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The Challenges, Tensions and Possibilities of Homeschooling: An Autoethnography of
One Educator's Homeschooled Journey

By

Kathleen Ann Virban

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The Challenges, Tensions and Possibilities of Homeschooling: An Autoethnography of
One Educator's Homeschooled Journey

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ABSTRACT

The traditional method of acquiring and receiving an education in Canada is to send children to government run schools, funded by the public. The promise of education attained through traditional schooling remains on structured and formal learning. Concerned about the education and safety of their children, an increasing number of parents are seeking educational alternatives. My family, in particular, sought out a new reform: the promise of homeschooling.

This thesis adopted a qualitative approach using autoethnography to examine my perceptions and my realities on the subject of homeschooling, while interrogating the promise of education along intellectual, social, and interpersonal dimensions. This qualitative inquiry is designed to discover more deeply the feelings and perceptions that emerge when homeschooling occurs while an essentialism educational philosophy and an authoritarian teaching style is dominant in the classroom. I will share my personal experience engaging in cultural, educational, and social pressures and will provide insights on these approaches from a homeschooled student's perspective as a researcher.

DEDICATION

      I dedicate this thesis to my parents, my siblings and my extended homeschooling family, through which stages of combined emotion and reflection were finally brought forward. To my siblings, I will never truly be able to express my sincere appreciation to the both of you who sat by my side at our kitchen table during our homeschooling years. To my parents, your love and guidance has inspired me to continue to be the best version of myself every day.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction to the Study

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the study. It includes an introduction, the background information of the problem, problem statement, purpose of the study, researcher's positionality, research questions, research objectives, importance of the study, and the theoretical framework guiding this study.

Introduction

Homeschooling is an alternative form of education where children are taught at home with their parents, often the mother, as their primary educator (Ray, 2005). Collom (2005) in his article "The Ins and Outs of Homeschooling" explains that the reasons parents have for choosing to homeschool differentiates from family to family and include "…dissatisfaction with the public schools, academic and pedagogical concerns, religious values, and family needs. These differing motivators do not translate neatly into distinct groups of home educators" (p. 331). Green and Hoover-Dempsey (2007) go so far as to say: "Homeschooling parents appear to decide to homeschool not because they believe that public schools cannot educate their children, but because they believe that they are personally responsible for their child's education and they are capable of educating their children well in ways consistent with their priorities" (p. 278).

Dr. Brian D. Ray (2011), a notable American researcher on homeschool education and President of the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI) stated: "Homeschooling, by definition, is family-based, home-based, and usually parent-led-with parents in charge of the child's education. If a parent wants another parent to do all the teaching and be in charge of the child, then it is probably not homeschooling.... In homeschooling, parents recognize their own responsibility and right to direct the

education and upbringing of their child.... Often classes for a specific subject are taught by someone other than the child's parent. ...This is a common, legitimate, and philosophically agreeable (p. 1)."

Research on homeschooling as a practice is growing, however, many gaps still exist. The focus of research pertaining to homeschooling practice covers many topics, yet specific research into the experiences of homeschooled students is lacking. Lois (2013) discovered that "Homeschoolers are extremely concerned about their children's education, and they homeschool because they see it as a way to be ultra-responsible parents" (p. 2). Articles focusing on homeschooling or alternative education touch on many topics including: religion (Bach, 2004; Balmer, 2007; Devins, 1984; Elliott-Engel, 2002); the possible connection between homeschoolers and public schools (Grob, 2000; Holt 1983); why people homeschool (Allan & Jackson, 2010; Arai, 2000; Aurini & Davies, 2005; Collum, 2005); cyber schooling (Cavanaugh, 2009; Huerta, Gonzalez & D'Entremont, 2006); homeschool students and college (specifically access, adaptability, and performance) (Jones & Gloeckner, 2004a, 2004b); reactions to and analysis of homeschool research studies (Chapman & O'Donoghue, 2000; Charvoz, 1998; Cizek & Ray, 1995; Dumas, Gates, & Schqarzer, 2010); government regulation (Alarcon, 2010; Batista & Hatfield, 2005; Baxter, 2010; Belfield, 2005); children with exceptionalities (Arora, 2006; Duvall, Delquadri, & Ward, 2004; Ensign, 2000); and homeschooling in specific countries (geographical) (Barratt-Peacock, 2003; Blok & Karsten, 2011; Bynard, 2007; Campbell, 2001; Jung, 2008) to name a few.

While parents' decision to homeschool is a popular topic for study, another topic that receives much attention is the academic and social quality of homeschooling

(Gregory, 2005; Nichols, 2006; McKeon, 2007; Andrade, 2008). Critics of homeschooling feel very strongly that homeschoolers are not properly socialized, nor do they receive a quality academic education. Homeschoolers, on the other hand, will attest to exercising and receiving socialization practices, sometimes too much in the way of extracurricular activities, and to their superior, and well rounded, education. Researchers have attempted to shed light on the question of quality in homeschooling. Andrade (2008) discusses how technology has aided in the rise of homeschooling over the past decade, while McKeon (2007) analyzes the styles, instructional practices, and reading methodologies of homeschooling families. Gregory (2005) adds to the homeschooling discussion with her study of physical education in the homeschooling home, while Nichols (2006) explores how homeschoolers attain music education.

There is wide speculation regarding the motivations to explain why North American families choose to educate their children at home, a traditional and effective way of teaching that was eventually replaced by public education from the late nineteenth century. Up until the 19th century, home-based education was common, if not the norm, for most of the nation's children (Ray, 2012, p. 125–126). Bielick (2008) who uses data from National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES) in the United States of America, identifies that many researchers cite religious reasons and discontent with public schools as the major reasons for homeschooling. A National Center for Education Statistics (2009) survey shows that about 36 % of parents cite religious or moral reasons as their major concerns in homeschooling their children. Another 21 % cite school environments that may include violence, bullying, drugs, and sexual influences. Aside from these two factors, a fairly large proportion of parents (14 %) cite family time,

finances, travel and distance from school as their motivation to withdraw from regular schools. Among the rest, about 7 % of parents are seeking a nontraditional approach to education, with 4 % of them citing special needs. And 2 % admit that physical or mental health issues are the reasons for homeschooling.

Homeschooling is a learning process in which family, especially parents, take charge of their child's/children's education (Korkmaz & Duman, 2014). Several studies have explained the importance of parents' role in providing support for their child's/children's learning process during homeschooling (Collom, 2005; Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007). This is naturally understandable given the fact that the learning process takes place at home and among family members, particularly parents, who must be actively involved in providing any necessary support for their child/children in attaining the best outcomes from their education. This project describes and interprets how I experienced homeschooling under my parents' direction. As a previous homeschooled child, I experienced a form of structured education as opposed to self-directed learning. The ways parents raise their child or children influence the development of a child or children's self-esteem (Amir & Gatab, 2013). Parenting then establishes a relationship between parents and their children since early childhood (Mogonea & Mogonea, 2014; Nurmi & Pullianinen, 1991).

As a researcher and previously homeschooled student, it is my hope that this autoethnography provides a unique opportunity for me to reflect on my own learning narratives. I hope to contribute to existing research as well as sought out new research findings that will shed light on the relational, situational, and contextual complexities that govern such non-traditional learning experiences such as homeschooling. My

autoethnography will reflect my homeschooling experiences which will unearth the engaging and interesting findings related to the challenges and successes associated with this unique schooling context. Despite my experience being mostly positive, several drawbacks are also explored.

Background of the problem

In 1938, John Dewey addressed a room of professional educators and urged them to take up the task of "finding out just what education is." Reading this lecture in the late 1940s, Philip W. Jackson took Dewey's charge to heart and spent the next sixty years contemplating his words. The stimulating result of a lifetime of thinking about educating, "What Is Education?" (Jackson, 2011), is a profound philosophical exploration of how we transmit knowledge in human society and how we think about accomplishing that vital task. Jackson argues that we need to learn not just how to improve on current practices but also how to think about what education means. Cheng (2015), in an article entitled "Learning in a Different Era," further says "Education is about learning processes designed by adults for the young. In the past two centuries in the industrial era, education has developed into society-wide school systems. Young people are expected to go through such systems" (p. 128).

In North America, homeschooling is a growing practice, moving away from traditional institutional education and chosen for a variety of reasons (McDowell, 2000; Van Pelt, 2003). One alternative to the structure of education provided through the public school system includes homeschooling. Although legal, it has not always been understood. Consequentially, this alternative educational reform has received preconceived stereotypes and misconceptions. At this stage in the research, the term

homeschooling defined by Statistics Canada reveals that "Home schooling is an alternative method of learning that takes place outside the public or private school environment. Parents choosing to homeschool have the primary responsibility for managing, delivering, and supervising their children's courses and program of learning, which can vary from a very structured curriculum to free-form learning" (Statistics Canada, 2013). Schooling at home allows parents to implement "A highly individualized conception of learning, one that prizes a customized experience to enhance a child's personality, idiosyncratic talents, cognitive style and sense of self" (Davies & Aurini, 2003, p. 69).

By choice, parents who homeschool their children typically do not seek to be interviewed about their preferred methods of educating their children, nor do they seem especially eager to answer to school boards or other governing agencies. According to the author Uecker (2008), it is explained that "Even less is known about homeschoolers. They and their families are difficult to locate, and when found they respond to surveys at notoriously low rates" (p. 563). Many parents who choose to homeschool their children frequently remain unreported in typical statistical data gathered by educational governing bodies, collecting accurate data from parents or adults who were homeschooled can be challenging at best. Barwegen et al. (2004) make a claim that "Although growing, the literature about homeschooling is extremely limited" (p. 41).

Statement of the problem situation

Homeschooling is not a secret form of education nor are homeschooling families difficult to locate. The problem is that analytical literature about homeschooling students' experiences and its overall impact on the individual is scarce. Certain limitations adhere

to most of the studies to date on the academic achievement; social, emotional, and psychological development; and success (or not) in adulthood of the home educated (Ray 1990, 2000b, 2010a; Rudner, 1999). Homeschooling families and their students do not appear to be a representative cross-section of all families in North America. One reason for this is that it is often not possible within the constraints of most studies to confirm whether samples are representative of the population of home-educated students.

Parent-child relationships have not received much attention as a variable in homeschooling practices (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). Most studies of homeschooled students rely on standardized tests of achievement or homeschooling parents' survey and questionnaire results rather than asking the participants themselves about their homeschooling upbringing. Homeschooling has transitioned into a social movement, ideologically and pedagogically. However, there is little literature on the emotional experiences and perceptions of children who were homeschooled (Hanna, 2012; Ray, 2013). Many observers wonder how the homeschooled individual will do in the "real world" of adulthood. One underlying problem is that most observers assume homeschooled children excel in the academics but fail to succeed in socialization aspects (Ray, 2013). Do home educated children develop personal voices and a strong sense of "self?" Research regarding this topic is scarce because most homeschooling families are undercounted as they do not register with the government (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013).

Some critics of homeschooling think that there are three stakeholders regarding a child's education: the state, the parents, and the child (Monk, 2009; Reich, 2001, 2005, 2008)- and that there must be some kind of balance guaranteed among these three. They argue, ultimately, that the state must make laws and regulations to assure that the rights,

as defined by the state, of all three domains are protected and the correct balance, as defined by the state, is achieved (Ray, 2013).

Homeschooling seems poised to respond to the needs and challenges of current society. For example, the opportunities technology offers and the excellence our global economies demand, we are positioned to embrace more fully new possibilities for education less encumbered by the constraints of time and space. A wide variety of homeschooling programs exist from online exclusivity to face-to-face organized settings (Apple, 2007; Hanna, 2012). Hanna (2012) postulated an increase of the networking concept among homeschoolers and the technology utilized expanded the homeschooling movement between 1998-2008. While there is limited research on homeschooling programs, methods and outcomes (Taylor-Hough, 2010), Ray (2010) found that computers were linked to informal and formal curricula. Families were found that did not use computers for reasons that were either religious or individual (Hanna, 2012). On the other hand, homeschooling generally requires that there is one parent dedicated to educating the children; thereby indicating a single-income family. This creates economic, as well as socially, and often religious divides between general society and homeschooling families.

Purpose statement

The purpose of this research is to provide a first-hand account of how homeschooling is a complex process and experience, made so because of various teaching and learning styles, all under the direction of one parent's perspective. The significance is to highlight which educational philosophy and teaching style that guided

my homeschooling journey and the complications and tensions that arose among the parent-child relationship.

Researcher's positionality

The importance of this qualitative inquiry is to take advantage of an opportunity to retell my story in juxtaposition to homeschooling, as presented in academic literature. My homeschooling story is a reflection of my upbringing experience, shaped by the forces of parenting and family hierarchy during my elementary school years. This qualitative self-reflection piece will explore my homeschooling journey and will connect this story to a wider cultural, political, and social context. Listening to homeschoolers' life stories provides an "insider view" and deeper understanding of homeschoolers' views on their experiences as homeschoolers (Green, 2013).

In choosing a methodological approach to guide my research, it was clear early on that I would need a framework that provided the opportunity to include lived experiences as a homeschooler, which gives me the opportunity to share my story as a researcher. "Qualitative data, with their emphasis on people's lived experience, are fundamentally well suited for locating the meanings people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives and for connecting these meanings to the social world around them" (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014, p. 11). "Autoethnography is both process and product, a way of doing and representing research" (Adams & Ellis, 2008, p. 189). Throughout the process of writing this reflection piece, I was acutely aware of my own experiences and biases. Bourke (2014) argues that "Our own biases shape the research process, serving as checkpoints along the way. Through recognition of our biases, we presume to gain insights into how we might approach a research setting, members of

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particular groups, and how we might seek to engage with participants" (p. 1). Each story reminded me of an event or feeling from my homeschooling years. Lived experience can be a vehicle for teachers to understand themselves, their relationship with their students and their role in the community. "In addition, the researcher may interweave his or her personal story into the final report" (Creswell, 1998, p. 507). Through the telling of my story, it is my hope to reinforce this understanding through my personal experiences of unconscious, social, and cultural biases that impacted my family's decision to homeschool.

I believe that education is a continuous learning process in search of unanswered questions. For this reason, I have chosen to disclose my educational journey as a research topic. Exploring and understanding my life experiences will provide an insight to an authoritarian led- homeschooling classroom and how this educational alternative has influenced me to become the person I am today. I hope that my story encourages others to share their stories and experiences with home education. The sharing of stories of home-educated individuals may create greater awareness about homeschooling and reduce any negative connotations (Davies & Aurini, 2003; Romanowski, 2006). I hope to provide insight into my family's homeschooling curriculum and its obedience-based practices and approaches which may provide a rich resource to alternative education discourse.

Research question

Autoethnography was selected for this study in an effort to best answer the research question: What can be uncovered through my lived experiences as a homeschooled child, specifically with respect to the themes of an essentialism

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educational philosophy and learning approaches that optimize and limit my intellectual and social growth.

Research objective(s)

I am pursuing this research in hopes that reasons and thoughts will emerge from the data collection. With these submerged themes, the narrative will provide clear and informational text to help readers to better understand the emotional expressions, beliefs and perceptions on my family who received an obedience-based education. The information that emerges from this autoethnography will hopefully provide not only a better understanding of the topic, but also a basis for further study and research into the homeschooling phenomenon.

Importance of the study

The existence of homeschooling is not fully accepted in the national education realm, and yet several researchers have reported that homeschoolers are out-performing mainstream education students (Davis, 2011; Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2011; Hanna, 2012). Qualitative research methods help researchers to understand people and their behaviors in a naturalistic setting, using interactive and humanistic methods (Leedy & Ormorod, 2009). Qualitative methods require a researcher to become immensely involved in the exploration of phenomena from participant's perspective with the focus on finding meaning (Merriam, 2009; Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013). Qualitative narrative approach offers the best option to understand meaning of homeschoolers' life experiences.

Theoretical framework

One of the most important concepts in social or situated learning theory is the notion of a community of practice. This theory, like Wegner (1998) describes in his book,

recalls that "…like the concept of constructivism or the concept of zones of proximal development, has been used both as an explanatory framework for learning and as a metaphor for how instruction should take place (p. 4). A community of practice is an important theoretical construct that underlies a particular model of learning, namely, learning in which people, through a process of legitimate peripheral participation, take up membership in and identity with a community which serves as the home of these shared practices.

The primary focus of this social theory of learning is social participation (Wegner, 1998). I was a homeschooled child, and I am now encompassed as being an active participant in the practices of social communities and constructing identities about the homeschooling community. Learning is at the center of this theoretical framework and will act as a guide to this qualitative inquiry. There are four components of a social theory of learning which include: meaning-making, practice, community, and identity. It is expected, that through my narrative, insight will be gained on how homeschooling shaped my own standpoints on meaning-making, practice, community, and identity. Wegner (1998) in his book: "Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity," explains that "a perspective is not a recipe; it does not tell you just what to do. Rather, it acts as a guide about what to pay attention to, what difficulties to expect, and how to approach problems" (p. 8).

A community of practice involves much more than the technical knowledge or skill associated with undertaking some task. Members are involved in a set of relationships over time (Lave & Wegner, 1991) and communities develop around things that matter to people (Wegner, 1998). The fact that they are organizing around some

particular area of knowledge and activity gives members a sense of joint enterprise and

identity. For a community of practice to function it needs to generate and appropriate a

shared repertoire of ideas, commitments and memories. It also needs to develop various

resources such as tools, documents, routines, vocabulary and symbols that in some way

carry the accumulated knowledge of the community. In other words, it involves practice:

ways of doing and approaching things that are shared to some significant extent among

members. Rather than looking to learning as the acquisition of certain forms of

knowledge, Lave, and Wenger have tried to place it in social relationships- situations of

co-participation. As William F. Hanks puts it in his introduction to Wegner's book:

"Rather than asking what kind of cognitive processes and conceptual structures are

involved, they ask what kinds of social engagements provide the proper context for

learning to take place" (Wegner, 1998, p. 14). It not so much that learners acquire

structures or models to understand the world, but they participate in frameworks that that

have structure. Learning involves participation in a community of practice. And that

participation "refers not just to local events of engagement in certain activities with

certain people, but to a more encompassing process of being active participants in the

practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these

communities" (Wegner, 1998, p. 4).

For Wegner, learning is central to human identity (Wegner, 1998). A primary

focus of Wegner's work is on learning as social participation- the individual as an active

participant in the practices of social communities, and in the construction of his/her

identity through these communities (Wegner, 1998). From this understanding, there are

four variables that optimize learning. Learning is optimized when the social element of

learning is respected- in the case of homeschooling, the relationship and understanding of learning between the parent and the child needs to be reciprocated. Optimal learning makes a distinction between knowledge and knowing while knowledge is the transmission of facts, and knowing is considered the experience of these facts. The final variable is meaning-making, how homeschooling individuals interpret the meaning of the education they receive and what it means to them on a personal and social level.

The homeschool environment varies from home to home, and can be parent- or student-led (Holt, 2004; Ray, 2015) based on the needs of the individual student, as well as the abilities of the educational provider (Collom, 2005; Green & Hoover- Dempsey, 2007). I experienced home-based, parent-led instruction from kindergarten through grade 8. The narrative will explain of the curriculum options and obedience-based education I experienced as a homeschooled student and how these approaches changed and developed throughout my homeschooling years. I share the advantages and disadvantages I encountered from a primarily authoritarian-led teaching approach as well as a teacher-centered classroom. As my narrative will depict, my educational experience varied over the years and different pedagogical approaches were used. I grew and developed throughout my homeschooling journey. These experiences and reflections have had an influence on my education as well as addressing my curiosity gaps in the education I received.

