

A Profile of Homeschooling in South Dakota

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The authors conducted a statewide study to determine which factors influenced parents' decision making in electing to homeschool their children rather than send them to public school education in South Dakota. Analysis of data, using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations revealed that the most prevalent reasons for homeschooling in South Dakota were the opportunity for parents to strengthen their relationship with their children, religion, peer pressure, public schools not teaching American values, and not aiding in character development. The major reason why parents homeschooled their children was to strengthen their family relationship. The least prevalent factors were teacher salary, ridicule by peers, physical handicap, not getting along with teachers, and racial reasons.

KEYWORDS *homeschooling, education, study, South Dakota*

A PROFILE OF HOMESCHOOLING IN SOUTH DAKOTA: INTRODUCTION

Despite legislative problems, regulatory hurdles, media attacks, and other affronts to the homeschooling movement, homeschooling has continued to gain in popularity and strength (Gilmore, 2005). As Thomas Jefferson alleged, the price of freedom is vigilance (Gilmore, 2005). That has never been truer than in the case of freedom to homeschool in the United States

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in the 1980s and 1990s when battles were fought in courtrooms and state legislatures.

With homeschooling legalized in all 50 states by 1993 (Angelis, 2008), the homeschool population continued to grow at an estimated 2% to 8% per annum (Ray, 2011b). By the spring of 2010, the United States had 2.04 million home-educated children (Ray, 2011a)—an increase of more than 1 million children in 10 years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). Likewise, South Dakota continues to have an increase in the number of homeschooled students. According to the South Dakota Department of Education (2011), when data were recorded independently, the number of homeschoolers in the state in the 2006–2007 school year was 2,311. The number of homeschool students was 2,852 in the 2009–2010 school year, a 23.4% increase over a 4-year period.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine the factors that influence parents' decisions in electing to homeschool their children rather than enroll them in public or private school education in South Dakota. In addition, we examined demographic, curriculum, assessment, and distinctive characteristics of homeschool parents. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of parents who choose to homeschool their children in South Dakota?
2. What are the reasons parents choose to homeschool their children in South Dakota?
3. What are the psychographic characteristics of parents who choose to homeschool their children in South Dakota?
4. What types of curriculum and assessment are homeschool parents or representatives using in the state of South Dakota?

Literature Review

Yang and Kayaardi (2004) found that American-born parents, urban parents, Christian parents, and parents in intact families were more likely to homeschool their children than were their respective counterparts. Also, African Americans and other racial minorities were less likely than were Caucasians to homeschool their children.

Academic Achievement

According to Rudner (1999), homeschooled children live mostly in White nuclear families with moderate to high levels of education and income,

and they are likely to live in a household with an adult not in the labor force. Subsequently, the odds are that homeschooled children will score well above the national average across all grade levels and all subject areas. In the most in-depth nationwide study on home education across the United States, Dr. Brian Ray (2003) collected data on 5,402 students from 1,657 families. The findings revealed the following:

- Homeschool students’ academic achievement, on average, was significantly above that of public school students. In addition, the home educated did well even if their parents were not certified teachers and if the state did not highly regulate homeschooling.
- Home educators are able to be flexible and tailor or customize the curriculum to the needs of each child.
- In study after study, home-educated students score better, on average, than those in conventional state-run schools (see Table 1).
- For learning-disabled students, there are higher rates of academic engaged time in homeschooling and greater academic gains made by home-educated students.
- Parents, even without special education training, provided powerful instructional environments at home.

In contrast, Rudner (1999) stated, “I’m not saying it’s the homeschooling that’s doing a good job. Take the same kids, similar characteristics, and the same amount of parent involvement into the public schools and the kids would probably do just as well” (p. 5). Also, an additional concern by the critics of homeschooling pertains to “resources and the absence of the kind of equipment that might be needed to properly teach science, music, art, computer literacy, vocational education, and even physical education” (Hlebowitsch, 2001, p. 579). The authors, however, did not find research data to support Rudner’s or Hlebowitsch’s statements.

