to Research Question #4

*What are the implications of the Christian homeschooling movement
for education in Taiwan?*

This last question is composed of two sub-questions: (1) what is the importance of Christian homeschooling in Taiwan? and (2) will it contribute any insights to education in Taiwan?

Though homeschooling is not the mainstream educational choice in Taiwan, it is worthy of notice that it is becoming increasingly popular. More parents show their interest in homeschooling and some of them already chose homeschooling as a better educational way for their children. As it is discussed above, the Christian homeschoolers choose homeschooling mainly for the reasons of religious education, which is null curriculum in mainstream education, and protecting their children from negative peer pressure in school. These reasons and the increasingly popular homeschooling movement can be taken as an opportunity to examine public school education in Taiwan and hopefully to improve some of the existing deficits in school.

In addition, many homeschoolers in this study pointed out that the focus of school education in Taiwan is primarily academic performance and test-taking skill training. It would be a great waste if education is limited to the studying of books as emphasized in Taiwanese traditional education.

All of the families have various collections of books for children to read in their living rooms or study rooms (along with a variety of books about education, discipline, and Christian parenting for the parents). It is noticeable that all these homeschooling families seem to protect their children from the influence of the media, as all of the families visited do not have televisions at home. Instead, all families have a piano in their living room and three of them have other musical instruments such as a violin or a flute for their children to practice. Extra-curricular classes (enrichment classes), including music, art, and sports are an important part to their homeschooling.

The findings of this study about Christian homeschooling, including the emphasis of a family-centered education, the close relationship between family members, and the fact that socialization is not a problem in homeschooling, also provide new empirical evidence for a better understanding or further acceptance of homeschooling in Taiwan. The homeschoolers in this study are not anti-school or holding unschooling attitudes; on the contrary, they are highly concerned about their children's education. They are adding or prioritizing something good in education with an attempt to make it more holistic by means of homeschooling. It is significant to clarify because the relationship between regular schools supported by the government and self-dependent homeschoolers should not be competitive or detesting. The ideal scenario is to have a cooperative and supportive relationship between schools and parents (homeschoolers) for the best profit

of children, particularly for the homeschooled children. Some issues raised by the homeschoolers in this study, such as the unclear or incomplete homeschooling laws in Taiwan, the need of space for group activities, the lack of positive support from the government, altogether are important for the future development of the homeschooling movement and education in general in Taiwan to consider and to make progress.

Future Research

The description and analysis in this study present a picture that helps readers understand how homeschooling is practiced in Taiwan. The themes that emerged from this study also hold significance for the Christian homeschooling movement and general education in Taiwan. Parents (including homeschoolers and non-homeschoolers), schoolteachers, educational administrative officials, policymakers, and others involved may benefit from reading the stories about these four homeschooling families in Taiwan. However, some limitations are found in this study and these also leave space for future research.

First of all, this study mainly focused on the parents' perceptions regarding their motivations and operations of homeschooling. In terms of this limitation, I would like to further include the voice of homeschooled children in the future. In addition, it may be helpful to extend interviews to others involved in homeschooling, such as the homeschoolers' relatives or schoolteachers.

Second, the participants in this study are all religious-motivated families from the Protestant background. It would be interesting to expand this research to include other

types of homeschoolers, such as non-religious or other religious groups, to see the differences and similarities between various groups of homeschoolers.

Third, in this study, it is found that the smooth connection to the regular schools is a big concern for most of the homeschoolers interviewed because they chose a road less taken. In response to this concern, a longitudinal study of the homeschooled children in different years is desired for future research. By tracking the development of the homeschooled students and their road to future education, it may disclose more information about whether this worry about choosing a less-taken path (homeschooling) in Taiwan is necessary.

References

- Advanced Training Institute International (2010) Retrieved November 1, 2010, from <http://ati.iblp.org/ati/>
- Altbach, P. G. (1991). Introduction: The uses of a comparative perspective. In *The Confucian continuum: Educational modernization in Taiwan*. Ed. By D. C. Smith (pp. xix- xxii). New York, NY: Praeger Publishers.
- Aso, K. (2005). *A case study of the drop out problem in Japan and homeschooling as a possible policy response*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Minnesota: MN.
- Bauman, K. J. (2002). Home schooling in the United States: Trends and characteristics [electric version]. *Educational Policy Analysis Archives*, 10(26). Retrieved 10/27/2009 from <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v10n26.html>
- Bielick, S. (2008). 1.5 million homeschooled students in the United States in 2007. *NCES Issue Brief*. DC: National Center for Education Statistics. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2009030> (retrieved 10/20/2009)
- Blok, H. (2004). Performance in home schooling: An argument against compulsory schooling in the Netherlands. *International Review of Education*, 50, 39-52.
- Chang, B.R. (2005). A Reflection on the educational philosophy of a religious home schooling family. *Journal of National Pingtung University of Education*. 24, 201-229. National Pingtung University of Education: Taiwan.