Conclusion

The extreme level of variety in the differentiated education that homeschooling families undergo was a key reason for studying this population. This autoethnography intends to provide insights into my homeschooling experience along with the teaching

styles used. Since homeschooled students may have a different experience and are from varying backgrounds (Rothermel, 2011; Wilkens, Wade, Sonnert, & Sadler, 2015), my experience is different from the stories of other homeschooled students. The literature review aims to provide a consensus to support the teaching styles, curricula options, and educational philosophies that are evident among homeschooling families within North America. The narrative aims to share insights into the tensions and challenges that are assimilated in the homeschooling environment from one homeschooled student's perspective. This qualitative inquiry will benefit current homeschooling families and those who are considering homeschooling as an alternative form of education.

CHAPTER 2: Review of the Literature

In this chapter, the literature review highlights the realities of homeschooling families with their use of curriculum and pedagogical approaches and the motivations used to become involved in their child's education. Chapter 2 also constructs a working frame in which the topic of homeschooling and support factors affecting the relationship between the child and parent are explored.

Introduction

Due to national economic shifts and societal changes, a rise of homeschooling may represent an alternative social movement, combined with an educational movement (Collom & Mitchell, 2005). Hence, expanded research and literature occurred on pedagogical and ideological parental reasoning for choosing homeschool and individual family roles (Anthony & Burroughs, 2010; Collom & Mitchell, 2010; Sherfinski, 2014). A significant connection exists between parental motivations and homeschooling when considering ideologues and pedagogues with flexibility, teaching methods, and family and religious reasons (Anthony & Burroughs, 2010; Hanna, 2012).

There are many different pedagogical approaches regarding homeschooling. As will be discussed in the literature review, parents have many motivators for choosing to homeschool their children such as customizing their curriculum (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007), safety (Cooper & Sureau, 2007), and religion (Collom, 2005). Homeschooling allows the parents to oversee their children's education while providing students with the opportunity to choose what and how they learn (Ray, 2000; Romanowski, 2006). In homeschooling, the pedagogical approaches can be chosen by the family (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007).

Other issues which have received significant attention are the legalities of choosing to homeschool and whether or not parents have the minimal qualifications and authorization to educate their children (Howard, 2010), and how homeschooling is proved to be successful (Basham, Merrifield & Hepburn, 2007). In most of these discussions, the implications of homeschooling in regards to how the children feel and their perceptions of this alternative form of education are downplayed for parental preference, dissatisfaction with the educational system, and or religious concerns (Bellamy & Woolsey, 1998; Shute, 2008; McLaughlin & Blank, 2004; Rotgan & Schmidt, 2014).

History of Homeschooling

Historically, home education was one of the more prominent forms of acquiring an education before the public school system came into effect in the early ninetieth century. According to Collom (2005) and Murphy (2012), the roles of living and education community were founded upon family beliefs, values, and initiatives. Due to the culture of the society, homeschooling was mainstream of education (Guterson, 1992; Hanna, 2012; Murphy, 2013).

Dissertations produced by Stambach & David (2005) concerning homeschooling explain that during the ninetieth century, specifically the time of John Holt and Horace Mann, the welcoming of free public education, social organization, unity and equality for all emerged. Modern designed public school systems built a culture based on historical society's education methods, which remain in effect (Courtney, 2012). In these progressive times, public education began with the theory that a role of society was to provide basic training, good citizenship and necessary skills for life and careers, to all

children, deprived or affluent (Driscoll & Wagner, 2011). During the shift from religious to content curriculum focus in the 1900s 1960s, contemporary homeschooling was a popular choice as an alternative education because God-driven prayers were taken out of the public school system (Lips & Feinberg, 2008; Wilhelm & Firmin, 2009).

Fraser Institute (2015) has claimed that modern-day homeschooling in Canada is 40 years old. Statistics indicate the number of home-educated students is increasing in the United States and Canada (Davies & Aurini, 2003; Ray, 2013, 2015; Snyder, 2013; Wilkens et al., 2015). The story of homeschooling in Canada, particularly in the last 40 years is a story of growth: growth in the research, growth in the regulation, and growth in enrolments. When researching this phenomenon, shifts are evident in why families are choosing to homeschool their children, how they approach it, and the impact on adult life.

During this twenty-first century era, public mindsets changed and fundamental shifts towards homeschooling. The outcomes of educational laws and regulations were enacted and defined homeschooling groups and reasons emerging, as well as and technological advancement (Isenberg, 2007; Valery, 2011). Recent American literature reported that homeschooling "Has experienced an increase in academic interest over the last decade, as what was once perceived as a marginal development has turned into a significant and growing phenomenon" (Lundy & Mazama, 2014, p. 53), showing the growth of the education approach and the need for more information on the practice to be publicized. The typical family constellation of homeschooled children has some distinctive characteristics when compared with conventionally-schooled students. Specifically, according to Princiotta et al., (2006), homeschooled students are more likely to come from two-parent families, especially if they relied on only one income, and were

more likely to have at least one parent with postsecondary education. They also reported that students with three or more siblings in the family were homeschooled more frequently than were those with fewer siblings. The ethnicity of homeschooled children has not changed much in the recent past, with most homeschool families being Canadian (Princiotta et al., 2006).

Increase in home education

The purpose of the homeschooling educational movement was to challenge the secularist operational structures of public education (Gaither, 2009; Murphy, 2013). Today, homeschooling is the fastest growing alternative form of education even though homeschooling is still the subject of critique, debate, and controversy (Ray, 2011). This qualitative inquiry exerts research from both Canadian and American literature. As a comparison, qualitative research regarding homeschooling is more dominant in American literature. For that reason, I have chosen to enclose both Canadian and American literature to support my research. The completion of this thesis is to construct an auotethnography to contribute further data concerning the homeschooling phenomenon in a Canadian context.

In Canada, homeschooling grew by 29 % from 2006 to 2012, according to an official 2015 report of Fraser Institute, even though the overall official enrollment is very modest only 0.4 % of the public school student population. Dr. Brian Ray, an American researcher, founder and president of the National Home Education Research Institute, estimates the number of homeschooled students, as of 2010, to be over two million (2011). Ray compiled data from multiple sources to develop his estimate: published research from the U.S. Department of Education, data provided by thirteen states that

collect information on homeschooling families, data from five nationwide and private organizations that serve the homeschool community, and surveys of leaders and constituents of statewide home-education organizations. Ray expects to "see a notable surge in the number of children being homeschooled in the next 5 to 10 years" (p. 3).

According to American researchers, homeschooling has been on the rise over the last four decades, and the number of homeschooling children continues to grow (Murphy, 2013). "Homeschooling is an old-age traditional educational practice that a decade ago appeared cutting-edge and alternative but now is bordering on mainstream" (Ray, 2011, p.1). An estimate of 10,000 to 15,000 students homeschooled in 1960, but increased to 60,000 students in 1983 before homeschooling becoming legal in all 50 states in 1993 (Murphy, 2012). According to National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), reliable homeschooling figures are difficult to obtain and are provided by curriculum suppliers, state departments, and home school leaders (Davis, 2011; Hanna, 2012; Kunzman, 2012).

Homeschooling is an alternative to educating today's youth, but there have been uncertainties and disputes as well as support and encouragement for this educational approach (Romanowski, 2001). Although children who were homeschooled were once thought to be rare, today they are becoming more mainstream (Neal, 2006). In Canada, homeschooling is on the rise and redefining itself into a legitimate, well- respected means of educating our youth (Davies & Aurini, 2003). Statistics indicate the number of home-educated students is increasing in the United States and Canada (Davies & Aurini, 2003; Ray, 2013, 2015; Snyder, 2013; Wilkens et al., 2015). Medlin (2013), an American researcher, has conducted research on the social and cognitive development of

homeschooled students for the past 22 years, argues that "Homeschooling, once considered a fringe movement, is now widely seen as 'an acceptable alternative to conventional schooling. Despite this popular acceptance, homeschooling remains controversial" (p. 284). Davies and Aurini (2003) note "Homeschooling is enjoying newfound legitimacy in Canada. Independent estimates suggest that homeschooled children represent nearly one percent of the student population" (p. 63). Since 2003, the number of homeschoolers has increased, and home education has become more talked about in the media (Davies & Aurini, 2003). In fact, "Media coverage of homeschooling is generally favorable in Canada, and dozens of books are being stocked by mainstream bookstores that offer tips and guides to homeschooling" (Davies & Aurini, 2003, p. 65). More recent literature reported that homeschooling "Has experienced an increase in academic interest over the last decade, as what was once perceived as a marginal development has turned into a significant and growing phenomenon" (Lundy & Mazama, 2014, p. 53), showing the growth of the education approach and the need for more information on the practice to be publicized.

Homeschooling is the fastest-growing form of education in the United States (Ray, 2011). The 2010 study used a variety of data sources including self-reports from homeschooling parents and from" letters of intent", to update the number of homeschooled children in K to 12 students. Ray (2011) estimated that there were 2.04 million homeschooled students in 2010 compared to 1.5 million in 2007. The continuing growth represents a growth rate between two and eight percent per year (Ray, 2016).

Homeschooling law

Homeschooling in Ontario for example, is legalized as Blokhuis (2010) explains: "Parents seeking an exemption from compulsory schooling laws in Ontario must obtain an order from the Provincial School Attendance Counsellor directing that a particular child be excused from attendance at school under s. 24(2) of the Education Act" (p. 211). Ontario has developed a policy on homeschooling; the regulation, Policy/Program Memorandum No. 131, implemented in 2002, outlines the procedure for parents who wish to homeschool (Ontario Ministry of Education [OME], 2012). This procedure begins by parents providing a signed letter stating the names, genders, and birth dates for each child they wish to homeschool (OME, 2012). Parents must provide notification of their intent to home educate their children every year. It is not common for the school board to investigate homeschooling families, unless there is reason for concern (OME, 2012). If an investigation takes place, parents are required to provide the curriculum used, instructional plan, and other resources used (OME, 2012). The government of Ontario wishes for every child to receive quality education and Policy/Program Memorandum No. 131 helps to ensure this.

Although homeschooling anywhere in Canada is completely legal, each province and territory has their own set of regulations and expectations surrounding home education. Researchers Willingham and Cutler (2007) provide a history of compulsory education in Ontario: Ontario's education became "public" under the School Act of 1871, which gave universal compulsory schooling to the children of Ontario. As Willingham and Cutler note, students were provided qualified teachers and a standardized curriculum. This would help ensure each student is learning the required material in an effective way.

It is important that each family pursuing this decision familiarizes with what each of those families' province/territory requires. In each province, the laws or policies indicate that under circumstances where there is evidence that a family may not be providing satisfactory instruction at home, the Ministry of Education has the right to proceed with an investigation. The last thing a family wants is to have a conflict that could cause concern for the family and the parent's intent to educate at home.

The province of Ontario also states that there is no legal requirement to register with any government body to educate children at home if the children have never attended traditional schooling (OME, 2012). If they have never been registered in school, parents may simply proceed with their plans to provide for their education in whatever way they see fit. If the children have been attending school or are registered to attend school, parents will, of course, need to let the principal and school board know of their decision to withdraw the children (OME, 2012). The government of Ontario wishes for every child to receive quality education and Policy/Program Memorandum No. 131 helps to ensure this.

When parents provide a board written notification of their intent to provide home schooling for their child, the board should consider the child to be excused from attendance at school, in accordance with subsection 21(2), clause (a), of the (Education Act,1990, section 21). The board should accept the written notification of the parents each year as evidence that the parents are providing satisfactory instruction at home. The board should send a letter each year to the parents, acknowledging the notification; for this purpose, the board may use the sample letter in appendix C found on the Canadian government website (Education Act, 1990, section 21). Normally, the board should not

investigate the matter. However, if there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the child is not receiving satisfactory instruction at home, the board should take steps to determine whether the instruction is satisfactory (Education Act, 1990, section 21). Blokhuis (2010) also says that "Some scholars have described compulsory attendance laws as infringing upon children's liberty rights" (p. 212). An example of this is that children are often put in a classroom where the pedagogical approaches are not ones that they prefer, but rather what the teacher prefers (Modi, 2013). This oversteps the freedom of children in that they rarely have a say in what they learn.

The Home School Legal Defense Association, is an American non-profit advocacy organization founded to defend and advance the interest of parents to direct their children's education in homes (Smith & Farris, 2011). HSLDA was formed in 1983 by concerned parents with the assistance of two attorneys Mike Farris and Mike Smith. The organization boasts more than 84,000 members. Although originally American, this agency now has a Canadian branch in London, Ontario. The organization tracks both state and provincial regulation that may affect homeschooling and defend bills that threaten family freedom to direct education (Smith & Farris, 2011). HSLDA responds to continuous print and electronic inquiries ranging from while parents choose to homeschool to requesting live interviews (Smith & Farris, 2011). HSLDA works with states to draft language that improves homeschool legal operating environment and oppose unfavorable legislation. HSLDA encourages homeschooling parents to join the organization to enjoy the benefits.

Homeschooling parents affiliated with HSLDA enjoy the many protections that come with being members. HSLDA attorneys work to govern laws that favor

homeschooling. The organization fights for its members to enjoy family liberties to direct

children's education (Vieux, 2014). Registered members do not pay for legal services.

Attorneys for the organization initiate letters on behalf of its members when contacted by

legal officials. Other benefits including providing market-like websites where parents can

buy and sell learning materials and books (Smith & Farris, 2011). HSLDA does offer

assistance to school related issues only, but the organization also connects members to

PerX program where members can get discounts to hotels reservation, home and auto

insurance, Internet accountability and filtering, and magazines.

Philosophy of education

Every educator has a set of beliefs and values from which their teaching styles are

exhibited. Education philosophies support these teaching styles, in which they influence

the questions of: the purpose of education, and what and how students are taught. Both

Eisner (1992) and Schiro (2008) agreed on the term curriculum ideologies, which they

used to describe "beliefs about what schools should teach, for what ends and for what

reasons" (Eisner, 1992, p. 302) and "peoples' endeavors while they engage in curriculum

activity or think about curriculum issues" (Schiro, 2008, p. 10). As teachers become

acclimated to a school and to the teaching profession, they often change and other

teachers, particularly more experienced teachers, can have a major influence on those

changes (Barrett et al., 2002; Bullough & Draper, 2004; Costigan, 2004; Melnick &

Meister, 2008; Peterson & Williams, 1998). Public education in North America is guided

by four main philosophical viewpoints. These philosophical viewpoints include:

essentialism, perennialism, progressivism, and reconstructionism/critical theory.

Essentialism, according to Bagley (1934, 1938), calls for a renewed emphasis on reading, writing, and arithmetic. Essentialists believe that there is a common core of knowledge that needs to be transmitted to students in a systematic, disciplined way. The emphasis in this conservative perspective is on intellectual and moral standards that schools should teach. According to Moss and Lee (2010), the core of the curriculum is essential knowledge and skills and academic rigor. Teachers are supposed to transmit knowledge to students who usually play a passive role in the process of learning. Although this educational philosophy is similar in some ways to Perennialism, Essentialists accept the idea that this core curriculum may change. The philosophy also asserted that other philosophies over-emphasized the process of learning instead of content knowledge in the curriculum (Null, 2003). Schooling should be practical, preparing students to become valuable members of society. It should focus on facts- the objective reality and the "basics" (Moss & Lee, 2010). These "basics" include teaching students to read, write, speak, and communicate clearly and logically so that students have the potential to achieve high, academic standards. Students should be taught to engage in hard work, respect for authority, and discipline. Standardized testing is seen by essentialists as an ideal benchmark for assessing students and holding teachers accountable for student achievement.

For Perennialists, the aim of education is to ensure that students acquire understandings about the great ideas of Western civilization. The focus is to teach ideas that are everlasting, to seek enduring truths which are constant, not changing, as the natural and human worlds at their most essential level, do not change (Moss & Lee, 2010). In addition, Hutchins (1936), a strong advocate of perennialism, argued that

"Education implies teaching. Teaching implies knowledge. Knowledge is truth. Truth is everywhere the same. Hence, education should be everywhere the same" (p. 66). In practice, this education philosophy assumes that all students will pursue the same curriculum regardless of individual differences and individual learning styles.

Progressivists believe that education should focus on the whole child, rather than on the content or the teacher (Dewey, 1938). It is based on John Dewey's (1916) theory of education, which explores the relationship between democracy and education (Moss & Lee, 2010). This educational philosophy stresses that students should test ideas by active experimentation. Learning is rooted in the questions of learners that arise through experiencing the world. It is active, not passive (Dewey, 1938). Research conducted by Michel, Cater, and Varela (2009) labeled teaching styles as either active or passive. The focus of active teaching is student learning. Active teaching improves students' participation in class, attitudes about learning, and levels of higher order thinking (Michel et al., 2009). Whereas, passive teaching, a common traditional lecture style, limits student participation, reduces attention levels, and curtails the retention of material being covered (Michel et al., 2009). According to Dewey (1938), "the main purpose or objective is to prepare the young for future responsibilities and for success in life, by means of acquisition of the organized bodies of information and prepared forms of skill, which comprehend the material of instruction. Since the subject matter as well as standards of proper conduct pre handed down from the part, the attitude of pupils must, upon the whole, be one of docility, receptivity and obedience. Books, especially textbooks, are the chief representatives of the lore and wisdom of the past, while teachers are the organs through which pupils rue brought into effective connection with the material. Teachers

are the agents through which knowledge and skills are communicated and rules of conduct: enforced" (p. 5). That being said, the student- aka learner, is a problem solver and thinker who makes meaning through his or her individual experience in the physical and cultural context. In order to be considered an effective teacher, educators must provide experiences so that students can learn by doing. This is demonstrated through curriculum content which is derived from student interests and questions.

Social reconstructionism is a philosophy that emphasizes the addressing of social questions and an objective to create a better society and worldwide democracy (Murrow, 2011). Reconstructionist educators focus on a curriculum that highlights social reform as the aim of education. Critical theory places students in the center of education (Moss & Lee, 2010). Critical theorists, like social reconstructionists, believe that systems must be changed to overcome oppression and improve human conditions.

Essentialism and perennialism gives teachers the power to choose the curriculum, organize the school day, and construct classroom activities. The curriculum reinforces a predominantly Western heritage while viewing the students as vessels to be filled and disciplined in the proven strategies of the past. Progressivism, social reconstructionism, and existentialism view the learner as the central focus of classroom activities. Working with student interests and needs, teachers serve as guides and facilitators in assisting students to reach their goals. The emphasis is on the future, and on preparing students to be independent-thinking adults. Progressivists strive for relevant, hands-on learning. Social reconstructionists want students to actively work to improve society. Existentialists give students complete freedom, and complete responsibility, with regard to their education.

Teaching styles

No two teachers are alike. Each teacher portrays his or her teaching style in a different manner. An effective teaching style engages students in the learning process and helps them develop transferable skills. Educators have many skills and abilities that are transferable and applicable in positions and industries outside of the traditional classroom setting. Transferable skills are outlined as the following: active listening, problem-solving, critical thinking, service orientation, and time management that are applicable for career success. Traditional teaching styles have evolved with the advent of differentiated instruction, prompting teachers to adjust their styles toward individual students' learning needs. The following list of teaching styles highlights the five main strategies teachers use in the classroom.

The authoritarian teaching style includes teachers who focus on content that is teacher-centered where the teacher feels responsible for providing and controlling the flow of content and the student is expected to receive the content (Evans, Harkins & Young, 2008). A teacher with this teaching style is not as concerned with building relationships with their students, and it is not important that their students form relationships with other students and therefore, this type of teacher does not usually require much student participation in class (Evans et al., 2008). In this style, homeschooling teachers are the ultimate authority, the child has limited autonomy, and there is no verbal give and take. The child is expected to listen to his parents and do what they say because they are the parents and are right. These parents also typically use punitive, forceful measures when needed, often as a result of their children's behaviors or actions that clash with their own high standards of acceptability. Although direct teaching

styles are effective in communicating the learning tasks to students and maintaining their focus, it disregards student responses and their input to learning (Gamoran & Nystrand, 1991).

