

REASONS WHY HOME-SCHOOLING FAMILIES CHOOSE STRICT HOME-BASED
EDUCATION OR COOPERATIVE GROUPS

by

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Liberty University

Approved by Watson, 10 1 19

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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2019

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Abstract

In its current format, homeschooling has become the fastest growing method of education in the United States. Over 3% of American children are currently being homeschooled. Because of this rise, considerable research has been done both to support and to critique the concept and practice of homeschooling. Recently, a subgroup has emerged within the larger homeschooling community and is known as a cooperative group, or co-op. Some homeschool families still choose to be the sole educators of their children. Other parents have intentionally come together to cooperatively educate their children. This has not gone unnoticed, or without criticism. This study sought to answer this question: How can the following factors (Social interaction, Concern of other educational environments, Religiosity, Moral instruction, Physical/mental needs, Illness, Special needs, Option for a non-traditional education) influence whether a parent will use a co-op format of homeschool education. This study also evaluated how the social learning theory relates to homeschool education. A survey-based descriptive design was used for this study. The participants were comprised of a convenience sample of both co-op home schoolers as well as traditional homeschoolers residing in Fairfax County, VA. The instrumentation for this study will include question #17 of the National Home Education Research Survey. Overall, the factors together were found to be insignificant. All findings and conclusions regarding future research are stated at the conclusion of this study.

Keywords: Home School, Cooperative Group Home School, Homeschool co-ops, Home school Education.

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Dedication

To my wife, Christa – your support, encouragement and love helped push me through the hardships we've faced together. That has not only led to this work being completed but has led to me becoming a better version of myself than I ever could've been without you! Thank you and I love you!

To my daughter, Charis – Life will make twists and turns that are completely unexpected. Dream big, my beautiful Daughter, and never lose sight of your goal. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart...” and allow Him to do great things and the small “whispers” of miracles in and through you!

To my son, Caleb – I hope and pray that in one way or another in Heaven, the Lord allows you to know that Daddy got this done and that you are proud. I miss you every day and look forward to seeing you again. Until then, Daddy loves you, Caleb!

To my family and friends – Throughout the years, there are so many of you that continued to support and encourage me when I felt like giving up. To my parents, siblings and my closest friends - thank you for not giving up on me when I almost wanted to give up on myself regarding this endeavor.

To my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ – Words do not seem adequate, Lord, to express to you how grateful and humbled I am to be in such a place. Who am I that you would bless me with so much, entrust me with so much, especially when I fail so much? To Him who is able to do exceedingly more than we can ask or imagine...Thank you, Lord!

Acknowledgements

To Dr. Steve Vandegriff – to my teacher, mentor and friend for over 20 years – I would like to acknowledge not just your input into this project, but your investment into my life. Thank you for always being in my corner and believing that I could accomplish this endeavor!

To Dr. Douglas Nagel – For your straightforward and deliberate evaluation of the literary components of this study, as well as the many hours of review you put in. This would not be the product it is without your assistance.

Dr. Darren Wu – Your willingness to serve and thorough contribution to this project even when it was inconvenient and unexpected is much appreciated. Your footwork and evaluations contributed greatly regarding the analysis portions of this project.

Dr. Brian Ray – For your professional input and counsel, as well as your personal encouragement in this work.

Dr. Kurt Michael – For getting me started on the right track with this project.

Dr. Scott Watson – For your assistance in getting me to the end of this project.

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List of Abbreviations

Co-op – Cooperative Groups

NHES – National Household Education Survey

NEHRI – National Home Education Research Institute

STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Math

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

Presently, there are over two million children in the United States being educated through home-based education. In the Commonwealth of Virginia, home school instruction is defined as “Instruction of children by their parents is an acceptable alternative form of education under the policy of the Commonwealth of Virginia.” (Home Instruction Statute of the Commonwealth of VA - 22.1-254.1) This is the operational understanding that home school has existed under since its modern conception, however, this leads to a very generic understanding of home school education. While this concept of home schooling is succinct, it may not be complete in its scope. Since its inception in its current form, much home school research has been done. Questions of validity and effectiveness have arisen (Blokhuis, 2010), and have been defended (Cogan, 2010). Various concepts of socialization, comprehension and quality of education have been questioned, studied and reviewed. At the present time, over 3% of American students are homeschooled (Jeynes, 2012). Within that percentage, there is a division that is growing. In fact, there exists heated tension and factions have developed in this group termed “Homeschool” (Ray, 2014; Kunzman, 2012). Some home school families posit that home school instruction should be limited to parental involvement only. Other home school families contend that optimal instruction occurs in cooperation with other home school families; hence the terminology used – Cooperative Groups, or Co-ops.

Home-based education has existed for hundreds of years. Moses was directed by the Lord that the nation of Israel should continuously teach their children the ‘Book of the Law’ (Deuteronomy 6:7 New King James Version). Homeschooling was the preferred method of education for students prior to the 18th century. Formal education was rare and expensive.

Tutors and teachers were available only to the wealthy or affluent (DiStefano, Rudestam and Silverman, 2004). As a result, all education took place, primarily, within the home with parents serving as instructors. Home schooling was a noted and respected method of education.

Homeschooling has been supported by many highly respected men and great thinkers, including John Locke , General MacArthur and Robert Frost (Tuckness, 2010).

Since those early days, home schooling has changed and developed. Home school education has continued to proliferate in America since the 1980's. As of 2010, approximately 2.04 million students were being homeschooled in the United States (Ray, 2011). Through various civil litigations, home-based education has become legal in all 50 states and continues to be the fastest growing format for K-12 education in America (Ray, 2014). There are many different preferences and motivations for parents to choose home-based education over other forms (Collum, 2005; Green; Hoover-Dempsey, 2007). This study will attempt to review some of the primary motivations examined on the National Home Education Survey.

Social Context

Home-based education remains the fastest growing form of education in the U.S. With continued growth and individualized instruction, variances in application will inevitably develop in home-based education. One of the more noticeable variances is the development of home school cooperative groups (also known as Co-ops). Co-ops are groups of home school parents that come together for collective educational and social opportunities. Social benefits of cooperative education could potentially include: opportunities for pre-service teachers to gain experience (Everhart, 1997), it could meet a specialized need within society for a sub-segment of the population (Hill, 2010), and help to determine the motives of home school based upon the current social context that they are in. For example, is it more likely for a white, middle-class

family that lives in a racially diverse urban locale to elect home school as opposed to a family with a similar status in a rural context (Speigler, 2010)?

Theoretical Context

Theories and preferences play a large part in determining what form of home-based education parents or families choose, and whether to utilize that form of education at all (Lewis & Hoffman, 2012). Lewis maintains that right or wrong, co-ops take the “home” out of home education. Hoffman refutes the argument and thus, defends cooperative groups precisely because they provide instructional opportunities that would not necessarily be available to some or all parents and children. In fact, it is argued that various “provisions”, such as equipment, sports competition, clubs, programs, etc., enjoyed by students educated in public and private schools rarely are available to home-schooled students. For example, the supposed absence of socialization is an argument frequently levied against home school education by its critics. This criticism is addressed by instituting (or creating/developing) co-ops (Boschee & Boschee, 2011). Other criticisms of legality are cited against home-based education. These are challenged by Farris’ (2013) based on constitutionally guaranteed religious freedoms and the legal right to both hold and exercise personal and religious convictions. The Green and Hoover-Dempsey (2005) study was designed to determine parents’ rationale in choosing home schooling as an option for the education of their student(s) as well as the level of involvement by those parents in the education and socialization of their children.

Two theories will be used in developing this study. One theory that strongly impacts (or influences?) this study is the Social Learning Theory (SLT) presented by Bandura (1971). SLT notes that an observer can achieve cognitive understanding through various forms of observation rather than simplistic inner impulses or from tenacious trial and error. Home-based education, in

theory, can be assumed to present modeled behaviors and understandings. In the case of the strict homeschool setting, modeled behavior rests completely within the family unit – parents, older siblings, etc. In the co-op setting, there are other models that can influence behavioral learning – non-related peers, other adults assuming educational roles within the co-op, etc. For parents, the question rests on whether it is prudent for their child/student to be influenced by individuals outside the context of the family home and whether that should still be considered home-based education. Conversely, it could be argued that restricting the number of potential role models, mentors, guides, and teachers to immediate family only could limit the potential development offered in a cooperative learning environment.

Another perceived criticism of home-based education is that a high percentage of the homeschool population adheres to a strong religious bent. Consequently, Cervone (2017) maintains that the religious undermining of the rural public-school systems in America through both the growth of the homeschool population as well as the indifference of political agendas of rural America will lead to the destruction of American democracy. Because homeschoolers are being perceived to be isolationistic, Cervone contends that they lack the experience to engage in the debate over politically based educational agendas.

This leads to the impact of the second theory involved in this study. The second related theory impacting home-based education is constructivist learning theory. Constructivism focuses on the activity of the learner and the learner's personal engagement in the learning process. Constructivist theory does not rely on traditional methodologies of lecture and memorization. Instead, constructivist theory places a greater emphasis on the sensory perceptions (e.g. – hands-on learning) of the learner and the prior experiences and understanding the learner brings to the present learning activity (Garbett, 2011). The focus offered by these two

theories will lend credence to the various rationales that can influence parental choices in determining the most appropriate setting and methodology to be used in the education of their children. In addition, both educational environments (traditional homeschool and co-ops) will be discussed and studied through the lenses of these theories.

Problem Statement

Presently, co-op students and home-based students are grouped collectively in the term “home school”. The co-op is assumed to be very similar to a traditional education format that might be found in a public-school setting. This assumption is creating some tension within the community of home school educators - parents and students. Co-op families contend that they are uniquely home-based educators working together for a common goal. Traditional homeschool families contend that co-ops merely circumvent the traditional education systems. They are not truly home-based schools at all, but rather a loophole in the system existing as a hybrid somewhere between a true home-school and any public or private school. Kunzman (2012) notes that it is necessary to navigate tensions in educational philosophy to produce an effective educational system. Many researchers have identified that a tension does, in fact, exist within the scope of homeschooling regarding the use of co-ops (Ray, 2014; Farris, 2013). However, the root of the tension has yet to truly be identified. Therefore, the problem is that there is little research that exists that seeks to identify and understand the sources of tension that exist in the homeschool community between parents who choose strictly home-based/non-cooperative education and those who choose home-based/cooperative education.

Purpose Statement

This descriptive study will seek to demonstrate which factor or factors (student social interaction, parental concern for other more optimal educational environments, religiosity (a

family's commitment to their religion/faith group), moral instruction, physical/mental needs, student illness, special considerations/needs, or a desire to pursue a non-traditional education) will best demonstrate whether parents from a select county in Northern Virginia (Fairfax County) choose a strictly home-based/non-cooperative education setting or a home-based/cooperative education setting.

Significance of the Study

Home schooling's rapid and continued growth may likely compel educators to review and more closely study/examine the variety of methods and nuances of the phenomenon. This will likely give educators a better understanding of the present situation. It could also potentially provide insight in navigating contentious situations in the future with more complete understanding and knowledge. Morton's (2010) study concluded that a wider view of homeschooling needs to be reviewed for a more complete understanding of the social benefit resulting from home education. The scope of this present study will also help identify sub-groups within the group broader "home school" community. This may help to eliminate simplistic, inaccurate, and inadequate perspectives relative to home-based education and provide a more wholistic understanding of the phenomenon. This potentially contentious viewpoint has been noted among leading researchers within the study of home school education as a source of a rising tension among active homeschoolers (B. Ray, personal communication, January 19, 2014). Ultimately, this study will seek to identify the factors that influence a family's choice in home-based education methodology. It was also noted that religious factors may contribute to deciding what makes a positive contributor to society (Kunzman, 2010). Howell encourages research to focus on how homeschool education can benefit the furthering of the homeschool model through reviewing possible factors rather than inciting endless and meaningless debate.

The dominant paradigm of educational research emphasizes quantitative analysis, standardized settings and large randomized samples. Unlike home schooling, public schools, with their state mandated curricula, age graded classrooms, and tight regulation of facilities and personnel, provide an ideal setting for this paradigm... Rather than focusing on holistic comparisons, aimed at demonstrating the superiority of one educational mode over another, homeschool researchers can gain mainstream attention by investigating factors that affect motivation and learning across educational context, thereby generating results that would be useful to both public school teachers and home educators. (Howell, 2013, p.355)

By reviewing the possible factors this research will attempt to provide support to Howell's point - not only to support homeschool education research in general, but also to help contribute by pointing out positive elements of an alternative educational format rather than providing "ammunition" for an unending debate on modes and methodology.

Research Question

RQ1: How do the following factors seem to influence home-school parents' decision to use a traditional homeschooling environment vs. a co-op environment to educate their child: social interaction, concern of other educational environments, religiosity, moral instruction, physical/mental needs, illness, special needs status.

Definitions

Homeschool - considered to be those that elect to educate their children outside of a traditional academic setting, public or private, with most of the education overseen/administered by the parent(s).

Co-op families - considered to be those who participate in a consistent gathering of multiple home school families for shared group instruction.

Traditional Homeschool Families - considered to be those that are not involved in a consistent gathering of multiple home school families, where parents choose to be the sole instructors of their home school children.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

A review of the literature for this subject matter will reveal a deep-rooted commitment to what some parents conclude to be a proper and wholesome education that is home-based. The methods and reasoning for home-based education are numerous. In order to comprehend the complexities of the present situation, it behooves the reader to review the history of home-based education, the social theories that impact home-based education, and diverging methodologies that exist within this field. The Commonwealth of Virginia defines a home school in the following manner: “Instruction of children by their parents is an acceptable alternative form of education under the policy of the Commonwealth of Virginia” (Home Instruction Statute of the Commonwealth of VA - 22.1-254.1). This is a broad and potentially ambiguous understanding of home-based education. As a result, it could lead the reader to assume an “umbrella” understanding of homeschooling. That understanding could then include anything outside of the traditional classroom either public or private. Because of such ambiguity, significant homeschool research has been conducted in various areas of study within the broader field of education, including but not limited to, social interaction, academic quality, strength of familial bonds, levels of self-confidence, etc. Questions of validity and effectiveness have arisen (Blokhuys, 2010), and been defended (Cogan, 2010).