Socialization

Concerning socialization for homeschool students, many people who consider the issue of parents teaching their children at home wonder about socialization. Shyers (as cited in Bunday, 1999), conducted research on self-esteem for his thesis, *Comparison of Social Adjustment Between Home*

TABLE 1 Home-Educated vs. Conventional State-Run Schools in Academics

	Reading	Language	Math
Public schools	50	50	50
Home education	65–80	65–80	65–80

and Traditionally Schooled Students. He measured the self-esteem of 70 homeschooled 8–10-year-old children and compared them with same-age traditionally schooled group. On the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, a frequently used measure of self-esteem, no difference was found between the two groups (Shyers, as cited in Bunday, 1999). In support of Shyer's finding, Smedley (as cited in Bunday, 1999), who completed master's-degree research, matched children by relevant demographic characteristics. Using the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales, which evaluate communication skills, socialization, and daily living skills, Smedley found that the homeschooled children were more mature according to the scoring rubrics of the Vineland scales, scoring in the 84th percentile, while the public school children scored in the 27th percentile.

The aforementioned findings put to rest the claim by homeschool detractors who believe that there is no substitute for group socialization that occurs in a public school setting. They believe that homeschooled children miss out on the interaction with their public school counterparts regarding different viewpoints, lifestyles, and political and religious orientations. Also, "they are less likely to find face-to-face engagements across racial, economic, and ethnic lines" (Hlebowitsch, 2001, p. 579).

Reasons for Homeschooling

In centuries past, homeschooling was more the norm than the exception. For example, during the 17th and 18th centuries, home tutors and parents were the educators available. However, it was during the 1960s that homeschooling became a true movement, and as the president of the National Home Education Research Institute in Salem, Oregon, declared, "It wasn't until the mid-1980s when Christians really exploded on the scene" (Hardy 2001, p. 16). Advocates of homeschooling point out that 11 U.S. presidents were homeschooled (Hardy, 2001). Abraham Lincoln, for example, had a short interval of time as a formal student. Woodrow Wilson had no early education, but he had contact with cultivated minds and constant instruction by parents. Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison, and Eli Whitney are a few of the names that homeschoolers cite as well. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's father devoted his time to his son's general and musical education. Louis Armstrong grew up in poverty and was homeschooled by default. William F. Buckley, Jr., a homeschooler, was the editor of the highly respected magazine, *National Review*, and served for decades as a witty and respected voice of conservatism (Dobson, 2000).

Researchers have identified several reasons that families choose to homeschool their children. For example, Romanowski (2001) found that parents have specific beliefs, values, and skills that they want their children to learn and embrace. The U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics (2008) found that the three major reasons selected

by homeschool parents of more than two thirds of the students were as follows:

1. A concern about the school environment (88%)
2. A desire to provide religious or moral instruction (83%)
3. Dissatisfaction with the academic instruction (73%)

Other reasons were as follows:

4. A dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools (73%)
5. Nontraditional approach to child's education (65%)
6. Family time, finances, travel, and distance (32%)
7. Special needs (needs other than a physical or mental health problem that the parent feels the school cannot or will not meet; 29%)
8. Child has a physical or mental health problem (16%)

In a survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics (2008) regarding parental choice for homeschooling, students were considered homeschooled if their parents reported them as being schooled at home and their part-time enrollment did not exceed 25 hours attending a public or private school. Students who were schooled at home primarily because of a temporary illness were not included as homeschoolers.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Descriptive research methods were used to acquire information about parents who homeschool their children. A survey instrument was administered to a convenience sample of homeschool parents or parent representatives to collect data that were used to answer the research questions for this study. The resulting data were analyzed and used to describe the demographic characteristics, psychographic characteristics, curriculum and assessment, and the reasons parents choose to homeschool their children.

Population and Sample

This study included a convenience sample of parents or parent representatives of homeschooled children in South Dakota. The names and mailing addresses of 217 parents or parent representatives were obtained from selected South Dakota homeschool associations.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument, developed by Dr. Katherine Meink (2004) for her study on homeschooling in Nebraska and used with permission for this study, was divided into four major sections and analyzed according to those sections. The four major sections of the questionnaire were (a) basic background, (b) reasons that parents choose to homeschool their children, (c) psychographic and demographic background, and (d) information that pertained to their own homeschooling program.

