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ABSTRACT

"Hybrid homeschools" generally operate as formal schools 2–3 days per week. The rest of the week students are homeschooled. These entities therefore share some aspects of conventional schooling along with some aspects of homeschooling and are classified in a variety of ways by their states, local districts, and even their own administrations. Most hybrid homeschools around the nation tend to be private and religiously affiliated, though some public models have emerged. The purpose of this study was to better understand parents' stated preferences for choosing to enroll their children in a charter school that is organized as a hybrid homeschool network in southern California. An electronic survey was sent through the network's CEO to all enrolled families asking questions regarding demographics, stated values, and desired sources of information. The results of this survey find that these hybrid homeschool families are on average slightly more ethnically diverse, less wealthy, and less educated compared to private, religious hybrid homeschoolers, but are also more ethnically diverse, more wealthy, and more educated compared to their sponsoring school district. These families tend to place more value on individualized attention and the learning environment than on religion, safety, or formal academic issues when choosing a hybrid homeschool compared to their private, religious counterparts.

Introduction

"Hybrid homeschools," as institutions, tend to operate as physical schools 2–3 days per week. As schools, they enroll students, hire faculty, teach classes in group settings, and follow a specified curriculum (either published or created independently). The rest of the week, students work through their curriculum at home, with their families, and their experiences on these days look like those of students who are homeschooled. A "hybrid homeschooler," then, is usually described as a student whose schooling experience looks partially like that of a student at a brick-and-mortar school, and partially like that of a homeschool student. Some hybrid homeschool families consider themselves homeschoolers who simply go to a campus a few times a week. Others consider themselves private school students who are simply working from home a few days per week. Still others consider themselves to be in a different category from either group. The structure and level of rigidity varies by school. Some schools require students to follow detailed lesson plans written by their teachers, whereas others are much more flexible and rely on parents for curriculum and teaching on home days. Most hybrid homeschools around the nation tend to be private and religiously affiliated.

The purpose of this study was to better understand parents' reasons for choosing to enroll their children in a charter school that is organized as a hybrid homeschool network in southern California. This is a single charter school entity which operates multiple sites that are set up using a hybrid homeschool-style structure. Across the country, many hybrid homeschool parents, and certainly the founders of such schools, place a great deal of value on religion as their motivation for

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creating and patronizing these schools. This network then, as a public option, represents a particular and different form of the hybrid homeschool phenomenon, with a potentially very different set of families and family preferences.

To learn parents' stated preferences about why they chose this particular school model for their children, an electronic survey was sent through the network's central office to all enrolled families. This results of this survey address four questions:

(1) What are the demographic characteristics of families who choose to send their children to the sites in this charter school network?
(2) What do these parents say they value as part of this type of education?
(3) What types of information do these parents say they seek out and value as they make their decision about this school option?
(4) What types of schools did these families previously use?

Literature review

Homeschooling

Some specific context around homeschooling itself is beneficial in understanding hybrid home-schools. The diversification of choice – the introduction of new policies, technologies, and school models – in recent years has made classifying schooling models more difficult. This is certainly true of hybrid homeschools; as noted above, even families from different schools using the same structure disagree on how to define themselves. Relevant to this study, the state of California defines "Independent Study" as "…a different way of learning. In independent study, a student is guided by a teacher but usually does not take classes with other students every day. The student works independently." The California Department of Education continues, "The purpose of independent study is to provide an alternative education program and setting for students. Independent study programs are voluntary and use alternative instructional strategies that respond to individual student needs and learning styles." The flexibility of independent study programs makes it possible to serve a wide variety of students, enabling some students who otherwise might not graduate to stay in school. Students who enroll in independent study include students who have health problems, are parents, need to work, and are child actors or aspiring Olympic athletes. Additionally, independent study serves students who desire to accelerate or move more slowly through a course, or to make up a subject that they have missed in a traditional classroom (Independent Study).

This description bears some resemblance to the hybrid homeschools discussed here, though it is not a clear match. Some of the benefits of this model are noted by respondents to this study as will be shown below. But the definition above implies this approach as a sort of one-off alternative to an existing school, whereas hybrid homeschools (including the one in this study) typically are more focused in their efforts. California's definition above captures some surface similarities or aspects of hybrid homeschools, but not their essence.