History

Home school education has been present in society since history first began. Homeschooling was the preferred method of education for students prior to the 18th century. In fact, prior to developed systems of education that arose much later, “primitive man” learned only from family. Graves notes this dynamic in his work on the history of education. He states that

since the needs of the society in primitive days were simplistic, then the educational practices thereof were also simplistic. Methodology of education in those times consisted of participation, imitation and community involvement. Because of the simplistic nature, there was no need for organized educational institutions. Education was passed on within the family and community context. Graves concludes the thought this way - "Through these institutions the young savage is taught to obtain the necessities of life. Individuality is as yet at a minimum, since the same forms of expression or carried on by all" (Graves, 1909, pp.194-195).

Biblical History of Homeschooling. Even in the Biblical times, Biblical laws and teachings were passed down from one generation to the next primarily through the family unit. This is evidenced in Scripture first in the book of Genesis regarding the man, Abraham. Upon being told that he would become a father, the LORD spoke these words regarding his offspring: "For I have known [Abraham], in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has spoken to him" (Genesis 18:19, NKJV). Later in the Old Testament scriptures, in the book of Deuteronomy:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

(Deuteronomy 6:4-7)

Klamm (2012) noted in his research on homeschooling that there is a rich biblical history connected with home-based education. He noted that for much of history, education

opportunities where the responsibility of parents. Not only that, but occupations, values and religious beliefs were handed down from one generation to the next through parental involvement, rather than formalized education. He cited various biblical accounts, from Deuteronomy in particular, where the Lord God instructed his people to teach the children God's words “when you sit at home, when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (New International Version).

The Book of Proverbs has many statements regarding the training of children. The first chapter of Proverbs has this verse – “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching” (Proverbs 1:8). Furthermore, the same books states, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). The author is clearly demonstrating that children need to be raised up and trained to become functional members of society. This was not just an Old Testament concept. The Apostle Paul has numerous writings that encourage instruction at home. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’ (this is the first commandment with a promise), ‘that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.’ Fathers do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the discipline an instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:1-4, NKJV). Paul also commented on the continued religious education of his young protégé, Timothy.

...that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt 1st in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also...But as for you, continue what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to

make you wise for Salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15, NKJV)

Paul also instructed another of his disciples, Titus to pass on that which he has learned as well (Titus 2:4-7, NKJV).

Modern Emergence of Homeschool. As time went on, tutors and teachers were available only to the wealthy or affluent (DiStefano, Rudestam & Silverman, 2004). As the majority, obviously, were not wealthy and affluent, homeschooling continued to be the primary method of education. It was supported by many highly respected thinkers, such as John Locke (Tuckness, 2010) and Rousseau (Wenkart, 2014). In America, home-based education can certainly be traced back to Colonial times, and throughout American history. Carper (2000) points out the roots of home-based education in American society as early as pre-colonial times. Carper noted that home schooling was extremely prevalent during the colonial period of America but as common ~~in~~ public schools began to grow and take root in American society, homeschooling began to fade away. Jones and Gloeckner (2004), supporting this idea of early presence of home school education, wrote that parents were the primary educators during the 17th and 18th centuries. In fact, in early America, the Native American example was passed from elder to child, and that it was “...typically the only way in which Native American children were educated, and in such environments, education was viewed as being inseparable from life” (p.12).

In fact, Ray (2013) stated that “until the 19th century, home-based education was common, if not the norm, for most of the nation’s children”. Gaither (2009) notes that the home was called upon to fill the gaps in the educational needs in many situations throughout American history; for women and slaves without the right to education, for low-income families, and even

for missionaries who relied on curricula to be mailed to them on the field. For example, in combining the rich biblical history of the home school movement with the historical evidence that many individuals that came from low income or from an enslaved background, C.G. Woodson noted the influence of all of those that benefited from home-based education.

The early advocates of education of the Negroes were of three classes: first, masters who desired to increase the economic efficiency of their labor supply; Second, sympathetic persons who wish to help the oppressed; and third, zealous missionaries who, believing that the message of divine love came equally to all, taught slaves the English language that they might learn the principles of the Christian religion. Through the kindness of the first class, slaves had their best chance for mental improvement. (Woodson, 1919, p. 3)

Some of the very core beliefs and cornerstones upon which the United States was founded are rooted in the concept of family-based education; the passing of knowledge, values and skills from one generation to the next. Cochran (2010), in review of some of Gaither's work, notes the landing at Plymouth Rock by the Pilgrims as early evidence of such practice. He reminds the reader of the account of the Plymouth colonists who arrived from Europe. Their concern was that of religious freedom to be able to practice their religion freely and to pass their religious beliefs and their moral values on down to the generation that would follow them. Their hope was to set up a colony that would be an example to others regarding what the Christian religion could and should look like from their perspective. The Plymouth colonists, according to Gaither, felt that in order to have a successful Colony, there had to be successful families; for families to be successful, there had to be a strong moral, Christian center to it.

History has shown that there have been many noteworthy home-schooled individuals such as William Penn, John Quincy Adams, Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Agatha Christie, Pearl Buck, General Douglas MacArthur, Charles Dickens, Andrew Carnegie, and Mark Twain (Jones & Gloeckner, 2004). Olsen (2014) adds to this list Robert Frost, Ansel Adams, Frank Lloyd Wright, Bethany Hamilton, and Tim Tebow.

Gaither (2009) goes on to state, however, that there is a stark difference between the homeschool systems and intents of the past, and the motives behind such ideas presently. Homeschooling, in its modern form, originated in the 1970's and has continued to rise in America since the 1980's. It wasn't until the middle of the 1970s, Carper (2000) says, that home school education began to return to the forefront of the American scene of education. This had a lot to do with various religious groups and their concerns regarding the educational benefit of the current public-school education system. The movement's origin had a dual-pronged purpose, with the allying of a religious segment of the population with a secular population that sought alternative methods of education for its children. Cochran summarized the movement's advent with three distinguishable factors that developed within society. First, the idea that the possibility of quality education outside of the public-school classroom setting became more accepted among society. Second, the life in suburbia was seen as conducive to homeschool education. Finally, the concern of the innocence and impressionable nature of children coupled with the rising concern of institutionalized learning began to rise in America (Cochran, 2010). Also, according to Wenkart (2014), the religious faction sought to extract its children from educational curriculum that taught lessons that were incongruent with religious beliefs. Wenkart goes on to refer to the secular segment of the homeschool population as being the "philosophical heirs of Jean-Jacques Rousseau".

Legalizing of Homeschool. Gaither (2009) noted several contributing circumstances that led to modern homeschooling, including suburbanization, feminism, political radicalism, bureaucracies and secular school systems. In another of his works, Gaither noted the progression of the American homeschool situation. From the historical record of the parental involvement of the education of children in the colonial times, to the current status of homeschooling the U.S., Gaither wrote thus:

Education in the home has indeed been a constant throughout the period, but it's social meaning has changed dramatically...[The reader will see] a gradual shift from the colonial period when civil government aggressively enforced a certain sort of home education, to the slow and voluntary eclipse of home instruction by other institutions, then to the antagonism between home and school that has been a hallmark of the home schooling movement, and finally to an increasing hybridization of home and school today...The notion, held by almost everyone, that the fate of the nation rests on the strength of its families. But Americans have had quite different ideas about how to strengthen the family. It was concern for the family that inspired progressive reformers in the 20th century to push for extended schooling, and the same commitment has inspired thousands more recently to reject that schooling. Home schooling advocates believe that government regulation threatened the foundations of the family. Government representatives feared that unregulated families posed a threat to vulnerable children. All parties wanted stable families with happy, well-educated children; They just had different visions for how to get there. (Gaither, 2017)

Opposition to Homeschooling. Everhart and Harper (1997) noted that modern legal history has come to accept homeschooling, though it has not gone without its challenges. Citing the case of Wisconsin versus Yoder in 1992, the authors recognized that The United States Supreme Court had generally continued to uphold parental rights to direct and even facilitate the education of their children. This was inclusive of the fact that truancy laws and laws that mandated the compulsion of students to attend school could also include attending school in their own homes. Carper (2000) concluded that after "... numerous clashes with public school officials and state authorities in the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, home schoolers now are tolerated and, in some cases, even accommodated by the education establishment, and they enjoy legal status and considerable freedom in all 50 states" (p.17).

The historical record attests to the validity and acceptance of homeschooling, and currently, the national and state laws permit homeschooling, however, there are still those who stand opposed to the concept of homeschooling. These individuals and groups cite the best interest of the child, lack of social skills development, the inconsistency of education between family units, the economic impact and even the country's sense of unity and ideals as reasons for opposition. One such individual, Merry (2010), argues that while homeschool might be legal, whether it is in the best interest of the children they are mandated to protect is for the state to determine how much deviation should be allowed from the public method. His concern is that the government is held responsible to ensure that all children are to have a proper and well-rounded education. The problem, according to Merry (2010), is that if parents are taking the responsibility of educating their children upon themselves, it inhibits the ability of the government to be able to execute the responsibilities that they are mandated to ensure are met. Although parents and homeschool groups continue to fight court battles, pleading their cases for

parental rights, religious exemptions, and moral misgivings of the public arena, Merry (2010) insinuates that these endeavors on the parts of parents and homeschool organizations restrict the ability of the government to fully do its own job.

There are others still that oppose homeschooling altogether with a strong voice of vehement opposition against the concept of home schooling. As recently as 2017, Cervone (2017), made the case that homeschooling is taking away a balance of voice and opinion in the public-school systems, particularly in rural public schools. He attributes a negative effect within the public-school systems in rural America to the Christian Fundamentalist. Cervone (2017) argues that these fundamentalist groups are developing and promoting a distrust among public institutions, which would include the public-school system. This distrust leads the rural family to fear the powers that be and leave the educational system for alternative methods of education, including homeschool. Even in instances where parents choose not to homeschool, within the public school system, Cervone (2017) posits that the Christian Fundamentalist has gained a hold of the school agenda and manipulates it to meet their own religious agenda – one that would maintain control over the misguided masses of the rural community. He completes his thought of this line of thinking this way – “Regardless of the outcome, the effect on public schools can be seen both as a misunderstanding of rural issues as well as the beliefs of rural people by largely urban centric academic left, and the rise of religious neo-liberals who have capitalized on the opportunity to profit off an attempt to increase the alienation and anger of rural Christians” (Cervone, 2017, p.307).

Cervone (2017) sees homeschooling as a threat to democracy. It allows a fundamentalist agenda to be pushed through rural educational institutions. This is done by means of inaction on the part of potentially politically disinterested or disengaged communities. This, in Cervone’s

(2017) opinion, has opened the door for fundamentalist religious agendas to be implemented by a minority opinion. He feels that educators need to be informed of the ways that homeschooling is only perpetuating the distrust of rural America. That distrust then allows for conservative minorities to claim offices, political and social influence. Once this agenda is illuminated to the currently ignorant homeschool population and society in general, Cervone (2017) assumes the return of the balance of power and stabilization of power and knowledge being produced in the public-school systems. It is this very anti-religious sentiment that homeschool families seek to avoid, and which ultimately has led, in part, to the continued growth of the homeschool movement.

Merry (2010) makes the case that the state is responsible for maintaining justice for all constituents, including children. The state's role, according to Merry (2010), is to ensure that the best care and opportunities are afforded to the children residing in that state. Merry (2010) makes the case that homeschooling undermines that responsibility. While the state in many cases has assumed the responsibility to ensure the proper education of its constituents' children, homeschooling removes the safety net of government oversight regarding the education of the young. While parents maintain ultimate say in what is in the best interest of their children, their choice to homeschool, or even put them in some alternative educational institution, challenges the role and authority that in recent years, has been maintained by the government. However, due to that very lack of government involvement, many have maintained pause when evaluating the plausibility of parents being the sole educators of their children (Merry, 2010).

While not specifically arguing against homeschooling, Hanna (2012), in her study regarding homeschool methodology in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, stated that Pennsylvania has fairly strict laws that monitor and evaluate the curriculum and advancement

that children make in a home school situation, this is not the case in many other states. Many states across the country, with a legalized homeschool in place, simply allow children to fall through the cracks, so to speak. With very little monitoring of things such as curriculum, attendance and hours enrolled in an educational system, Hanna is concerned that the children are being robbed of the opportunity to have an actual education that will be of benefit to both them and society in the future. It is these inconsistencies, Hanna notes, in the home school environment that lead people to question the validity of home school educations.

De Carvalho (2018) says that perspectives of homeschooling in the United States are generally negative among those who do not choose to homeschool. Many of the concerned voices cite issues such as a lack of social interaction as well as a limited investment in the community. The author then reflects on the idea that the issue with homeschooling among the naysayers is not revolving around educational issues, but rather social ones. The author notes conversely, that many homeschoolers are actively involved in social groups outside of the home in various social and community settings. Their flexible school schedule allows them to be even more active socially than their public-school counterparts. De Carvalho (2018) goes on to indicate that these external or extramural social opportunities exist for homeschoolers removed from the threats that are traditionally found in public school, such as bullying.

Current Status

Currently, over 3% of American students are homeschooled (Jeynes, 2012). In 2010, there were 2.04 million students being homeschooled (Ray, 2011). Home Education is legal in all 50 states and is the fastest growing segment of K-12 education in the United States (Ray, 2014). The legalization of homeschooling came with a strong effort by the Home School Legal Defense Association, which, according to Rep. William Goodling of Pennsylvania could be one

of the most effective special interest groups in the country (McDowell & Ray, 2000). Even with all of this evidence pointing towards the growth of home-based education, Thomas (2016) states:

When evaluating our current state of education in the United States, homeschoolers are typically left out of the discourse. As Hurley might say, they do not fit education's corporate model that emphasizes performance products and data – 'if a goal or teaching practice cannot be stated in observable outcomes and quantified, it cannot be part of the current schooling discourse or curriculum.' However, there are a number of reasons why homeschoolers should be of particular interest. (Thomas, 2016, p. 234)

Composition of homeschool families. Homeschool families are comprised of many subset religious affiliations, including Protestant Christian (the largest by far), as well as Mormons, Jews, Catholics, and Seventh Day Adventists. The fastest-growing subset, however, is the Muslim-American subset (Kunzman, 2010). Hautamaki (2011) notes that many of the parents that are choosing to educate at home are doing so with no formal training or education background but are developing advanced skills. He cites various studies where parents, who have not been trained as educators, have developed many advanced teaching practices out of necessity because of the concern of the parent for the value and completeness of education that they desire for their children. It is this observed passion and concern, coupled with intimate knowledge of the mindset and personality of their "students" that allows parents to truly develop effective teaching techniques for their children.