- Chang, Y. C. (2003). On constitutionality of Taiwanese religious education—An analysis of civil education. Unpublished master thesis. National Cheng-chi University: Taiwan.
- Central Intelligence Agency (2009). The world factbook. Retrieved October 21, 2009, from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tw.html>
- Chiu, H. Y. ed. (1995) *International comparisons of religious education and policy studies* (宗教教育之國際比較與政策研究). Ministry of Education: Taiwan.
- Collom, E. (2005). The ins and outs of homeschooling: The determinants of parental motivations and student achievement. *Education and Urban Society*, 37(3), 307- 335.
- Department of Statistics, Ministry of Interior (2009) Population by single year of age. *Monthly Bulletin of Interior Statistics*. Retrieved November 18, 2009, from <http://sowf.moi.gov.tw/stat/month/list.htm>
- Edwards, L. (2007). *Home school families: An analysis of their characteristics and perceptions toward public schools*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Tennessee State University: TN.
- Eisner, W. E. (1998). *The enlightened eyes: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Eisner, E. W. (2002). *The educational imagination: On the design and evaluation of school programs*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, c2002.
- Electronic Theses and Dissertations System of National Central Library (2005). Retrieved October 22, 2009, from <http://etds.ncl.edu.tw/theabs/index.jsp>
- Ely, M., M. Anzul, T. Friedman, D. Garner, & A. M. Steinmetz (1991). *Doing qualitative research: Circles within circles*. Bristol, PA: The Falmer Press.
- Fang, C. (1998). *Analysis of Western contemporary theories of religious education*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. National Taiwan Normal University: Taiwan.

- Gaither, M. (2008). *Homeschool: An American history*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gong, H. Y. (1998). Contemporary situations of religions and religious education (近代的宗教實況與宗教教育). *Taiwan Education Review*. 567, 47-55.
- Harris, G. (1995). *The Christian home school*. Gresham, OR: Noble Publishing Associates.
- Holt, J. & P. Farenga (2003). *Teach your own child: The John Holt Book of Homeschooling*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing.
- Homeschool-Curriculum.org (2008-2009). History of HomeSchooling November 8, 2009, from <http://www.homeschool-curriculum.org/history-of-homeschooling.html>
- Home School Legal Defense Association (2009) State Laws. Retrieved November 8, 2009, from <http://www.hslda.org/laws/default.asp>
- Home School Legal Defense Association (2009) Home schooling/International. October 21, 2009, from <http://www.hslda.org/hs/international/Taiwan/default.asp>
- Homeschool World (2009) Colorado homeschool groups. *Homeschool Organizations and Support Groups*. Retrieved November 18, 2009, from <http://www.home-school.com/groups/CO.html>
- Hsu, W.T. (2006). A case study on home schooling in Taiwan. Unpublished master thesis. Ming Chuan University: Taiwan.
- Huang, L. M. (1994). *The study of feasibility of religious education in elementary and secondary schools in Taiwan* (我國中小學實施宗教教育之可行性研究). Unpublished doctoral dissertation. National Taiwan Normal University: Taiwan.
- Jung, J. H. (2008). *Contested motherhood: Self and modernity in South Korean homeschooling*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Washington State University, WA.

- Knowles, J.G., Marlow, S. E., & Muchmore, J.A. (1992). From pedagogy to ideology: Origins and phases of home education in the United States, 1970-1990. *American Journal of Education*, 100(2), 195-235.
- Kung, F. C. (2005) *Case studies on parents' preference for home-schooling*. Unpublished master thesis. National Taitung University: Taiwan.
- Kunzman, R. (2009a). *Write these laws on your children: Inside the world of conservative Christian homeschooling*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Kunzman, R. (2009b). Homeschooling Research & Scholarship.
http://www.indiana.edu/~homeeduc/research_homepage.html
- Lee, Y. Y. (2005). Homeschooling for the best (在家教狀元). *Business Weekly*, 942, 148-156.
- Lin, C. J. (1983). The Republic of China (Taiwan). In *Schooling in East Asia: Forces of change*. Edit. By R. M. Thomas and T. N. Postlethwaite. 104-135. New York, NY: Pergamon Press.
- Lin, P. H. (1994). *The clash between religion and the state in Taiwan*. Taipei, Taiwan: Daw Shiang Publishing.
- Lyman, I. (1998). Homeschooling: Back to future? *Cato Policy Analysis*. 294.
<http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa-294.html> (10/22/2009 retrieved)
- Mujen Home Educators Association (2009) Retrieved November 10, 2009, from
<http://www.mujen.org.tw/>
- Mullady, A. M. (2006). *Beyond stereotypes: Stories of home school families*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Arizona State University: AZ.
- National Palace Museum (2009). Brief chronology. *Tradition & Continuity*. Retrieved October 21, 2009, from <http://www.npm.gov.tw/en/about/tradition.htm>.