Section 1 contained 13 multiple-choice questions pertaining to the background of each of the homeschool families. Section 2 had 21 items rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The eight multiple-choice items in Section 3 contained information related to psychographic and demographic profiles of the families of homeschoolers. Section 4 provided 21 multiple-choice responses for additional information about the homeschool program (i.e., main educator, preparation of material for teaching, and hours per day in formal instruction, among others).

Data Collection

Several South Dakota homeschool associations were contacted regarding dissemination of the survey. One organization provided names and addresses and four associations offered to mail the surveys to their association members. A sampling of 217 homeschooled families received a survey with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study.

The cover letter assured each participant that all of the information provided would be strictly confidential. A brief description of the study and the importance of the study were addressed. Participants were encouraged to return the questionnaire in the stamped, self-addressed envelope provided. A summary of the results of the study was made available to the participants upon request.

A cover letter, questionnaire, and a self-addressed envelope were mailed to homeschool parents whose names were provided through one homeschool association. Additional cover letters, questionnaires, and self-addressed envelopes were mailed to contact individuals for other homeschool associations. Each parent or parent representative was asked to respond within 15 days.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the completed survey instruments were tabulated and analyzed to respond to the research questions posed for this study. Descriptive analyses including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were applied. We used SPSS to tabulate and analyze the Likert-type items.

The first research question, regarding the demographic characteristics of parents who homeschool their children, was answered by calculating frequencies and percentages of the survey responses. The second research question regarding the reasons parents chose to homeschool their children was answered using means and standard deviations to determine why they chose to homeschool their children. The third and fourth questions referencing the psychographic characteristics of parents who homeschool their children and distinctive characteristics of homeschooling were answered by using frequencies and percentages of the survey questions.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The results of data analyses and findings of the factors that influenced parents' decision making in electing to homeschool their children rather than expose them to public school education in South Dakota are provided in this section. This subdivision includes questions regarding demographics, reasons parents choose to homeschool, psychographic characteristics, and characteristics of homeschool programs.

Demographic Characteristics of South Dakota Homeschool Parents

The demographic characteristics data (see Table 2) showed that 88.5% of the homeschool respondents currently operated a homeschool and 76.8% homeschooled all of their children. Of the homeschooled families, 13% responded that some of their children attended public schools, whereas 8.7% responded that some of their children attended private school. Regarding the number of years respondents had been homeschooling their children, 50.7% homeschooled for more than 5 years, 14.5% for 3 years, 8.7% for 1 year, 7.2% each for 2 years and 4 years, and 1.4% for 5 years. In reference to parents' opinion concerning the attitude of public school officials toward homeschooling, 52.2% indicated an attitude of indifference, 24.6% were considered helpful, 14.5% were perceived as opposing homeschooling, and 2.9% were regarded as interfering with homeschooling.

Although state legislators were contacted by 52.2% of homeschool parents regarding homeschooling, only 27.5% perceived that the legislators were helpful. In addition, 10.1% of the respondents perceived that the state legislators had an opposing attitude. Concerning whether distance was a reason for homeschooling, 84.1% of the respondents indicated that it was not one of the reasons for homeschooling their children. Furthermore, 52.1% denoted that the distance to the nearest school was 0–3 miles; 15.9% specified 3–6 miles; 10.1% indicated 7–10 miles; and 8.7% denoted more than 10 miles.