Two things that have grown are the confidence and comfort level parents have with the idea of educating their children. Gaither noted an evident rise in self-confidence among home school educators. Gaither notes the rise in self-confidence in many areas in modern society.

Some of his examples include the rise of do-it-yourself home improvement stores as well as online tutorial videos for such projects, internet-based research to reach a self-diagnosis of various medical issues and concerns, the rise and acceptance of the independent film industry, available music production software for your personal computer, among others. From that point, his line of reasoning concludes thus: “In a culture that mocks record company executives, second guesses doctors, distrusts professional contractors and delights in smart shopping, it is not surprising that many parents think of themselves as the most qualified arbiters of their children's moral and intellectual development” (Gaither, 2016).

Carpenter and Gann (2015) noted in a qualitative study of three homeschool families that various modalities and methods were used among homeschool families, from self-teaching, to online instruction. Parents were more of a moderator/facilitator in some instances. In research that they conducted in 2017, Gann and Carpenter (2015) further noted that the role of the parent went beyond that of the moderator, but to possibly that of counselor, presenter or lecturer, particularly in the case of STEM education among high school age homeschool students. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 91% of the parents responding to the NHES (National Home Education Survey) stated that the primary reason for their choice to homeschool arose from concern of the environments of other educational options given to them. Aurini & Davies (2005) noted that initially, home school was primarily thought of to be comprised of religious persons, or groups simply looking for a nontraditional approach to educating their children.

However, these researchers have noted that there is a growing number of various subsets of homeschoolers with motivations and goals that vary as much as the persons that choose to utilize homeschool as their education methodology. Even as late as 2018, Watson (2018)

compiled much data regarding homeschool family demographics. Her findings noted that among the parents who chose to homeschool, 98% of them graduated high school, while the national average is 82%. Over half of the homeschool parents hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree, compared to the 42% of national parent population of children K-12. She also noted the constitution of homeschool families in that between 89% and 97% of the reported families are married and have an average of 3.5 children. The national average is 73% and 2.1, respectively. She finishes her statistical report stating, "According to the NCES United States 2012 report, 41% of home school students live in rural areas, 83% are white and there is no significant difference by gender. Only about 10% of home schoolers are considered poor" (Watson, 2018, p. 404).

Morton (2010) notes that the rise of home-based education is not only a phenomenon in the United States. It is also a phenomenon observed in England and Wales, as well. McClain (2014) states that the basis upon which home school education gains its unique prominence is based upon a relationship that is absent in the traditional educational setting.

Intuitively, a homeschool means a combination of the social entities of home and school. Dooyeweerd (1969) theorized that the family was a socially typified entity, ethically qualified and biotically founded, "The natural immediate family is...an institutional moral community of love between parents and their children underage, structurally based upon biotic ties of blood relationship" (Dooyeweerd, 1969, p. 269). This structure means that family is active not only in the Formative through Ethical aspects, but also the Biotic, Psychic and Analytical aspects. This fact warrants that the family be recognized as being one of a unique kind of institution... with the ability to actualize laws that other social entities could not. (p.112)

McClain (2014) goes on to exhibit this strength with society's current recognition of homeschool success by stating that homeschooling's acceptance in society is demonstrated through the concerted effort to target and accommodate the homeschool community among businesses and entities within the community. Libraries and museums have events and programs specifically targeting homeschool populations within their community. These community bonds not only allow for these homeschool families to develop a sense of ownership of the community, but also further strengthen the familial bonds through their activity within their home communities.

Motivations for Home Schooling

General Motivations. According to the United States Department of Education's National Household Education Survey of 2012, the following chart shows the percentages of factors chosen by homeschool parents as being considerations for their choice to homeschool.

2012 NHES Motivation Results (Table 2.1)

Reason	2011-2012
A desire to provide religious instruction	64
A desire to provide moral instruction	77
A concern about environment of other schools	91
A dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools	74
A desire to provide a nontraditional approach to child's education	44
Child has other special needs	16
Child has a physical or mental health problem	15
Other reasons	37

Parents have a variety of motives for choosing to home educate their children (Collum, 2005; Green; Hoover-Dempsey, 2007). Peer pressure, curricular objectives, religious or moral instruction are many of the reasons parents choose to adopt homeschool education. Thomson (2014) states that parents will elect to home school for a variety of reasons. Studies show that parents who elect to homeschool their children produce children with relatively low substance level abuse. Their children often display strong religious and moral values. Parents also feel that

they are helping to protect their children from the negative social and peer influences that parents may be concerned with in the public-school setting.

Morse (2014) noted that another reason might be that parents may want to support their children's' special educational needs in a more involved manner, coinciding with Hoover-Dempsy's research. Noel, Stark and Redford (2015) noted that as of 2012, the top three reasons that parents elected to home school their children were:

- 1) A concern about the environment of institutional schools
- 2) A desire to provide moral instruction
- 3) A dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools (Gann & Carpenter, 2017).

Hanna's research found that Van Galen's study on motivational factors to put homeschooling into two distinct categories of parents who chose to homeschool – ideologues and pedagogues. Hanna describes these two categories in the following manner:

...ideologues chose home schooling for 2 distinct reasons: (1) An objection to public and private school teachings, and (2) A desire to strengthen the parent-child bond. These parents are Christian fundamentalists, subscribed to specific conservative beliefs/values, champion the role of family, and decried the absence of moral teaching in formal institutionalized schooling. Their orientations and personal identity arose from an individual called by God to teach their children, and ...opposed regulations that sought to undermine their efforts...The pedagogues ...[often] possessed an educational background and objected strongly to what they perceived as poor teaching in schools. These pedagogues encouraged individuality and creativity in learning and did not shackle the time and efforts of their children. Their personalized and libertarian approach to home

education in the spirit of John Holt was activity rich and intrinsically motivated. The learner took a central role as the pedagogues created a holistic, experiential and unstructured learning laboratory that bore little resemblance in form and function to public schools. (Hanna, 2012, pp. 624-625)

Fields-Smith and Williams (2009) studied the contributing factors that led African- American families in a Southeastern metropolitan area to elect implementing a home-based educational model. In their findings, the authors noted that the reasons these African-American families chose to homeschool differed from those of their Caucasian counterparts, most with issues involving race relations. Lundy and Mazama (2014) concur with Fields-Smith and Williams (2009). They state that research reviewing the motives of African American home-school families' needs to be considered in its own context, due to their historical and social uniqueness, rather than assuming similarity with other races and ethnicities. This difference in motivation, again, is not unique, however, to a single group. Motivations vary with location, class and background. Boschee and Boschee (2011) conducted a study to determine factors for homeschooling in South Dakota and found the main reason parents elect to homeschool their children was the strengthening of family bonds. Racial issues were cited as least influential for choosing home-based education when surveyed. Therefore, even within these few examples, it may be seen that there are many compelling reasons for a family to select a home-based educational system. Hoover-Dempsey (2011) conducted a study of homeschool and public-school parents to determine the underlying reasons for selecting certain methodologies for educating their children. "For example, parents who choose to homeschool may experience different community, family, or child influences differently than those experienced by public

school parents: Such differences may in turn cause variations in the salience of specific motivations for involvement across the two groups” (Hoover-Dempsey, 2011, p.340).

In 2013, Glanzer wrote an article regarding the need for home schooling to save education in America as a whole. He expresses concern about the apparent ends of public education to value students merely as members of political state or in terms of their political identity. He indicates that education in its current public context only gives value to students as a political body, rather than understanding and appreciating each student’s unique personhood. This, in his opinion, leads public education to becoming its own loosely defined “religion”. Glanzer quotes John Dewey in saying, “Is it possible for an educational system to be conducted by a national state and yet the full social ends of the educative process not be restricted, constrained and corrupted?” He goes on to focus on the personhood of individuals rather than just focusing on the political aspect or perspectives that they maintain. Glanzer (2013) focuses on the fact that education should benefit the entire person, not just focus on the political or societal benefits of the educating of the masses. The individual needs to be benefited by the education that they received. His concern is that institutionalized education is becoming more and more focused on political end goals rather than on the betterment of society as a whole. While that may or may not be the case, he substantiates his claims by focusing on the idea that democracy is meant to be varied in nature, encompassing many philosophies, religions, and perspectives. A single focused education system, in Glanzer’s (2013) way of thinking, only concentrating on a political set of goals as its product, does not encapsulate all that a true Democratic society should aspire their education to become. This singular focus of the current educational setting leads Glanzer (2013) to consider that education is becoming more religious in nature. “Yet the increasing tendency of educational philosophers, leaders, and practitioners to

think about education primarily in terms of our political identity signals of potential danger that we need to consider, especially when scholars write about ‘the primacy of political education’” (Glanzer, 2013, p.343).

Home schooling then, in this context, becomes a point of reference. It is an anchor to traditional values and educational philosophies. Home schooling filters out all the political “noise” and allows for students to flourish without the inhibitions of political agendas or party identities constraining them or influencing the potential that they may intrinsically possess. Home schooling, in a sense, becomes the “saving grace” of true education. It allows for students to have a wholistic and complete education, not one filtered through an agenda established by the state or restricted by the guidelines and standards set by a political party.

In 2017, Guterman called for a re-evaluation of the educational methodology of current public-school systems because of the documented increase of mental and behavioral problems in recent years. His research has led him to conclude that an outdated public-school educational methodology is producing students ill-prepared for a post-modern world. In addition, Guterman (2017) identified the understandable pressures and frustrations associated with methodologies that do not fit current developmental and mental needs of students. He identified apparent shortcomings in current public education preparatory processes that students use as they engage the current world around them. Guterman (2017) stated that the current education system was developed to fit a modern society, one coming through an industrial revolution. The society that this education was prepared for was an excellent “fit” in its day, however, that day has passed. Current educational methods are so far behind modern standards and contemporary technology that it begs the question whether public institutionalized education is truly adequate in preparing students for the world that they will encounter upon graduation. There's a sizeable chasm

between the education and skills being offered to students and the reality that graduates will face. Guterman notes that parents have seen this dilemma and have answered it with homeschooling. Current education must center around the skills and methodologies that children will encounter upon launching into the world, rather than simply studying antiquated methodologies of a society long past. Parents see the need to equip their children with research skills, critical thinking and self-direction and motivation. These qualities are found in the very roots of homeschooling. These shortcomings inevitably lead to breakdowns in expectations, frustrations among parents, teachers and students alike, as well as an overall failing of the educational system in general. Guterman (2017) suggests that some of these shortcomings are rooted in very serious criticisms against the current educational system. He feels that some of the documented stresses and behavioral problems noted within the school context can be directly attributed to the atmosphere that the school itself fosters. The stress of meeting adult-level expectations, as well as the unnecessary weighting of evaluation and examinations, coupled with extensive amounts of homework and social pressure to excel are beyond reasonable to place upon a child. If the current public-school system is failing to meet the demands based on archaic goals and antiquated methodology, it is imperative that there be some alternative form of education that will better prepare and equip students to handle the situations of the world that they're about to encounter. In Guterman's (2017) opinion, homeschooling can provide that format.

In 2018, Neuman researched criticisms by parents regarding governmental educational systems. These criticisms came from both public school and homeschool parents. While criticisms were present in both cases, most of the reasons differed greatly between the two groups. Homeschool parents referenced the lack of depth in the subject matter as well as a concern for the values being taught within the public-school system. Neuman (2018) went on to

state, “Home schooling parents were occupied mainly with the need to shift the focus of the studies - to replace the existing subject matter. In other words, [home schooling parents] sought a completely different system of values and subjects that are relevant to the present time and related to life skills and broader learning that cuts across disciplines” (Neuman, 2018, p.7).

In 2019, Tilhou researched the values that motivate families to choose homeschool methodology for their children’s education, and if there was any determinable correlation to a family’s core values and beliefs, and the type of home school group they would join. She states: “Home school families sought groups to share resources, expertise, and common values. Values included the desire for strong family bonds, teaching faith, closely guided social interaction, and responsive pedagogy” (Tilhou, 2019, pp. 16-17).

The roots of home-based education started with many different motivations. So have the number of motivations for choosing homeschooling. As a result, the number of students registered in some form of home-based educational practice or system has continued to grow. Welner (2002) discussed in her study the perceived tensions between homeschoolers and the public-school system. She concluded that many homeschool parents choose that method because of personal perceptions regarding the agendas of the government and the desire to make the best choice to raise their children. Green and Hoover-Dempsey (2005) constructed a study to determine why parents choose to homeschool their students coupled with how involved they are in their children’s day-to-day education. Each year, the United States Department of Education conducts a National Home Education Survey (NHES), with one portion (Question #17 – See Appendix A) surveying numerous possible reasons that parents elect home-based education over traditional forms of education. As this study will be focusing on those contributing factors outlined in question #17 of the NHES, reviewing literature previously produced regarding those

possible factors would be of benefit. Watson states that as “homeschool numbers increase, it is evident that families choose home schooling for their children for a variety of reasons and those reasons appear to be changing overtime” (Watson, 2018, p.405).

Environment. One contributing factor that led parents to utilize a home-based form of education is the alternative school environment that their children may be exposed to. In some cases, it has been demonstrated that parents are concerned about the safety, peer pressure, and negative influences that may affect their children. Baidi (2019) stated that a safe and healthy learning environment seems to be neglected in public schooling. Issues such as racism and racial prejudices are still factors to be considered as potentially influencing the educational environment of children in public school. Baidi further stated that one possible option ~~then~~ would be for parents to elect to homeschool their children in order to provide a “safer and healthy learning environment for affected children.”

Possible concerns for students’ safety include issues such as bullying. Today, bullying is not confined to a face-to-face confrontation at school. Bullying has followed students home by means of social media, email, texting, sexting, etc. As a result, parents may choose home-schooling as an alternative means for their child’s education. In a study on effects of bullying in association with school attendance, Riley noted that approximately 25% of students surveyed experienced bullying in some form in the last 12 months. Of those, over 15% missed school because of safety concerns. To keep their students safe while not jeopardizing their academic progress, parents may choose to utilize a homeschool format. English notes that this concern is not limited to American parents in regard of American school systems. In a study reviewing the drastic growth of home-based education in Australia, English noted that many families are

concerned with mainstream schools regarding safety and bullying. “Many describe bullying and a lack of support for their children’s individual needs” (English, 2016, p.17).