- Noddings, N. (2003). *Happiness and education*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Peter, T. & Chapman, C. (2006). Trends in the use of school choice: 1993 to 2003: *NCES Statistical Analysis Report*. DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- Princiotta, D. & Bielick, S. (2006). Homeschooling in the United States: 2003. *NCES Statistical Analysis Report*. DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- ProQuest Dissertation & Theses Database (2009).
<http://0-proquest.umi.com.bianca.penlib.du.edu/login> (via the link of Penrose Library at University of Denver).
- Rosemond, J. (2007). *Parenting by the book: biblical wisdom for raising your child*. New York, NY: Howards Books.
- Smith, D. C. (1991). Foundations of modern Chinese education and the Taiwan experience. In *The Confucian continuum: Educational modernization in Taiwan*. Ed. By D. C. Smith (pp. 1-63). New York, NY: Praeger Publishers.
- Steven, M. L. (2001). *Kingdom of children: Culture and controversy in the homeschooling movement*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press:
- Taylor, L. A. (1993). *At home in school: A qualitative inquiry into three Christian home schools*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Stanford University: CA.
- Taylor, L. A. (1997). Home in school: Insights on education through the lens of home schoolers. *Theory into Practice*. 36(2), 110-115.
- The China Post (2009a). Taiwan fertility rate lowest in world: Poll. Retrieved October 28, 2009, from <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/health/pregnancy-&-menopause/2009/09/20/225411/Taiwan-fertility.htm>

- The China Post (2009b). Education involves more than studying textbooks.
Retrieved November 4, 2009, from
<http://www.chinapost.com.tw/editorial/taiwan-issues/2009/08/16/220673/p2/Education-involves.htm>
- Tung, W. (2004). *The establishment of Religious Studies Education in Taiwan: A First Assessment of the Present Development of Departments and Graduate Institutes of Religious Studies*. Unpublished master thesis. National Chen-chi University: Taiwan.
- Uhrmacher, P. B. & Matthews, J. (2005). Building his palette of scholarship: A bibliographical sketch of Elliot Eisner. In P. B. Uhrmacher & J. Matthews (Eds.), *Intricate palette: working the ideas of Elliot Eisner* (pp. 1-13). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Van Galen, J. (1986). *Schooling in private: A study of home education*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: NC.
- Wagner, T. J. (2008). *Parental perspectives of homeschooling: A qualitative analysis of parenting attitudes regarding homeschooling as opposed to public schooling*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Capella University: Minneapolis: MN.
- Wu, C. J. (2006). A content analysis on home schooling laws and regulations in Taiwan. *NTTU Educational Research Journal*. 17(1), p. 133-154.
- Yang, P. Q., & N. Kayaardi (2004). Who chooses non-public schools for their children? *Educational Studies*, 30(3), 231-249.
- Zheng, S. C. (2003). The establishment of principles of life education in Daoism (道教生命教育學理之建構). The collection of conference papers “*Religion and Life Education Conference~ Daoism and Life Education*” (宗教與生命教育研討會~道教與生命教育), pp. 1-18.

Appendix A: The Population of Obtaining Homeschool Approval in Taiwan (2008-2009)³⁹

Year City/County	2009		2008	
	Elementary Education	Junior High Education	Elementary Education	Junior High Education
Taipei County (台北縣)	78	37	87	38
Yilan County (宜蘭縣)	8	12	6	2
Taoyuan County (桃園縣)	77	19	82	18
Hsinchu County (新竹縣)	30	12	106	14
Miaoli County (苗栗縣)	10	5	15	4
Taichung County (台中縣)	80	0	51	0
Nantou County (南投縣)	22	1	19	0
Changhua County (彰化縣)	26	7	30	0
Yunlin County (雲林縣)	0	2	1	2
Chiayi County (嘉義縣)	1	1	1	1
Tainan County (台南縣)	6	5	7	5

³⁹ Reference: Mujen Home Educators Association
http://www.mujen.org.tw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8&Itemid=65 (Retrieved on 11/9/2009)

Kaohsiung County (高雄縣)	6	1	10	1
Pingtung County (屏東縣)	4	1	4	1
Taitung County (台東縣)	2	0	3	0
Hualien County (花蓮縣)	6	3	6	3
Penghu County (澎湖縣)	0	0	0	0
Keelung City (基隆市)	1	4	2	0
Hsinchu County (新竹市)	15	6	19	3
Taichung City (台中市)	273	76	311	46
Chiayi City (嘉義市)	0	0	0	0
Tainan City (台南市)	23	7	32	4
Kinmaen County (金門縣)	0	0	3	0
Lienchiang County (連江縣)	0	0	0	0
Taipei City (台北市)	196	89	213	76
Kaohsiung City (高雄市)	47	3	34	3
Total	911	291	1042	221

Appendix B: The Chinese Texts of the Aims of Mujen Home Educators Association

慕真的使命 (The Mission of Mujen)

鞏固婚姻 (To consolidate marriage),

合一家庭 (To unify family),

教養敬虔後代 (to raise faithful children).