TABLE 2 Demographic Characteristics of Homeschoolers ($N = 69$)

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Operate homeschool		
Yes	61	88.5
No	1	1.4
No response	7	10.1
Homeschool all children		
Yes	53	76.8
No	10	14.5
No response	6	8.7
Some attend public school		
No	54	78.3
Yes	9	13.0
No response	6	8.7
Some attend private school		
No	57	2.6
Yes	6	8.7
No response	6	8.7
Homeschooling (number of years)		
1	6	8.7
2	5	7.2
3	10	14.5
4	5	7.2
5	1	1.4
>5	35	50.7
No response	7	10.1
Attitude of public school officials		
Indifferent	36	52.2
Helpful	17	24.6
Opposing	10	14.5
Interfering	2	2.9
No response	4	5.7
Attitude of legislators		
Helpful	19	27.5
Indifferent	13	18.8
Opposing	7	10.1
No response	30	43.5
Distance a reason		
No	58	84.1
Yes	3	4.3
Yes and no	2	2.9
No response	6	8.7
Distance to school (miles)		
0–3	36	52.1
4–6	11	15.9
7–10	7	10.1
>10	6	8.7
No response	9	13.0

(Continued)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Child not challenged		
No	38	55.1
Yes	23	33.3
Yes and no	1	1.4
No response	7	10.1
Child special learning needs		
No	51	73.9
Yes	11	15.9
Yes and no	1	1.4
No response	6	8.7
Grade-level performance		
Above grade level	43	62.3
At grade level	21	30.4
Below grade level	7	10.1
No response	17	24.6

Regarding academic achievement, 33.3% of the responding homeschool parents perceived their children were not challenged academically in public or private schools. In addition, 15.9% of the homeschool parents revealed that their children had special learning needs. Furthermore, 62.3% of the homeschool parents pointed out that their children were performing above grade level; 30.4% achieved at grade level; and 10.1% disclosed that their children were achieving below grade level.

Reasons Parents Choose to Homeschool Their Children

In this segment, data are presented in response to the items for Research Question 2, "What are the reasons parents choose to homeschool their children in South Dakota?" Each of the 20 items in the survey used a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) to measure respondents' perceptions. The mean score for each item was computed as a numerical score from 1 to 5. Response mean scores at or above 3.50 indicated a high level of impact, mean scores between 3.40 and 2.60 were considered to have a moderate impact, while mean scores of 2.50 and below were calculated as having no impact.

The reasons why parents chose to homeschool their children are illustrated in Table 3. Homeschool parents indicated that the primary reason for homeschooling was to strengthen the relationship with their child ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 0.74$). In addition, parents reported a concern regarding religious freedom in public schools ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 0.99$). Regarding peer pressure ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.75$), homeschool parents believed peer pressure was too great in the public schools. They perceived that the public schools did not aid in character development

TABLE 3 Reasons Parents Choose to Homeschool Their Children

Item	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
21 Strengthen relationship with child	63	4.44	0.74
20 Cannot learn about God in public schools	63	4.41	0.99
17 Peer pressure is too great in public schools	63	4.40	0.75
22 Public schools do not aid in character development	63	4.08	1.10
27 Class size too large for individual attention	57	3.96	0.98
33 Public schools do not teach American values	60	3.83	1.10
24 Disappointed with academic emphasis	61	3.74	0.95
16 Too much competition and rivalry	62	3.65	0.94
23 Fear for the safety of child	63	3.59	0.99
31 Lack of discipline in public schools	63	3.49	0.26
30 Reasons other than religious	63	3.46	1.27
25 Child not motivated in public schools	54	3.33	0.85
26 Child denied religious freedom	54	3.24	1.08
19 Unpleasant experiences with administrators	60	2.95	1.19
15 Child has special needs	62	2.84	1.20
18 Child did not get along well with teachers	56	2.45	0.95
14 Teachers more interested in salary than students	63	2.44	0.76
28 Reason does not relate to public schools	62	2.44	1.15
32 Ridiculed by peers for dress preferences	56	2.41	1.13
29 Racial reasons	62	1.55	0.92

($M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.10$) and that class size was too large for individual attention ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.98$). According to data presented in Table 3, parents specified that public schools did not teach American values ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.10$), and they were disappointed with academic emphasis in the public schools ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.95$). Homeschool parents also felt that there was too much competition and rivalry ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.94$) between individual students in the public school and feared for the safety of their children ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.99$).

Factors that had moderate influence on parents' decision to homeschool their children was the lack of discipline in public schools ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.26$). Parents alleged that their children were denied religious freedom in the public schools ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.27$). Additional factors were a lack of motivation in the public schools ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 0.85$), denial of religious freedom ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 1.08$), unpleasant experiences with public school administrators ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.19$), and better care at home for special needs students ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 1.20$).