Other safety concerns for parents now also include life -threatening assailants. Far beyond bullying, school shootings, gang violence, and other life-threatening situations are also matters of deep concern. Jonson (2017) studied mass shootings at educational institutions in the United States and the consequent prevention measures. In her study, she noted the concern and fear of American parents regarding these tragic situations to which their children may be exposed. She noted that the attacks that ultimately cost the lives of 71 people at Columbine High School, Virginia Tech, and Sandy Hook Elementary School all led to parents coming face-to-face with the reality that the world that they send their children to could be exposed to very real threats. After these brutal events, media attention was thorough, and consistent. The images of the brutal and tragic scenes flooded the TV and Internet for days and weeks on end. That coverage led parents to rethink the educational situations that their children face every day. Parents needed to consider that education was not going to be merely comprised of academics, but there is also going to be an ingraining of safety and security measures into the lives of their children from this point on.

In response to such tragic events, parents may very well deem it more appropriate and safer to educate their children at home rather than face the potential threat in their community or local public school. Parents want to protect their children from harm and negative influences not only for their obvious physical safety, but also to help eliminate potential distractions and hinderances to their academic advancement. Yarbrough (2003) supported this concept as well. In an interview with the co-founder of the National Black Home Educators Resource Association (NBHERA), Joyce Barges, the author discovered that concerns for the safety and security of

children crossed racial lines. Parents of African-American children want their children to be protected from violence, negative peer pressure, enlarged classroom sizes, thus, larger student to teacher ratios.

Ray concurred with this sentiment. He noted in 2015 that the trend seemed to demonstrate that there was a rise in African-American families choosing to homeschool. He attributed this increase to their desire for better overall education of their African-American children. Ray noted that there are attempts to establish all black schools, even after the fiercely fought battle that led to the United States Supreme Court case in 1954 of *Brown vs. Board of Education*. Ray (2015) states that the hope was for equal opportunity for all children to receive quality educations in environments that would best serve their needs. Ray's research leads him to suggest that this has not been the case.

Wearne (2016) researched reasons why parents would choose a "hybrid" school, one where a student is homeschooled some days of the week and attends class at either a public or private school for other portions of the week. His findings were similar to those of Murphy's (2012) study regarding why some parents choose home school as an option. He listed Murphy's (2012) top four concerns among parents, and among them was school environment. Wearne noted regarding school environment that "...parents in their survey typically valued issues such as school climate, discipline, safety and smaller classes ahead of academic reasons such as test scores" (Wearne, 2016, p.368). Safety and security of the children, as well as the control of potentially negative influences on their education and well-being, have demonstrably been linked to the potential factors that parents consider when electing for any form of education. This is particularly true when parents elect to homeschool.

Another environmental fact impacting parents' choice of homeschooling emerges from Guterman's study. His research concludes that the aging model and goals of the public-school system lead to unnecessary psychological stress and elevated levels of depression and externalized problems. When compared with public school students of similar demographic profile, the homeschoolers showed significantly lower levels of the indicated mental and psychological concerns the study reviewed (2017). Parents' concerns of both the environment and the antiquated methodology of the existing public-school system may lead them to elect a home-based method of education to alleviate stresses that occur when archaic methods are being forced to meet post-modern demands and expectations.

Concern Regarding Academic Instruction in Public Schools. While this is akin to the "environment" factor, the concern of instruction focuses on the quality of the instruction that students may receive in other educational settings. With various new concepts of learning, testing and instruction methodology entering the public-school environment in recent decades, some parents respond with concern. Again, according to Murphy's (2012) study, another reason parent's elected to home school their children was due to "academic deficiencies in the assigned public school" (Wearne, 2016, p.366). This is an age-old issue. It has been addressed and redressed numerous times. It has been examined not only by parents and home-based educators, but also governments, public school educators and others. Page (2006) pointed out the potential conflict of interest that the public education system continually seems to face. Page noted that when the government attempts to help produce an educational system that will benefit an entire society, the conflict of interest ensues. The only way to gauge the effectiveness of that educational system for such a large quantity of people is to develop goals that will meet a vast array of needs. The questions then come: who sets the goals and are the goals for the benefit of

the individual receiving the education or for the society as a whole? This concern about the intended goal of education inevitably leads parents to question whether their children's education will better prepare them for success or will fail them. Parents wonder if the public-school system truly teaches, educates, and prepares their children well or if the public-school system is agenda-driven with little or no regard for the individual progress and potential of their children. This line of thinking doesn't even take into account other potential issues such as the quality or quantity of skilled teachers available to given school system or district, resources available to the school or classroom and so on. Hanna recounts the initial study by Van Galen in 1991 when she states that some homeschool parents "...objected strongly to what they perceived as poor teaching in schools...encouraged individuality and creativity and learning and did not shackle the efforts of their children. Their personalized and libertarian approach to home education in the spirit of John Holt was activity rich and intrinsically motivated" (Hanna, 2012, p.612).

English also noted a similar sentiment in Australia when she states, "For many parents, the choice to homeschool their children is a result of dissatisfaction with mainstream schools and institutionalization. Many describe schools as places where children are given limited autonomy over their learning" (English, 2006, p.17). Cochran states "...those on the left, disillusioned with their parents' America, attempted to create a private, alternative world outside the mainstream, which included the educational indications of a freer, more natural childhood, individual expression and authenticity - in short, home schooling" (Cochran, 2010, p.98).

Religious & Moral Instruction. One of the more common conceptions regarding homeschooling is its religious component. As homeschooling resurfaced in American culture, it was not long before religious groups and families began to see the value in home schooling their children. "Homeschooling...began to regain popularity beginning in the 1970's among so-called

pedagogues, who believed that the growing bureaucratization and professionalization of public schools were undermining instruction of their children. The so-called ideologues, seeking to impart religious values on their children, joined the homeschool movement by the 1980's" (Bennett, 2019). In 2014, Vieux agreed with other researchers in noting the rise of homeschool families in the US. She noted over 15% growth annually among home school children. She did note, however, that a significant percentage of those homeschooling families could be attributed to a large number of conservative Christian homeschoolers.

McDonald (2019), in her research regarding the parents' choices and beliefs on child vaccination, noted that "... 'religion' was not explicitly stated as a motivation to home school, yet many subjects use terms such as 'worldview', 'values' and 'influence' in a religious context" (McDonald, 2019, p.744). Thomas notes the special place in the educational discourse that religious homeschool has by recognizing that religious and moral values were a significant priority to a high percentage of the homeschool population. Because of the freedoms that the United States enjoys, coupled with the judicial victories won on behalf of homeschooler and similar interest groups, homeschool maintains a specific place in the overall educational spectrum in the U.S. Even with that, Thomas understands that this freedom of choice allows for parents to detach from the society that afforded them that very choice, based on moral and/or religious convictions (2019).

English concurs with this when she notes that some parents choose homeschooling because, "...they are ideologically opposed to governmental intrusion into family life" (English, 2016, p.17). Cochran (2010), citing Gaither, says on the political right, "...some conservative evangelical Protestants, alarmed by the increasingly secular nature of American society in general and the public schools in particular, turned to the emerging Christian schools as an

antidote. Others, dismissing Christian schools as a viable option for various reasons, turned to home schooling” (Cochran, 2010, p.98). Merry writes, in his argument against homeschooling, a description of the potential mindset of the religious homeschool parent. Merry (2010) states that the homeschool parent doesn’t see socialization and community citizenship as being exclusive to the public-school setting. Because of that rationale, parents then free themselves to pursue other avenues, such as homeschool, to better equip their children while having the opportunity to invest moral and religious values in their children. He continues, “Further, while the state may override parental authority in cases of abuse or neglect, parents normally possess the right to exercise their personal liberties both to meet a child's basic needs and also to pass along one's personal values. If parents do indeed have these prerogatives, it is not unreasonable to depict education as both a public but also a personal and private good” (Merry, 2010, p.502).

While it has been demonstrated that religious and moral values are certainly motivations for parents who consider homeschooling, it is important to understand that though these rights to home school are legal currently, they do not go uncontested, or universally accepted, even in today's current society. This underlying religious and moral concern must be evaluated when considering motivational factors regarding homeschoolers. Because religious values have been present in the homeschool movement since the country’s beginnings, it appears that religious and moral values will continue to play a significant role in many parents’ choice of home schooling as the best environment for their children’s education.

A study done by Cervone (2017) that combines the concerns of the religious/moral issues as well as the academic instruction is also a prime example of a source of concern for homeschool parents. In Cervone’s study (2017), he attempts to show how religious inclusions within the public-school setting coupled with the perpetuating of the homeschool population is

undermining the very fabric of democracy in our country, particularly in rural America.

Conversely, parents with a fundamental belief system are concerned about the removal of moral instruction in the education of their children and the perceived skewed definitions of “right” and “wrong” that those morals are being replaced with. Those that seek to eradicate those moral and religious values are a source of concern for many religious parents. These concerns lead them to consider home-based education.

Temporary Illness. In America, it is assumed that every child should have the opportunity to receive a basic education. Sometimes, factors arise that inhibit or even prevent that education from taking place. Some of these factors could include a major illness that would prevent children from attending school (public or private). Illnesses like mononucleosis or a serious injury could leave a child home-bound for a temporary period. In these instances, home-based education prevents children from falling behind in their academics. Janssens (2018) stated that “the right to education, even when ill, seems self-evident. Even when you are ill for a long time, you preserve the right to learn and keep your place in the social environment of your class group.” Temporary illness, therefore, can be considered a potential factor that would lead parents to choose to homeschool their children.

Physical/Mental Needs. Beyond the temporary nature of sudden illnesses and accidents, there are situations where the nature of the physical or mental need is of a more permanent nature. While many programs and resources for children with varying mental and physical limitations exist, some parents still elect to homeschool their child. Quist (2019) did a case study of one such scenario, albeit somewhat extreme. She detailed the potential dangers in such instances, reporting on the evident neglect and lack of physical and mental development that a

specific child being examined in the study exhibited. Chopp, a lawyer contributing to that case study, noted the varying degrees of latitude that states may give to homeschool families.

Cheng (2016) details the assistance available to homeschool parents of children with disabilities and the restrictions on said assistance. Various Federal laws were passed in the early to mid-1970s and were continuing to be reformed and developed throughout the early 2000s. These laws provide educational resources to students with mental, emotional, psychological, or physical disabilities commensurate with their level of disability, yet also provide maximum interaction with their peers. These Federal guidelines aspired to provide students with physical or mental disabilities a free and full education within the boundaries of their ability. Cheng goes on to elaborate how this style of education may be lacking in the home school environment. In these situations, parents choose to individualize the education that their child needs, removing them from peer-based distractions and interactions. In so doing, however, they may, in some states be electing to refuse the extra care and attention that a special needs student may require.

The question arises, “Why a parent would choose not to utilize the resources available to them in such extreme situations?” Cheng’s (2016) research demonstrated that of the cases reported, parents having children displaying disabilities that were homeschooled were dissatisfied with the resources and experience that their children had in the public-school arena. Cheng (2016) also noted that despite the findings of his research, support literature for parents of disabled homeschool children was severely lacking. He did, however, reinforce this factor being a strong motivator for homeschool education in a special needs situation.

The low student-to-teacher ratio enables students to learn at their own pace. Meanwhile, the instructor, typically the parent, is able to carefully design an instructional program, to structure the schedule of the school day, and to use pedagogical methods that are most suitable for the

student. Parents who select home schooling are highly motivated and may also be most familiar with the child's unique needs. In a home school context, students may also be educated in an inclusive environment yet be shielded from labels that induce negative stigma and lowered expectations - factors that may hinder educational success (Cheng, 2016, pp.385-386).

Simmons and Campbell (2019) noted the special needs and considerations that children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) face. These various needs can be met in several different manners and through various service providers, however, those instances are inhibited through negative experiences. The authors explain, "Unfortunately interactions between parents of children with ASD and education professionals are often marked by confusion, frustration, tension, and lack of cooperation that hinder the effectiveness of service delivery" (Simmons, 2019, pp.329-330). It is this kind of experience that Simmons noted that has led to an increase of parents of children with ASD to elect a homebased form of education. Care for special needs children, can be made more difficult by the frustration of working with educational professionals. Thus, some parents choose to homeschool their children. Simmons' research went on to conclude that much of the education that children with special needs receives in a homeschool setting is severely lacking in many areas. Some of these areas include the lack of practices that have some form of demonstrable evaluation or testing, poor teaching methods and practices, which in many cases contradict or stand diametrically opposed to what has been understood to be beneficial in research. Along with these factors, the evaluation of the education that these children did receive was noted as having been subpar and inadequate for the student, whereas inclusion in a public-school setting or engagement with educational professionals may have averted some of these results.

Parents often recognize their own limitations in providing a proper education and social interaction for their children with these mental and physical needs. They, nonetheless, elect homeschooling to meet the educational needs of their children and limit the frustration of working with educational professionals they have encountered.

Special Needs/Considerations. There are situations where parents may decide that their child has extenuating circumstances or needs that don't fall under the diagnosed criteria for a permanent illness/disability. Nor are their circumstances essentially of a temporary type. Special considerations may cause parents to elect to homeschool because that is what they feel is best for their child. The family may have recently moved in the middle of a school year. Rather than trying to acclimate the student to a new school setting, the parents choose to complete that year in a home-based educational environment. A child who has a hard time socially adjusting to a classroom setting may prompt parents to educate the child at home because it is in the best interest of their student.

Some parents may refuse required vaccinations for public school admittance. Thorpe (2012) conducted a survey of homeschool parents to evaluate their reported beliefs regarding vaccinations. In her initial research, she noted that recent increases in the homeschool population may have created concern about the rise in the number of unvaccinated children. This can be attributed to parents that are concerned with necessity, effectiveness, or dangers of vaccinations. Thorpe reported that very little was published on the vaccination status of home school children, and those clinical studies in population data are lacking to support any kind of statement regarding the percentage of home school children being vaccinated currently. She did evaluate the overall reported population of children that were not vaccinated and noted the increased likelihood of contracting vaccine preventable diseases (VPDs) and the threat of

transmitting those diseases to susceptible people. In 2016, the State of California passed a law that prohibited children from attending public school without having proper vaccinations. Because of the enactment of this law (SB-277), McDonald (2019) conducted a study on the perceived consequences of SB-277 on homeschool families. In her interviews, she states the results as such: “While respondents were aware of SB-277 and perceived the law to be an infringement on parental autonomy, none reported that the law impacted their decision to vaccinate or reason to home school” (McDonald, 2019). The interviews that McDonald conducted stated that the new law was not necessarily the deciding factor for participating parents to homeschool. However, if the perceived infringement on parental autonomy and rights persists, this could lead to the parents’ beliefs regarding vaccination to become a determining factor in their choice to homeschool.