慕真的宗旨 (The Proclamations and Purposes of Mujen)

- 相信教養子女是 神託付給父母的天職，而不應由政府或學校負擔所有的責任。(Believing that raising children is a parental responsibility and mission dictated by God, and this responsibility should not be taken over by the government or schools.)
- 鼓勵父母在不違背政府法令的原則下，全職在家教育自己的孩子。(Encouraging parents to lawfully homeschool their children full-time.)
- 鼓勵父母以聖經為生活各方面的最高準則，先以身作則，再藉著在「信心」「德行」「知識」(彼得後書1章5-7節)各方面循序並均衡的教導，以培養出敬虔的後代。(Encouraging parents to follow the Bible as their highest guidance of every aspect in life, to set a good example, and to teach with “faith,” “virtue,” and “knowledge” (as in II Peter 1:5-7) for raising faithful descendants.)
- 相信在家教育是一種生活革新運動，在真理原則中建立蒙福的家庭，為國家社會注入正面積極的影響力。(Believing the homeschooling is a life-reforming movement to build blessed families based on the truth and to have positive influences within the society.)

Reference: Mujen Home Educators Association (2009) <http://www.mujen.org.tw>

Appendix C: Interview Guide for Homeschoolers

General

- How long have you been homeschooling?
- When did you first think about homeschooling your child/children?
- Where did you first hear about homeschooling? (Friends? Church? Books? Magazines? TV?)
- What resources did/do you learn from about homeschooling to feel competent to homeschool your child/children?

Intentional

- What motivates you to choose homeschooling your child/children?
- Why don't you choose public school, private or Christian schools for your child/children?
- In what ways does your homeschooling differ from other kinds of schooling (public schools, private schools, Christian schools)?
- What are the goals you hope to reach by homeschooling your child/children?
- What is the most important thing you hope to accomplish by homeschooling?
- Why do you continue homeschooling?

Curricular

- What subjects do you cover in your homeschooling?
- Why do you choose these subjects?
- What curriculum materials do you use?
- What are your criteria for selecting the curriculum?

- Have you ever changed your curriculum to suit your children's needs? If so, would you please share an example? (Why? How? In which part?)

Pedagogical

- What would you say is your teaching style?
- Why have you chosen this method of teaching?
- What are the strengths/weaknesses of this teaching method?
- What are the problems or challenges you face in teaching your child/children at home?

Structural

Time

- How is a typical homeschooling day structured?
- Why do you make these arrangements?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of these arrangements?
- How is your school year divided?

Space

- Which area do you teach your child/children at home?
- Where else does your teaching take place, if any?
- What influenced the way your home is organized for your homeschooling?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of these space arrangements?

Evaluation

Discipline

- What would you say is your parenting style?
- What behaviors do you reward your child/children for?

- How do you reward these behaviors? Why?
- What behaviors are forbidden?
- What is the penalty for forbidden behaviors?

Teaching

- How do you measure your child/children's progress?
- What are the standardized tests, if any, to evaluate your child/children?
- Why do you select certain standardized tests, if any?
- How do you evaluate your own teaching?
- Does anyone else evaluate your homeschooling?
 - Who?
 - Why do they evaluate your homeschooling?
 - How often do they evaluate your homeschooling?
 - In what ways, if any, do you think it is helpful?
 - In what ways, if any, do you think it is threatening?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages you perceive from doing homeschooling?

Community

- What are the support groups, if any, you are involved in for homeschooling?
- Have you received enough support to homeschool in Taiwan?
- Is there any other support or resources that you would like but you have not found in Taiwan yet?
- What are the educational activities are you involved in outside your home?

- What do your relatives, friends, church friends and/or neighbors think about your homeschooling?
- Which pressure, if any, do you feel from doing homeschooling in Taiwan?
- How do you deal with the pressure or challenges to homeschool, if any?

Homeschooler's Educational Background and

- What kind of schools did you go (from elementary through higher education)?
- How did you like your school days?
- Does the choice of homeschooling relate to your own school experience?
- Do you have teaching licensure?
- Have you taken any teaching or educational courses?
- Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your homeschooling experience?

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form (English Version)

Informed Consent Form

A Qualitative Inquiry of Christian Homeschooling in Taiwan

You are invited to participate in a study that will explore the Christian homeschooling in Taiwan. In addition, this study is being conducted to fulfill the requirements of a Ph.D. dissertation. The study is conducted by Wei-chen Tung (a.k.a. Grace Tung). Results will be used to finish the Ph.D. dissertation and to receive a grade in the course. Grace Tung can be reached at 720-280-9025 , wtung@du.edu . This project is supervised by the course instructors, Dr. Edith King and Dr. Bruce Uhrmacher, Curriculum and Instruction Program, Morgridge College of Education, University of Denver, Denver, CO 80208, 303-871-2487, eking@du.edu, or 303-871-2483, buhrmach@du.edu.