Factors that had little or no effect on parents who chose to homeschool their children related to children not getting along well with teachers ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 0.95$), teacher emphasis on salary rather than children ($M = 2.44$, $SD = 0.76$), and factors not relating to public schools ($M = 2.44$, $SD = 1.15$). Also, children were ridiculed by peers because of personal dress ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 1.13$); they did not homeschool for racial reasons ($M = 1.55$, $SD = 0.92$).

TABLE 4 Psychographic Characteristics of Homeschoolers ($N = 69$)

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Population of town or city		
>5,000 people	41	59.4
<5,000 people	21	30.4
No response	7	10.1
Marital status		
Married	59	85.5
Widowed	2	2.9
Separated	1	1.4
Single	0	0
Divorced	0	0
No response	7	10.1
Children in each grade		
K-2	43	62.3
3-5	40	58.0
6-8	32	46.4
9-12	22	31.9
No response	0	0
Attend religious services		
Weekly	58	84.1
Daily monthly	3	4.3
Monthly daily	2	2.9
Yearly	0	0
No response	6	8.7

Psychographic Characteristics of Homeschoolers

The psychographic characteristics are summarized in Table 4. The majority of the parents who homeschooled their children lived in a town or city with a population of more than 5,000 people (59.4%), were married (85.5%), and had a child in kindergarten, first grade, or second grade (62.3%). As shown in Table 4, homeschool families attended religious services at least once weekly (84.1%).

The top three religious affiliations, as shown in Table 5, were Catholic (26.2%), Christian (19.7%), and the Evangelical Free Church (13.1%). The religious affiliations mentioned the least were non-denominational (1.6%) and Pantheist Pagan (1.6%).

As shown in Table 6, women were the main educators for homeschooled children (73.9%). A small percentage (8.7%) indicated that men and women were the main educators in the home. The majority of parents who homeschooled their children did not have teacher certification (72.5%), although 15.9% of homeschool parents were certified teachers. A majority of the homeschool educators had a college education (53.6%). Of the respondents, 14 (20.3%) were high school graduates, and 10 (14.5%) had completed some graduate-level study.

TABLE 5 Religious Preference ($N = 61$)

Religion	<i>n</i>	%
Catholic	16	26.2
Christian	12	19.7
Evangelical Free	8	13.1
Protestant Reformed	5	8.2
Lutheran Missouri Synod	5	8.2
Unitarian Universalist	3	4.9
Protestant	3	4.9
Baptist	3	4.9
United Methodist	2	3.3
Pentecostal	2	3.3
Pantheist Pagan	1	1.6
Nondenominational	1	1.6

TABLE 6 Gender and Educational Levels of Homeschool Educator ($N = 69$)

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Main educator		
Female	51	73.9
Male	7	10.1
Female and male	6	8.7
No response	5	7.2
Certified teacher		
No	50	72.5
Yes	11	15.9
Yes and no	1	1.4
No response	7	10.1

Types of Curriculum and Assessment

For Research Question 4, concerning the types of curriculum and assessment used in homeschool programs, the majority (72.5%) of homeschool educators (see Table 7) used published curricula in teaching as opposed to preparing their own material, and 13% did not use published curriculum materials. Fifteen (21.7%) of the responding homeschool parents or representatives designed their own curriculum material. Christian school curriculum (49.3%) was the most frequently used curriculum, other curricula (33.3%), and the public school curriculum was used by 5.8%.

As shown in Table 8, 55.1% of homeschool parents had a copy of the South Dakota curriculum standards, and 44.9% followed the South Dakota curriculum standards. The majority of homeschool parents or representatives spent 4 (42%) to 6 (23.2%) hours daily in formal education. A small

TABLE 7 Types of Curriculum ($N = 69$)

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Use published curricula		
Yes	50	72.5
No	9	13.0
Yes and no	3	4.3
No response	7	10.1
Prepares own material		
No	44	63.8
Yes	15	21.7
Yes and no	2	2.9
No response	8	11.6

TABLE 8 Curriculum Standards ($N = 69$)

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Copy of standards		
Yes	38	55.1
No	24	34.8
No response	7	10.1
Do you follow the standards?		
Yes	31	44.9
No	28	40.6
No response	10	14.4

percentage (4.3%) spent more than 8 hours teaching their children in the homeschool setting.