Non-Traditional Methods. For some parents, a home-based education provides an opportunity to break the norm of traditional methods of teaching. This leads parents and home-based educators to explore new options for education. These options could include various forms of technology, hands on applications, on-site education (field trips) and much more. In many cases, the curricula in homeschool settings are varied and only reported, not necessarily consisting of mandated material by state or local governments. This variance provides ample opportunity for deviation from traditional methodologies. Bell (2016) noted the following:

Few government regulations restrict the age of practices homeschooling parents may adopt. Arguably the largest natural experiment in the history of American education, this freedom allows for unimpeded innovation and experimentation not feasible in traditional settings.” She also noted that homeschool incorporates “...practices of homeschooling parents that included ‘flexible and highly

individualized [programs], involving both homemade and purchased curriculum materials' (Bell, 2016, pp.330-331).

As stated, the number of parents choosing homeschooling as an alternative to public education continues to increase. In addition, parents exhibit a wide variety of motivations for choosing the homeschool option. With that growth, again, comes variances in application. Gaither (2009) concedes that homeschooling has become as varied in its implementation as the very people that participate in homeschool education. In many cases, according to Gaither (2009), home schooling can look very similar in its implementation to traditional public-school settings. With the advent of co-ops, as well as homeschool groups collaborating together to develop social clubs, sporting teams, bands, and other extracurricular activities, home school meetings, whether they take place in a home, at a library in a church or some other venue, are beginning to look very much like their public school counterparts.

Bell (2016) concurred with this stance in her work regarding the motivational environments of homeschools. She stated that “along many dimensions, homeschooling is increasing, diversifying and spreading globally” (p.330). This diversity allows for parents and home-based educators to customize their students' learning to accentuate their strengths as well as undergird and reinforce their areas of weakness in their academics. It also provides parent educators opportunities to explore areas of their OWN personal strengths. For example, parents with a background in history have the freedom, within a homeschool methodology, to explore nuances of history that their students may not be able to explore in a different educational setting because of time constraint, curriculum limitations, external resources, etc.

A good example of the availability and use of external resources is reviewed by Pannone (2019). In her research on homeschool children and their use of the public library, she found that

the use of the public library allows home-school families to utilize resources that would not commonly be available to them outside the public-school setting. She states that parents tend to maximize community resources and some families based their educational program around the offerings of libraries, museums, and state parks. She goes on to relate that some of the closest community relationships that homeschool students and families have are with their local librarians. This is directly related to the number of times that homeschool families are understood to visit their local libraries. These visits, according to Pannone (2019), is because of the number of resources available to families through the public library, resources that otherwise would often be too expensive to acquire, or unreasonable to own due to limited use. Reference materials, curriculum supplemental materials, even media products are available to homeschool families to utilize or review prior to purchase. Again, homeschool parents value this flexibility that lends itself to a non-traditional approach to education.

Another consideration regarding a non-traditional method is a non-traditional purpose. Traditional public education has increasingly emphasized assessment and testing of students to determine knowledge and skill in predetermined skills and facts. Examples of this would be standards of learning (SOLs) and Common Core Curriculum. Homeschooling allows parents the flexibility of teaching beyond a set of facts and skills to achieve a broader educational content. The focus could be on subject mastery, concept exposure, or a multitude of other concentrations. This freedom does not necessarily exist within a public-school format. Fensham (2013) studied the effects of assessment and noted that varying styles of assessment lead to varying levels of achievement. "Assessment of learning plays a dominant role in formal education in the forms of determining features of curriculum that are emphasized, pedagogic methods that teachers will use with their students, and parents and employers' understanding of how well students have

performed” (Fensham, 2013, p.326). Skill assessment and testing for content may not be the primary concerns of the home-based educator. Thus, the freedom to avoid “teaching to the test” becomes a factor in determining the educational methodology parents will choose for their children.

Homeschool Cooperatives (Co-ops)

Everhart and Harper (1997) note that homeschooling is generally comprised of various methods and formats, including both student-led and parent-led activities, strict and relaxed curricula, etc. Morton (2010) posits that the group known as “homeschool” is so fragmented that the term “group” might not even be appropriate. She continues by sharing that homeschoolers are not a homogeneous group and there is no one way of 'doing' home education; methods of home education are at the parents' discretion.

One variance in methodology, as Gaither (2016) indicates, is the development of Homeschool Cooperatives (or Co-ops). Co-ops are groups of homeschool parents or families coming together for collective educational and social opportunities. Within co-ops, parents with various educational and vocational backgrounds coordinate educational opportunities to assist in and enhance the education of their children. This alleviates the burden of specialized education or training for parents, especially in attempting to teach more advanced subjects such as those normally found within the STEM curriculum, e.g. Basic Chemistry, Trigonometry, Physics, Biology, etc.

Potential Benefits of the Cooperative Group. The development of the homeschool co-op also helped to refute some of the criticisms leveled at homeschool families, especially regarding issues of social interaction (that will be reviewed later in this study). Co-ops are a collective of parents and families that choose to educate their children at home but cooperate at

given times to achieve a more rounded educational experience for their students. It is inherent that these students will interact in both academic and social situations through their experiences in a co-op. However, even the co-op is not necessarily a new phenomenon in practice. Hill (2010) noted that back in Colonial America that families, wealthy or not, educated their children at home. In these instances, parents, tutors, siblings and the like had a place in the education experienced by children in those times. Hill (2010) continues by explaining that "...colonial, rural, one-room schoolhouses provided a place for the children of several families to study together under the direction of a teacher who implemented their personal program of instruction" (ALJ, 2014, p.1).

Ray (2013) noted that the research "time and again finds that homeschooled students and their parents are very engaged in their communities, including activities such as sports teams, cooperative classes, church activities, and community service". He continues, "Further, homeschooled children typically interact with a broader range of ages (of children and adults) than do most institutional school children (Smedley, 1992). Medlin (2006) wrote the following in his review of research: "In conclusion, the available studies [on social skills] show either no difference between homeschooled children and other children, or a difference favoring homeschooled children."

One of the other benefits of the co-op is to alleviate the potential burden that comes with educating multiple students. Prior to the development of the co-op, options that were available to parents were limited. They could either send their children to school part-time for certain specialized subjects (i.e. – chemistry or advanced mathematics) or choose to send their children to public school for certain grades (i.e. – high school years). Isenburg (2007) demonstrated that the NHES collects various forms and subjects of information from homeschool families. In this

data, it has been shown that the continuation rate from year one to year two among homeschoolers is only 63%. However, after that first year, the rates increase from 73% to 94% from years two through six.

The potential benefits of homeschool education extend beyond the breadth of academic subject matter that may be offered in the co-op format. Proponents of the home school co-op also note the social benefits to the co-op as well, both for students and parents. Critics of homeschool education have long pointed to the absence of socialization opportunities as one of homeschool's biggest failings. Removing students from a classroom setting, critics say, will cripple a child's ability to develop the social skills necessary to socially interact in a classroom environment in the future. Cooperative Groups respond to and resolve this criticism (Boschee & Boschee, 2011). There are other social benefits to the cooperative education, as well. Co-ops benefit parents, students and teachers alike. Social benefits could include: opportunities for pre-service teachers to gain experience, (Everhart & Harper, 1997), meeting the needs of those with mental and physical disabilities, (Hill, 2010), and determining motives and their derivation from social context in which the parents/families reside (Speigler, 2010). A couple of possible motives for parents to choose homeschooling from social context could be relief from dangerous (inner city), threatening (bullying) or inadequate (underfunded) public school contexts. Chen and Cohn (2003) also noted that children with social and developmental disorders participating in cooperative homeschooling have a greater possibility of social interaction in a controlled environment.

Theoretical Background

Social Learning. One of the main criticisms that has been leveled at homeschool education in general throughout the years (Ray, 2013) is that homeschooling removes the

opportunity for students to interact and develop socially. A primary theory in question here is Bandura's Social Learning Theory. Bandura (1971) states that in "the social learning system, new patterns of behavior can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behavior of others". The development and gaining of desired social responses in various contexts are most effectively reinforced, both positively and negatively, through direct experience. This is accomplished secondarily, through observation or modelling, according to Bandura.

Motivations, reinforcements and models all effect, according to Social Learning Theory, the learner's ability to develop thinking that will produce desired results in social situations. This implies that a student, removed from opportunities to observe the natural or learned behaviors of his or her peers, will have a delay or deficiency in social development or social learning.

Current research seems to indicate the exact opposite conclusion. Koehler, Langness, Pietig, Stoffel, and Wyttenbach (2002, p.473) state that "the home-schooled children demonstrated above average social skills, while publicly schooled children demonstrated average social skills as reported by parents". Barone noted in 2012 that current research demonstrated that homeschool children were demonstrating high levels of social skills, confidence and self-esteem. He went on to conclude that if the trend continued, these students would have no difficulty transitioning to effective members of their future communities. Educated parents who have researched the impact of homeschooling on social competency have found no reason to eliminate home schooling as an option for their children. Haugh (2014), a public-school teacher who holds a master's degree in education, investigated three of the common concerns regarding those who homeschool their children. Concern about social interaction was the primary focus of her research, especially as it affected the choice of homeschooling for her own children. Haugh (2014) found there to be no difference between the social skills of home-schooled students and

those involved in communal educational settings. If there was a difference, it favored the homeschool students.

Available Technology. The increasing availability and uses of technology must be considered when evaluating the effectiveness of the homeschool setting. Computers, tablets, and the internet place the world at a student's fingertips with the stroke of a key. Vast amounts of knowledge and resources are available to homeschooled children that would not be available in a public classroom setting because of budget constraints, time, and the availability of technology to all students. Several studies have taken place designed to evaluate the effect that technology has on education. In 2013, Kunzman and Gaither analyzed some of the effects that exist in the home school arena. Alamry (2016) reviewed the effect that technology would have on the home school student. Alamry (2016) also looked at the potential that technology gives students in terms of the amount of information available and the academic pacing best suited to the student's needs. The research Alamry (2016) conducted examined the effect of technology on the student's potential for self-directed learning (SDL). Alamry (2016) states a self-directed approach will lend itself to a better transition for students from theory to "real-life" contexts. This is due to the nature of learning, where students are inserted into a stimulus-response-based methodology of learning. This allows for interaction and mastery of education, as well as for the product of education to be more applicable to adult-life context (Alamry, 2016). Alamry (2016) goes on to note several factors that increase the potential inherent in the use of technology for self-directed learning. For instance, the increase of available information on the internet and the advent of Cloud storage eliminates the need for the presence of an expert teacher. Self-directed learners do not require a teacher as much as they require a guide to help them find and access technological methods, tools and information.

Research Regarding Tension Between Homeschool Methods

While there are many that will defend and promote the homeschool co-op, there are those that will levy attacks against such groups. It has been noted through research that there exists heated tension and factions amongst this group termed “Homeschool” (Ray, 2014; Kunzman, 2012). Lewis and Hoffman (2012) critique/defend the Co-op issue. Lewis maintains that, right or wrong, co-ops take the “home” out of home education. Hoffman defends co-ops because they provide instructional opportunities that would not necessarily be available to some parents. Farris (2013) defends the right of parents to home school their children from attacks by those that support a more traditional method of instruction. Some of these attacks, Farris (2013) states, are inconsistent in their very definition. According to Farris, the opponents of the homeschool movement state that home-based education creates a society of intolerance. Therefore, society must become intolerant of home-based education to achieve a society of tolerance. As referenced previously, the modern developments of homeschool and the utilization of highly developed co-ops have many similarities that can be drawn to traditional programs. The controversy centers on whether this methodology can truly be considered home school education. The problem is that there is little research to understand or define the source of tension between homeschool parents that choose strict home-based education versus those that choose cooperative home-school education.

Cooperative Group Variance from Traditional Homeschool. Homeschool parents addressed the social and socialization needs of their children by developing cooperative education groups. This also addressed the concerns of critics regarding the perceived lack of social interaction and development inherent in the homeschool methodology. This response has not gone unchallenged. In Kunzman’s (2012) study regarding school reform and varied

practices, he focuses on homeschool education and its varying methodology. Kunzman (2012) noted that, in recent history, homeschooling took place primarily within the home. That educational format lent to parents being the primary educators of their children. This is the concept most often associated with the term “homeschool”. Recent developments noted by Kunzman (2012) demonstrate that this is preconceived notion is becoming less and less accurate. With non-traditional methodology in mind, many homeschooling families have embraced the advent of homeschool co-ops, classes that may take place at a library offered to the community, or even dual-enrollment in college-level classes. As was alluded to previously, the development of hybrid schooling allows students to be enrolled part-time in a homeschool and part-time in a public-school setting. Kunzman (2012) says that the “home” in “homeschool” is becoming increasingly a misnomer among certain groups of homeschool families.

Location is not the only variable that Kunzman (2012) noted. Access to educational resources to homeschool parents increases exponentially with technological advances on a regular basis. Format, goals, length of educational time, and other elements of education are all subject to change from one homeschool family or co-op to the next.

Nature of the Tension between Homeschool Methodologies. These various opportunities come at the cusp of innovation and change. With change, as is often the case, there is resistance and tension. There is a growing tension within the colloquial homeschool community between those that choose to educate strictly at home (home-based) and homeschool families that utilize a co-op. Co-op students and home-based students are all grouped collectively in the term “homeschool”. However, both will note the vast differences in motivation and perspective between their viewpoints as to the purpose and method of home-

based education. These different viewpoints are a source of rising tension in the larger active homeschooling community (B. Ray, personal communication, January 19, 2014).