Educators who resemble a demonstrator teaching style retains the formal authority role while allowing teachers to demonstrate their expertise by showing students what they need to know. This approach focuses on demonstration and modelling. These types of teachers' act as a role model by demonstrating skills and procedures and as a coach to guide in helping students develop and apply these skills and knowledge (Evans et al., 2008). According to Evans et al., "teachers with this type of teaching style might comment: "I show my students how to properly analyze a task or work through a problem and then I will help them master the task or problem solution", and also important to the teacher is for each student to independently solve similar problems by using and adapting demonstrated methods" (p. 575). Instructors with this teaching style are interested in encouraging student's participation and adapting their presentation to include various learning styles. Students are expected to take responsibility for learning what they need to know and for asking for help when they cannot comprehend the material at hand.

Facilitators promote self-learning and help students develop critical thinking skills and retain knowledge that leads to self-actualization. Teachers who have a facilitator model teaching style tend to focus on activities. This teaching style emphasizes student-centered learning and there is much more responsibility placed on the students to take the initiative for meeting the demands of various learning tasks (Evans et al., 2008). This type of teaching style works best for students who are comfortable with independent learning and who can actively participate and collaborate with other students. Teachers

typically design group activities which necessitate active learning, student-to-student collaboration and problem solving. Moreover, according to Glenn (2009), this type of teacher will often try to design learning situations and activities that require student processing and application of course content in creative and original ways.

The delegated teaching style tends to place more control and responsibility for learning on individuals or groups of students, and will often give students a choice designing and implementing their own complex learning projects and will act in a consultative role (Evans, et al., 2008). Students are often asked to work independently or in groups and must be able to maintain motivation and focus for complex projects. Students working in this type of setting learn more than just course specific topics as they also must be able to effectively work in group situations.

Chatoupis (2010) analyzed teaching styles and placed them on a spectrum of various identifiable teaching characteristics. According to Chatoupis (2010), the Spectrum of Teaching Styles is a conceptual framework which helps to describe and organize the process involved in teaching as well as serving as a repository for gathering results. According to Mosston & Ashworth (2008), the Spectrum consists of a continuum of 11 styles, each of which emerges as decisions shift between teacher and learner. Mosston & Ashworth (2008) state that there are always two sets of objectives to be reached in any teacher-learner interaction: subject matter objectives (dribbling the basketball, kicking the football, performing the bench press, shooting) and behavior objectives (cooperation, self-assessment, honesty, replication, designing). Behavior objectives cannot be excluded from the learning experience; they are always embedded and result from the decisions made by the teacher and learners (Chatoupis, 2010).

Behaviour objectives are always made either deliberately or by default. The majority of the reviewed SR has focused on subject matter objectives (Chatoupis, 2010). Chatoupis (2010) argues that "Researchers, who will look at the effects and influence of disparate teaching styles on behavior objectives, will provide a window into knowledge that is essential for all teachers and for all grades" (p. 90).

LaBillois and Lagacé- Séguin (2009) explored the relationship between teachers' teaching styles and the personal behavioral factors that prompt students' own personal growth and development. They found that teachers' teaching styles do more than influence their students' knowledge and skill levels. These characteristics are also responsible for encouraging or discouraging specific self-concepts that leave lasting impressions on the way students develop their learning tactics. After decades of work (Cohen & Amidon, 2004; Gamoran & Nystrand, 1991; Gregorc, 1979; 1984; LaBillois & Lagacé-Séguin, 2009; Mann et al., 1970), no consensus conclusions have been reached by researchers that identify which teaching styles, if any, are most effective to actuate optimal student learning.

Traditional schooling

The traditional translation classroom has been boldly criticized as being teacher-centered, uncreative, rigid, and out of date (Kiraly, 1995, 2000; Colina, 2003; Stewart, 2008). The learner passively absorbs the passed on knowledge rather than becomes actively engaged in the learning process. Zhong (2002) boldly stresses that "we as educators must not dis-empower [students] by depriving them of their subjectivities and their right to think independently" (p. 579). In a nut shell, a modern translation classroom should create opportunities to boost students' creative potential and imagination rather

than brainwash its learners with the elusive and deceptive criteria of accuracy and objectivity.

As Maingano (2016) mentioned in his dissertation concerning homeschooling, the use of traditional education approaches is relevant and still in practice in many classrooms. Teachers generally pass a vast amount of knowledge by the customary lecture method (Taylor-Hough, 2010). The greatest tenet of traditional education is transmitting skills, standards, and morals adults consider valuable, to the learners. Learners are expected to accept provided information obediently. In traditional education, teachers are the instruments of knowledge communication and enforcers of standards. The traditional style of homeschooling resembles what goes on in a typical classroom (Taylor-Hough, 2010). Students read assigned chapters and answer questions. Children typically use workbooks in tandem with textbooks. Workbooks usually contain fill-in-the-blank and multiple-choice questions. The parents provide course syllabi, lead discussions, give homework, and tests (Anthony & Burroughs, 2012).

Teacher centered classroom/method

Teacher-centered learning fosters a culture whereby the learner does not outgrow his or her dependency on the supervising instructors and teachers. One of the main goals of modern pedagogy by contrast is to create strong self-directed learners. A teacher-centered learning environment does by definition neither facilitate nor empower a learner's individual study-skills and lifelong learning skills (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Since the learner is only being assessed by the teacher or instructor, critical assessment of oneself and others is not an intrinsic part of teacher-centered learning (Schraw & Robinson, 2011). According to Kompa (2012), "standardized grading and monopolized

assessment encompass a traditional top-down approach. Assessments are in many cases only carried out as summative and not formative evaluations and they rarely address qualitative issues of the learner's progress" (p. 1). In contrast to a traditional grading system, multi-perspective assessment (Barrows & Wee Keng Neo, 2007) focuses on the learner's performance as a problem-solver, researcher and team-player.

Conventional classrooms are designed around a transmission model of teaching-instructors are experts that transmit knowledge to the less knowledgeable (and presumably receptive) students (Lasry, Charles & Whittaker, 2014). Conventional classrooms are teacher-centered by design- an instructor stands in the front of the class while students are facing the teacher. In the teacher-centered approach to instruction, development of curriculum and control of the learning process is retained by the teacher and is closely related to the behaviorist tradition. The teacher's role is to create an environment which stimulates the desired behavior and discourages behaviors that are believed to be undesirable (Liu, Qiao, & Liu, 2006). In other words, teachers control the learning situation to obtain the desired outcome, guided by generalized characteristics of the learners (Wagner & McCombs, 1995).

In Lasry, Charles & Whittakers' (2014) study, the researchers examined what happens when the design of the classroom (conventional or teacher-centered versus student-centered classroom spaces) is consistent or inconsistent with the teacher's epistemic beliefs about learning and teaching (traditional or teacher-centered versus student-centered pedagogies). The results showed the primacy of pedagogy: student-centered active learning pedagogies produce larger student gains than teacher-centered pedagogies, regardless of the classroom architecture. The data also showed that

sociotechnological environments may have negative effects on students' learning outcomes if used with teacher-centered pedagogies. In sociotechnological classrooms, there is a rich context that affords learning from a host of resources both human and digital.

Teacher-centered instructors that only wish to lecture may be more effective in conventional classrooms. However, greater learning gains can be achieved if teachers come to view learning as a student-centered process. Lasry, Charles & Whittaker (2014) suggest that "a student-centered pedagogy produces substantially more conceptual learning than traditional teacher-centered pedagogical approaches" (p. 7).

Instructors' beliefs may shape the pedagogy they use (Lasry, Charles & Whittaker, 2014). Firstly, the traditional teacher-led or administer-centered learning are used more frequently than student-led learning (Zohrabi, 2012). A student is viewed as the learner, who passively receives information and teacher's role is the information provider or evaluator to monitor learners to get the right answer (Zohrabi, 2012). According to Zohrabi (2012), the problem is that this approach is less likely to permit students in using their potential, so the main focus is getting the learners to perform well on state-mandated tests rather than catering to students' need. This method is unsuccessful because the knowledge of students is judged based on their performance in the final exam scores (Lynch, 2010).

Curriculum options

Families reported that home schooling allows them to tailor their educational approach and curriculum to the individual needs and interests of the child (Anderson, 2000; Butler, 2000; Gold & Zielinski, 2009; Romanowski, 2001). The one-on-one

instructional setting provided in most homeschooling families allows for adjustments in

curriculum and is credited with the success of many home schooled students, due to

engaging in high interest activities (Butler, 2000; Klicka, 1995b; Romanowski, 2001).

Therefore, parents have freedom to select a teaching style and curriculum that meets their

educational and personal objectives (Butler, 2000).

Today, the rise of home schooling has generated a massive increase in the

curricula available to home schooling families (Anderson, 2000), and the American

HSLDA reports a home school curriculum market of approximately $750 million. Ray

(2004) reported that some families purchase complete curriculum packages, while others

approach home schooling with only a small degree of preplanned structure. McKeon

(2007) also found that parents' religion had a significant impact on the type of curriculum

that was used to teach initial reading skills.

Independent learning

There are many different definitions and descriptions of the term "independent

learning." The terms 'self-directed learning' and 'learning how to learn' are sometimes

used interchangeably with independent learning (Meyer et al, 2008). The most common

descriptor of independent learning is 'self-regulated learning' (Meyer et al, 2008, p. 2).

According to Merrigan and White (2010), everyone has a preferred learning style.

Through identification of students' learning styles, teachers will be able to determine

most of the students' individual strengths and assess their academic accomplishment.

Although these researchers reveal that everyone has a preferred learning style, there is not

a specific learning style with which every student can identify, (Glenn, 2009) or to which

students are limited. Mckendry and Boyd (2014) conclude their definition of independent

learning by saying: "We believe an independent learner: 1. Takes responsibility for their learning, 2. Manages their time effectively, 3. Organizes and plans their learning, setting themselves targets and working out how to reach them, 4. Recognizes that they have to learn how to learn at university. Teaching and assessments are different from school/college and it can take a little while to adjust, 5. Asks questions and is curious about subjects, 6. Solves problems, 7. Is motivated and enthusiastic about their learning and makes an effort to understand why their program covers the material it does (p. 220)." Additionally, Kruse (2009) points out that students do not possess learning styles; rather every student has unique prior knowledge, experiences and developmental levels.

Learning styles consist of a unique blend of instructional and environmental preferences, of information processing preferences, and of preferences related to personality; no one style which typifies good language learners has been identified yet (Nel, 2008). According to Karthigeyan and Nirmala (2013), it would be useful for teachers to know the learning styles of their students so as to offer individualized instruction and for students to plan and make better use of their study time and learning strategies which can improve their academic performance.

Presumptions associated with homeschooling

Previous research has found that homeschooling is an alternative education method used in order to ensure each child is receiving the education they deserve (Lubienski et al., 2013; Ray, 2000, 2013). The performance of homeschooling children on standardized examination has always been a topic of contentious debate. Ray (2016) reported that homeschoolers score 15 to 30 percentile points above their peers in public schools regardless of parents' level of formal education. As home schooling becomes

more accepted (Knowles, Muchmore, & Spaulding, 1994) and as debates about educational choice continue to occur (Callan, 1995; Marshall & Valle, 1996), we may see more families engaging in the practice. The available research shows that parents who have homeschooled in the past have usually held strong philosophical beliefs about it, whether those beliefs were about the content or pedagogy of contemporary schooling, or about their rights to determine their children's education.

Homeschooling evolved quickly from an innovative alternative form to almost mainstream education. The current number of homeschooled children is estimated to be around 2.3 million (Ray, 2016). Homeschoolers have become more diverse, and the motivations for homeschooling have increased. Parents often have more than one reason for choosing to homeschool. The top reasons for homeschooling remain the need to customize curriculum and learning environment, to accomplish more than in public schools, employ different learning approaches, and augmenting family relationships (Ray, 2016). Homeschooled children behave in the same manner as other children in public schools. According to Ray (2016), there is no difference between homeschooled children's emotional, social, and psychological development and that of their peers in public schools.

Homeschooling myths

As homeschooling has recently increased as a popular educational practice, so have a variety of myths surrounding this practice (Romanowski, 2006). The most frequently cited objections to homeschooling have been related to the idea of social isolation. While most students do in fact play outdoors with neighboring children and attend extracurricular activities, it seems reasonable that outside observers would assume

that common stereotypes of homeschoolers might depict homeschoolers as inept or awkward in social settings (Luke, 2003). Romanowski (2006) addresses four myths about home education, the first being that homeschooling produces social misfits. According to Romanowski (2006), the myth that parents who homeschool their children are restricting their social development is probably one of the most prevalent beliefs. In the article "Revisiting the common myths about homeschooling," the author Romanowski (2006) outlines that "Probably the most widely held misconception of homeschooling is the myth of socialization. This myth was born out of a misunderstanding of what homeschooling is really like and rests on the assumption that school is the only effective means for socializing children. The mistaken belief is that homeschooled children wake up and hit the books from 9:00 am until 4:00 pm, locked away in their homes with little interaction with the outside world. They are socially awkward, lack essential social skills, and have difficulty relating to others in social situations. However, this is simply an outdated stereotype. Yes, there are some homeschooled students who are social misfits, but there are also public school students who lack adequate social skills" (p. 125). Parents who have elected to homeschool their children have often encountered the question about socialization from other parents, teachers, and administrators who are not involved in homeschooling (Luke, 2003). The answer to this question has yet to come from the homeschooled students themselves. Other researchers, such as Walters (2015) have found that the maturity level of typical homeschooled students is qualitatively different from many institutionally schooled student. This is so because homeschooled students are less exposed to adolescent culture and more exposed to the culture of adults. For example, through increased adult interaction, homeschoolers are apt to learn more

mature ways of communicating as well as the nuances of adult conversation and listening skills (Walters, 2015). There are many options for North Americans when it comes to educating their youth, and homeschooling has quietly become an option that has attracted all types of people with values ranging from counter-cultural too conservative and everywhere in between. The idea that homeschooling students are not socialized adequately or that they are social misfits is an idea that has been challenged and addressed by researchers, but has yet to be answered by homeschoolers themselves.

The second myth addressed is "homeschooling fails to prepare good citizens" (Romanowski, 2006, p. 126). This myth says that "The concern was that homeschooling might turn out better students, but does it create better citizens? The argument was that homeschooling centers on the best interest of the individual rather than public schools' concern for the best interest for society as a whole (Romanowski, 2006, p. 126). Romanowski (2006) counters the myth of homeschoolers not being active citizens by suggesting that "Today, the first generation of homeschooled students have grown up and have entered America's workforce, colleges, and universities. … It seems that homeschooling creates responsible and productive citizens, which is positive for both the individual and society" (p. 127). Blok reported that homeschooled children take part in a wide range of social activities: church, extracurricular sports, and numerous amounts of cultural activities (2004). It is the responsibility of the parent or mentor to ensure that these children are given the opportunity to partake in such social activities. Of course, families must reach out to the community, and the community must in turn provide the opportunity for children to involve themselves in social and educational instances (Berger, 1997). Romanowski (2006) notes that homeschooled students engage in

extracurricular activities and are involved in community events by volunteering. Ray (2013) elaborates by saying "The home-educated may be more civically engaged and more participatory in community service than the general public" (p. 336).

The third myth explored by Romanowski (2006) is that homeschoolers have difficulty in entering post-secondary education. Researchers have argued that homeschooled students experience barriers in achieving their full academic potential as they pursue post-secondary options. According to Romanowski (2006), "Not only do colleges and universities boast that their place of learning is supportive of students who have largely been homeschooled, but universities actively recruit homeschoolers. Many college representatives attend homeschool conferences to talk with students and parents, and admission departments advertise in homeschool publications, communicate with state-wide homeschool organizations, conduct workshops for homeschoolers and their parents to help them plan for college admission and tuition costs, and even offer special scholarships for homeschooled students" (p. 127). Researchers have argued that homeschooled students experience barriers in achieving their full academic potential as they pursue post-secondary options. On the contrary, Romanowski (2006) has further observed that "Not only do colleges and universities boast that their place of learning is supportive of students who have largely been homeschooled, but universities actively recruit homeschoolers since these students scored higher than the national average in English, reading, and the overall composite of the ACT" (p. 128). As a result, homeschoolers exhibit a strong work ethic and high moral values, which play a role in their success in college (Klicka 2003). The reality is that homeschooled children can

learn effectively and succeed in college without experiencing traditional forms of schooling (Romanowski, 2006).

The last myth addressed by Romanowski (2006) is "most people homeschool only for religious reasons" (p. 128). Romanowski states that "However, religious and conservative families are not the only ones homeschooling their children" (p. 128). He argues that one of the unique aspects of the homeschool community is that it appeals to "a demographic diversity that includes virtually all races, religions, socioeconomic groups and political viewpoints (2006). The stereotype of homeschoolers is that they are conservative Christian families (Romanowski, 2006). This relates to Cooper and Sureau's (2007) research in regards to families of differing beliefs and religions, including Muslims and New Agers, are choosing home education. They found that "What was once portrayed as an ideological movement- built around conservative, born-again Christian beliefs- appears to be broadening" (Cooper & Sureau, 2007, p. 112). There are many reasons parents decide to choose home education for their children, besides religious reasons (Collom, 2005; Cooper & Sureau, 2007; Lubienski et al., 2013). Parents have the right to choose how their children should be educated by determining what form of schooling best meets the complex needs of their children (Romanowski, 2006).

Reasons/motivations for homeschooling

Homeschooling can provide the opportunity for an inspiring educational journey facilitated by a parent/educator. Homeschooling parents often cite the need to incorporate religion and moral instruction in their child's education (Gaither, 2008; Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007a; Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2011). Researchers also reported parent's desire to control content (Kunzman, 2012), public schools' inability to teach what

students need to know, and methods of instruction that do not cater for individual students' abilities (Clements, 2009).

As the researcher Maingano (2016) mentioned in his dissertation regarding homeschooling in Hawaii, he used the following findings to support reasons why parents chose to homeschool. Maingano (2016) mentioned that Clements (2009) reported that one of the factors influencing parents to choose homeschooling is that school districts are not emphasizing the teaching of traditional subjects in public schools. Parents felt that public schools were moving away from teaching subjects that include mathematics and writing and choosing to teach social issues including racial tolerance and homosexuality (Maingano, 2016). Homosexuality education continues to be one of the most contentious debates about public education. Curricula that exercise the authoritative exclusive partiality on social issues seek to dismiss, ignore, and undermine presentations of other points of view (Petrovic, 2013). Parents feel that the schools are not doing enough but teaching social issues prejudicing children of valuable learning time. The issue of homosexuality education in public schools is becoming a frequently discussed topic among policymakers. The growing expectation among gays and lesbians is the introduction of sexual identity and orientation in public school (Halstead, 1999). According to Maingano (2016), the argument against teaching about homosexuality stems from the assumption that teaching sexual identity and orientation in public schools accelerates recognition and acceptance of homosexuality as a normal moral behavior.