The U.S. Department of Education (USED) also provides some definitions of various types of study outside of a structured school setting, including "home instruction," "home study," and "homeschooling." For example, USED defines *home instruction* so, "Instruction provided in the home, by educational personnel, for children with special needs (usually homebound or pre-school) or their parents". This is not a definition that matches hybrid homeschools (though it may be the case that such instruction does occur in this manner in some instances). Next, USED defines home study as "Studying done at home outside school hours, including work on school assignments, community projects, or individual problems". This is closer to the concept of hybrid homeschools but still does not quite capture the phenomenon, as it implies something more like homework, or extra school projects. Neither of these definitions completely represents the way hybrid homeschools operate or see themselves. USED defines *homeschooling* this way, "Provision

of compulsory education in the home as an alternative to traditional public/private schooling – often motivated by parental desire to exclude their children from the traditional school environment". Of the three USED definitions presented, this one most closely approaches the home-school aspect of the hybrid homeschool model. Some portion of hybrid homeschoolers' time occurs in a classroom setting, but that is also the case for many full-time homeschoolers who participate in cooperative groups. The second clause of this definition especially – the desire for a nontraditional school environment – gets closest to describing the nature of this phenomenon, and hence justifies their inclusion in many cases in the universe of *homeschooling*.

Ray (2016, 2011) estimates about 2.3 million students are currently being homeschooled in the U.S. and expects that number to grow. This is also likely true for hybrid homeschools; though the University-Model Schools International (UMSI) network, a group of private, religious hybrid home-schools, has existed for a few decades, many of their campuses are fewer than 10 years old, and this is also true of many independent hybrid homeschools.

In terms of what they desire for their children's education, hybrid homeschooling families often have similar values to full time homeschooling families. Murphy (2012) and Beck (2012) attempt to categorize homeschoolers, but as described below, these categorizations only partially capture the kinds of motivations that bring families to hybrid homeschools.

Murphy's (2012) four frameworks include religion, academic deficiencies in the assigned public school, social/environmental problems in the assigned public school, and other family-based motivations.

Beck (2012) defines *homeschoolers* by separating them into four broad groups: 1) "structured" homeschoolers, or "home educators, who are frequently religious, conservative, well-educated middle-class parents"; 2) "unschoolers," or "home educators who are frequently well educated middle class parents, anti-establishment, with radical political and cultural viewpoints"; 3) "pragmatic" homeschoolers, or those who are "Often rural, working class home educators. The parents have limited formal education"; and 4) A group of "Unknowns," who consist of "Different groups of home educators which more or less are all not registered with the authorities or known: This could consist of radical unschoolers gypsies (romanis); unknown immigrants; socially troubled families who sometimes have substance abuse problems; and extreme fundamentalist religious families" (p. 74).

Wearne (2017, 2016) finds that one or another of Murphy's (2012, pp. 83–104) four frameworks regarding parents' decisions to homeschool typically fits many hybrid homeschoolers well, and they are by far most likely to fit into Beck's (2012) "structured" grouping of homeschoolers (p. 74).

As hybrid homeschoolers share some aspects of their schooling with full-time homeschoolers, they also share some characteristics with students in 5-day per week schools. Zeehandelaar and Winkler (2013) conducted a broader classification of public and private school parents, and that survey looked at a much larger sample of parents, but that survey also does not quite capture the responses from hybrid homeschool parents. Zeehandelaar and Winkler's classifications included groups of parents who prioritized:

- vocational/job-training classes
- instruction in citizenship for a democracy
- schools with high standardized tests cores
- schools with diverse ethnic backgrounds
- arts instruction above all else
- a focus on getting students into a top-level college.

Even when asked to provide open-ended answers regarding why they chose a hybrid homeschool, parents tend to only rarely offer reasons related to one of these six classifications.