As shown in Table 9, the majority of homeschool parents felt that they were not accountable to someone outside the home (53.6%). Those who did feel accountable to someone else indicated that they were accountable

TABLE 9 Accountability ($N = 69$)

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Homeschool accountable		
No	37	53.6
Yes	23	33.3
Yes and no	1	1.4
No response	8	11.6
Accountable to		
Local school official	9	13.0
Organization	4	5.8
Publisher of curriculum	2	2.9
Certified teacher	0	0
Other	10	14.5
No response	44	63.8

TABLE 10 Preference for Homeschooling ($N = 69$)

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Child preference		
Yes	57	82.6
No	2	2.9
No response	10	14.5

to local school officials, publisher of their curriculum, or homeschooling organizations.

According to parents who homeschooled their children (see Table 10), the majority (82.6%) reported that their children preferred homeschooling over attending public or private schools.

As shown in Table 11, parents of homeschooled children did not find it difficult to stay on a regular schedule (68.1%). They also reported using a combination of testing materials to measure the progress of their children. There were 13.0% who used tests from local school districts; however, some parents of homeschooled children used tests supplied by the curriculum publisher (36.2). In addition, 40.6% of the homeschool educators developed their own testing material and 66.7% used standardized tests. Of the respondents who used standardized tests, the majority used the California Achievement Test. Furthermore, 78.3% indicated that their homeschool was approved by state authorities.

The results of the survey, as shown in Table 12, indicated that parents of homeschool children used resources available to them. The public library was used most often (85.5%), followed by field trips (73.9%), technology (69.6%), audio visual equipment (68.1%), museums (53.6%), and guest

TABLE 11 Achievement Tests Used by Homeschool Families

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Testing material		
Standardized tests	46	66.7
Own method	28	40.6
Curriculum publisher	25	36.2
Local school districts	9	13.0
No response	0	0
Achievement tests		
California Achievement Test	31	44.9
Stanford	23	33.3
Iowa Test	10	14.5
Other	5	7.2
No response	0	0

Note. Percentages equal more than 100% because of multiple selections by the respondents and the frequency total equals more than 69 because of multiple responses.

TABLE 12 Resources Homeschool Children Use

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Resources		
Public library	59	85.5
Field trips	51	73.9
Technology	48	69.6
Audio/visual	47	68.1
Museums	37	53.6
Guest speakers	17	24.6
Own a computer		
Yes	63	91.3
No	6	8.7
No response	0	0

speakers (24.6%). A computer was owned by 91.3% of homeschool families. In addition, 89.9% indicated that they had Internet access, and 76.8% reported that the Internet was used for homeschooling. Percentages in Table 12 equal more than 100% and frequencies equal more than the total number of respondents because of multiple selections.

Social Interaction

The results of this study, as shown in Table 13, indicated that homeschool children engaged in social interaction with religious activities (84.1%), home educator groups (81.2%), neighborhood children (75.4%), local clubs (62.3%), and other types of group activities (44.9%).

As shown in Table 14, when parents were asked whether they would at some time enroll or reenroll their children in public or private schools, 63.8% indicated that they would not and 20.3% responded positively. In addition, the majority (73.9%) of homeschool parents indicated college as an educational goal for their children; 13.0% chose vocational education as a goal; 7.2% were not sure about an educational goal; 5.8% chose finishing high school as a goal; and 4.3% felt that attending business school was a goal for their children.