Isenberg (2007) compared the question, "Do you homeschool for this reason?" of NHES studies of 1996, 1999 and 2003 and found the top three reasons to be the same, "to give a child a better education at home", "religious reason", and "poor learning

environment," (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). Sixteen percent of parents represented dissatisfaction with previous school academic instruction (Lee & McMahon, 2011; National Center for Education Statistics, 2014; Princiotta & Bielick, 2006). Research has shown that conflicting experiences of school happen before a parental decision is made to enroll the learner in homeschooling (Anthony & Burroughs, 2010; Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; Knowles, 1988). A common concern among homeschooling parents was with trust in the educational system authorities and academic and social accomplishments authorities (Driscoll & Wagner, 2011; Lee & McMahon, 2011).

In the homeschooling study of Van Galen (1986), two broad types of homeschooling parents are identified: the first one is identified as the Ideologues, who homeschool because they think the values which public schools teach are anti-family and anti-Christian; the second type is as the Pedagogues, who choose homeschooling mainly because they believe their children can learn better in the home environment. Homeschoolers were motivated by the pedagogical reason to leave schools because of system dissatisfaction and wanting something better for their children (Anthony & Burroughs, 2010; Gathercole, 2007; Isenberg, 2007; Lee & McMahon, 2011). A significant amount of families cited religion as a factor and one out of seven claimed special needs or behavior issues as parental motivations for homeschooling (Isenberg, 2007). While ideological and pedagogical groups represented a mix of parental reasons for homeschooling (Anthony & Burroughs, 2010), various families blamed the public school system for offering a one-size-fits-all primary education that does not take into consideration the emotional, developmental, intellectual, and moral needs of all children

(Driscoll & Wagner, 2011; Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007).

Religious concerns and homeschooling

Religion has played a key role in the emergence and growth of the homeschooling movement, and remains an important motivator for homeschooling, especially for parents who feel a moral imperative to nurture their children's moral and spiritual development (Ballmann 1987; Cizek 1994; Kunzman 2009a, 2009b; Murphy 2012). According to Uecker (2008), the religious effects of different types of schools- namely Catholic, Protestant, and homeschools- however, are rarely evaluated. Despite noisy public discourse about the place of religion in education, the influence of different schooling environments on the religious lives of adolescents is seldom explored. When schooling types are considered, Catholic and Protestant schoolers are typically combined into one homogeneous group of "religious schoolers" (e.g., Gunnoe and Moore 2002; Regnerus, Smith, and Smith 2004; Trinitapoli 2007).

Much of the social scientific research on intergenerational transmission of religion utilizes social learning and social capital theories to explain the role of parents in their adolescents' religious lives (e.g., Myers 1996; Lee, Rice, and Gillespie 1997; Bao et al. 1999; King, Furrow, and Roth 2002; Regnerus, Smith, and Smith 2004). These studies suggest a direct influence of parents on their adolescents through processes such as modeling and parent-child interaction. Another line of thinking suggests that parents affect adolescent religiosity through what has been termed "channeling" (Himmelfarb, 1980). According to this hypothesis, parents indirectly influence adolescents' religious outcomes by guiding them into more religious social settings, such as peer groups and schools. Though a large number of parents homeschool for religious reasons, little is

known about whether these parents accomplish their goal of religious socialization (Cizek, 1994).

Homeschooling permits parents to have the freedom to instruct their children in the beliefs and values of their family, often causing children only to be taught one religious perspective (Apple, 2015; Blokhuis, 2010; Reich, 2005). Additionally, Blokhuis (2010) notes: "The state plays an educative role individual parents often cannot (i.e. exposing children to diverse conceptions of the good; promoting reason and critical thinking) while parents may teach what the state must not (i.e. inculcating religious beliefs)" (p. 202). Being exposed to only one religion and viewpoint during the formative years of child development is troublesome. Despite this, Blokhuis remarks that parents are to teach religion to their children. Nonetheless, children should be exposed to many and encouraged to formulate their own opinions (Apple, 2015; Reich, 2005), as individuals learning how to formulate their opinions is a part of development.

While there are many questions about homeschooling and the reasons why people choose to homeschool, there is no doubt that the United States of America and Canada are countries that have placed increasing value on the idea of homeschooling in favor of declining interest in public schools (Moreau, 2012). According to the article "Specific differences in the educational outcomes of those students who are homeschooled vs. students in a traditional school setting," the author Moreau (2012) argues that an area of conversation regarding homeschooling involves the focus on incorporating religion into the homeschool curriculum. The author further outlines that "Parents tend to shy away from the public school due to their personal religious beliefs" (p. 10). The article suggests that parents who embrace the religious aspect of homeschooling tend to use a more

controlled style of teaching than the public school teachers (Moreau, 2012).

According to Romanowski (2006), "The stereotypical view of homeschooling families is one of a conservative Christian family who homeschools in order to pass on Christian values to their children and protect them from the world... However, religious and conservative families are not the only ones homeschooling their children... Both the political left and right of homeschooling are active today" (p. 128). Although parents who have chosen to homeschool their children often share common demographic characteristics, to stereotype them as "ultra conservative" or "far right wing" may be largely unfair. In fact, the homeschooling movement is not homogeneous. It includes people that belong to a wide spectrum of political/ideological, religious, and educational beliefs, and it cuts across racial and class lines (Ray 2013). Kunzman (2010) has suggested that "…the point of such a comparison, however, is not to imply that homeschooling ultimately fosters religious fundamentalism. The structural flexibility of homeschooling, and the space it provides both literally and ideologically lends itself to counter cultural movements of all kinds" (p. 18). Home education is slowly becoming a socially acceptable means of education, as it can meet the learning needs and preferences of students (Medlin, 2013).

Family relationships and connectedness in homeschooling

Family dynamics is meant to describe the ways in which the family interacts with one another. This may include traditions, behavioral patterns, styles of communication, and emotional independence (Bowen, 2011). It is important to take into consideration the ethnic culture of the family environment when interpreting family dynamics. Self-construal, or the ways in which individuals view themselves as separate or connected to

others, can affect the ways in which they perceive the relationships between one another (Anthony & Burroughs, 2010).

Homeschooling clearly puts fathers and mothers in a position of being connected to, responsible for, and having authority over their children. This is because homeschooling returns a critical social function- the education of children- to the family. Institutional schooling places institutionally trained teachers in authority over children and puts these teachers in "loco parentis" (example: in place of the parents). Children and youth in schools, therefore, ascribe to these teachers' great prestige and influence in their own lives regarding matters of knowledge, values, beliefs, and worldview (Gregory, 2005; Nichols, 2006; McKeon, 2007; Andrade, 2008; Korkmaz & Duman, 2014).

Whereas historically children once accepted their parents as the primary authorities in their lives, increased institutional schooling shifted the locus of authority and control to state and private schools and personnel. Modern home-based and parent-led education reverses this trend because parents continue the education of their children under their own direction (or retrieve them from institutional schools where they had sent them). The parents, therefore, are able to select learning activities, curriculum materials, and community and social activities that are consistent with their own family's values and beliefs and what they think is best for the upbringing of their children. Rothermel (2002) reported in her research that homeschooling families "Seek to strengthen intra-family relationships" (p. 43). Family values are important to parents, including those who choose to homeschool their children, as Ray (2013) explains they "Strongly emphasized the importance of family" (p. 328).

According to Bhatti (2011), the role of the family is the first and foremost

influence over a child's development, including his or her personality. The social ethics, developmental practices and the roles of the parents and other family members directly affect the development of each of its members. The parents, specifically, are responsible for creating an environment that aids in the development of a healthy personality. Bhatti also states that intellect, physique and emotions are the raw materials of a personality; thus, parents should maintain a pleasant living environment that supports and motivates their children. Children who feel safe and secure within their environment show secure base behavior, which ultimately leads to these children becoming joyful, social, and inquisitive about the world around them (Bowlby, 1988). Should the child's development be void of these supports, the individual becomes detached or disengaged from the family and develops a passive, avoidant demeanor. Research within cultures that emphasize independence has found that children who are raised by family members who utilize an authoritarian child rearing style in which the parents or family appear cold, rejecting, intrusive and controlling, tend to have low self-esteem and self-reliance and tend to react with hostility and frustration (Berk, 2006). However, for cultures characterized by interdependence, the appearance of authoritarian parenting may be normative (Berk, 2006). Ultimately, the family environment and its interactions play a crucial role in the development of a child and their personality.

Home educated children spend more time with their siblings and therefore have more opportunity to develop close ties with them. Rather than focusing large amounts of attention on their nonfamily same-age peers, homeschoolers are able to learn with their brothers and sisters, teach and care for their younger siblings, model after their older siblings, and share in daily real-life experiences with one another (Ray, 2002). There is

evidence that this is leading to stronger life-long bonds among siblings than is likely among siblings who spend about forty hours per week with non-sibling same-age peers (Ray, 2002).

Research indicates that the overall effect of homeschooling on children and youth is to prepare them for healthy and virtuous relationships within and outside of their families. The psychologist Medlin stated in "Homeschooling and the Question of Socialization" (2000), that several conclusions could be made about homeschooling and socialization, although many unanswered questions remain. The conclusions were, first, that homeschool children are taking part in the daily routines of their communities. Second, they are not socially isolated and, in fact, associate with- and feel close to- many kinds of people. Third, homeschooling parents are concerned about their children's long-term social development and actively encourage their children to participate in social opportunities outside the family. Fourth, homeschooled children acquire the rules of behavior and systems of beliefs and attitudes that they need for successful living. Fifth, they have healthy self-esteem and are likely to display fewer behavior problems than do those in institutional schools. Sixth, they may have better leadership skills and be more socially mature than others. Finally, they appear to be functioning effectively as members of adult society (Medlin, 2000).

Attachment and homeschooling

Homeschooling, according to proponents, intends to enhance attachment between children and their parents and siblings (Ballmann, 1987; also see Barfield, 2002; Ray, 2014). One of the driving factors in the origin of contemporary homeschooling, according to Milton Gaither (2008), was the "American cult of the child," experienced by

progressives and conservatives alike, whereby parents sought to "liberate the kids from what they took to be the deadening effects of institutionalization by keeping them at home" (p. 113).

What link does attachment have about education or relationship outcomes? Does a child's relationship with his or her parents and teachers have an effect on his or her ability to learn or the investment in the educational process? It is important to understand what influences a child's acceptance into society if the ultimate goal is to safeguard the child's moral being. Why is it that some children accept their parent's values and ideals while others reject and rebel against it? It is the theoretical framework of attachment theory that examines the quality of relationships and its impact on other areas of life. Studies have shown (Duschesne & Larose, 2007, Learner & Kruger, 1997, Nelson & Knight, 2010) that children with insecure attachment styles respond differently to challenges and situations that cause stress. School is a challenge, both for the student and the teacher, and it is perhaps even more of a challenge for homeschooling children and parents.

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has identified and explored the motivations for homeschooling, philosophies of education, and the specific learning/teaching styles present when an obedience-based education is underway. Understanding why parents choose to homeschool provides a further understanding of why they choose specific curricula and instructional designs. Guidelines on homeschooling differ from province to province and state to state. As a result, homeschoolers need to be aware of the laws that govern homeschooling in their home provinces and states. The literature established that

the number of home schools continues to grow, and more parents are advocates for their children's learning. The literature review on motivations for homeschooling outlined that parents are concerned about the quality of education in public schools and turn to homeschooling techniques to fulfill these concerns. According to the literature review, homeschooling parents believe that public schools do not provide adequate preparation for children to succeed in higher education. These parents believed that the curriculum lacked religious content and does not cover what children need to learn under parents' standards and expectations.

What the literature review did not find is a research study that has focused directly on asking children why they believe their parents homeschooled them and to articulate it in their words. Homeschooling is continuing on an upward trend as more parents are becoming familiar with the practice. The fact that all provinces and states are beginning to accept homeschooling as an alternative to traditional education may be causing more people to consider homeschooling. The purpose of this autoethnography is to explore my life story with homeschooling at the center of my educational journey. This is in hopes that future researchers and homeschooling parents conduct research on homeschooling curricula and instructional designs in order to prevent what had happened to my two siblings and myself. The secrecy and privacy of homeschoolers is evident, and previous researchers pointed out the difficulty one may face in conducting research.

Chapter 3 will provide methodology used to gain insights into the research design and the appropriateness of qualitative research used in this autoethnography. Chapter 3 will cover a rationale for choosing an autoethnography, the method, my role as a researcher and a participant in the study, and my research questions guiding this

qualitative inquiry. This chapter will also determine the data collection methods, the

narrative process, data analysis, limitations and validity and reliability to help determine

whether to generalize the findings in this qualitative inquiry.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology and Procedures

Introduction

In this chapter, the method, the research question, the data collection process and the analysis of the narrative is put forward. Chapter 3 identifies the steps to fulfill the autoethnographic writing process.

The concept in my research statement is centered on my family opting out of traditional school and engaging in homeschooling. The educational philosophy that guided my education was based on essentialism. I was also instructed from an authoritarian teaching style. This research has a means of uncovering these approaches and how they were portrayed throughout my homeschooling journey and my transition to traditional school. It will consist as a mere reflection on how I did not attend elementary school and instead, was provided with an alternative way of education. A huge benefit to my autoethnographic research refers to gaining a better understanding of what research means. The best way to emulate that environment is to simply throw yourself into it. By conducting and pursuing autoethnographic research, I want to concentrate on ways of producing meaningful, accessible, and evocative research grounded in personal experience. According to researchers Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011), "Autobiographers can make texts aesthetic and evocative by using techniques of "showing" (Adams, 2006; Lamott, 1994), which are designed to bring "readers into the scene"- particularly into thoughts, emotions, and actions (Ellis, 2004, p.142)- in order to "experience an experience" (Ellis, 1993, p.711; Ellis & Bochner, 2006). This form of research will sensitize readers to issues of identity politics, to experiences shrouded in

silence, and to forms of representation that deepen our capacity to empathize with people who are different from us (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Autoethnography considers the researcher's experience to be a topic of investigation in its own right (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). It is a mode of inquiry that challenges conventional norms. Autoethnography is an analytical practice that does not follow standard writing formats normally employed by traditional social science customs. Integration and reflexivity is a key ingredient of autoethnographic work (Richardson, 2000; Wall, 2008). Wall (2008) mentions that autoethnography offers an opportunity to express personal experience while also benefitting sociological understanding through the experience of relating to individual perspective.

Bourke (2014) explains that "It is reasonable to expect that the researcher's beliefs, political stance, cultural background (gender, race, class, socioeconomic status, educational background) are important variables that may affect the research process" (p. 2). My theoretical perspective lies within my in-depth interpretative reflections and self-interactions, as one who has experience being both an educator and a homeschooled student. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) suggest that qualitative researchers employ several methods in collecting data that include interviewing and the use of personal experiences-ideas that I employ in my autoethnography. They also noted that the researcher may interpret interviews in different ways, including narrative; thus, qualitative interpretations are self-constructed. Pearce (2010) clarified that in conducting autoethnographic research "we seek to understand ourselves in order to provide a shared truth to others. This can only be achieved by recognizing what is valuable in our response and our experiences" (p. 12). What one recognizes as valuable is determined through the self- referencing

process which, as has already been established, is shaped by one's mental models, "or mental pictures of their experiences, representations that model the stimuli or data with which they are interacting" (Werhane, 2007, p. 463).

Research method

Autoethnography is a research method where the researcher divulges their personal experience through data collection, which centers on three principles: qualitative, self-focused and ethnographic research (Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chang, 2010). The researcher must take time to self-reflect on personal bias while analyzing experiences as is applicable to their topic of interest. Through this process, "researchers intentionally embrace personal memory, self-observation, self-reflection, and self-analysis as a means to collect autobiographic data" (Chang & Boyd, 2011, p.15). During the process of self-reflection and analysis, researchers can experience intense emotions and memories that can be painful as well as enlightening to both the researcher and the reader. This storm of remembrance and emotions will aid in the connection between research and personal applicable information.

The autoethographer uses self-observation to record his/her actual behaviors, thoughts, and emotions as they occur in their natural context. This self-observation takes place in the autoethnographer's daily life (Chang, 2008). Chang (2008) continues to state that: "Planning what to observe and record needs to be carefully planned out in your research design. For example, you can self-observe and record your behaviors, thoughts, or emotions at certain time intervals or by occurrence; in a narrative format or pre-formatted recording sheets; and immediately when they occur or after you retreat from your action field" (p. 91).

Rationale for choosing an autoethnography

I am writing this autoethnography because I have chosen to offer my personal story as a glimpse into why I was homeschooled, how the curriculum was chosen, and the teaching styles that were dominant in my education. The opportunity to tell a personal story supported by scholarly research in a significant and academic way is motivated by the vision that supports a paradigm shift in teaching styles and educational philosophies. A second motivation for the sharing of this personal account of education is to lead by example.

Autoethnography is one approach to research that intends to describe and analyze personal experience systematically in an attempt to understand cultural experience (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). As a method, autoethnography is both a product as well as a process (Ellis, 2004). Autoethnography combines cultural analysis and interpretation with narrative details (Chang, 2008). Chang (2008) asserts that autoethnography aligns to anthropological and social scientific inquiry approaches that focus on storytelling. Autoethnographers' stories must be reflected on, analyzed, and interpreted in their broader sociocultural context (Chang, 2008). In autoethnography the subject is the ethnographer herself (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

As an autoethnographer, I have chosen to write in a descriptive-realistic style. Bochner and Ellis (1996) encourages the autoethnographer to add as many details in their storytelling. Another writing style that is used is confessional-emotive writing. Here the autoethnographer is allowed to expose confusion, problems, and dilemmas in life (Chang, 2008). The autoethnographer's vulnerability allows the reader to participate in the stories.

This gives the autoethnographer the power of being able to speak to the hearts of the reader (Ellis, 2004).

Research question

Autoethnography was selected for this study in an effort to best answer the research question: What can be uncovered through my lived experiences as a homeschooled child, specifically with respect to the themes of an essentialism educational philosophy and learning approaches that optimize and limit my intellectual and social growth.

Data collection

The data in this qualitative inquiry is my narrative. Writing my story begins with self-observation and self-investigation, gathering complete representation of the story, how it may be molded by personal bias, and reflecting and integrating the meaning of the story. Autoethnographic narratives offer the opportunity for data collection via self-observation that is both systematic and interactive (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The majority of my learning and evaluating occurred at my family's kitchen table. Before choosing to conduct an autoethnography, I often contemplated on how my parents' educational influences and teaching directions led me to where I am today. In autoethnographic work, memories are shaped and reshaped according to the kind of story one seeks to tell (Chang, 2008). For me as a researcher and writer, the capacity to create multiple versions of an event in my homeschooling years, is an opportunity to see the fragility and partiality in all attempts to construct meaning for the reader and myself.

An integral element of autoethnography is in the acknowledgement of the many ways personal experience influences the research process. When researchers write

autoethnographies they write meaningful, descriptive and reminiscent portrayals of personal experiences (Ellis, 2004). As a result, autoethnography is one of the approaches to research that accommodates the researcher's influence, subjectivity, and emotion rather than acting as though personal bias does not play a vital role. Bias in personally directed research such as autoethnography is incorporated and considered to be an element that strengthens a project (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). Autoethnography is often dismissed as being insufficiently rigorous and analytical, too emotional, and therapeutic (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011).

Given the nature of autoethnography, my personal experience is used as primary data. However, through an ethnographic orientation, it may be useful to also set a framework for conceptualizing my experience within the greater constructs of my particular culture. In constructing knowledge as a researcher, I benefit by the subtle interplay of conceptual self and other, observing relationship, and remaining subjective. "All knowledge is constructed, and the knower is an intimate part of the known" (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 137). Through the methodology of autoethnography, one is constructing self and on a quest for self that is distinguishable from 'other' while also allowing the space for other to be similar. "A quest for self and voice plays a central role in transformations in women's ways of knowing" (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 133).