Participation in this study includes interviews and observations: a 40-minute interview for 3-4 times and approximately 20-30 hours over a week for observations. Participation will involve responding to questions about your homeschooling experience. Participation in this project is strictly voluntary. The risks associated with this project are minimal. If, however, you experience discomfort you may discontinue the interview at any time. We respect your right to choose not to answer any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. Refusal to participate or withdrawal from participation will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your responses will be identified by pseudonym only and will be kept separate from information that could identify you. This is done to protect the confidentiality of your responses. Only the researcher will have access to your individual data and any

reports generated as a result of this study will use only group averages and paraphrased wording.

If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during the interview, please contact Susan Sadler, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at 303-871-3454 or ssadler@du.edu, or Sylk Sotto-Santiago, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 303-871-4052 or ssottosa@du.edu, or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.

You may keep this page for your records. Please sign the next page if you understand and agree to the above. If you do not understand any part of the above statement, please ask the researcher any questions you have.

I have read and understood the foregoing descriptions of the study called *A Qualitative Inquiry of Christian Homeschooling in Taiwan*. I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of any language that I did not fully understand. I agree to participate in this study, and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form.

I agree to be audiotaped. I do not agree to be audiotaped.

I agree to be taken photos. I do not agree to be taken photos.

Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form (Chinese Version)

參與研究同意書

歡迎您參加這項研究，這是有關台灣基督徒父母在家教育經驗之研究，此研究是丹佛大學博士班課程與教學研究所學生董維真同學 ([720-280-9025](tel:720-280-9025), wtung@du.edu) 在金恩博士 (Dr. Edith King: 303-871-2487, eking@du.edu) 與額馬克博士 (Dr. Bruce Uhrmacher: 303-871-2483, buhrmach@du.edu) 指導下進行的博士論文研究，金恩博士與額馬克博士的通訊地址如下：Curriculum and Instruction Program, Morgridge College of Education, University of Denver, Denver, CO 80208.

參加此一研究包括有3-4次訪談（每次約40分鐘）以及參與觀察（一週間約20-30小時），主要是瞭解您在家教育的經驗與想法。參與本研究完全是自願的，您若有任何意見或問題可以隨時提出，並您可以選擇不回答任何不便回答的題目，我們尊重您參與研究的權利，若您拒口參與研究也不會受到任何懲罰或損失。

您的回應與分享將以代號或化名呈現，藉以保護您的隱私，只有研究者保有您所提供的意見與看法。如您對此項研究有任何意見或建議，您可以聯繫山德勒博士(Dr. Susan Sadler, 303-871-3454, ssadler@du.edu) 或蘇德女士(Ms. Sylk Sotto-Santiago, 303-871-4052, ssottosa@du.edu), 其通訊方式如下：Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, University of Denver, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.

您可以保留這份同意書作為記錄。若您瞭解並願意參與此一研究，煩於下面簽名處簽名以示同意。若是您對此研究有任何疑問，請向研究者詢問。

請勾選

我同意訪談錄音

我不同意訪談錄音

我同意攝影（照相）

我不同意攝影（照相）

簽名

日期

Appendix F: The Reasons to Homeschool for Family #1

The following is quoted from the homeschooling application documents shared by Family #1 and it is translated into English by the research:

* We believe that children are the precious inheritance given by God, the great work of God. We expect to educate our children to be a God-loving and people-loving person, active and optimistic and will be used by God. (我們相信兒女是上帝所賜的產業，是上帝獨特的傑作。我們期待培育孩子成為一個愛神愛人、積極樂觀、為神所用的人)

* Parents know their children best and are able to design tailor-made curricula based on children's interests and aptitudes. We hope to discover our children's potentials, help and encourage them to develop their gifts effectively through homeschooling. (父母是最能夠了解自己孩子的人，可以依照其興趣、性向，量身打造適合孩子的課程。我們希望藉著在家教育，提早發覺孩子的潛能，協助並鼓勵他有效發展)

* We believe family is the most place for development of character education. Good interactions and modes of communications among family members are the foundation of all social relationship. (我們認為家庭是人格培育最重要的場所，家人之間良好的互動與溝通模式，是一切人際關係的基礎。)

* We hope to establish the right values and views of life for children, so that they can be brave to be pillar rock in midstream (mainstay) even under peer pressure and negative influence of the popular culture. (我們希望先建立孩子正確的價值觀與人生觀，使他們能在同儕關係與不當的流行文化影響下，勇於作中流砥柱。)

* We are willing to be a learner first, to grow with our children, and to be a good example of life-long learning for them. We expect our children to love reading, enjoy learning, know the directions of life clearly and be able to bring their talents into full play. (我們願意自己先成為學生，一同成長，作孩子終身學習的好榜樣。期待孩子也能熱愛閱讀、享受學習、清楚人生方向、並能發揮所長。)