Among traditional home-based parents, cooperative homeschool groups are assumed to be very similar to a traditional educational format. Gaither (2009) even noted that co-ops have a strong resemblance at times to traditional formats of education. This is not, however, always the case. Thomas (2016) noted the variety of the methods and locations of some families that consider themselves working within a co-op home school format. Thomas interviewed one individual who described a “typical” homeschool day in this way:

We are very involved in a local, freedom-based learning cooperative (inspired by both Sudbury schools and unschooling philosophies/principles), many of our weekdays include time spent with our friends of mixed ages at our learning cooperative ... Although we are ‘homeschoolers,’ we spend most of our days out of the home, interacting with the world around us and learning together in a myriad of self-directed and self-chosen (and both adult and peer supported) ways with our friends of many ages at our learning cooperative. (Thomas, 2016, p.239)

Regardless of the homeschooling method chosen by parents, there still exists a tension that can be examined and removed. Kunzman (2012) notes that it is necessary to navigate tensions in educational philosophy to produce an effective educational system.

Summary of Literature Review

As noted previously, the continued growth of homeschooling should compel educators to review various methods and nuances of the phenomenon. If home-based education is the fastest growing segment of education in the United States, more questions and conflicts will arise and will need to be addressed and rectified. Home schooling, in its modern form and with its ever-

evolving nature, is a young concept and will need more review. Morton's (2010) study concluded that a wider view of homeschooling is needed for a more complete understanding of the social benefit of home education. Bell's (2013) research, reviewing models of home schooling, concluded that more information about different models of homeschool education is needed to gain a clearer understanding of the impact on the students participating in those models. Thomas noted "If there is a common theme from the literature about what takes place during home education, it is the significant lack of research" (Thomas, 2016, p.235). Alamry (2016) concurred with this evaluation when he stated that, "Although it is in its early days, there is little research on how technology impacts homeschoolers" (p.2). Even as recently as May 2019, Tilhou stated that "there is little research specifically exploring the values and beliefs on which homeschool groups are formed and operated, and how groups aid in children's' long-term development" (p.2). Pannone (2019), reviewing the homeschoolers' use of the public library, states, "...there is limited research that explores the lived experiences of homeschoolers that utilize the library. As such, the purpose of this study was to give a voice to homeschool participants who use the library" (Pannone, 2019, p.6). These are a few examples in which home school research is lacking. Many other topics within the broader subject of homeschool education could benefit from further research, especially its individual impact, its societal impact and its varied methodologies. Cheng reviewed home school education as an effective means to educate students with disabilities and concluded that "much more research must be done to better understand homeschooling and special education..." (Cheng, 2016, p.394). This is a continuing theme throughout research regarding homeschool education. Society will benefit from a further complete and holistic review of the subject matter, including the factions, and the source of those factions. Kunzman (2010) stated in his study of homeschooling that religious factors may

contribute to deciding what makes a positive contributor to society. Religion, however, is not the only reason that parents choose to home school. Haugh (2014) stated that for some parents, faith-based reasons do contribute to the choice of homeschooling for their children. Others, including her, do so for philosophical reasons. Some choose to utilize homeschool education because of time and income constraints, and the current status or quality of the local public schools (Isenburg, 2006). By identifying the factions within the group called “homeschooling” and the reasons these different factions choose to homeschool in the first place, the research will help:

- 1) Give clarity to the definitions of the various groups within homeschool education
- 2) Define the factors leading to parents’ choices in style of homeschool education.

As noted by Muldowney (2011), Barwegen, Falciani, Putnam, Reamer, Stair, and Lines (2001), little research has been conducted on the evolution of homeschool cooperatives and their effectiveness. More research will provide potential gains by reviewing the divisions and motivations within the homeschool community. It may also uncover information that will best predict the methodology that homeschoolers will choose.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Design

The purpose of this study will be to determine which factor or factors will best determine whether parents choose a strict home-based education versus utilizing a cooperative group in Northern Virginia. For this study, a survey-based descriptive study will be utilized. The factors include: Social interaction, Concern of other educational environments, Religiosity, Moral instruction, Physical/Mental needs, Illness, Special Needs, Option for Non-traditional education.

Research Question

RQ1: How do the following factors seem to influence home-school parents' decision to use a traditional homeschooling environment vs. a co-op environment to educate their child: social interaction, concern of other educational environments, religiosity, moral instruction, physical/mental needs, illness, special needs status.

Participants and Setting

Participants

The participants were comprised of a convenience sample of home school families in a given county in Northern VA, distinguished between those that naturally chose to utilize a co-op and those who chose not to use a co-op. Those who chose to use a co-op were counted as any that attended a consistent gathering of multiple home school families for group instruction. Those that are not involved in a co-op were identified as those whose parents choose to be the sole instructors of their home school children. Co-op parents were comprised of a convenience sample selected from 2-3 area co-ops in Northern VA. For this study, the number of participants sampled was 66 families which according to Gall et al. (2007, p. 145) exceeded the required minimum for a medium effect size with statistical power of .7 at the .05 alpha level). The survey

was conducted at a regularly scheduled co-op meeting at the Mount Vernon Co-op for the group identified as Co-op families, as well as having the survey emailed to 2 other co-ops in Fairfax County, VA. The Mount Vernon Co-op is comprised of over 300 home school students residing in Fairfax County. The survey was self-administered via snowball sampling at the identified traditional homeschool families' residences. These families are comprised of households whose reside in Fairfax County, and the sole responsibility of academic education is held by the parents. The group is identified as being naturally-occurring, with the number of variables identified as "Co-op" totaling over 300, and the "Traditional homeschooling" totaling between 40-50.

Setting

Fairfax County, VA is within what is considered the Metro area of Washington, D.C. area of northern Virginia. As of 2018, the County of Fairfax reported that the current population of the county is 1,152,873 living in 418,250 housing units. The median household income of the county is calculated to be \$118,279 annually. This statistic is nearly double that of the median annual household nationally (\$60,338). Among the current population, there is a tremendous racial/cultural diversity. With just over half of the population being considered "white", the remaining population consists of Asian/Pacific Islanders, Black and Hispanic among others.

Instrumentation

Source of the Instrument

The survey instrument that was utilized was question #17 of the 2012 National Home Education Survey (NHES). The NHES is comprised of demographic information, style of home education and reasons parents chose to home school. Format of the questions being utilized for this study include yes/no questions (See APPENDIX A). This instrument was developed and is currently used by the United States Department of Education. Upon the researcher's discovery

of such an instrument, the research consultant for this project approved the use of this instrument in the stated manner, as this is a standard research instrument in this field of study. This instrument was also used by Ray (2015), a leading researcher in the field of home school education and the director of the National Home Education Research Institute, in his research on motivating factors of African-American families that elect to homeschool. Isenberg (2007) also used this survey in research of similar nature. In addition, portions of it are adapted to target either specific methods of homeschooling or to target specific components of home-based education. The survey is comprised of eight “yes/no” questions relating to the reason or reasons that a family would choose to elect for home-based education.

Validity

This survey is the basis upon which some of the leading researchers in the field of homeschool education develop their research instruments. Again, Dr. Ray, director of the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI), stated that much of his statistical research utilizes this instrument. In a personal communication with Dr. Ray, he stated that for this instrument, “Face validity is very good. The items have been used by many (e.g., US Dept Ed, me) a number of times so you would be in a strong position for comparative studies. I did not put it through a formal validity study; the items are not real controversial...” (Ray, Personal Communication, 2014).

As noted, the United States Department of Education utilizes this study regarding home-based education research. There are some questions regarding the validity of the use of this instrument. However, with leading researchers in this field using this survey as the standard, coupled with its development by the United States Department of Education and the approval of

this project's research consultant, face validity is established for this instrument to be used in this research.

Anonymity

In order to protect the study from any unnecessary identifiers, the survey requires no form of identification. Letters of consent will be dispersed to participants at the time of the administration of the survey. There will be no signatures required. There will also be no need to have the consent letter to be returned to the researcher. Consent will be implied by the return of a completed survey. Points of contact will in no way identify those that are participating in the survey. Surveys will be grouped together and returned to the researcher at one time. This will prevent any possible identification of the participant.

Content of the Survey

Initially, two questions on this survey will be self-identifying. The first will ask the participant to self-identify if their family utilizes home-based education. The second, will ask the participant to identify whether the family uses a traditional format of homeschooling or a homeschool cooperative group. These two initial categorical questions will be followed by eight questions assessing the motivational factors that led that family to elect to homeschool. The eight questions in this survey are based upon the following factors: Social Interaction, Concern of other Educational Environments, Religiosity, Moral Instruction, Physical/Mental Needs, Illness, Special Needs, Option for Non-traditional Education. The purpose of this survey is to gain insight into the educational experiences of the home-based educators and students. It collects data regarding a vast array of subject areas, and it is for this reason that specifically question #17 was selected, as it pertains only to the area of factors that correspond to this study.

Factors of Influence

The question about school environment asks parents to consider if the social environment at other schools that their students may attend, such as a public school, was a contributing factor to the election of home schooling their students. The next question dealt with the influence of the factor of the educational environment. Was the quality or environment of the academic instruction meeting their personal standards? The third question and the fourth question on the survey dealt with religious and moral instruction - did the parents prefer to home school their children because they wanted to instill or supplement religious or moral values in the academic instruction. The next question asked if a physical or mental illness contributed to their decision to home school their children. Likewise, the next question on the instrument asked if recovery from a temporary illness prevented their child/children from going to school. Next, the parents were asked to consider any other special considerations not delineated on the survey instrument. The last influential factor investigates whether parents were simply choosing what they considered to be a non-traditional approach to their children's education. As this survey instrument is developed and used by the United States Department of Education, there is no need to acquire permission to utilize this survey or any part thereof, as it is for public use.

The survey should take no more than 10 minutes for a parent to complete. The survey was administered at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Mount Vernon Co-op and in the homes at the convenience of the strictly home-based educators. See APPENDIX C – Consent Form).

Procedures

The researcher will first procure approval from both the Co-op chairperson and traditional homeschool families (See APPENDIX C for Consent Letter). Once that has been accomplished, the researcher will obtain Liberty University IRB approval. (See APPENDIX B

for IRB approval). Once IRB approval has been granted, the researcher will then coordinate with the point of contact for the Co-op group and the various traditional homeschool families to establish a timeframe for the survey to be administered. At that point a mailing address will be obtained. The researcher will mail instructions and instrument to both co-op and traditional homeschool families with self-addressed stamped envelopes to return the instrument to researcher (See APPENDIX E for instructions mailed). Digital copies of the survey instrument will be made available upon request to traditional home school families. These surveys will be emailed to a point of contact and dispersed to families by request. Surveys will be returned to the point of contact through email. The point of contact will then return all surveys to the researcher. Completed surveys will be returned to the researcher. A follow-up mailing will be sent to the points of contact after two weeks to ensure the surveys' completion.

Analysis

Upon the retrieval of all data, the data will be reviewed for observable differences. Groups will be identified as Co-op (= 1) or non-Co-op (=0). Factors are presented in a yes/no option. The responses from the returned questionnaires will be given “dummy” scores: “yes” = 1 and “no” = 0. The responses will be tallied, and percentages calculated for each factor within each form of home-education – Co-op and Non-Co-op. Once the calculations are completed, the percentages and significance testing will be compared to evaluate any observable differences that may indicate possible reasons for families' choices of a method of home-education. Factors being observed as significant will be noted in Chapter 4 of this study.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Overview

The survey instrument being used for this research is a portion of the 2012 National Home Education Survey from the United States Department of Education used to survey home educators. The portion being utilized for this study was developed from question number 17. This question specifically focused on eight (8) potential reasons that parents may choose to home school their children. The factors were presented to participants in such a way that they would respond by placing a check mark beside either “yes” or “no” answers as to whether the given concern (factor) contributed to their choice to educate their child/children at home. Participants were instructed to mark an answer for every question. The factors are as follows: Social interaction, Concern of other educational environments, Religiosity, Moral instruction, physical/mental needs, Illness, Special Needs, Option for non-traditional education. The factors are not deeply elaborated upon within the survey itself (See APPENDIX A), however, they are listed in question format. Social Interaction refers to the various social issues that may arise in a public environment, such as peer pressure, safety, drugs, etc. Educational environment references the method or quality of the actual educational instruction. Religiosity and moral instruction refer to whether the parent is choosing to educate at home to supplement religious and/or moral instruction with their academic instruction, respectively. Another factor surveyed the student’s possible physical or mental needs that indicated some form of homeschooling as the best option. Similarly, temporary illness was the factor for parents who chose some form of homeschooling during a student’s recovery from a temporary or long-term illness or injury. A general special needs category was listed for parents to choose if one of the other factors did not specifically cover their circumstances. The final factor asked participants if they were seeking a

non-traditional format of education, moving away from the public classroom setting to something more nuanced or unique.

Research Question

RQ1: How do the following factors seem to influence home-school parents' decision to use a traditional homeschooling environment vs. a co-op environment to educate their child: social interaction, concern of other educational environments, religiosity, moral instruction, physical/mental needs, illness, special needs status.

Descriptive Statistics

The objective of the descriptive statistics section of this study was to evaluate possible relationships between the factors that may influence parents to homeschool their children and the format of homeschool that those parents may elect to utilize. The survey results were compiled into a Microsoft Excel Worksheet initially, in preparation for the analyzing of the data.

Affirmative or “yes” answers to the factor questions were given the value of “1”; negative or “no” answers were given the value of “0”. Likewise, the groups “Co-op” and “Non-co-op” were given the values “1” and “0”, respectively (See Appendix F). Percentages of affirmative responses were tallied for each group – Co-op and Non-Co-op.

Once the data was recorded and percentages thereof calculated and ranked, the results were demonstrated in Tables 4.1 and 4.2. Table 4.3 demonstrates the combined affirmative responses between both methods of homeschooling.

Co-op Homeschooler Responses (Table 4.1)

	% of Affirmative Responses	Ranking
Temporary Illness	0%	8

Concern for Environment	94%	1
Social Interaction	58%	5
Religiosity	78%	3
Moral Instruction	89%	2
Health Concerns	14%	6
Special Needs	11%	7
Non-traditional Methods	72%	4

Non-Co-op Homeschooler Responses (Table 4.2)

	% of Affirmative Responses	Ranking
Temporary Illness	0%	T-7
Concern for Environment	100%	1
Social Interaction	75%	T-4
Religiosity	95%	2
Moral Instruction	85%	3
Health Concerns	0%	T-7
Special Needs	20%	6
Non-traditional Methods	75%	T-4

Descriptive Statistics (Table 4.3)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Environment	56	0	1	.96	.187
Co-op (1) Non (0)	56	0	1	.64	.483
Instruction	56	0	1	.64	.483
Religious	56	0	1	.84	.371
Moral	56	0	1	.88	.334
Health	56	0	1	.09	.288
Spec. Needs	56	0	1	.14	.353
Nontraditional	56	0	1	.73	.447
Illness	56	0	0	.00	.000
Valid N (listwise)	56				

The results from the total population surveyed are listed in Table 4.3. The factor relating to the concern of the educational environment was the most common factor affirmatively selected among the population group, regardless of format of homeschool education. This factor recorded a score of 96%. The least influential factor among the same surveyed population was temporary illness, receiving no (0%) affirmative selections. This table also demonstrates that of the total population surveyed, 64% of the responders self-identified as utilizing a co-op method of homeschooling.