Ellis (2004) stated that "autoethnography does not proceed linearly" (p. 119) and that the process is complex and does not follow any specified formula. She declared that writing an autoethnography is similar to being sent "into the woods without a compass" (Ellis, 2004, p. 120). Chang (2008) pointed out that the autoethnographer usually conducts data collection, interprets the data, and writes the report. An autoethnographer

collects field data by means of participation, self-observation, interview, and document review; verifies data by triangulating sources; and interprets data to decipher the cultural meanings of events, behaviors, and thoughts. There is no specific or prescribed autoethnographic writing process because the content and the form of an autoethnography are developing components unique to each writer (Wall, 2006). Ellis (2004) argues that the advantage of engaging in a writing process without a predetermined direction is that the writer may discover information or knowledge about him or herself that could not have been predicted. The analysis of autoethnographic data begins the moment the researcher perceives the information. In autoethnography, the interpretation of data is an ongoing event, developing and crystallizing over time. It is also about gathering information from personal reflection and experiences. The interpretation goes hand-in-hand as theories and themes emerge during the study (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). In the case of this autoethnography, my reflection shaped and gave form to the description of my experiences. Ellis and Bochner (2000) have asserted that interpretation involves a process during which the researcher emotionally recalls the events of the past. The researcher is able to look back on specific, memorable episodes and experiences, paying particular attention to the emotions and physical surroundings during the recollection. A unique aspect of a qualitative study is the ability of the researcher to let the data emerge as the research and writing are progressing. In the initial phases of my autoethnography, for example, it was not always clear what distinct themes would emerge.

   I began my narrative with breaking down timeline periods that I believed were the most significant and data rich. These included early years, elementary school, high

school, post-secondary and graduate studies. Once I had these time periods listed, I reflected on my thoughts, feelings, and major experiences during each of those time periods. I also looked for further reassurance on these time periods through family photos and family videos. Reflecting on these aids, helped me to organize my thoughts and feelings associated with each time period. These timelines served advantages and disadvantages of each part of my life. Exploring these thoughts provided me with the opportunity to witness and reflect on how my education affected my transition to high school, university, and career objectives. While writing my narrative, I would listen to my family's conversations or witness my younger siblings finishing their school work in their bedrooms. This process of elimination helped to bring back memories of what words or mannerisms from my family would spark a memory from our homeschooling days. My narrative is very personal and has never been shared before. Looking back on these family photos and videos allowed me to unearth emotions and feelings that had been held back for so many years in fear of disappointing my family if I spoke about my educational journey. Many writers invoke the terms "story" and "narrative" to convey a sense of our human involvement in the creation of the realities we live and perceive. Custer (2014) states that "Autoethnography as a transformative research method is valuable to science because it incorporates and even celebrates individuality. It allows the researcher a unique way of understanding their intimate and influencing relationship with the research process itself" (p. 9). Sell- Smith and Lax (2013) once again affirm this theory stating, "Instead of trying to keep a facade of objectivity, I realize that I am more authentic when I acknowledge my own 'situatedness' and draw awareness to the role I play in creating and shaping knowledge" (p. 14).

The narrative process

  Autoethnographic narrative is a discipline within the broader scope of qualitative research that utilizes story, autobiography, journals, conversations, photos, and other artifacts to the units of analysis to research. It helps researchers to understand the way people create meaning in their lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Diana Raab (2013) writes, "Because many autoethnographical studies relate to painful experiences, the researcher may encounter difficult moments during the course of the research and writing" (p. 14). Custer (2014) explains that "Not only does an individual have to face their own pain, often times they are exposed to the pain and anguish of other people who have experienced similar circumstances" (p. 2). It is not an easy task to relate to who we were in the past and understand how that translates into our identity today, but it is worth the effort in order to reap the rewards of reflexivity and introspection. Custer (2014) describes this process as "looking into the mirror" which requires radical honesty with oneself with the need to be forgiving, compassionate, and understanding, and find meaning from horrific, painful, or troubling events.

  Writing an autoethnography allowed me to be vulnerable and exposed. According to Custer (2014), "Autoethnography by its very nature is engagement. It is reaching deep down into the soul and pulling up trash and scum. It is a dirty job. However, the results of engagement with oneself are the act of "courage and clarity of purpose" (p. 4). This is how my narrative became a form of identity, in which the things I chose to include in the story, and the way I told it, can both reflect and shape who I am. A life story does not just say what happened, it says why it was important, what it means for who the person is, for who they will become, and for what happens next. Autoethnography is a creative process.

It is an artistic tool of deep inquiry. Custer (2014) believes that autoethnography: "It is also an innovative tool because it promotes reevaluation, reinterpretation, and reinvention from the inside out" (p. 5). Brown (2011) identifies that "Thinking out of the box" about our lives in retrospection and introspection stimulates creativity and innovation which are social tools used to "transmit our identities and social positions to others. They are social products that represent cultural norms and beliefs and transmit normativity, hegemony, power, oppression, and resistance" (p. 80).

In my narrative, I established the subjective facts of my homeschooling experience. I communicated the feel and texture of my life thus far. For me, this is how it is or was. When we tell a story, we make experience and interpretations of life, present in a social scene of action, using the terms of some particular linguistic, historical and cultural community. According to Allen- Collinson (2012), autoethnographers occupy a dual, and often highly demanding, role as both a member of the social world under study and a researcher of that same world (Anderson, 2006). This demands of the autoethnographic researcher high levels of critical awareness reflexivity, and self-discipline. For me, narrating my own story puts knowledge into play in the real world. This is how experiences, feelings, and inchoate thoughts take form. They gain substance. They become something other than internal wanderings but become active as they are entered into the here and now of the social world. Connelley and Clandinin, (1990) note "Narrative inquiry is increasingly used in the studies of educational experience" (p. 2). Further, Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, and Orr (2010) indicate, "Narrative inquiry shapes the lives of educators, including teachers and researchers, as well as the lives of children, youth, and families" (p. 81). My narrative was a reflection on the homeschooling aspect

of my life. The focus was my perception of the pedagogical approaches my parents used and how they were explored in relation to literature. The problems that I encountered during my home education experience and with various teaching styles and educational philosophies to guide my education were contained within the narrative along with the solutions or resolutions that came about as a result, allowing for the full exploration and discussion (Creswell, 2014). A key strategy to access core components of my narrative was to describe significant memories in conscious awareness and to reflect on important but forgotten past experiences and events in the context of narrative time periods.

Data analysis

Maingano (2016) in his study: "Hawaiian parents' experiences and stories in homeschooling: a narrative study," completed his data analysis using Polkinghorne's research study. Polkinghorne (1989) proposes that a person's own narrative understanding of his or her life causes the behavior expressive of that intimate story. Therefore, in his view, scientists must learn to read people as they would a text: "Acting is like writing story, and the understanding of action is like arriving at an interpretation of a story" (p. 142). It would be a mistake, he thinks, to try to explain human behavior by using general laws, whether these be physical, biological, psychological or social laws, since "bodily movement is "caused" by the meaning to be expressed" (p. 142).

Like Maingano (2016), I have adopted the same data analysis strategy using Polkinghorne's analysis of narratives method. The method involved capturing commonalities within the storied data through the creation of nodes- a central or connecting point (Maingano, 2016; Kim, 2016). The storied data were analyzed for commonalities, and divided into categories or themes. Analysis of narratives allows

researchers to take pieces of data and form categories. The analysis of narratives allowed

me to evaluate general features of my personal stories. It seeks to find common themes

from storied data (Maingaino, 2016; Kim, 2016). The purpose of using analysis of

narratives was to help the reader understand why and how things happened the way they

did, and how and why myself and my family acted in a way we did (Maingano, 2016;

Kim, 2016). Narrative inquiries produce a storied description process carried out in a life

span. Data consisting of events, actions, and happenings were analyzed to produce

coherent stories. I integrated events and happenings as described in my narrative into

themes. These themes formed the basis for retelling the stories. I used narrative

smoothing method to fill the gaps between events. Narrative smoothing is the editing of

insignificant information to make the story more coherent (Maingano, 2016; Kim, 2016).

Narrative smoothing allowed me to capture the richness of my actions that could not be

expressed in abstract terms. As described by Maingano (2016), "the narrative mode of

analysis was a chosen method because it focuses on events, actions, and happenings" (p.

109).

Limitations

There are limitations to this study, despite best efforts to be accurately written and

prepared. The following section depicts those limitations.

The limitation of every researcher, regardless of the method employed but

particularly in autoethnographic, narrative, and organic inquiry, is the quality of the

research. A flawed study represents a flaw in the researcher (Belenky et al., 1997).

Research is easily criticized for its particular methodologies without considering the

paradigm in which they exist (O'Leary, 2004). However, delusions, anger, and confusion

are harmful to any study, particularly one of a charged personal nature. A researcher with an unobtrusive ego and strong intellect can minimize risk of producing inadequate lucidity in the conveyance of knowledge (Ellis, 2004).

According to Ngunjiri, Hernandez and Chang (2010), a primary concern of autoethnography is ethics. These researchers discuss the challenge of telling one's stories in light of representing others in that story. Another concern is writing about oneself while dealing with sensitive issues. These researchers mention that issues of vulnerability may make the reading of an autoethnography difficult, because the researcher/subject exposes his or her emotions. Another limitation of autoethnography is that it only uses data from one source which is the researcher.

Conclusion

Autoethnography methodology provided me with a framework for understanding my perceptions on receiving an education in the comfort of my home. This method allowed me to explore and interpret my reflections on how an authoritarian teaching style was not effective for my specific learning styles in homeschooling. I designed my research in such a way to show the unique qualities of my research: an autoethnography study wherein the researcher and the participant are the same person. According to Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang (2010), "The researcher is at the center of the investigation as a "subject" (the researcher who performs the investigation) and an "object" (a/the participant who is investigated)" (p. 1). Autoethnographic data provides the researcher a window through which the external world is understood. Although the blurred distinction between the researcher-participant relationship has become the source of criticism challenging the scientific credibility of the methodology (Anderson, 2006; Holt, 2003;

Salzman, 2002; Sparkes, 2002), access to sensitive issues and inner-most thoughts makes this research method a powerful and unique tool for individual and social understanding (Ellis, 2009). My thesis then is firmly rooted in the tenets of qualitative research.

There is much research and literature on the topic of homeschooling. However, sharing my story may help fulfill some curiosity and reveal an authentic experience by providing one story of how an authoritarian teaching style and an essentialism education philosophy guided my learning in a homeschooling environment. Autoethnographers utilize their own experiences as sources of data to achieve their goals (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Reed-Danahay, 1997). Those working from this perspective aspire to provide explanations, not simply descriptions. Many people are not aware of the benefits of homeschooling, often causing a negative connotation to be associated with it (Davies & Aurini, 2003; Romanowski, 2006). The sharing of stories of homeschooled students may help to reduce the negative connotation associated with homeschooling, creating a more realistic viewpoint.

Since all homeschooled students have a different experience and are from varying backgrounds (Rothermel, 2011; Wilkens, Wade, Sonnert, & Sadler, 2015), my experience is different from the stories of other homeschooled students. The sharing of stories of home-educated individuals may create greater awareness about homeschooling and reduce any negative connotations (Davies & Aurini, 2003; Romanowski, 2006). I hope to provide insight into reasons why my parents chose to homeschool from a homeschooler's and researcher's perspective.

The narrative that I have provided is an account of my educational journey, to explore the tensions, challenges, and possibilities of home education under an

authoritarian direction and an essentialism educational philosophy. The discussion and findings have explored how my story is related to literature on the topics on homeschooling. This will help to provide justification for my narrative and portray how my experiences fit with other existing research.

CHAPTER 4: The Promise of Homeschooling

Introduction

In this chapter, a personal narrative will be identified, which uncovers my experiences, challenges, and learning objectives that occurred during my homeschooling years. It consists of a description of the curricula, teaching strategies, and philosophy of education that influenced my education as well as my moral upbringing. This narrative provides a first-hand account of the emotional impact that followed my homeschooling journey, in which personal emotion and thought are finally brought forward.

The beginning

My siblings and I were all homeschooled during elementary school. It was not until grade 9- first day of high school, that we were introduced to the public education system. Being the eldest, I had preconceived notions of what a school looked like, how children interact and learn, the layout and space of a classroom, and the teacher to child ratio.

For the majority of my life, my learning occurred at home- at the kitchen table, surrounded by younger siblings. Here, three passive and timid children who were educated with the same curriculum, values and morals, were produced, yet somehow with completely different motives and personalities. When I was a child, I never challenged nor contemplated the curriculum or education objectives that my mother had arranged for me. I simply followed the "rules" and obeyed the structure and routine of what homeschooling meant to my mother. Years to come would be the spark of critical thinking as I reflected on why my parents chose to homeschool us, how they chose to do so in terms of curriculum and structure, was I receiving the same education and

guidelines as other children by age, and would my siblings and I ever attend a public school?

Having received an obedience-based education, being taught at home restricted a child like me. I was a child who had preconceived notions of what education looked like, and who wanted to understand and address the curiosity gaps associated in my mother's teaching strategies and learning objectives. These parental influences did provide me with a sufficient amount of religion, literacy, and language arts, but it failed to prepare me for the remaining subjects that are so heavily emphasized in the school system: math, science, geography, history and social sciences. Throughout high school, I knew I needed to develop skills that I would need to further my education and my career. I understood that the education I received at home did not grant me these strengths and that I would need to work that much harder to progress and move forward.

My family

I am the oldest child of three children, born to parents who both belonged to a European, traditional, and religious families in Windsor, Ontario. My parents were born to immigrants from Eastern Europe and even though, both of my parents were born in Windsor, Ontario, they did not speak English at home. My siblings and I have never learned a second language- we are only fluent in English. I have a younger sister who is two and a half years younger than me, and a younger brother who is five years younger than me. My father works at the Chrysler Assembly plant in Windsor, Ontario while my mother is an elementary teacher. My father has a skilled trade diploma from St. Clair College and my mother has an Honors degree in Business with a B.Ed. teaching degree from the University of Windsor. My mother has eight siblings in which four of those

siblings homeschool their families. Because we are very close in age, we spent a significant time with my cousins. Education was never a topic of discussion in our family. It was more of a prerequisite for receiving a post-secondary education that would eventually be attained in the future. As a curious learner from an early age, I was always asking questions similar to "why do I have to do this? How is this going to help me understand better? Will I use this in the future?" As always, my mother usually had the same responses: "you need to do this to get a job. I am the mother, so what I say goes. Finish your work so that you can move ahead." Not very encouraging responses are they? No stimulation, no eagerness, and a lack of reciprocal communication. As a child, I did not understand the significance of these answers. I simply took them as the "right" answers because my mother was always reminding us that she was older and wiser. Obviously, it had been ingrained from a young age, for which we grew up thinking our mother must be right. How could we differ from this stance? There were no third-party influences that had the potential to challenge our beliefs. It was not until post-secondary school that I began to reflect on these tensions and decided to move forward in a more profound direction.

My education

I cannot pinpoint an exact time frame of when I began my formal education of sitting down at a desk and following a curriculum. Although, I imagine it was somewhere between four and five years old. The homeschooling routine consisted of waking up and eating breakfast and then beginning the workload. This included me sitting at the kitchen table completing different workbooks and worksheets for a few hours each day, while my mother provided support when necessary. My mother would explain the lesson and

remain in a close vicinity around the house while I completed the lesson. In Rothermel's (2011) research on homeschooling families, she notes "Most families trod a middle path that was neither very structured nor very haphazard" (p. 46). Similarly, my experience included a short period of formal instruction every day led by my mother, but I was also encouraged and allowed to have free play time in different increments throughout the day to learn independently. I spent my free time reading books, playing outside on the swing set, playing imaginary "cowboys and Indians" or "house" and "school." I now realize that this was a form of dramatic play- a form of learning in emergent curriculum. When I realized how quickly the day's work could be completed and how much free time would remain, my siblings and I developed a strategy which we call: "doubling up." If we knew that someday during the week we had a field trip planned or that my mother would be taking us over to our cousins' houses, we would engage in completing our school work for the required day as well as the day we would be taking off. This ensured that we would not fall behind in our curriculum's lesson plans.

I did not live a life resembling other children my age. I did not have to wake up early and go to daycare, get on a bus, experience recess, and have the pleasure of buying "back to school supplies" each September. I was provided the opportunity to stay at home, wake up whenever I wanted, complete a few hours of school and play with my siblings who were also homeschooled. The structure of our curriculum was very relaxed and flexible. There was no strict schedule, so usually, the same routine followed each day. Get up in the morning, wear pajamas, eat breakfast, watch some television, and start your homework. In most cases, I remember starting with the harder subjects first because I knew they would require more time and effort. Once these were finished, I could move

ahead into the easier workbooks and fly through the rest of my day. The first formal learning that I can remember was learning how to cursive write. I remember I had a separate cursive writing book with exercises in it that allowed me to recognize the different letters which would later be formulated into words and sentences. During my early years, drawing and painting were highly encouraged. Our basement consisted of tabletop easels and erasable and removable calendars where we could draw and develop our fine motor skills. Our upstairs fridge had magnetic letters and numbers while our bathtub had the same principles but in the form of sponges. My siblings and I grew up with limited technology. My first gift that is considered "technical" was a CD player. My own individual music player with my favorite artists and songs, who were of course, approved by my parents beforehand. There was always music in the house whether it be from one of us playing piano or from a tape recorder. We were raised as a very outdoorsy and athletic family. Before the age of three, we each learned how to swim, rollerblade on the pavement, ride a bike and skate on the ice. My mother was a stay at home mother and my father worked swing shift. These flexible schedules allowed my parents to spend a lot of one on one interaction time with their children in which they encouraged outside play time and gross motor skills. The learning I experienced during this time period was often role playing and self-directed.

While my elementary school years helped form the foundation of me being self-motivated and taking responsibility for my education, my public high school education, helped to reinforce and build upon that foundation. Throughout my high school years, I studied independently for the majority of my subjects. I remember writing an essay for a social science class and asking my mother to proofread and overlook it for errors. Her

response was upsetting: "When I entered post-secondary education, Baba and Dida (maternal grandparents) did not speak a word of English. We could not turn to them for help. You need to take initiative and see if you can figure it out on your own." I will never forget that conversation. I vowed to myself that I would never seek out help or ask a question from my mother that related to my education. If I was expected to succeed in the adult world, I would have to pursue it on my own. Broad (2006) found in his study that "Resources do not figure significantly in students' perceptions of independent learning, whereas the guidance and support offered by their tutors ranks more highly" (p. 140). Because I studied independently during my high school years, the transition to university was smooth in regards to independent study and taking responsibility for my own work.

During highschool, I completed my work independently and on my own schedule. I would finish as much homework as I could during class time and then bring my school books home with me in order to get more studying done. I understood that I was required to meet deadlines and to be time manageable. It was my responsibility and obligation to reach the goals. Even today, I prefer to have my own schedule rather than being told what to do. It is easy for me to motivate myself to complete my work in school. Reflecting on this now, I think it was a combination of my personality and the opportunities I had to motivate myself. Another factor that contributed to my self-motivation was that I wanted to prove to people that I could be successful through homeschooling, that I could learn what was taught in school at home. I wanted to show them that I was learning and that I was on par with my peer group. In addition to proving to others that I could be successful in homeschooling, I was also proving it to myself. During my high school years, I often

questioned if home education was a quality means of education and whether I had learned what I was required to be learning. I feared I would graduate high school with less knowledge than those who went to public school, pushing me to further lead my own learning and learn beyond what I was required to. I wanted to be at least on the same academic level. Guilt was one of my biggest frustrations with school work during my teenage years. Despite the negative attitude I often displayed because of the guilt I would carry, having a strong conscience pushed me to be more self-motivated. The self-discipline I had learned early on, pushed me to be successful in my high school studies and in my postsecondary education.