Appendix G: Weekly schedule in Family #1

Chelsea's weekly schedule

Chelsea	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.
8:00-9:00	Housework	Housework	Housework	Housework	Housework
9:00-10:00	Housework Cindy's Chinese	Housework	Housework	Housework	Study Group
10:00-11:00	Cindy's English / Tony	Jimmy's English	Tony	Tony	
11:00-12:00	Jimmy's violin	Jimmy's violin	Jimmy's violin	Jimmy's violin	
12:00-13:00	Lunch break	Lunch break	Lunch break	Lunch break	Lunch break
13:00-14:00	Housework	Housework	Housework	Housework	Laundry
14:00-15:00	Nap time with Tony	Nap time with Tony	Nap time with Tony	Nap time with Tony	Nap time with Tony
15:00-16:00	Jimmy's English	Jimmy's violin	Jimmy's English	Jimmy's English	
16:00-17:00	Checking homework	Lily's society	Checking homework	Checking homework	
17:00-18:00	Playground⁴⁰	Playground	Pick up Lily	Playground	Jimmy's violin
18:00-19:00	Cooking dinner	Cooking dinner/ making bread	Cooking dinner	Cooking dinner/ making bread	Cooking dinner
19:00-20:00					
20:00-21:00		Tony's English**	Lily's piano	Tony's English	

* housework includes cleanup, floor sweeping, preparing for meals, laundry (washing and hanging the clothes in the balcony) ** Reading English books for Tony

Cindy's weekly schedule

⁴⁰ Playground is the time Chelsea will bring Tony and Jimmy downstairs to play with other neighbors' kids in the basement of the community.

Cindy	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
8:00-9:00	Bible / History ⁴¹	Bible	Bible / History	Bible	Bible / History	Bible
9:00-10:00	Chinese / running	Chinese / running	Chinese / running	Chinese / running	English	Magazine reading ⁴²
10:00-11:00	English	Math class	English	Piano	Chinese	
11:00-12:00	Piano	Piano	Piano	Math class	Piano	
12:00-13:00	Lunch break	Lunch break	Lunch break	Lunch break	Lunch break	Lunch break
13:00-14:00	Housework	English reading	English reading	Housework	Reading	Drawing class
14:00-15:00	Geography	History	Civic studies	Chinese essay	Biology	
15:00-16:00	Geography/ rope jumping	History/rope jumping	Civic studies	Chinese essay	Biology / rope jumping	Chinese
16:00-17:00	Reading	Reading	Piano class	Advanced essay class	Biology	English
17:00-18:00					Math	
18:00-20:00						
20:00-21:00	Math	Math	Math	English	Table tennis class	Chinese
21:00-22:00	Biology	Math	Math	Math		Math

Lily's weekly schedule

⁴¹ The historical text Cindy is reading is *Records of the Grand Historian*.

⁴² The magazine Cindy is assigned to read is CommonWealth (天下雜誌) www.cw.com.tw.

Lily	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.
8:00-9:30	Bible / History ⁴³	Bible / History	Bible / History	Bible /History	Bible
9:40-10:30	Abacus Cal. / running	Abacus Cal. / running	Abacus Cal. / running	Abacus Cal. / running	Study Group (World Geography / Art)
10:40-11:30	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	
11:40-12:30	Math	Math	Math	Math	
12:30-13:00	Lunch break	Lunch break	Lunch break	Lunch break	Lunch break
13:00-14:00	Housework	Housework	Housework	Housework	Housework
14:00-14:50	Diary	Diary	Chinese essay & calligraphy class	Diary	
15:00-15:50	English ⁴⁴	English		English	English
16:00-16:50	Piano /rope jumping	Society / rope jumping		Piano	Chinese
17:00-18:00			English		Piano
18:00-20:00	Free time Dinner break	Free time Dinner break	Free time Dinner break	Free time Dinner break	Free time Dinner break
20:00-21:00		Piano	Piano class	Calligraphy	Table tennis class

* 15:00-17:00 on Sat. is the soccer class for Jimmy & Lily.

Jimmy's weekly schedule

Jimmy	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.
8:00-9:00	Bible/ Math	Bible/ Math	Bible/ Math	Bible/ Math	Bible
9:00-10:00	Abacus Cal.	Abacus Cal.	Abacus Cal.	Abacus Cal.	Study Group (World Geography / Art)
10:00-11:00	Violin	English	Violin	Violin	
11:00-12:00	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	
12:00-13:00	Lunch break	Lunch break	Lunch break	Lunch break	Lunch break
13:00-14:00	Housework	Housework	Housework	Housework	Housework
14:00-15:00	Science ⁴⁵	Science	Science	Science	Science

⁴³ The historical text Lily reads is the same as Cindy's (*Records of the Grand Historian*).

⁴⁴ Lily is using the popular magazine "Let's Talk in English" for her English study.