Observations

Observations of Similarity

It was noted that for both groups, the concern regarding the academic environment of alternative methods of education was of highest response among both the Co-op families and Non-Co-op families, 94% and 100% respectively. Likewise, the lowest scoring factor was also

common among both groups, that being temporary illness, with no affirmative responses from either group noted for this factor. The researcher also noted that four of the eight factors evaluated ranked identically among both homeschool entities, when accounting for the tied rankings within the Non-Co-op results. The factors ranking similarly were concern of academic environment (1), non-traditional methodology (4), social interaction (5), temporary illness (8).

The highest three scoring concerns between both homeschool formats were also similar. Both groups identified concern regarding academic environment, desire for religious and moral educational aspects with the curriculum as the most influential factors that led parents to elect homeschooling. Though the order is not congruent between both groups, they remain the most influential aspects of both groups.

Observations of Difference

Between Tables 4.1 and 4.2, differences were documented. The differences within each group's rankings were noted among second/third highest ranked factors and the sixth/seventh ranked factors. For the Co-op families, the factor of "moral instruction" (89%) scored second highest and "religiosity" scored third (78%). Non-Co-op families rated those factors inversely, with "religiosity" scoring second (95%) and "moral instruction" third (85%) among those surveyed. Likewise, for the Co-op homeschoolers, concerns for health-related issues (14%) and special needs concerns (11%) ranked sixth and seventh, respectively. Non-Co-op homeschoolers ranked them inversely, as well, with special needs concerns ranking sixth at 20% and other health concerns tying for last with no affirmative responses given.

Summary of Observations

While there may be slight differences in order, the rankings of the presented factors show that the concerns of all homeschool parents surveyed, regardless of method of homeschooling,

are influenced primarily by the concern for the academic environment as well as the substance of the academic instruction in regards to the investment in their children's character and morality. With this being the case, it was determined that no factors were observable within the surveyed population that would attest to the format of home-based education a family may choose to implement. This may be attributed to several uncontrollable factors due to the nature and circumstances surrounding the research. These will be outlined in the "Limitations" section of Chapter 5.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

In this chapter, the researcher aims to discuss the purpose of the study and how the results relate to previous research endeavors. There will also be listed some of the potential implications of this research and how these implications impact the overall body work on homeschool education research. Limitations to the research study will be listed as well as possibilities for further research regarding homeschool education relating to the content of this study.

Discussion

As stated in the outset of this study, “This descriptive study will seek to demonstrate which factor or factors (student social interaction, parental concern for other more optimal educational environments, religiosity (a family’s commitment to their religion/faith group), moral instruction, physical/mental needs, student illness, special considerations/needs, or a desire to pursue a non-traditional education) will best demonstrate whether parents from a select county in Northern Virginia (Fairfax County) choose a strictly home-based/non-cooperative education setting or a home-based/cooperative education setting.”

Initial Evaluation of Results

For this study, the research question was posed thus: How do the following factors seem to influence home-school parents’ decision to use a traditional homeschooling environment vs. a co-op environment to educate their child: social interaction, concern of other educational environments, religiosity, moral instruction, physical/mental needs, illness, special needs status. Upon receipt of this surveys, the researcher noted that many of the responses were initially gauged to be similar upon the first initial review. Results were tallied and percentages calculated

for each of the factors within the surveyed populations. The results were divided between “Co-op” and “Non-Co-op” groupings, as indicated on the surveys. As stated earlier, the influencing factors were observed to be similar in ranking, with minute differences being noted between the rankings of factors between both groups.

No Factors Indicated

With there being no significance among the testing results, none of the presented factors can be listed as valid. However, it was noted through the computation of percentages, that “concern for the academic environment” (96.4%), “moral instruction” (87.5%) and “religiosity” (83.9%) were indeed major influential factors that led both groups to elect to homeschool their children.

This supports the findings of other studies such as Murphy in 2012 and Thomas in 2019, both of whom pointed out religiosity was one of the main factors that led parents to elect to home school. Cervone’s perspective (2017) supports improving rural schools by removing religious presence and influence within the public-school setting. This gives parents who value religious values and moral instruction cause for pause. Such parents have great concern how this vacuum of moral guidance will affect their child’s overall academic progress and the application of the knowledge they receive. Thus, they feel forced to choose the option of homeschool. Merry (2010) states that around the world, governments fear the undermining of their societies due to a growing divergence from what is defined as “national identity” and a refocusing on individualistic beliefs, norms and values. Merry (2010) goes on to insist that parents that hold a divergent religious ideology cannot support the overall good of the country. “Reasons for exemption are limited to matters of conscience and not to teaching methods. So, for example, parents whose spiritual convictions are in conflict with the orientation of the local school are, in

principle, permitted to request an exemption from compulsory school attendance” (Merry, 2010, p.503).

The issue here is forcing parents to evaluate their concerns for public education and subordinating their concerns, with only religious factors to be considered substantiated. Even those factors are being looked down upon in some areas, with the insinuation being that if the public school is not good enough for your child then you must be unpatriotic or disloyal to your country.

However, Thomas (2019) does caution making assumptions regarding the parents’ rationale for electing home-based instruction. “...without an understanding of parent perspectives, there may be a tendency to bias reasons on preconceived notions such as, ‘The religious homeschoolers do not want to collaborate with public schools because public schools do not teach about their given religion.’ ...there are many different perspectives that religiously/morally motivated homeschooler have” (Thomas, 2019, p.32).

Nothing within the literature review for this study or the body of homeschooling research substantiates the claim that religious homeschoolers elect to homeschool exclusively due to religious motivations. The fact that a homeschool family is religious is simply one element of the circumstantial evidence by which their motivations should be evaluated. While this study may suggest the possibility of religiosity as a significant factor, there are many motivating factors for all home school parents. This research and previous research cannot substantiate choice of homeschooling strictly based upon religious affiliation and choice.

Religion could be considered a significant predictive concern if parents felt that an unwanted or undesirable religious agenda was being implemented in their student’s public educational system. As Glanzer noted,

Although liberal democracy can function as a healthy and robust tradition that respects the variety of voices in America, it can also be corrupted so that it fosters dangerous habits of reasoning, vices and misdirected loves. They can become something it was never meant to be - a religion. Of course, I do not mean that liberal democratic institutions may suddenly promote substantive religious beliefs about God or various gods. The democratic identity and narrative *functions* as a religion, I suggest, when these elements become elevated to the most important identity and narrative in all human beings' lives and the most important identity and narrative when thinking about educating students. (Glanzer, 2013, p.343)

Historical Comparison

Furthermore, these assumptions are also congruent with history. The Holy Bible references numerous examples of ancient home-schooling taking place throughout its scriptures. Just a few examples of this would include Paul's protégé, Timothy (2 Timothy 1:5), Moses' instructions to the Israelites (Deuteronomy 6:6-9), as well as the various instructions from King Solomon to his son (Proverbs). All of these demonstrate an ancient acknowledgement of the value of home school.

More recent history also suggests the value of religious education to be integrated into general education. Vieux (2019) demonstrated that much of the recent rise in home school populations was directly attributed to those that would consider religiosity to be a major factor in their choice to home school their children. This factor cannot be overstated. There is a strong religious presence within the population of homeschool education. Churches host co-op groups. The religious conservative population continues to impact the homeschool policies being written

into law that govern the various states and throughout the country, and have been doing so since the modern resurgence of homeschool education in the 1980's.

Objectives Review

There were two main objectives that this study intended to investigate through the research. First, the main research question was to find out if there did exist any factors that would best demonstrate whether a family would choose to utilize either a cooperative format of home school or a traditional format of home school. Observation of the survey results suggests that there are no significant factors among those presented. This will require further research and investigation. The first objective can be considered to have been accomplished in that the question was answered – no significant factors are suggested among the tested population. The second objective was to further define the variances and nuances within the collective group referred to as “home school”. The literature review of this study, combined with, at least partially, the results examined from the surveys analyzed, confirmed within this study sample that there in fact does exist at least some difference between the factors leading parents to choose one format of homeschool over another. Most of the factors listed on the survey did not prove to be of significance in determining the methodology parents would choose to home school their children. Many of the responses were quite similar. The small variance does show that there are some, albeit few, separate and unique nuances within the collective group of “homeschool” that could be analyzed further. Also, as was noted in the literature review, Watson (2018) states that as homeschooling continues to grow, the motivating factors that influence families to elect to homeschool will change. This evidence leads the researcher to conclude that the second objective was met, as well.

Another possible inference from this study may be drawn from the similarity of responses from the survey questions. The overall homeschool population has a very common purpose and goal in mind - to educate children with maximum individualized education tracks, while maintaining a positive learning environment that incorporates a non-traditional methodology. This study is in congruence with previous research studies that examined those perceptions in the home school population. Murphy (2012) and Thomas (2019) both note that a large percentage of parents who elect to homeschool their children, do so over concerns about alternative academic environments and to stress academics in their home-based curricula. Thomas (2019) goes on to assume, "A united home-schooling community may prove to be important in future educational developments" (p.34). The survey results, as well as the research of Thomas and others, noted concerns over school environment and the choice for non-traditional methodology were among the most consistently affirmed responses in both the co-op and the home school groups. These findings are congruent with previous data that has been researched and reported prior to this study.

Theoretical Review

This study's findings influence the nature in which the two theories presented are initially implemented in the education of the homeschooler. Bandura's Social Learning Theory - which states that students learn through various forms of observation rather than simple inner impulses or tenacious trial and error. Social Learning is at work in homeschool and co-op settings because of the controlled environment students to observe, engage and integrate various behaviors and situational responses. In homeschool settings, students are observing their parents as their model. Within the co-op setting, the students are modeling a variety of parents from the co-op. The importance of this is indicated by the high percentage of both home school parents and co-

op parents who cited concerns regarding educational environment as a contributing factor in their decision to homeschool. By being the primary behavioral model for their children, parents and co-op educators ultimately control the acceptable and expected behaviors they wish their children to internalize.

The second theory that influences this study is that of the constructivist learning theory. As stated previously, constructivism focuses on the activity and involvement of the learner in the learning process and it does not rely on traditional education methodologies. Traditional and cooperative homeschool parents alike cite the value of non-traditional approaches to learning. Thus, they are not as likely to use traditional educational methodologies. This opens a plethora of opportunities for parents to explore various tools, curricula, technologies and stimuli to enhance their children's education. Recalling Thomas' interview in 2016, one homeschool parent referenced their ability, within the homeschool context, to spend a majority of their "educational day" outside the home. This refutes the concept that "homeschool education takes place only in the home." It is the flexibility that is characteristic in homeschooling that leads to the very essence of the purpose of this study – co-op vs. parent-led homeschool. Both groups exist within the broader category called "homeschool". However, the flexibility and non-traditional educational format available to both groups within the surveyed population of this study demonstrate the preference for the homeschooling option. The increasing availability of technology, the wide variety of online learning options, and the ease of modern travel may make what were once considered "non-traditional educational methodologies" the future standard within the larger homeschooling community. This is supported by Kunzman's (2012) research, again, where he acknowledges the misconception of homeschool strictly taking place within the home setting. With the constant development of technology, as well as the growing trend of

community organizations to accommodate homeschool populations within their communities, homeschoolers find a plethora of opportunities outside of the home for educational experiences. Kunzman notes things like, “home school co-op's, college and community classes, part-time public-school enrollment, extracurricular activities, and online learning have all made the “home” in home schooling increasingly a misnomer” (Kunzman, 2012, p.125).

Another factor that is observed to be congruent between both traditional and cooperative homeschoolers is the concern for the academic environment that is currently available in other educational options. Parents desire their children to have a full education and to have a successful experience in their academic endeavors, this study’s survey demonstrates that a majority of those responding were concerned about the educational setting their students may experience. As a result, they elected homeschooling as opposed to other available options. The studies published by English (2016), Steiner (2015) and Jonson (2017) all support these findings. There are similarities between traditional homeschool parents and those choosing cooperative homeschool. Some of these similarities are very strong. However, mindsets and preferences still exist between these two groups. The literature review for this study notes that there is a severe lack of research exploring the homeschool population, motivations for choosing homeschooling methodologies utilized, etc. The demonstrated lack of research combined with the continued growth of the home school population, seems to indicate that factions within the homeschool population may develop over time. These factions will pursue their home school education in varying and sometimes conflicting manners. One example of this concern could be the aforementioned election of some parents to refuse child vaccinations.

Discussion Summary

Overall, this study affirmed much of the previous work within the existing body of homeschool research. No factors were demonstrated to be a primary reason for parents to choose to homeschool utilizing a Co-op methodology. Both traditional homeschool parents and parents that use co-ops place a high value on positive learning environments, religiosity and moral instruction.

Implications

General Implications

This study has added to the body of knowledge regarding homeschool research. It has demonstrated that there are many similarities between the two presented factions of homeschooling groups – co-op homeschool models and traditional homeschool models. Overall, through the data and analysis provided, combined with a review of current literature, homeschooling has been demonstrated to be a continuously growing population within the area of education. More and more research studies are being done, and more research is necessary. As the population grows, it is demonstrated that there will continue to be areas of significance and nuances that will arise that will need to be evaluated, researched and refined for a more complete understanding of the homeschool population and its effects on education and society as a whole.

Similarities' Implications

This study indicates that there are significant similarities within the answers of the surveyed families. It has been stated earlier in the literature review for this study, and by Ray (2014) that a tension exists between strictly home-schooled families and co-op families. It is of note that most of the answers from the survey were very similar among both groups. Both groups share more commonalities than differences based on the factors they evaluated. If the

groups move past their perceived differences, they truly may become a force that can impact homeschool educational policy and implementation, as noted previously.