Throughout my elementary years, I was expected to be highly proficient in English, literacy and language arts, and religion. The other subjects that were highly emphasized in the public school system that my mother did not consider as important included: science, history, geography, math and social sciences. It was not until I entered high school that these subjects were introduced to me. As you can imagine, I was at a loss. I had the fear and anxiety of possessing a lower education caliber than the other students in my grade. Before high school, I had never been introduced to inquiry based activities such as science or technology experiments. As a result, when I entered high school and was introduced to these subjects, I believed that I was at a disadvantage because I had never learned these subjects. I had to work that much harder in order to understand the concepts, creatively think and then transfer it to critical application and processing purposes. My mother believed that the concept of creationism was more important to understand as opposed to the evolution of the world. For this reason, she chose to restrict her children from discover- based learning. As I have said before, during

my homeschooling years, there was no encouragement for learning or motivation to learn based on my interests. My mother had a specific private, religious curriculum and we were instructed to follow that curriculum and that alone.

Reasons to believe I was homeschooled

I have received the question of why my parents chose to homeschool me countless times. Almost every time I encounter a new person and they begin to question my past, homeschooling seems to take full responsibility of why I am the way that I am. I have come to believe that I will never escape the stereotypes and preconceived notions behind this underlying question. I was often considered as the "homeschooled girl" which for me, was associated with a negative and often embarrassing connotation. If it were not for those educational milestones and challenges in my life, I would not be the person I am today. I would not be an educator. I chose this type of profession based on the possibilities and tensions that arise with traditional learning methods. What I have thought to have "missed out" during my elementary school years, has influenced me to heavily introduce and emphasize the material and pedagogical approaches I take hold of, while possessing the responsibility of educating students.

Growing up, I remember asking my mother why she chose to homeschool. She simply responded with: "I am a certified teacher so I have the right to direct my children's learning" or "at the time of Junior/Senior Kindergarten registration, I did not want to enroll you in a split classroom, so I felt that you could receive the same influences and learning opportunities surrounded by your younger siblings." I also recall my parents saying that they believed that religion was an important subject and that it was being overlooked and ignored in the public school system. Parents having a choice in

the ways their children are taught is an important factor that contributes to the decision to homeschool (Davies & Aurini, 2003). I grew up alongside other religious families who were homeschooled, but was reminded by my parents that at the age of when we should be expected to attend high school, we would take that first leap.

The reasons for why parents choose to homeschool is centered on the parents' education objectives, their teaching style, their viewpoint or perspective on education, and their choice of curriculum. All of these reasons put the child at the highest priority, with the goal that these children will receive the best education. Apart from all existent homeschooling research, it is safe to assume that my parents did not share the same mindsets as other homeschooling parents. Even to the present day, my mother cannot answer the question of why she really homeschooled her children. Yes, she admits to different driving factors, but there is not one single, concrete reason for why she provider her children with an individualized home education.

While I reflect and write this narrative, the reasons for why my mother decided to homeschool become uncovered. They include the following: family, cultural, and social pressures, religious concerns, and parental control. Although these driving factors were not easy to verbalize, my mother eventually let her guard down and admitted why she had homeschooled. Throughout the process of writing this thesis, I questioned everything and anything. It is a non-stop process of searching for the right answer.

Like I had mentioned earlier, my mother belongs to a European, Catholic family in which four out of the eight siblings homeschooled at the same time. My mother is the fourth born. Her two older sisters had begun to homeschool, for which my mother eventually followed. I refer to them as the "Blazevic bubble" because they look for

answers in the Catholic faith, or recognition on what they choose to believe in, from their mother and one another. For instance, I have asked my mother why she chose to follow the private, Seton Curriculum as opposed to any other homeschooling curriculum or a mix of certain textbooks. Her reply is as follows: "Teta Maryann (mother's oldest sister) chose Seton because she is a devoted Catholic and heard that this was a religious curriculum which included a Christian lifestyle in every subject. She was the first to commit to it, so the rest of us did too." This is a prime example of family pressure. Growing up in a close family-related environment, my mother did not stray from the norm. She along with her brothers and sisters continue to only trust one another and look to one another for recognition, praise and reassurance. They refuse to refer to research such as academic journal articles or science-based facts. Instead, if they face a problem, they encourage each other to speak to a priest. When I have confronted my mother with the creationism belief, she responds with: "Uncle Antony (mother's oldest brother) is an engineer. He knows the most. If he can mix science and religion together, then nothing else is believable. He is the person I trust most."

Another driving factor that convinced my mother to homeschool was religious studies. Depending on the homeschooling students' religious backgrounds, most students are only taught about one religion or belief system (Apple, 2015; Blokhuis, 2010; Reich, 2005). Reich (2005) discusses this as "Homeschooling is the education of children under the supervision of parents. In no other educational setting are parents as able to control and direct all aspects of education, for in home schools they are responsible for determining not only what children are taught, but when, how, and with whom children are taught" (p. 3). My parents were both raised as Roman Catholic and that is the only

religion I was ever exposed to. From birth to present, as a family, the five of us attend church every Sunday. My siblings and I were never presented with the option of missing church or abandoning our faith. If one of us were to do so, we would be disowned from the family and be provided with a lecture of how we are committing a sin and not leading a life like Jesus did- which would ultimately lead us to Hell after death. From the beginning we were taught the creation worldview and that the evolutionary worldview is made up by scientists who are persuading others to believe in it to take a stand against Jesus Christ. From this stance, it is clear that my siblings and I lived in a parental control environment- a cult if you will. It is because of this worship and praise and an instilled fear that was forced upon us by our parents. That being said, neither one of us was given the opportunity to study about what we were interested in, or form a knowledgeable opinion of our own beliefs, instilling responsibility and independence.

Entering university gave me an opportunity to think independently and develop research skills in order to problem solve and critically examine what was laid before me. Before this time in my life, I had never been exposed to learning or practicing these skill sets. Religious and conventional families are most commonly the first to adopt homeschooling. Many parents are profoundly religious and believe that mainstream education does not teach their children strong Christian values (Aiex, 1994). They argue that public schools fail to take religion seriously and that it has not been successfully implemented into the curriculum. This has become a problem because for these families, their religious beliefs and their child's education go hand in hand (Romanowski, 2001). Receiving a new and higher education enabled me to take responsibility over my own

learning, as it produced confidence, a willingness to learn, and it made me more enthusiastic and appreciative of education.

As I have mentioned, my family was involved in a large Catholic homeschooling community in Windsor, Ontario. For the years I was homeschooled, this had a large influence on my decision making as well as my thought processing. When you are constantly surrounded by adults and children who are supportive of faith and have a tendency to preach about it every chance they have, it becomes very excessive and overwhelming- almost to the point of annoyance and complete abandonment. Both my immediate and extended family are very religious and take pride in converting individuals who do not possess any religious faith. It is almost unbearable because religion seems to continue to be the point of interest and discussion at every family and social gathering. The age groups in my family range fromeighty years old until two years old. We are a very large group. Over the years, as the first cousins have grown up and entered post-secondary education, the religious aspect of our lives have been questioned and even abandoned. Individuals are now granted the opportunity to expand their knowledge and make informed decisions without the consent of their parents. Nevertheless, this has proved to cause a lot of awkwardness and instability in the immediate family.

Religious education to me was a controlling aspect of my education. I was constantly reminded and scolded to remember Roman Catholic concepts and beliefs, without being exposed to other cultures and beliefs. Now that I am an adult, I find various religions to be interesting. Apple (2015) remarks "Schools also are part of the cultural apparatus of society in other ways than building (positive or negative) identities" (p.

307). Studying religion did not spark any independent and self-directed learning styles. Instead, it proved to be the opposite. Studying religion provided me with a close-minded approach to learning. It produced an ignorance and an ego-centric mindset because I was unaware of the other religions in the world. After twenty-six years of being exposed to these beliefs, I am still hunted down by my mother who regularly questions "when are you going to church today? Remember, if you do not go, it is a sin." I understand the meaning behind this as a child. But now as an independent adult, it has become too much of an annoyance. For me, there is a line that has been crossed. I understand the motives behind my parents' teachings but when these commands are being shouted at an adult day in and day out, it then becomes a burden. I do not respect her authority. I have now come to appreciate and respect other cultures and their beliefs systems and it has produced an eagerness for independent study.

The use of discipline and control was a huge component to my upbringing, especially during homeschooling. As children we were never praised for asking questions or showing concern in the education we received. Rather, I was told that my mother had chosen the best curriculum suitable for her needs and we were going to be taught it because she said it was right and not wrong. That is how my siblings and I grew up. Before entering post-secondary education, I was a very passive and timid individual. I never possessed critical thinking or problem-solving skills. I was never encouraged to ask questions because the answer was always the same: "I am the mother and it is so because I said it is." My siblings and I grew up in fear of our parents. We possessed the fear of never questioning nor disobeying them because of the punishment that would follow. I respect my parents but I also have a lot of disappointment and resentment. I resent them

because as a teacher, my mother should have been aware of these different learning styles and she should have researched all there is to know concerning homeschooling. In my opinion, she chose to do so as a sense of parental control. She was born into a strict, traditional, and religious family and she wanted those same values and morals to be passed onto her children. I cannot taunt her for that. Although, I am disappointed in what these values taught me as a child. Thankfully, I have progressed and moved forward, abandoning this "fear" of asking questions which has allowed me to address the curiosity gaps in research that I now have, in search of a solution.

I do not remember my parents discussing homeschooling with us, although I am sure my parents discussed it together. We as children, never questioned this educational approach. I assumed it was the right thing to do because my parents said it was and it was a normal routine of ours. How could I have possibly thought any different? I was never introduced to concepts or beliefs that existed in the outside world nor was I encouraged to think outside of the box. I consider this a form of negative persuasion. I was coerced to believe in, to adhere to, and to respect my parents' authority and their decisions. I never knew any different. I assumed every child grew up like this. I grew up in fear of my parents. The fear of disappointing them, or getting into trouble for rebelling was too great of a risk to think and behave any differently. Homeschooling was a new experience for my family and my parents invested in a variety of resources and a significant amount of time to provide me with the best education they could. But was it the best? Did my parents consider other options? Why did homeschooling become the norm? Many homeschooling parents do this, according to Green and Hoover-Dempsey (2007), who say "It is clear that homeschool parents invest substantial resources (e.g., time, energy,

income, knowledge, and skills) into teaching their children at home" (p. 265).

The desired trait: independence

In order "To demonstrate independent learning, students must be given autonomy" (Zutshi, Mitchell, & Weaver, 2011, p. 2). From a young age, I adopted this trait and placed matters into my own hands. I was eleven years old when my mother returned to work. For so many years she had homeschooled the three of us and now she was returning to part-time work as a supply teacher for the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board. At the time, my father had received back surgery and would be recovering in our home. He had never attempted to homeschool or review our work books before this time period. Not having my mother around all day, every day, was a strange transition. My younger sister and I took up the responsibilities around the house as well as the education portion. At the time, my youngest brother was only six years old and was very dependent on us. We did everything from making his breakfast and pouring his juice, to monitoring his television time and helping him with his hockey drills. The most challenging daily task was homeschooling one another. I took it upon myself to teach not only myself the grade six curriculum but also to teach and help my younger siblings if any problems with their lessons aroused. This relates to what Mckendry and Boyd (2014) say: "In the School, we believe an independent learner … takes responsibility for their learning" (p. 220). Developing motivation and initiative from a young age assisted in preparing me for the remainder of my formal education years as well as my adult life. I remember enjoying being in charge of my own schedule and having the responsibility of organizing my day. Through this, I learned which subjects and tasks I would rather do early in the day and those that I would prefer to complete

later. While I did not know it then, in university I realized that learning independently and taking responsibility for my work were valuable learning skills. Because I was taught responsibility and self-motivation as a child, I was able to navigate my university studies with competence and confidence in my organization skills.

Unlike traditional curriculum, homeschooling allows for changes and diversity in lessons. I was able to work at my own pace, helping to instill persistence and motivation to complete tasks from an early age. I understood and respected what needed to be completed each day and it was my responsibility to complete the work without my mother having to interfere. With this understanding I was able to meet my parent's expectations as well as my own. I also enjoyed the flexibility in my play and school schedule that homeschooling offered. If I began the school year before September, I could often finish that grade before June of that following school year. I was aware that my school year was over when I completed the assigned work books for the year. My siblings and I followed the Seton Home Study School: Catholic Homeschooling Curriculum developed in the state of Virginia in the United States of America. The curriculum is a Catholic curriculum providing me with biased information. The curriculum we adhered to related all of its subjects to Catholic beliefs and the creationism viewpoint. When the workbooks for a certain grade were complete, I was finished that particular grade. I was in control of my learning schedule, developing responsibility and initiative. The content was controlled by the curriculum and my parents' wishes. This responsibility continued throughout my schooling years and provided me a good foundation for when I started postsecondary education, aligning with Mckendry and Boyd's (2014) statement "In recent years autonomous or independent lifelong learning

has become a key concept within international higher education" (p. 209).

The kitchen table

Most of my formal learning took place at my kitchen table or in my bedroom. I became so familiar with my surroundings that l learned how to tune out distracting people, noises, and objects from my learning. This taught me persistence, determination, organization, and how to time manage. I have always completed and met my deadlines. After my school work was completed for the day, I was free to engage in what children refer to as "free play." At this time, we had no technology in the house so I relied very heavily on the outside world and my imagination. Learning how to self-meditate under the distractions at home enabled me to work independently. To this day, when I enter an institution or a library, I am very distracted with the noises, the people walking to and from, and the computer in front of me. I complete my best work, distraction-free in the comfort of my home.

When I was fourteen years old, in grade 9, I was the first in the family to attend a traditional school. I believe my mother cried that first day of school when she dropped me off. I think I cried that day too. Imagine waving goodbye to the only people who had ever taught and surrounded you all day, every day. Nevertheless, I was excited for this new chapter. I longed for new teachers, new materials, and new friends. This transition was also a relief. I was aware that I would finally be receiving the proper education I deserved that would help me reach my fullest potential before post-secondary education would arrive. The most vivid memory I have of that first semester was receiving a 50% passing grade on my first math test. I cried the entire bus ride home, fearing my parents' reaction and the disciplinary action I would receive for this disappointment. I was

disappointed in myself but I was also afraid to disappoint my parents. My parents'

reassurance and approval was the most important thing to me.

For the most part, I struggled in every subject besides religion and English. I had

never been exposed to these subjects. Once my mother had returned back to work, my

siblings and I fell behind in our curriculum. I could not possibly teach myself science,

math and history if I had never learned about it? I had no idea where to begin.

Nevertheless, I set a standard for myself. I knew that I needed good grades in order to get

accepted into high school and university. In high school, I worked that much harder. I

listened attentively, I participated and I often pulled "all-nighters" studying because I had

to teach myself things I had never been exposed to. Some would say this was a sign of

independence and courage. Others would contradict this and blame my mother for her

lack of responsibility and selfishness. I regard it as a motivator for being burned out and

not wanting to homeschool any longer.

As time went by, I became more focused and accustomed to my workload. I

discovered my strengths and weaknesses in certain subjects and I conquered them. The

hardest subject was sexual education. I must have been the naivest individual in this

department. Throughout high school, I had this internal fear of people finding out my

background and judging me. However, I could not escape it. I became the homeschooled

girl and I remained that girl. I remember being embarrassed not knowing the reproductive

health organs or how partners even engaged in intercourse. The only thing my mother

had taught me was what happened to a woman when she hit puberty. The only reason she

explained this is because when I experienced it in grade 8, I had begun to scream and cry

fearing something terrible had happened to me. No child should ever have to experience

this and feel ashamed or terrified of his or her body. How did I react? I became a very timid and passive person. I sat at my desk and listened to other student's stories and opinions on these subject matters and I learned from researching on my own. I never asked my parents another question because I knew that they would not provide an accurate or scientific answer. If I required help, I sought it out myself. Again, I am extremely disappointed in my parents' teaching styles and philosophy of education to guide my learning. It is not an approach that I support. It does not prove to be effective. In fact, it resulted in the opposite. It created naive, timid, and closed-minded children who grew up with one mindset, afraid to stray from their parents' beliefs.

Social development and the homeschooling context

Myths of homeschooling include that the educational approach produces individuals who are not able to socialize nor who are good citizens. "Critics charge that homeschooled children are isolated from the outside world, rendering them socially and educationally handicapped" (Romanowski, 2006, p. 125). Ray (2015) argues this, saying "The home-educated are doing well, typically above average, on measures of social, emotional, and psychological development" (p. 2).

From my experience, I grew up a very social and outgoing individual. I was always interested in what other people had to say, how they behaved, or how they reacted in certain situations. Although my parents controlled what we could watch, what we could listen to, or who we could interact with, they encouraged us to explore sports, hobbies, and music. Because we were homeschooled, my mother would take us for bike rides, skating or field trips with other homeschoolers. We were not sheltered to the four walls of our house. I played travel soccer from my elementary years throughout my

undergraduate degree. This is how I met people.

A disadvantage of being homeschooled in elementary school was not being surrounded by other children or adults on a daily basis. While this was advantageous for me in that I was not as distracted as I may have been in public school, I was not engaging in completing formal group work regularly with students my age. Ray (2013) summarizes the stereotype of homeschooled students not being socialized: "Homeschool parents call it the 'S question'- 'What about socialization?'- and these S questions are asked of nearly all homeschooled parents and homeschooled teenagers" (p. 327). Because I was limited to only sports and recreational activities with other Catholic homeschooling families, I was unaware of the outside world and the different cultures and ethnicities encompassed in it. I was not seeing real life examples every day as may have been the case if I was in public school surrounded by students of different races, gender, or ethnicities. I believe this influenced my judgment in becoming a closed-minded, passive, and egocentric individual.

Homeschooling: influence on traditional school preparation and learning

Homeschooling did not prepare me for high school. If anything, it set me up for failure. I was at a loss in the academic world. I had never received any training on the subjects that emphasize discovery based learning such as: science, math, and technology. This not only limited my intellectual growth but also my social growth among other teachers and students. I was ashamed to ask for extra help. It is because of this, that I believe I was given a disadvantage in the career world. Regardless of the grades I received, my parents insisted that I be enrolled in the academic realm as opposed to the applied realm in public schooling. Throughout high school, I took all of my required

math and science courses. My parents insisted on me entering the medical field in post-secondary education. For this reason, I took biology, math, and chemistry in both grade 11 and 12. Despite my parents' wishes, I was afraid of failing university and not receiving the support or grades I needed in order to pursue Nursing. I was however, accepted into the Nursing program at the University of Windsor. As it turns out, I did not enter the medical field. In 2009, one week before orientation and the start of university, I went to the Registrar's office and switched to a different undergraduate program. I completed my undergraduate degree in Sociology. I must admit, there are times where I regret this choice and I wish I had pursued Nursing. I wish I had grasped the concepts at an earlier stage in my development and become confident in my academic abilities. However, it did not work out that way. I have accepted that. I am proud of the person I have become and I will never stop researching, learning or educating others on what I have come to known.