Hybrid homeschools

Hybrid homeschools might be considered more structured versions of homeschool cooperative groups. Carpenter and Gann (2015) and Muldowney (2011) have described the phenomenon of home-school cooperative groups (co-ops), in which families meet together to have group classes, or to bring in teachers for particular (usually specialized or higher-level) subjects. Hybrid homeschools also bring students together for classes but are typically more formal organizations compared to co-ops; whereas students in co-ops are almost always considered full-time homeschoolers, hybrid home-school students may be considered homeschoolers or enrolled private school students, depending on the particular hybrid's model and local/state requirements.

A large amount of variability exists even within groups that would clearly be considered full-time homeschoolers. For example, some full-time homeschoolers may follow a very scripted, published curriculum and academic calendar, whereas others follow such things more loosely. Similarly, hybrid homeschools' particular models vary a great deal. As noted above, some hybrid homeschools consider themselves to simply be organized support for a group of home-schooling families, whereas others see themselves as very flexible private schools. The charter school network surveyed in this study is on the more formal end of that spectrum.

Although the network in this study was founded in 2000, and other, even older examples of hybrid homeschools, such as the University-Model Schools network exist (UMSI History, n.d.), the literature on hybrid-style schools specifically is still limited. As an entity, UMSI actually distances itself from the "homeschool" label, but Brobst (2013) finds some evidence to suggest that UMSI students resemble homeschoolers in terms of their reasons for attending UMSI schools and in terms of their academic outcomes. Similar to traditional homeschoolers, UMSI parents value having more time and influence over the children's educations. Brobst also finds that UMSI students tend to score over 30 points higher on the SAT compared to students in full-time private schools.

Wearne (2016, 2017) has conducted previous surveys similar to this one, focused on hybrid home-schoolers affiliated with faith-based private schools. Those surveys find that hybrid homeschool families tend to be mostly affluent, to be white, to live in suburban locales, and to be married. Families in those schools report placing more value on areas such as curriculum, religion, and school culture, while placing relatively little on areas such as extracurricular offerings or standardized test results.

Charter hybrid homeschool network

This particular school network is chartered by a single school district in southern California, consisting of 16 total sites across three counties. Approximately 10% of the network's students reside within the sponsoring district, whereas the rest live in nearby districts. The location of sites outside of the sponsoring district has caused logistical hurdles for the network, including the need for new authorizers for some sites and the threat of closure for others, after legal challenges from some neighboring school districts. At least two families from each of the 16 sites provided responses to this survey. The network uses three forms of hybrid schooling options at its various sites:

- **Home Study**. These students are at home 5 days most weeks of the year. They may, depending on their individual needs and desires, come to a campus one day per week for enrichment courses, with teachers at the site providing oversight and assignments.
- **Academies**. These sites are most like hybrid homeschools in other settings. Students physically attend school on campus either 3 days per week (in middle and high school) or 4 days per week (in elementary school). The vast majority of students in the network and of respondents to this survey are enrolled in the network's Academies.
- **INSITEs**. These students attend school on "INSITE" campuses up to 4 days per week (the fact that they attend 4 of 5 days per week means that they fall below the local requirement that they attend school 80% or less of the time, enabling them to be classified as hybrid, rather than as

full-time students). On campus, these students do their work supervised by teachers, either individually or in small groups. As opposed to the Academies, in which students are working together as a class with teacher-led assignments, the INSITE campuses are better understood as centralized places where students can come to do their individual work, with facilitation and help from teachers. This program is meant for students who would rather not attend school full time for various reasons (fit, motivation, pregnancy, the need for credit recovery, etc.).

The network's original intention was to allow students in any of these programs to take classes together as applicable. Academy students could theoretically come in on their home days to study with INSITE students, or home study and INSITE students could work with academy classes on particular units. In practice, the groups have tended to sort themselves apart socially, with academy, home study, and INSITE students keeping to their own groups, though the network and individual sites do make attempts to bring students together for events (through class social events, dances, graduations, etc.).

Parent information

The literature on parental decision making in education is much more developed, although it does not specifically consider hybrid homeschools. It is becoming well established that when asked about why they chose a particular school, parents focus on measures of climate, extracurricular activities, location, safety, or other issues rather than standardized test scores or other typical accountability measures (Harris & Larsen, 2015; Schneider, Teske, & Marschall, 2000; Stewart & Wolf, 2014). Abdulkadiroglu, Pathak, Schellenberg, and Walters (2017) find that parents often make choice based on the quality of potential student peers, as opposed to the academic quality of a school itself. Kelly and Scafidi (2013), in their survey of parents using tax credit scholarships, also found that parents' stated values included items such as discipline, safety, and smaller classes more than academic measures.