TABLE 13 Types of Social Interactions of Homeschool Families

Activity	<i>n</i>	%
Religious activities	58	84.1
Home educator groups	56	81.2
Neighborhood children	52	75.4
Local clubs	43	62.3
Other	31	44.9

TABLE 14 Educational Goals for Homeschool Students

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Enroll or reenroll child in public school		
No	44	63.8
Yes	14	20.3
Yes and no	1	1.4
No response	10	14.5
Educational goal for child		
College	51	73.9
Vocational	9	13.0
Not sure	5	7.2
High school	4	5.8
Business school	3	4.3

Note. Percentages equal more than 100% because of multiple selections by the respondents and the frequency total equals more than 69 because of multiple responses.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are based upon the data obtained from the study results and the statistical analysis.

1. The primary reasons for homeschooling were to strengthen relationships with children, public schools did not permit their children to learn about God, peer pressure, public schools not aiding in character development, and class size being too large.
2. Parents who homeschool their children were primarily married women, and they lived in cities or towns with populations of 5,000 people or more. Therefore, distance from school was not a major reason for homeschooling.
3. Homeschool families attended religious services at least one or more times a week.
4. A small percentage of the homeschool educators were certified teachers; the majority had a college education.
5. The majority of homeschool parents used a published Christian curriculum and used the California Achievement Test for assessment. The greater part of the parents had a copy of the South Dakota curriculum standards and many reported following the standards.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated homeschooling as an alternative for educating children in South Dakota. Even though the modern homeschool movement had a controversial beginning, it has continued to gain popularity nationwide

(Gilmore, 2005; Meink, 2004). The data showed that homeschooling has established itself as an alternative to regular school for families. Similarly, when data were first recorded independently in South Dakota, the number of homeschoolers in the state in the 2006–2007 school year was 2,311. In the 2009–2010 school year, the number of homeschool students was 2,852, a 23.4% increase over a 4-year period.

Yang (2005) found that American-born parents, urban parents, Christian parents, and parents in intact families were more likely to homeschool their children than were their respective counterparts. Likewise, homeschool families in this study lived in a city of 5,000 people or more with the female as the main educator. The data in this study revealed that the majority of homeschool parents were married. It also affirmed that the majority of homeschool parents educated their children in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade with numbers gradually declining as children advanced in age and grade level.

The U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2008) reported the following data regarding the reasons parents homeschool their children: (a) a concern about the school environment (88%); (b) a desire to provide religious or moral instruction (83%); (c) dissatisfaction with the academic instruction (73%); (d) a dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools (73%); (e) nontraditional approach to child's education (65%); (f) family time, finances, travel, and distance (32%); (g) special needs (needs other than a physical or mental health problem that the parent feels the school cannot or will not meet; 29%); and (h) child has a physical or mental health problem (16%). The present study revealed that the five major reasons parents in South Dakota chose to homeschool were (a) parents want to strengthen their relationship with their children, (b) religious reasons, (c) peer pressure, (d) dissatisfaction in character development in the public and private schools, and (e) large class size in the public schools. However, parents of homeschool children in South Dakota expressed a desire to communicate with educators in the public and private schools.

Homeschooling provides a valuable option for parents who desire an education unencumbered by the limitations in public schools (Fey, 2003). As well, homeschool families in this study believed that education is an ongoing process throughout the day and does not have a specific time frame for learning. The length of the school day reported by homeschool parents and parent representatives was 4–6 hours a day of formal instruction with continued teaching and learning in a variety of extracurricular activities.

To address the controversial issue of socialization, this study showed that homeschool children participated in homeschool support groups, religious activities, local clubs, and homeschool organizations. Lyman (1998, 2000) and Lines (2001) also found that homeschool children engaged in a

variety of activities outside the home. In addition, the data in this study revealed that most homeschooled families used the public libraries, museums, technology (computers and audio/visual material), field trips, and guest speakers as resources for learning. Studies by Lyman (1998, 2000) and Lines (2001) support this finding. They found that homeschooled children engaged in a variety of activities outside of the home.

Public and private schools in South Dakota use the Stanford Achievement Test; however, the majority of homeschool parents and parent representatives reported using the California Achievement Test. It would be beneficial for homeschool students and public and private school students to use the same assessment.

Homeschool parents and parent representatives perceived that communication with legislators and educational personnel could be improved. Also, parents of homeschool children believed collaboration would strengthen curriculum knowledge.

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