Homeschooling prepared me for university because I was accustomed to independent learning and I was motivated and determined to move forward. I wanted to break out of the stereotype of being homeschooled and become my own person. I wanted to create a name for myself that people recognized without associating it to homeschooling. I was annoyed with the constant comments of "oh, that explains why you are like this. Or, no wonder you are smart, you were homeschooled for the majority of your life." This alternative form of education provided me with a sense of responsibility for my learning. Throughout university, I adhered to deadlines and time constraints and I always made an effort to complete the work in advance. From the time that I was responsible for my own education as well as my siblings' education when my mother

returned to work, this challenge helped to inculcate responsibility and discipline into my character. This transferred into my post-secondary studies in that I would become determined to complete the assigned work when it was given, rather than waiting until a later date. The educational approach of homeschooling, with encouragement from my parents, helped me to develop a sense of self-discipline and the urge to complete the work assigned when it is required and demanded.

Throughout my university years, I felt that I was no longer "behind" in academics like I had experienced in high school. I had successfully completed high school and was receiving above average grades in university. In my first semester, I quickly became accustomed to being in a large lecture hall and lecture-based environment. I remember feeling intimidated being in a room with two hundred other students all eagerly listening to one professor. It did not help either that my guidance counselors and my own mother were always saying, "you are just a number in university. No one knows who you are and professors do not care if you attend class or not." It did not take me long to realize that this was true for the most part. After I completed my first year, I was comfortable with the scheduling of the semester, taking tests, and completing assignments. I learned how to quickly adapt to the preferences of different professors and how to answer them accordingly. It became easier in my third and fourth years of university since I had some professors as instructors in previous semesters and knew their individual expectations, preferences, and teaching styles. The support system in my courses helped ease my stress in that I knew I had others to rely on for missed information and who understood the materials and particular situations I was involved with. Having several of the same peers in each of my classes helped make me feel more comfortable attending classes. At the

beginning, I was often nervous before class began. The level of anxiety and nervousness decreased with each year. I went from being a passive, timid girl in high school who was not encouraged to voice her opinion, to a mature, and academically spoken individual who engaged in discussions and argumentative purposes.

Conclusion

Through the writing of this narrative, I have examined my homeschooling experience, the teaching style that was distributed in my learning, and the philosophy of education that motivated my parents to homeschool in the first place. These driving factors each had an effect on my transition to high school and postsecondary education. This has been a great learning experience for me since I had the opportunity to reflect, ponder, and recollect my homeschooling years. During my elementary and high school years, I was not aware of the various pedagogical approaches I was using nor exposed to. It is through the M.Ed. program and the writing of this thesis, that these educational approaches have become clearer. Reflecting on my experience now reveals to me the advantages and disadvantages of those approaches I used. Having the opportunity to relive my home education experience through the writing of this thesis revealed more about my educational journey than I ever realized was there.

CHAPTER 5: Findings and Results

Introduction

In this chapter, I will summarize and discuss the findings that I presented in the narrative in Chapter 4. The literature review in Chapter 2 provided an understanding of the instructional methods, learning styles, educational philosophies, curriculum options, and reasons/motivations for why my parents opted out of traditional schooling and chose home education for their children. It will be determined in this chapter, the understanding of these perspectives and the recommendations that will potentially help parents, teachers, professionals and legislators to better plan for their homeschooled students.

The key findings for this autoethnography are that a) this qualitative inquiry provided an inside look at the concerns and issues of homeschooling when an authoritarian teaching style and essentialism philosophy of education is manifested, and b) curriculum options in my homeschooling education and c) the prominent reasons/motivations for opting out of traditional schooling.

Identified Themes

Given there is a clear gap in the literature regarding research on the lived experiences of homeschooled children, research in this area is necessary in order to understand the effects of different instructional methods, learning styles, educational philosophies, curriculum options, and reasons/motivations when applied to homeschooling.

Although some consider a personal narrative to be the same thing as an autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), others use autoethnography as a means of explicitly linking concepts from the literature to the narrated personal experience (Holt,

2001; Sparkes, 1996) and support an approach as rigorous and justifiable as any other form of inquiry (Duncan, 2004). The findings in this chapter allow the reader to understand my homeschooling experiences, and how certain teaching styles and curriculum options have affected my transition to the public school system and to the adult I am today. It provides an inside look at the concerns and issues that had arisen upon my reflection of my homeschooling experiences. An outline of the results is provided as themes and subthemes.

Theme 1: The manifestation of authority

By withdrawing their children from the public-school system, homeschooling parents have re-asserted their authority as parents to control their children's education and upbringing. Isenberg (2007) reported that a child from a "very religious" family is more likely to be homeschooled (p. 402).

Formal research in the area of teaching strategies is limited. In an in-depth study completed with four homeschooling families, Anthony (2009) found that the traditional teaching strategy was most commonly used by the families. In addition, Anthony (2009) reported that most of the families employed methods similar to traditional school settings where the teacher provided a course syllabus, lectured, led discussions, took the children on field trips, gave homework, and administered tests. There was also an inverse relationship found between the amount of direct parent student association and the age of the child (Anthony, 2009), indicating that the older the child was, the less direct instruction they received.

Authoritarian teaching style

This section will describe authoritarian parenting and its effects on children's emotions and behaviors. Hoeve et al. (2009) suggested that authoritarian parents show low responsiveness and warmth but high control toward their children. According to Baumrind (1966, 1971), authoritarian parents attempt to shape, control, and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of their children according to a set of principles they provide. The parents tend to be conservative and strict. The children are given little choice and have to follow parents' orders (Gfroerer et al., 2004). Parents have expectations, and children are not allowed to disobey their parents (Kim & Rohner, 2002; Takeuchi & Takeuchi, 2008).

Steinberg et al. (1991) described authoritarian parents as those who monitor their children's behavior. Barber (1996) described such monitoring, as "parents attempt to manage or control children's behavior" (p. 3296). Barber (1996) and Fletcher, Steinberg, and Williams-Wheeler (2004), determined behavioral control as parents' monitoring their children's behavior and activities outside the home. For example, parents want to know where their children are and what they are doing. As part of parental control, parents also get involved in making decisions for their children (Fletcher et al., 2004; Steinberg, Elman, & Mounts, 1989). The children do not have opportunities to decide what they want and as a result become less self-confident (Suldo & Huebner, 2004).

Another characteristic of authoritarian parenting is that authoritarian parents talk to their children rather than with their children and do not consult with their children when making decisions (Alegre, 2011; Baumrind, 1971; Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009; Leman, 2005). This one-way communication does not give children space to express their needs and does not give children reasons for their expectations. Authoritarian parents can

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be categorized as demanding, expect much of their children, and are unresponsive to the children's needs (Leman, 2005). Moreover, authoritarian parenting is restrictive, rigid, and punitive where parents pressure children to follow their directions and to respect their words and efforts (Timpano et al., 2010). Marsiglia et al. (2007) also found that authoritarian parents discipline their children with physical and emotional punishment. Taken together, authoritarian parents do not encourage verbal give and take (Leman, 2005) and children are expected to accept their parents' position for what is right (Baumrind, 1966).

The parenting style that my parents acknowledged and insisted on using was authoritarian. As a child raised under authoritarian parents, I was under the absolute authority of my parents, and was stripped of my own independence and freedom. Every action and every life decision was decided by my parents. Parents hold the attitude that they are the authority figure, and children are encouraged to be submissive at the expense of their own desires. As I have have mentioned before, my parents were very strong willed on their decisions for the family as well as certain family values that would become essential in our development. The most important consisted of: family time and religious belief/worship. Under my parents control, my siblings and I are expected to continue this religious education and belief every Sunday at mass as well as "do unto others as Jesus would to you." My parents firmly believed in respect, obedience, and discipline. From a young age, I can recall cleaning after myself when I made a mess of my toys or helping out with family chores. If one of us children strayed away from this, we would suffer the consequences. In most cases, this resulted in a punishment in the form of losing a privilege such as television time or leisure time with friends. I am now

twenty-six years old, still living at home, and I am often threatened of losing privileges if standards are not met. My parents do not believe in reciprocity. If their children are to live under their roof, we are faced with the following ultimatum: obey your parents who have distributed certain rules and regulations or simply get out and live somewhere else. At times, these ultimatums become almost unbearable and unrealistic. It is very challenging to live under one condensed roof with five adults who do not share the same values nor similar personalities. I often reflect on the different parenting styles that exist, and I associate these influences on how and why homeschooling could instill a negative impression on me. Were my parents too harsh on my upbringing? Are their criticisms of me a form of "tough love" or sincere parental investment? Did my parents discipline my siblings and I too often? If my parents were to be less passive aggressive would we have grown up entirely different than what we represent now? This is by no means a justification for me being categorized as a challenging child or adolescent. It is the opposite. I grew up in fear of my parents and I continue to hold that stereotype. I am afraid of disappointing them and challenging their authority. For our entire existence, my siblings and I were taught to respect our elders and to suppress all judgment towards adults. I remember my parents always saying, "Adults will always be smarter and older than you. You are instructed to obey their rules and not to question their authority or decision making." This may explain why I grew up with a closed-minded psyche and fear of disappointing others around me, with the will to always achieve better than my counterparts. I continue to strive for that reassurance and satisfaction from my parents.

Philosophy of education

The Essentialist movement was borne out of the struggle between the "traditionalist" and "progressive" approaches to curriculum and pedagogy. The philosophy of essentialism grows out of Bagley's moral commitment to the education of teachers (Null, 2007). The words often heard in today's educational circles are concerning standards, whether they are individual state standards or in reference to the common core standards, are the words "rigor" and "relevance."

Essentialism, in the sense in which it is used in this autoethnography, represents something that is unalterable and permanent. It is an educational philosophy which structures its mandates on some truths that are absolute and which nothing can change. According to Womack (1942), under the essentialist philosophy of education, the main aims of education are summed up as follows:

1. The child should be trained for adult activities.

2. There are certain "musts" that must be taught regardless of their interest or value to the child.

3. Children need mental discipline; the studies in school should help this discipline.

4. Children should be trained for the duties of citizenship. (p. 30).

As one can imagine, being an educator and a parent are completely separate identities with overlapping expectations, challenges, possibilities, and tensions. My narrative depicts the experiences and feelings of me growing up in an authoritative and essentialist philosophy of education in which religion holds precedent over all else. These frustrations are not just attributed to adolescent behavior, but in the form of disappointment and resentment as a child whose education was defeated. I feel this way

because as an educator myself, my work experience in education has taught me to recognize how components of behavior and human activity are affected by the interplay between social structure and individual behavior. Each student enters the classroom with a unique and valuable set of life experiences, and my goal is to use the tools of sociology to help students better understand their lives and the larger social context in which they live. Teaching requires openness to change. Therefore, I continually examine my teaching strategies and techniques and experiment with ways to become a more effective teacher by integrating technology (e.g. student response systems), adapting practices to address the needs of an increasingly diverse student body, (e.g. student generated syllabi), understanding different learning styles, and incorporating various assessment and evaluation strategies. I strive to create an active, collaborative learning environment filled with curiosity and inquiry in which all participants are both teachers and learners. Addressing these curiosity gaps motivates students to discover knowledge rather than remaining as passive recipients. My mother, being an elementary teacher, does not share these same pedagogical approaches or values. She was awarded her B.Ed. degree under the direction of a traditional and an authoritative teaching style. It is very difficult to reconcile with her ulterior motives when the types of teaching styles are portrayed from her traditional and existent motives in comparison to my innovative and new-changing strategies.

Socialization

Oldenburg (2010) states that socialization can come from many different outlets. These outlets include sports, church groups, playing at the park, and real-world experiences. Children who are homeschooled have a wider variety of socialization

experiences offered. Oldenburg believes that when compared to children enrolled in traditional schools, homeschoolers have more positive interactions with others than children who are enrolled in public school. According to Emms (2008), typically, homeschooled children have higher moral values, greater maturity, and are more capable in communication. This comes from socializing with a variety of ages and alternate experiences than that of the public schools, where children are surrounded by other children of the same age for most of the day. Emms (2008) also believes that "These homeschooled children are also found to have more positive than negative interactions with peers" (p. 5).

According to Gaither (2009), many families who homeschool enroll their children in a variety of activities, such as dance, fine arts, music or sports. Homeschooling families also create co-ops with other homeschool families, join sports teams, bands, and clubs or church groups to socialize and play together. Gaither (2008) also mentions that public school districts commonly have programs that allow students to attend part time and be homeschooled the rest of the time. This allows the students who are homeschooled to participate in extracurricular

activities through the school or school district without having to attend full time.

As mentioned by Romanowski (2006), there is often a concern that homeschooled children are not socialized normally. As depicted from my narrative, I explain how I was a very outgoing child and was encouraged by my parents to make friends around the neighborhood as well as in extracurricular activities. When I entered high school and even post-secondary education, I was often approached with a dumfound expression when people replied with: "You were homeschooled? Wow, I would have never

guessed." While homeschoolers are socialized differently as they do not interact solely with same-age peers, several measures show that homeschoolers have similar social skills and equal numbers of friends as traditionally schooled students do (Dumas et al., 2010; Reavis & Zakriski, 2005; Saunders, 2006).

As a child, I can remember my mother always taking us to the mall or grocery store with her. We would assist her with the shopping and make a game out of it. This exercise allowed us to practice our behavioral tendencies with other adults besides my parents. During the time of building our current home, we were exposed to various amounts of interaction with people of different ages, ethnic backgrounds, and career motives. We learned the fundamentals of building a house and got to see the process of modernization from start to finish. How many children can say they have witnessed this first hand? It was through these experiences that I learned how to function effectively as a member of society.

My siblings and I met friends through extracurricular activities, through social and religious homeschooling groups and through church. Every first Friday of the month, all of the homeschoolers in the Windsor-Essex surrounding area would get together for mass in the morning with a playdate to follow up in the afternoon. It was a chance for the mothers to support and console one another through this process, while the children were able to mingle with other children their age besides their own siblings. This aligns with Ray's (2013) view that "It appears that adults who were home educated tend to be entrepreneurial, independent minded, non-statist. … The home educated may be more civically engaged and more participatory in community service than the general public" (p. 336). My personal narrative shared how I was interacting with neighborhood children

after school and that I was involved in extracurricular activities as well as competitive sports. With regards to the advantages of homeschooling in terms of meeting social needs of their children, the ability to control the environment and social interactions that children may become involved in was a theme in my narrative. During my elementary years, my parents were in control of who were our friends. I was never allowed to visit peoples' houses, engage in sleepovers, or visit places. Children around the neighborhood were always invited to our home, where we could be controlled and monitored by my parents.

A typical concern regarding homeschoolers is the perception that homeschoolers lack regular social interaction and are less capable socially as a result (Gathercole, 2007). In fact, homeschooled students are as socially capable as traditionally schooled students (Bolle-Brummond & Wessel, 2012; Pool, 2010; Riley, 2015; Saunders, 2006). In addition, homeschooled students are similar in measures of self-esteem and self-efficacy (Alvord, 2003; Drenovsky & Cohen, 2012). I found myself to be as socially capable in university as my traditionally schooled counterparts. I no longer had my parents' approval of who were my friends. I felt responsible for making my own decisions for when the time came for who made a positive impact on my life and who did not. I made friends in the dorms from out of town who were in my classes, in extracurricular activities when playing intramural soccer for the university, through orientation, volunteering for different organizations and at work. I found making friends was an easy task for me because I had similar interests to those around me. I played sports, I listened to music, I played an instrument, and I had a part-time job. I cannot explain how exactly

these friendships formed, but the friends I have made along my educational journey have continued to be representatives in my life to this present day.

Theme 2: Curriculum options

Traditionally, reasons for homeschooling included teaching personal family values and beliefs, accomplishing more academically, individualizing curriculum and learning environment, and enhancing family relationships (Ray, 2011a). The one-on-one instructional setting provided in most home school families allows for adjustments in curriculum and is credited with the success of many home schooled students, due to engaging in high interest activities (Butler, 2000; Klicka, 1995b; Romanowski, 2001). Therefore, parents have freedom to select a teaching style and curriculum that meets their educational and personal objectives (Butler, 2000). Webb (1996; 1999) found that some parents choose to homeschool in order to have a more flexible schedule. They enjoy being able to start the school day late, end it early and go on family vacations during the school year.

Parents of homeschooled students were surveyed to find out what type of curriculum they used for homeschooling their children. The result was that most of the parents used a curriculum they purchased through a homeschooling catalog, other retailers, and the public library. Approximately half of homeschooled students used curriculum or books from homeschooling organizations. Other sources were obtained from a church, synagogue or other religious institution or a public school (Princiotta, Beilic, & Champion, 2006). According to Brian Ray from the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI), parents and their children decided to home school for more than one reason, with the most common reasons being the ability to customize or

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individualize the curriculum, use pedagogical approaches other than those in typical

institutional schools, and provide a safer environment for children and youth (Ray,

2011b). Dahlquist (2005) also found that the freedom to choose the curriculum was an

important reason in families' choice to homeschool.

Regulation

Homeschooling can be an effective educational alternative to public school to

reach each student, but students react to homeschooling in different ways; some view it

as a positive experience, while others as a negative one (Rothermel, 2011). Similarly,

some homeschooling families practice formal learning with a strict schedule, while others

allow for their child to direct the learning (Gray & Riley, 2013). Despite the benefits

homeschooling parents find in using a curriculum that aligns with their beliefs and values

(Bolle, Wessel, Mulvihill, 2007; Collom, 2005; Cooper & Sureau, 2007; Green &

Hoover-Dempsey, 2007; Lubienski et al., 2013; Ray, 2000), literature reports that

homeschooling should be more regulated to ensure that children are being equipped to be

engaged citizens (Reich, 2005, p. 5).

My siblings and I were exposed to only the values of my parents. Instilling family

values through home education can be seen as a form of indoctrination. Reich (2005)

warns about this by saying that homeschooled students are often sheltered and isolated

from other beliefs because of their teaching-learning style. Reich also emphasizes that

homeschooling parents have control over their child's education by saying:

"Homeschooling is the education of children under the supervision of parents. In no other

educational setting are parents as able to control and direct all aspects of education, for in

home schools they are responsible for determining not only what children are taught, but

when, how, and with whom children are taught" (p. 8).

Independent learning

Independent learning was a highly dependent approach I was encouraged to adhere to as a child, as well as transform it into a skill that would be prioritized in the later years of adulthood. One definition of the independent learner suggests that: "Takes responsibility for their learning … [and] manages their time effectively" (Mckendry & Boyd, 2014, p. 220). I was encouraged to take responsibility for my own learning and set a leadership example to my younger siblings. The older I became, the more responsibilities were introduced, and the more satisfying my conscious become knowing that I was granted this core value which would one day become a teaching tool of my own. The age difference in my siblings and I resulted in a lot of independent study work. Even though we were expected to help each other throughout the process of homeschooling, our bond become closer through play-based learning as opposed to independent learning. I preferred to work alone and complete my homework on my own time and at my own speed. This would result in more time to engage in the activities that interested in me, and would make for more free time to assist my mother in the household responsibilities. I include that what I learned in my free time studies, motivated me to pursue my own interests independently from what my parents wanted. Research that has shown that as children turn into adolescents who then turn into young adults, they desire an increased level of independence from parents in all aspects of their lives, including career-related aspects (Taylor, 2010). Therefore, it is possible that an increasing need for independence facilitates a decreasing desire to comply with the wishes of the parents.

As I explained, independent learning was an imperative skill that was required

and expected in homeschooling as well as in high school, aligning with Mckendry and Boyd's (2014) view that "The need for, and desirability of, independent learning is likely to remain strong within higher education" (p. 216). Throughout elementary school, I was expected to take on an independent role as the eldest child in the family. Over time, I learned how to effectively manage my time, organize my thoughts, take responsibility for my own actions, and be motivated to ask the deeper questions about my educational journey. These skills were highly recommended in postsecondary education. However, I was only able to choose my own electives and remained authorized to comply to my mandatory courses to graduate from my specific program of study. There were opportunities where students were granted the option of choosing their own topic of interest to present or write about. This ensured the skill of independent learning at an all-time high because of the professor's leniency. After returning home from school, or even contemplating about a topic that was discussed with other people in casual conversation, I always found it reassuring to go home and research the topic on my own and research related information that would inspire me to dig deeper in asking unanswered questions that were unfamiliar to me. The adaptation of smart phones and technology has greatly assisted in this learning process. My personal stories in my narrative explored how my experiences with independent learning aligns with literature on the topic. It identified how independent learning was a valuable approach for me throughout my educational years and continues to be in the present day.