15:00-15:50	English	Violin class	English	English	Quiz (古文驗收)
16:00-16:50	Chinese Literature	Chinese Literature	Chinese Literature	Chinese Literature (古 文／成語)	Chinese
17:00-18:00	Exercise	Exercise	Exercise	Exercise	Violin
18:00-20:00	Free time Dinner break	Free time Dinner break	Free time Dinner break	Free time Dinner break	Free time Dinner break
20:00-21:00	Violin	Violin	Violin	Violin	Table Tennis class

* 15:00-17:00 on Sat. is the soccer class for Jimmy & Lily.

Appendix H:

⁴⁵ It is time for reading books about natural science, at least one booklet per day.

Token chart of Family #1

Weekly Allowance:

Cindy (Heart): \$ 30 NTD/per week

Lily (Feather): \$ 25 NTD/per week

Jimmy (Crown): \$ 20 NTD/per week

Biblical verses memorization: \$ 10 NTD /per week

Reading through *Records of the Grand Historian* (史記) : \$ 300 NTD for the whole book

Finishing reading *Analects of Confucius* (論語) : \$ 10/per week

Reading the story to Tony: \$ 3 / per time

Teaching Tony the flash card of words: \$ 1/ per time

The best for the cleaning task: \$ 10 NTD

* Points / per week

Finishing all duties by Friday: 200 points

Finishing all duties by Saturday: 100 points

Finishing all duties by Sunday: 50 points

Bing dutiful and responsible in the position: 100 points

Dereliction of duties : 50 points

→ 6,000 points: Family travel

pocket money:

Usually Chelsea gives them the allowance early in the week (Monday through Wednesday). Chelsea gave the pocket money to the kids on Wednesday (Cindy: \$ 65 NTD, Lily: \$ 51 NTD, Jimmy: \$ 40 NTD). The kids have to give 1/10 to church as offering (tithes).

Appendix I: Weekly schedule for Family # 2

The sample weekly schedule for Esther⁴⁶:

Time		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
08:00-08:30	Content	Breakfast Time	Breakfast Time	Breakfast Time	Breakfast Time	Breakfast Time
	Instructor	Sophia	Sophia	Sophia	Sophia	Sophia
	Location	Home	Home	Home	Home	Home
08:45-09:20	Content	Housework	Housework	Housework	Housework	Housework
	Instructor	Sophia	Sophia	Sophia	Sophia	Sophia
	Location	Home	Home	Home	Home	Home
0930-10:10	Content	Bible	Bible	Bible	Bible	Bible
	Instructor	Sophia	Sophia	Zach	Sophia	Zach
	Location	Home	Home	Home	Home	Home
10:30-11:10	Content	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese
	Instructor	Sophia	Sophia	Sophia	Sophia	Sophia
	Location	Home	Home	Home	Home	Home
11:30-12:10	Content	Math	Math	Math	Math	Math
	Instructor	Sophia	Sophia	Sophia	Sophia	Sophia
	Location	Home	Home	Home	Home	Home
Lunch Break						
14:00-14:40	Content	English	English	English	Taiwanese	Life/Health
	Instructor	Zach	Zach	Zach	Sophia	Sophia
	Location	Home	Home	Home	Home	Home
15:00-15:40	Content	individualized instruction	individualized instruction	Nature/Art	Nature/Art	Nature/Art
	Instructor	Sophia	Sophia	Sophia	Sophia	Sophia
	Location			Home	Home	Home
16:00-16:40	Content	Flue				
	Instructor	Ms. Lin				
	Location	Music classroom				
17:00-17:30	Content				Piano	
	Instructor				Ms. Chen	
	Location				Music Classroom	

- Saturday: Morning: Attending the fellowship group for elementary students in church
- Sunday: Morning: Attending the children's Sunday school course in church

The sample weekly schedule for Paul⁴⁷:

⁴⁶ Resource: It is cited and translated from the homeschooling application material sent to Hsinchu City (新竹市國民教育階段學齡兒童在家自行教育申請表).

⁴⁷ Resource: It is cited and translated from the homeschooling application material sent to Hsinchu City (新竹市國民教育階段學齡兒童在家自行教育申請表).

Time		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
08:00-08:30	Content Instructor Location	Breakfast Time Sophia Home	Breakfast Time Sophia Home	Breakfast Time Sophia Home	Breakfast Time Sophia Home	Breakfast Time Sophia Home
08:45-09:20	Content Instructor Location	Housework Sophia Home	Housework Sophia Home	Housework Sophia Home	Housework Sophia Home	Housework Sophia Home
0930-10:10	Content Instructor Location	Bible Sophia Home	Bible Sophia Home	Bible Zach Home	Bible Sophia Home	Bible Zach Home
10:30-11:10	Content Instructor Location	Chinese Sophia Home	Chinese Sophia Home	Chinese Sophia Home	Chinese Sophia Home	Chinese Sophia Home
11:30-12:10 -	Content Instructor Location	Math Sophia Home	Math Sophia Home	Math Sophia Home	Math Sophia Home	Math Sophia Home
Lunch Break						
14:00-14:40	Content Instructor Location	English Zach Home	English Zach Home	English Zach Home	Taiwanese Sophia Home	Life/Health Sophia Home
15:00-15:40	Content Instructor Location	Free Time	Free Time	Nature/Art Sophia Home	Nature/Art Sophia Home	Nature/Art Sophia Home
16:00-16:40	Content Instructor Location	Horse Riding Coach Racecourse				
17:00-17:30	Content Instructor	Cello Mr. Hsu	Exercise Zach	Exercise Zach		
	Location	Music Classroom	University Campus	University Campus		