Methods

This study reports the results of an electronic survey conducted during the 2017–2018 school year. The electronic survey was completed by families with students enrolled in the charter school. To gather responses to the survey, the CEO of the charter network sent an invitation email with a survey link to all families in the network, asking them to participate. The email contained a link to a Survey Monkey survey consisting of 25 questions. At least one family from all 16 school sites within the network responded to the survey. Respondents were required to agree to participate and to choose their school site from a drop-down list but could otherwise skip any questions and still submit their responses. No individually identifying information was collected. The CEO sent a reminder message to the same email list one week after the original invitation. The survey was open for a window of approximately 3 weeks and generated 270 responses, for a response rate of 17.4% among participating families. A potential limitation of this sample is that, though participants were asked (though not required) to list their school site, they may differ in particular ways from the school population as a whole. Overall enrollment characteristics for the school from the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of data suggest that the sample is more white and less Hispanic than the school as a whole (which also suggests that the school is more diverse than its surrounding district as stated below).

The survey instrument used here is based in part on a survey of reasons for choosing particular schools originally conducted by Kelly and Scafidi (2013) to survey Georgia parents who had received tuition tax credit scholarships for use in full-time private schools. It has been iterated over several surveys of hybrid homeschool families in multiple states and school types around the U.S. (Wearne, 2017, 2016). To condense the resulting response data, open-ended "other" responses to questions asking for "all" reasons and "most important" reasons were coded using an a priori code list, based on the popular reasons identified in previous surveys of hybrid homeschool parents. Upon

completing initial coding of one set of responses, all responses were recoded, with additional emergent codes added and some original codes collapsed into others as necessary (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Findings

Demographics

Demographically, these families were somewhat less ethnically homogeneous, educated, and wealthy than families in other hybrid homeschools around the country. Compared to their home district, these families were more ethnically diverse, more educated, and more wealthy. Among respondents to this survey of families with students in grades K-12, 56.9% had an income above $100,000, 69.9% had an undergraduate degree or higher, 88.7% were married, 74.2% were white, and 75.7% lived in a suburban area. The percentage of families that reported incomes of $0 – $24,999 was 3.7, which is a much lower percentage than the home district, but a much higher percentage compared to other hybrid homeschool families. Respondents to this survey considered themselves to be more urban and less rural as a group compared to other hybrid homeschoolers, though they reported living in the suburbs as often as Wearne's (2017) UMSI families (and the district is categorized as "Rural Distant" by the NCES). Table 1 reports these demographic characteristics alongside previously surveyed UMSI schools, and the surrounding school district for comparison.

Reasons for choosing a hybrid charter school

The first set of questions posed to respondents about their schools asked for them to identify all of the reasons they chose their current school:

> There are many possible reasons why families send their children to a hybrid school, rather than to some other kind of school. Please select each of the following reasons you had for sending your child to such a school (you may mark as many or as few reasons as applied to your situation).

The list of most responses are shown individually in Appendix A and the most popular include, "Smaller classes sizes" (81.7%), "Better learning environment" (74.9%), and "More individual attention for my child" (67.6%). Least popular were the responses "Higher standardized test scores" (14.2%), "Would prefer full-time private school, but the hybrid is more affordable" (13.2%), and "Religious education" (5.89%).

After selecting all of the reasons that affected their decision to choose a hybrid homeschool, respondents were prompted to identify their "most important" reasons. These responses are grouped under four broader categories: formal academic reasons; safety and order; personalized attention; and the teaching and learning environment. Religious education functions as its own category, as a comparison to private hybrid homeschools. More extracurricular opportunities could plausibly be a school environment item or an item meant to help a student gain entrance into college, and so is also reported separately. As "most important" concepts, the personalized attention and teaching and learning environment groupings were the most popular. These results from respondents to this survey are shown in Table 2, alongside UMSI parents' responses to the same questions per Wearne (2017). Full results are reported in Appendix A.