One potential factor expresses concern for the environment in the school setting children may attend if not homeschooling – public school, private school, etc. Parents are concerned about influences and the safety of their students within the educational settings offered to them. Jonson’s findings from 2017 highlight increased fear and concern for student safety following the reports of tragic mass shootings in public school settings. This appears to be congruent with Steiner’s research regarding bullying, a concern for students and parents alike (2015). English indicated that homeschooling in Australia is growing; citing references indicating a combination of concerns about school environment and bullying as causes for this rise (2016).

This study also observed a great similarity among those surveyed regarding the “character” factors influencing parents’ decision to homeschool their children. With religiosity and moral instruction being second and third, regardless of ranking, the concept of investing in the character, either morally or spiritually, is influencing the decision of families to utilize home-based education. Most of the co-op parents in this study attend a co-op that is hosted by a local church. Understandably, the parents in this group are more inclined to cite religious investment as a factor that was considered in choosing to home school. It can be seen, from both this study and the available literature, that parents who value the importance of religion in their children’s education may seek out a cooperative approach to homeschooling. Tilhou (2019) noted the several reasons parents sought out a co-op format and listed shared beliefs and faith as one of the factors. McDonald concurred with these findings in her interviews of homeschoolers receiving or not receiving mandated vaccinations for admittance to public school (2019). Though parents did express a feeling of infringement on their rights, vaccination laws were not necessarily

deciding factors for them. The choice to home school was based more on religious reasons. Hanna also noted that even in the early stages of modern homeschooling, religious preferences and concerns were of primary importance to a large segment of homeschooling families. Though their methodologies were formatted similarly to public school education, with regard to time constraints and structure, the “harmful curriculum” was absent, replaced by religious-based instruction books and texts (Hanna, 2012).

Even those that would stand in opposition to homeschooling, such as Merry, recognize the importance of religion and morality to parents motivated to homeschool. “One of the things being contested by parents who homeschool is...whether schools really do encourage worthwhile shared values...” (Merry, 2010, p.501). The religious backgrounds of the more traditional homeschool format surveyed for this study is unknown. Religiosity, however, was still a very significant factor among the traditional homeschool model as well.

Religiosity could also play a factor on the reverse side of the religious/moral conversation. Parents may choose homeschooling because of concerns for political and moral agendas that take on an almost religious quality within the public-school systems. If such agendas are perceived as antithetical to the parents’ own beliefs, they may choose to homeschool their children. Glanzer (2013) acknowledged a growing concern that the public education system is becoming more and more “religious like” with its political views and subsequent agendas. This inherently leads to students becoming the product of political development, and only valued for the political identity that they develop through this “educational process”. Most homeschool parents would rather their children be granted the gift of a wholistic education that will permit them to becoming thinking, contributing and valued assets of a diverse society.

Another potential factor common to both groups is the desire for a nontraditional approach to their children's education. The flexibility and freedom that comes with homeschooling, regardless the format in which that homeschooling takes place, is something that could be seen as attractive to homeschool families. With constantly progressing technology, coupled with flexible regulations regarding the implementation of home school, Bell (2016) noted this nontraditional approach is something that the American society has not seen before. Hanna's research reinforced this concept by stating that many parents chose to homeschool to free their children to pursue a holistic educational methodology that relies more on activity and experience and less on structure and rigid schedules.

The learner took a central role as the pedagogues created a holistic, experiential, an unstructured learning laboratory that bore little resemblance in form and function to public schools. As Lubienski in 2003 noted, 'debates over curricula and pedagogy highlight the messy and contested nature of schooling in the public realm, but the simple and efficient solution of homeschooling only withdraws from such public discussions, privatizing and closing the common benefits of educational endeavors.' (Hanna, 2012, p. 612)

This break from common, traditional approaches highlights one of the main common factors among home schooling parents that were surveyed in for study. The idea of a free and wholistic education, outside the constraints of time, resources, and other outside concerns, will allow the student to develop an academic understanding of the world around him or her by means of a non-traditional approach. All of this can be accomplished while providing opportunities to learn in a manner in fashion that far exceed the limits intrinsic in a public classroom setting.

Implications Regarding Variances

The variety within homeschool education stems from the variances in methodology and focus. Much of the nuance also can be attributed to the focus that the families themselves wish to instill in the overall education of their children. Whereas, in some cases, religiosity is of primary importance, safety and security of the children may be so in another. Understanding a) that these variances exist and b) that as homeschool continues to develop, further research will be conducted. Researchers and homeschool educators can begin to work within the developing constructs of “homeschool” to best present options that will benefit families and the students themselves. Ultimately, factors may be uncovered that will be observed to be influential in determining the methodology of homeschool families may elect.

Summary of Implications

Other formats and fields of education can learn from this data as well. Concerns that have been reviewed and stated are rising among parents. The concerns are numerous and varied in form. There are issues such as quality of education, classroom size, faith and moral-based trainings, training of the educators. There are much more serious considerations such as safety and security of schools. Today’s world is one where situations like Sandy Hook, Columbine, and Virginia Tech are a reality and these tragic events leave burned impressions into the minds and hearts of parents. It is imperative that decision makers and administrations in all formats of education take note of the concerns that are weighing on the minds of parents. Whether or not administrations choose to utilize the given data in conjunction with the body of knowledge that has been previously been presented, parents are looking for alternative formats of education for a variety of motivations. Even those who would advocate against the homeschool concept, rightly or wrongly, understand the plethora of reasons that parents evaluate when they choose to utilize

this format of education. They acknowledge administrative and legal inconsistencies, and shortcomings, along with personal moral and religious values as being factors that parents consider when choosing a home-based format of education. Though they may understand these concerns exist, it is just as important for them to understand the motivations behind those concerns. This research simply gives a unique glimpse into the world of homeschool, with its concerns, goals and motivations, and singles out but one concern that may predict the format of homebased education that a family may choose. The data received, however, clearly notes that the concerns, though not significantly different between the two groups, do, most certainly, exist.

Limitations

Limitation of Location

There are several limitations to this study that need to be noted. First, this study was specific homeschool families in a single area in Northern Virginia – Fairfax County. The results included in this study may not necessarily reflect the homeschool populations in other areas. Demographics information reported by the County of Fairfax in 2018 reported having over 1.1 million residents. Among them, there is a high racial diversity (nearly 50% of the residents are Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, Black) and high median income (\$118,279 annually). These traits are an exception nationally, and not the norm. These external factors need to be taken into consideration when reviewing this study.

Limitation of the Convenience Sample

This study utilized a convenient sample for the participants in the study. With that understanding, the ability to generalize the result across the entire population of home school is limited. What may be true among this sample of homeschoolers may not necessarily prove to be accurate among all homeschoolers or homeschoolers in different locations, demographics, etc.

Limitation of Participants

Another limitation was the number of participants. Over 120 hard copied surveys were dispersed and over 300 homeschool parents were given digital access to the survey. However, only 56 completed and returned it. This is an extremely small sample size and limits the ability to gauge the validity of the findings among the overall homeschool population in this area.

Limitation of Contributing Source

A fourth limitation is the source of the co-op participants. It must be understood that the participants of this survey that expressed their participation in a co-op were of the same co-op that regularly meets in a church in Fairfax County. This reality could potentially skew the responses toward the affirmative regarding “religiosity” and “moral instruction”.

Recommendations for Future Research

It has been thoroughly demonstrated that the area of academic research in the home school education and among the home school environment is severely lacking. There are many areas that can be further investigated and researched in order to better understand this specific educational population. This study has alluded to various areas of potential research that can be further examined. Homeschool education would benefit from further investigative research, both quantitative and qualitative analysis. This study has led to some specific areas that may be further examined relative to the findings of this study.

A Different Population

One very important concept to evaluate would be in researching a different demographic population of home schoolers than what was done in this study. The County of Fairfax, VA is a unique demographic. As shown previously, Fairfax County has a much higher median income as well as a greater racial/cultural diversity than what much of the country experiences. It would

benefit the body of knowledge as a whole to research a population that may more accurately reflect the median population of homeschool families nationally.

A Different Co-op Location

Another possible avenue of research would be to survey a co-op that does not meet in a church/religious building. Does the location of the co-op influence who participates in that co-op? Further research would benefit the body of knowledge overall to understand the impact and limitations various meeting locations may have on the families that choose to attend a given co-op.

Technology's Impact on Homeschool

Research regarding technology and its influence on education, particularly, homeschool education, is on the rise. It has been thoroughly demonstrated throughout this study that little research has been done on how these advancements will affect or change trends with regards to homeschool education. It would be interesting to discover how technology impacts home schooling in general. It also would help the body of knowledge to know if advances in technology will eliminate or reduce the need for co-ops. Will advancements in technology reduce or eliminate the need for co-ops? The availability of online learning, virtual classrooms, etc., may lead to a decrease in collectively educating students in a co-op setting. It could be that the trend becomes that as more advanced technology becomes available and utilized that the homeschool population may evolve into a mainly online community.

To Vaccinate or Not to Vaccinate?

Parents' increasing awareness of problems related to childhood vaccines has resulted in a growing population of parents who choose not to vaccinate their children. Future research studying any possible correlation between homeschoolers that choose the "religiosity" factor and

those who abstain from vaccination would be beneficial. It could be a study on political rights and freedoms of parents to choose what they feel is best for their children. Another research topic might compare the number of homeschool families that choose not to vaccinate their children to reported contractions of vaccine-preventable diseases among the larger population within a given area.

Summary

In conclusion, this study has accomplished two important goals that were initially proposed. The first goal was to determine if a factor existed among the eight possible factor choices of the study's research tool that is significant in predicting a family's choice of cooperative homeschool education. It was discovered that no significant factors were demonstrated among those presented to and evaluated by the population surveyed. The second goal was to explore the differences between the two factions of the overall homeschool population – traditional homeschool and co-ops. Though the differences among this population were minute, they did exist. However, with that said, it was clear to see that, within the population surveyed, there are many more similarities among the factors of influence than there were differences.

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APPENDIX A: Survey

My children are Home Educated Yes ___ No _____
 I have chosen to: Utilize a Co-op _____ Strictly Home-based _____

Survey Instrument: Taken from the 2012 National Home Education Survey: Question #17.

There are many different reasons that parents choose to homeschool their children. Did your family choose to homeschool this child because:

Mark ONE for each item below.

a. You are concerned about the school environment, such as safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure? Yes___ No___

b. You are dissatisfied with the academic instruction at other schools?..... Yes___ No___

c. You prefer to teach this child at home so that you can provide religious instruction? Yes___ No___

d. You prefer to teach this child at home so that you can provide moral instruction? Yes___ No___

e. This child has a physical or mental health problem that has lasted six months or more? Yes___ No___

f. This child has a temporary illness that prevents him/her from going to school? Yes___ No___

g. This child has other special needs that you feel the school can't or won't meet? Yes___ No___

h. You are interested in a nontraditional approach to children's education. Yes___ No___

APPENDIX B: IRB Approval

February 6, 2019

Robert McTurnal

IRB Exemption 3658.020619: Determining Factors that Best Predict the Style of Home School Education that Parents Utilize

Dear Robert McTurnal,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

(2) Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording):

(i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX C: Consent Form

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved this document for use from
2/6/2019 to --
Protocol # 3658.020619

CONSENT FORM

Determining Factors that Best Predict the Style of Home School Education that Parents Utilize

Robert McTurnal

Liberty University

School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study investigating factors that influence parents' choices regarding home school education. You were selected as a possible participant because you have chosen to educate your child/children through a home-based means of education, either strictly by the student's parents/guardians or utilizing a co-op method of homeschooling. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Robert McTurnal, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is simply to determine which factors, if any, will predict the method of home school education that a parent chooses to use – either strictly home-based or through co-operative learning.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to complete the enclosed Survey. It should take no more than 10-15 minutes.

****Note:** Please do not include your name or any other personal information on this survey that would lead to identifying the participant.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

Please do not include any personal information that would link you individually to this survey. This survey is to remain completely anonymous.

All surveys will be kept filed in my personal desk drawer for the mandatory three (3) years. Any data analysis done electronically with the data from the surveys will be kept on a password protected computer and USB drive. After three years, electronic data will be deleted, and hard copy data will be shredded

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time, prior to submitting the survey, without affecting these relationships.

The Liberty University Institutional

Review Board has approved this document for use from

2/6/2019 to --

Protocol # 3658.020619 **How to Withdraw from the Study:** If you choose to withdraw from the study, please inform the researcher/administrator of the survey that you wish to discontinue your participation prior to submitting your study materials. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Robert McTurnal. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at remcturn@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. Steve Vandegriff, at svandegriff@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

**APPENDIX D: Personal Communication with Dr. Brian Ray – National Home Education
Research Institute (Copied from personal e-mail account)**

You are welcome, Robert.

I don't think it is co-op users vs. "purists"; it is an insignificant number who are against being a part of co-ops ipso facto or at all. There is, however, definite tension between those who strongly believe in parent-led home-based education/discipleship and those who are going over the line into institutionalized schooling via 3 or 4 days per week of "co-ops" or paid teachers or using a program (I don't want to name names) that substantively shifts the responsibility and/or planning and/or teaching to mainly to teachers and disciplers other than the parents, especially for children up to around 12 or 13 years of age.

As of now, no plans to be near DC. Maybe you could get one of the DC-area homeschool organizations, or someone else, to invite me ☺

Godspeed.

--Brian

From: Robert Mc Turnal [mailto:rmcturnal@hotmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2014 6:23 PM
To: Brian Ray
Subject: RE: Research assistance

thank you so much, Dr. Ray. I appreciate the valuable tools! I do have one last question for you - just your opinion more than anything. I was recently told that there is an increasing tension between homeschool groups that utilize a Co-op system and those that are "purists", where the only instruction done is in the home. Do you notice such a trend or tension, in your opinion, Sir? thanks for your time, assistance and encouragement. Will you be doing any speaking engagements in the DC area in the near future? I would love the chance to meet you and thank you in person sometime. Blessings, Sir.

Robert McTurnal

APPENDIX E: Link to the United States Department of Education's Analysis of the NHES

<https://nces.ed.gov/pubSearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2000311>

Appendix F: Excel Compilation of Survey Data

Co-op (1) Non(0)	Environm ent	Instructi on	Religio us	Mor al	Heal th	Spec. Needs	Non- traditional	Illne ss
1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0
1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0
1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0
1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0

1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0
1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0
1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0
1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0

0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0
0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0
0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0
0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0