Theme 3: Opting out of traditional schooling

Reasons for families to opt out of traditional schooling and concentrate on homeschooling differentiates according to each participating family. Some may choose

this alternative form of education as a means of religious concerns, family structure, family/social dynamics or personal choices.

While there are several perspectives of parents who choose to homeschool, including religious reasons, some homeschool for the educational control (Romanowski, 2006). Dumas, Gates, and Schwarzer (2010) believed that the "flexibility in approach, materials, pacing, scheduling and activities" are benefits above traditional schools and are possible reasons for parents to homeschool, allowing parents to exercise more management over their child's education (p. 72). Romanowski (2006) also believed parents are pursuing educational superiority over public education by providing homeschooling. Meanwhile, Merry and Karsten (2010) stated that homeschooling should be considered an "expression of parental liberty" (p. 498).

Family, cultural and social pressures

Family, friends, and school have been found to play a strong role in the socialization and development of children and adolescents (Gergen & Gergen, 1992). Of these three social influences, the family is usually the most powerful. An immediate family usually contains at least one parent or caregiver, and may also contain one or more siblings. Larger family systems can also include grandparents, cousins, or other relatives. Of these family members, parents have been shown to have the most influence on the development of offspring (Bryant, Zvonkovic, & Reynolds, 2006).

It is apparent from my narrative that my parents did not have a single reason for opting out of traditional schooling. I mentioned in my narrative that my mother has always explained to people that she chose to homeschool because she did not want her children enrolled in a split classroom, nor did she believe her children would receive

better influences from public school children than compared to at home, alongside their siblings. It was only recently that my mother admitted that one of the reasons she chose to homeschool was because her older siblings had pressured her into homeschooling. My mother explained that her older siblings had bragged about how flexible, nurturing, relaxing, and family-oriented homeschooling proved to be. She then decided to take a chance and begin to homeschool her children, realizing that if her siblings could successfully homeschool why would she not be able to do so? Similar to her immediate family, she was a stay at home mother with a husband who made decent money and was considered white, middle class in society.

Coleman (1998) identified that in every family there are financial, human, and social capital, which are used and developed by members of the family. Parenting occurs through theses avenues of capital. Financial capital refers to wealth, whereas human capital refers to skills and capabilities of the child that parents encourage or discourage. Social capital refers to social functions between individuals, which include expectations, norms, sanctions, trustworthiness, and social structures within and outside the family that enhance child development (Bryant, Zvonkovic, & Reynolds, 2006). This capital and the broader social environment form a basis for a child's future plans (Law, 1982).

Within the area of child development, parenting literature is mainly limited to the discussion of parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, neglectful), which reflect aspects of parental behavior (i.e., warmth, control, punishment styles, responsiveness, and neglect) (Park & Walton-Moss, 2012). Controlling behavior usually reflects familial norms and social rules (Perez & Cumsille, 2012). Within the domain of behavioral control are two components: discipline and monitoring. Monitoring refers to

parental awareness and supervision used to track down a child's activities and whereabouts. Discipline, however, encompasses strategies to enforce rules and foster values (Cummings, Davies, & Campbell, 2000) and is embedded in literature review mentioned parenting styles (e.g., authoritarian, authoritative, permissive).

Religious concerns

Many homeschooling parents make their homeschooling decision based on religious reasons (Apple, 2006; Webb, 1996,1998; Isenberg, 2007; Kunzman, 2010; Montes, 2006; Spiegler, 2010). The most prominent theme that emerges from my personal narrative is religious education and how it influenced my everyday life. My mother chose to use a specific curriculum to guide my learning. It was called the "The Seton Home Study School: A Catholic School Under the Bishop of Arlington, VA" and my siblings and I were instructed to follow that curriculum and nothing else. Not only did this curriculum include religion and literacy studies, but it was applied to most subjects. I can remember calculating my multiplication tables or using flash cards that had the names of various saints on them or the number of rosaries or "types of sins" used as the numbers to the math problems or as spelling words. My family then, was much more actively involved in the church compared to now, but we still attend weekend mass as a family. As the narrative explains, the teachings and sacrifices that the Catholic faith promotes, was deeply connected to the core family values that my parents instilled. As children, and even now as competent adults, it is frowned upon and discouraged to speak about other religions and their influences in family discussions.

The first time I was exposed to other religions and cultures was in Grade 11 Religion in high school where it highly emphasized various world religions. Being

exposed to this assisted in me forming my own opinions about the surrounding world and keeping an open mind. Although my parents did not see this fit, it was my decision to pursue and formulate my own opinions and my own research.

Religion was integrated into every aspect of our learning. Not only was religion considered an important subject in homeschooling, it was considered a lifestyle to lead. Some critics of homeschooling have characterized the homeschooling population as almost cult-like in their practices, mostly concerned with keeping their offspring from experiencing "the real world" in order to promote the religious belief system of the homeschooling parents. According to Kunzman (2010), "Stereotypes of religious homeschooling often involve parents creating brainwashed automatons, unable to think for themselves and either sequestered from society or determined to impose their worldview on others" (p. 26). The curriculum my parents endorsed was very biased because it was Seton Curriculum. My narrative also explains how my family is very traditional and faith oriented. Because of this outlook, my parents and their opinions on different religions besides their own are very biased. After receiving credit for my Grade 11 Religion course, I began to formulate and construct my own beliefs and opinions about my family's religion. I do not agree with every detail and belief the Catholic faith instructs and holds true. Growing up in a strict, Catholic environment, I have tried to reduce this bias my family represents and encourage them to remain open-minded and forgiving. However, this has proved to be challenging and arguably, a lost cause. My learning experience may have possibly been different considering had I attended a traditional elementary school and would be exposed to these different values and opinions on a regular basis. Unfortunately, for me, being homeschooled did not offer a

me or my siblings an emotional outlet. There is no escape route. I was demanded to become the person my parents saw fit and if I strayed, I would potentially suffer the threats of my parents. It is because of these threats and punishments from my parents, that I portray the the emotions of resentment, hostility, and confusion.

Parental control/centrality of the family

Some reports suggest that parents choose to homeschool to provide more religious or moral instruction, but also increasingly because parents want to provide a safer environment for their adolescents where they will be less likely to be exposed to sex, drugs and violence and to strengthen parent–child bonds (Kunzman and Gaither, 2013; Ray, 2011). Indeed, as poor parental supervision and monitoring and greater exposure to substance using friends have been linked to substance use among adolescents (Kiesner et al., 2010), greater levels of parental involvement and supervision and more control over peer groups and contexts in which peers socialize could account for the lower access and use of substances among homeschooled youth compared to conventionally schooled youth. In fact, Groover and Endsley (1988) found homeschooled parents motivated to homeschool by personal beliefs were more authoritarian and restrictive of children's television watching than parents of non-homeschooled children.

Kunzman (2010) believes that homeschoolers and religious fundamentalists hold a restriction to experts in certain fields of study and their institutions. He argues that the ultimate site of resistance to contemporary culture is the family. The emphasis of this is that most homeschoolers and non-homeschooling parents, should have authority over the education of their children, with little or no state regulation (Carper & Ray, 2002; Kunzman, 2009; Martinez, 2009; Moss, 1995; Van Galen, 1987). My parents in

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particular are firm believers of this theory. They believe that along with their genetic makeup and biology, God granted them a child and for that reason, they are to be the child's first teachers. According to Kunzman (2010), "Homeschooling is a shaping not only of intellect but- even more crucially- of character. This means more than just moral choices of right and wrong; character is developed through the inculcation of an overarching Christian worldview that guides those moral choices" (p. 23).

While most parents strive to put their child's interests above their own, and to protect their children in a variety of ways, my conservative Catholic parents view contemporary culture as a threat to these values that they wish to impart on their children (Apple, 2005; McDannell, 1995; Stevens, 2001). Mothers, in particular, strive to be deeply engaged in the day-to-day lives of their children (Lois, 2009). These parents share a fierce determination to instill Christian character in their children, a process that entails protecting them from the corrupting influences of broader society. As one homeschool mother remarked, "Why would you want to send your child away for the majority of the day and let someone else's ideas and personality be placed in your child every day? I'm her parent. God gave her to me to form and to raise, so I feel that's my responsibility" (Kunzman, 2009, p.180). One obvious way in which religious parents use homeschooling to shape their children's character is by using curricula infused with their faith convictions. For religious conservatives, the intellectual life only finds meaning when it aligns with religious truth. In the eyes of fundamentalists, the sanctity of sacred scriptures trumps all human sources of knowledge and understanding. According to my mother, this involves putting priests and the Pope at the highest pedestal and if the belief or truth does not coincide with what a priest speaks of or what the bible addresses, then it remains

dishonest. If my siblings and I challenge my parents on these "beliefs," my mother responds by saying: "the most original source is always the word of God and it is only found at church when spoken by a priest."

Homeschooling offers religious parents the opportunity to resist the influence of secular culture on their families (Kunzman, 2010). Furthermore, homeschooling offers pedagogical flexibility which in turn, allows a specific educational environment especially suitable for parents to cultivate a particular set of values and commitments in their children. For my family, as each of us entered the public school system, we were stereotyped. It was assumed that my parents had brainwashed us as persons who were unable to think for ourselves and would assume the role of a "religious preacher" unto others. As Kunzman (2010), addresses this, he explains that all homeschooling parents are faced with challenging questions: "What are the central purposes of education? What kind of person do I want my child to become? How can I make their learning experience the best it can be?" (p. 26). With homeschooling becoming a popular modern phenomenon, teachers and parents from both sectors of the educational system need to form an alliance on answering these questions. Both groups require the intention of seeking possibilities for compromise and accommodation on how religious conservatives and public educators can come forward and reconcile on pedagogical strategies while abandoning their deeply held identities and beliefs.

Summary

From the themes and subthemes identified in the narrative, it is evident that this, along with the relevant literature, highlighted the overall research question guiding this autoethnography: What can be uncovered through my lived experiences as a

homeschooled child, specifically with respect to the themes of an essentialism educational philosophy and learning approaches that optimize and limit my intellectual and social growth. The answer is simple. For my siblings and I, these approaches produced resentment, negativity, anger, confusion and disappointment in our parents. Of course regrets exist. My mother regrets not putting us into the public school system when she returned back to teaching, just like we as her children regret not attending school and being exposed to third party viewpoints to encourage our critical thinking. I do not however, take homeschooling for granted. It was an important factor in my life. It helped to build the person I am today and for that, I am truly grateful. I am proud that I could eventually disengage from my parents' secular views, and begin to formulate my own beliefs. I am no longer the passive, timid, closed-minded high school student for which I used to be. I will say, that homeschooling is an effective practice. There is no doubt that private education serves an individual for the positive. It is however, a negative aspect if an essentialism philosophy of education and authoritarian teaching style is highly emphasized in the child's life. The question is not whether homeschooling is effective, but how is it effective and distributed among the family life? Exploring these themes allowed for a critique on my narrative.

Implications and recommendations

This autoethnography has implications for homeschoolers, homeschooling parents, educators, researchers, and policymakers. Parents and homeschooling children will be happy to know that as a whole, I found my homeschooling experience both positive and negative. I admit that I am a socially capable person, academically skilled, self-motivated to learn, family-oriented, and independent.

It is alarming for me that my parents as well as my extended homeschooling family felt they could provide a better education at home and felt that the learning environment in schools is poor. For parents to feel so disengaged from and distrustful of the quality of traditional schooling that they would undertake the task of educating their own children, this should cause public educators to reevaluate both their programs and their community involvement levels. I recommend that schools need to work harder to communicate with existing parents as well as with potential parents to provide more opportunities for meaning-making inputs into the educational system.

The results from this qualitative inquiry unfold that homeschooling is a challenging, yet fulfilling experience for both homeschooled children and homeschooling parents. Based off of my experiences, parents must prioritize curriculum and implement teaching styles to better meet their children's needs as potential citizens. In my narrative I explain how the essentialism educational philosophy did not meet my needs and how this affected me as an emerging adult. In order to combat Reich's (2002) concerns that children have a say in their education, homeschooling parents should encourage children to discuss their educational goals and career plans. Ray (2000) and van Schalkwyk and Bouwer (2011) suggest that parents plan a curriculum that addresses their student's abilities and styles in order to be effective. Parents may want to consider testing their children regularly to determine whether homeschooling is meeting their children's academic goals.

Like my homeschooling family, some homeschooled students eventually join traditional schools. A way that public schools could demonstrate increased invitations to homeschoolers would be to prepare a transition program to assist in the entry of

homeschoolers. Research about student reintroduction into public schools identifies areas

of adjustment to be social acquaintances, experience with conventional school

organizations and facing challenges to personal beliefs and values (Romanowski, 2002).

In my narrative, I included how the socialization process and the transition from

elementary to high school was easier than expected because I was encouraged to make

friends on extracurricular activities and in our neighborhood. According to Romanowski

(2002), he believed that these relationships could potentially ease a student's transition.

Traditional schools can make this a reality by attempting to place previously

homeschooled students with known peers. To facilitate the transition from

homeschooling to traditional schooling, parents and school officials need to discuss and

teach students about school routines, rules, and procedures. This would have proved to be

very helpful when I entered high school because I had limited knowledge and was

unaware of what occurred in conventional schooling on a daily basis. I would also

propose a plan to provide supportive student services to give homeschoolers assistance

with new situations that may challenge their beliefs and values. An introduction plan

could be a tool for school officials to develop to indicate their openness to students after

having experienced homeschooling.

Although not mentioned in my narrative, I am aware that several homeschooling

families in the Windsor-Essex County are preparing for admission to a post-secondary

institution. Because homeschooling is a continuous growing educational choice, I would

suggest that admission offices from different colleges or universities improve their

assessments of the ways in which homeschooled applicants are treated and reviewed. I

can imagine it must be frustrating and difficult for those homeschooled students who are

in the process of planning out their future careers and applying to different institutions. This would be especially difficult for those people living in the province of Ontario because under provincial regulations, it is not required for homeschooling families to be registered with the Ministry of Education nor governing agencies. That being said, how would post-secondary institutions expect homeschooling students to have report cards or other developmental evaluations which conclude the student's academic direction and progress. As a homeschooled student, your parent or primary teacher is responsible for creating your high school transcript and for sending it to your schools of admission. Many of the materials in a homeschooled student's application will be non-traditional, and this can help to distinguish them from mainstream applicants. Rather than serving as a limitation, this is their chance to shine and highlight the accomplishments that make them distinctive and unique. It is important for universities and colleges to acknowledge these distinctions and actively recruit these students in welcoming them to their future career orientations. According to Wilhelm and Firmin (2009), "Although public universities at one time viewed high school graduates from home schools with suspicion, Wasley (2007) has indicated that now the pendulum has swung in the opposite direction, and homeschooled students generally are in high demand. Generally, homeschooled applicants achieve above average ACT and SAT scores and aptly complete their college degrees" (p. 304). As Wilhelm and Firmin have noted, homeschoolers have been gaining admission to colleges and universities with higher than average ACT and SAT scores and graduating from college with little difficulty. This shift in perspective points to the importance not only of the increased academic performance among homeschoolers but also the important role of perceptions about homeschooling among members of the

educational community, students, and their parents. The homeschooling movement could gain more credibility if universities were willing to track their progress as a separate group of students.

The last recommendation for further research is to use different methodologies or designs. By taking a qualitative approach, I believe that the voices of future homeschooling participants reflecting on their experiences will unearth the engaging and interesting findings related to the challenges and successes associated with this unique schooling context. The study's intention should focus on exploring the beliefs and every day experiences of children and parents who were homeschooled and to describe both the child's and the parents' perceptions of why homeschooling was a viable option for the child's education. According to Houser (2008), "A case study approach can illustrate life-changing events by giving them meaning and creating understanding about the participant's experience. These strategies can result in a great depth of understanding about the phenomenon under study" (p. 339). According to Creswell (2003), "…case studies are appropriate when researchers intend to explore in depth programs, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals" (p. 15). The advantages of the qualitative case study method are that (a) the participants can provide their own experiences and information regarding the topic of homeschooling; (b) the researcher has flexibility and a degree of control over the line of questioning during the semi-structured interview process; and (c) the participants may provide illuminating and specific answers to research questions, identify phenomena specific to homeschooling, and reflect on ways that homeschooling is perceived by them and others.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative autoethnography was to explore my educational journey of my experience as a homeschooled student, in determining appropriate homeschooling styles, curricula, and instructional strategies. All the while, I have been influenced and subjected under an authoritarian teaching style and an essentialism educational philosophy. By presenting and appraising the intentions and implementation of my homeschooling family, I also hope to provide further educational insights under the direction of an authoritarian and an essentialism educational approach. My objective is for readers to be aware that homebased education is also a social movement. It is both the result of and a contributing factor to the changing dynamics of religion, family, and politics. That being said, not every homeschooling individuals' experience with this educational approach is positive. My story told through my narrative, explains the many tensions, challenges, frustrations and possibilities that homeschooling can produce in a family.

The telling of my story allowed for my experiences to be shared and insights given into homeschooling. It also allowed me to reflect on my upbringing and the feelings that submerged when those memories are suppressed. Caine et al. (2013) note that "We see experience as lived in the midst, as always unfolding over time, in diverse social contexts and in place, and as co-composed in relation" (p. 575). Additionally, Polkinghorne (2007) discusses the validity of narratives, saying "The knowledge claims they (narrative researchers) produce are meant to be taken seriously by their readers" (p. 477). The narrative I included relates to the literature on homeschooling and the teaching styles and philosophies of education used by my mother, which provide an example of

how they were implemented in a homeschooling environment. My story is told truthfully, and I hope it has provided the reader with greater insight into my life as a homeschooled student.

The experiences that support and conflict with my reflections on homeschooling can be identified in my narrative. It is evident from the narrative that there was not one single reason to support why my parents chose to homeschool their children. The themes that were developed from reflections and the analysis of my individual narrative were provided in an outline and later discussed in detail with specific examples pulled from my narrative. I discussed my educational journey in relation to homeschooling literature which highlighted three key findings: a) this autoethnography provided an inside look at the concerns and issues of homeschooling when an authoritarian teaching style and essentialism philosophy of education is manifested, and b) curriculum options in my homeschooling education and c) the prominent reasons/motivations for opting out of traditional schooling.

Homeschooling offers researchers a unique opportunity. Parents are typically the first and most important agents of socialization in a child's life (Grusec & Davidov, 2007). With institutional schooling removed from the picture, socialization within the family can be viewed against a simpler, clearer background (Medlin, 2013). Recent research, like that reviewed earlier (Medlin, 2000), gives every indication that the socialization experiences homeschooled children receive are more than adequate. According to Blokhuis (2010), "In fact, some indicators such as the quality of friendships during childhood, infrequency of behavior problems during adolescence, openness to new experiences in college, civic involvement in adulthood, suggest that the kind of

socialization experiences homeschooled children receive may be more advantageous than those of children who attend conventional schools" (p. 216). We might learn much, therefore, by shifting the focus of homeschooling research from the outcomes of home education to the process itself. This includes how homeschooled children can reflect on their educational journey to how parents have shaped their children to become a part of the social world around them.

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