"Other" reasons for choosing a hybrid charter school

Forty-eight respondents wrote in additional "Other" responses to the questions asking for their reasons for choosing a hybrid homeschool. "Other" responses were coded using a set of a priori codes and then recoded as additional themes emerged. Table 3 contains a sample of common responses. Respondents' answers in previous surveys were coded similarly and fell into categories

Table 1. Summary demographic data for respondents, percent.

Income	Charter	UMSI	District[a]
$0–$24,999	3.7	0.9	28.0
$25,000–$49,999	6.8	5.7	28.7
$50,000–$74,999	17.3	16.3	20.8
$75,000–$99,999	15.2	16.0	10.2
$100,000–$149,999	26.1	34.4	7.1
$150,000–$199,999	16.7	14.7	3.9
$200,000 and up	14.1	12.0	1.1

Note. UMSI =
n = 191.
[a] Source: NCES Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates: Income and Benefits in 2016 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars, ACS 2012–2016 Profile.

Educational Attainment	Charter	UMSI	District[a]
Did not graduate high school	0.0	0.3	15.2
Graduated from high school	7.7	1.4	22.6
Some college	22.5	14.5	37.1
Undergraduate degree	30.6	47.5	14.5
Graduate or professional degree	39.3	36.2	10.6

Note. n = 196.
[a] Source: NCES Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates: Population 25 years and older, ACS 2012–2016 Profile.

Marital Status	Charter	UMSI	District[a]
Married	88.7	95.7	52.0
Not Married	11.3	4.3	48.0

Note. n = 195
[a] Source: NCES Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates: Males and Females 15 years and older, ACS 2012–2016 Profile.

Race/Ethnicity	Charter	UMSI	District[a]
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2.6	0.3	0.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	5.7	0.3	2.2
Black or African American	1.6	2.3	0.6
Hispanic American	6.7	2.3	*
White/Caucasian	74.2	92.4	84.7
Multiple ethnicity/Other (please specify)	9.3	2.3	2.5

Note. n = 194
[a] Source: NCES Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates. In this survey, respondents were asked to identify their race in two questions: one allowed them to choose "One race," which did not include a "Hispanic" option (97.5% of respondents said they were of "one race"). In the second, which asked respondents to identify themselves as "Hispanic or Latino" or "Not Hispanic or Latino," 12.9% chose "Hispanic or Latino of any race."

Urbanicity	Charter	UMSI	District[a]
Urban	13.0	8.4	–
Suburban	75.7	75.7	–
Rural	11.4	15.9	–

Note. n = 193
[a] Source: NCES Common Core of Data. The district is categorized as "Rural Distant" by NCES, though relatively few respondents see it this way.

Table 2. "Most important" reason for choosing a hybrid homeschool.

Answer Options	Most Important Reason Charter $n = 227$	Most Important Reason UMSI $n = 371$
Formal academic reasons	4.0	8.1
Safety and order	8.4	22.0
Personalized attention	34.4	36.5
Teaching and learning environment	44.9	6.7
More extracurricular opportunities	1.8	0.5
Religious education	0.0	18.3
Other (please specify)	6.6	7.8

including family, homeschool/education-specific reasons, flexibility, and religious/political reasons. Although many answers from these respondents were somewhat similar to those from other surveys of hybrid homeschool parents, as a group their answers coalesced differently. Family and flexibility emerged again as categories in these parents' responses, as noted in Table 3. The largest number of "Other" responses, however, were about curriculum and teachers. When respondents mentioned curriculum in this survey, it was typically in the context of creativity and critical thinking, for example, rather than strictly political agendas or opposition to the Common Core State Standards, which has been a major theme in other surveys of hybrid homeschool parents. Some form of appreciation for the school's project-based learning approach was also common.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, these charter school parents did not mention religious education at all. They did, however, mention a few items as "Other" reasons, though less often, that are also worth noting: medical issues, cost, and technology. These are not categories that private hybrid homeschool families have mentioned much, if at all, in other surveys. More than one respondent to this survey, however, stated that "medical needs" (without elaboration) were an important reason they chose this charter hybrid homeschool. A small number of others mentioned cost as a factor, but mostly as a barrier to full-time homeschooling, rather than as a barrier to private schooling. For example, one respondent stated that, "I would like to homeschool full time, but finances and my personal

Table 3. "Other" stated reasons for choosing a hybrid homeschool.