- Saturday: Morning: Attending the fellowship group for elementary students in church
- Sunday: Morning: Attending the children's Sunday school course in church

Appendix J: Alice's weekly schedule (4/19-4/25, 2010)
 The completion rate= 83 %

	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
0730-0800	Bible	(Bible)	Bible	Bible	Bible		
0800-0900		Biology	Housework	Violin	Violin	Bible	Bible
0900-0930		Biology	Chinese essay	English	Housework	Math	
0930-1000		Schedule	Chinese essay	English	Math	Math	
1000-1100	Chinese		Math	Biology	History	Math	
1100-1130	Chinese		Violin	History	Chinese	Math	
1130-1200	Chinese		Violin	History	Chinese	Math	
1200-1300							
1300-1400		English	Biology	Chinese	Geography (Map)		
1400-1500		English	Geography	Chinese	Special topic		
1500-1600		English	Biology	Housework	English	Violin	Violin
1600-1700		Chinese		Violin class	Biology		
1700-1800	Chinese	Special topic	Table tennis	Violin class	Biology		
1800-1900							
1900-2000	Chinese	Swim	Swim	Swim	Swim		
2000-2030	Chinese	English magazine ⁴⁸	English magazine	English magazine	English magazine		
2030-2100	Chinese						

⁴⁸ Alice is reading Studio Class English magazine.

Alice's schedule (3/22-3/28, 2010)

The completion rate: 74 %

	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
0730-0800	Bible	Bible	Bible	Bible	Bible		
0800-0900	violin	Biology	Housework	violin	violin	Bible	Bible
0900-0930	housework	Biology	Chinese essay	Civic studies	Housework		
0930-1000	Chinese		Chinese essay	Civic studies	Math	Math	
1000-1100	Chinese	Geography	Math	Biology	History	Math	
1100-1130	Chinese	Violin	Math	History	Chinese	Math	
1130-1200	Schedule	Violin	Math	History	Chinese		
1200-1300							
1300-1400	Biology	English	Biology	Chinese			
1400-1500	PE	English	Geography	Grammar	Special topic		
1500-1600	Chinese	Biology	Housework	English			
1600-1700	Chinese		Violin	Biology			
1700-1800	Chinese	Special topic	Table tennis	Violin	Biology		
1800-1900							
1900-2000	Chinese	Special topic	Violin	swim	swim		
2000-2030	Chinese	English magazine	English magazine				
2030-2100	Chinese						
Total Hours	9.5	10.5	10	10.5	10.5	4	1
Completion Hours	9.5	8	2	9.5	9.5	3	0

Appendix K: Charlotte’s weekly schedule (4/5-4/10, 2010)

	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
4-5						
5-6	Devotional Time & Breakfast					
6-7	History	Geography	History	Geography	History	
7-8	Chemistry	Chemistry	Chemistry	Physics	Physics	
8-9	Wisdom Search					
9-10	Math	Math	Math	Math	Math	
10-11	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Civil study	Civil study	
11-12	adv	adv	adv	adv	adv	
12-1	Physics	Chemistry	Global science	Physics	Chemistry	
1-2	Lunch break					
2-3	Math	Math	Math	Global science	Biology	
3-4	Biology	Global science	Biology	English	English	
4-5	Math	Math	Math	History	Geography	
5-6	History	Geography	History	Piano	Piano	
6-7	Piano/ Dinner					
7-8	Shower & Dishwashing					
8-9		Prayer meeting				
9-10	Math		Math	Math	Math	
10-11	English	English	English	English	English	

* “adv” stands for “Advanced”; it refers to the Studio Classroom English magazine for advanced level.

Appendix L: Carolyn's weekly schedule (4/5-4/10, 2010)

Time	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
7:00						
8:00	Wisdom Search & Breakfast					
9:00	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese
10:00	Math	Math	Math	Math	Math	Math (practice)
11:00	History Making lunch	History	History	History	History	Social study (practice)
12:00	Lunch break					
13:00	English	English	English	English	English	English (practice)
14:00	Dishwashing					
15:00	Exercise					
16:00	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese (practice)
17:00	Math	Math	Math	Math	Math	Nature (practice)
18:00	Housework & shower time					
19:00	Dinner				Art class	
20:00	Geography	Geography	Geography	Geography		
21:00	Biology	Chemistry	Biology	Physics		Global science
22:00	Civil study	Civil study	Civil study	Civil study	Civil study	