Type of Reason	Respondents' Stated Reasons
Family	• "I love to home school through [this charter school]…Learning for us is so fun and they love being in there home environment." • "Family time- I felt guilty taking my own child off campus at a comprehensive elementary school. I do not feel that way [here]." • "I want to spend More time with my kids." • "More time with kids at home, better family life."
Flexibility	• "Schedule works better for her dance involvement." • "My child wants to do some classes but not have to commit to 5 day/week school." • "The in-class and at home ratio, and the flexibility in teaching styles, curriculum, and daily structure that would be available to us in the home-study portion."
Curriculum/ teachers	• "My child is highly gifted (reading at one year old, chapter books and Shakespeare before kindergarten) so the homeschool flexibility allowed us to teach to her needs while she got a classroom experience with age peers, too." • "Came to this school specifically so my scholars could study with [specific teacher]." • "Project based learning was the final selling point for our school…I want my child educated…not indoctrinated!" • "We chose this school because of [specific teacher] and the friendly, small community feeling. Fulltime homeschool can get lonely and this fills the gap. (plus they have a great math program…which I never would've learned about if I just homeschooled)."

education are limited." Another noted that he/she, "Would homeschool completely, but I have to work." Although the survey listed a few aspects of school safety, some respondents mentioned safety concerns again as an "Other" issue, with comments such as "less bullying," "less exposure to negative influences," and "public schools are not safe to attend." Finally, though the comments were not as numerous as with the categories above, several respondents noted the fact that the students at the hybrid homeschool were not immersed in technology as an important factor in their decision. These responses include:

- "…once my son transferred, I saw how the fact there is less technology made such a difference to his actual ABILITY to learn that it has become the #1 reason we stay there"
- "RE: the computer/ipad/laptop etc. The fact they only had 5 chrome books for 1 class positively influenced my decision. I was happy that they only use them ~15 minutes a day vs. 2–4 hours per day at the public schools in our district."
- "better control over electronics in the classroom"
- "Regarding computer usage for teaching, my concern was the amount of time it was used. I prefer a minimum amount of time of computer usage for learning."

Types of information

The next set of questions asked respondents to identify what types of information they used in making their decision to send their children to a hybrid homeschool, and then which type of information was "most important" in making their decision. ("What information about hybrid schools is most important in helping select the best private school for your child? (you may mark as many or as few reasons as applied to your situation)"). Respondents were then asked to choose the "most important" type of information they valued in making their decisions. These questions were again grouped into categories of similar items. When naming all types of valued information, only class size and curriculum content were valued by a majority of respondents. "Operational and structural issues" were valued most by parents, with class size comprising the bulk of that group (35.9% of all answers). The second most popular answer was the school's curriculum and course descriptions (under "Curriculum content"), accounting for 27.8% of total answers. The least valued individual piece of information was the religious leaning of the school. No respondents selected "The percentage of students who are accepted and attend college," "The colleges attended by graduates of the school," "The governance of the school, including the members of the board of trustees," "The percent of teachers and administrators who leave from year-to-year," "Whether computers are used effectively in classroom instruction," or "The racial, ethnic, and socio-economic makeup of the student population." "Other" types of information included statements about recommendations from friends, the size of the school overall, and information about the school's ability to care for students with particular medical needs. These results are shown in Table 4, with the full list of items in Appendix B.

Types of past schools

The fourth set of questions asked respondents to note which types of schools their children had attended in the past, and also which type of schooling they considered the primary method they used to educate their children. Because of the unique nature and relative youth of most hybrid home-schools, many students come to them after having studied in some other schooling environment. Most respondents had spent at least some time in a conventional public school, and over one fourth (28.7%) had some experience as full-time homeschoolers, with 13.6% reporting that they had primarily been full-time homeschoolers in the past. Over half had primarily been in conventional public schools before coming to the hybrid. Results for these responses are reported in Table 5.

Table 4. "Most important" types of information.

Answer Options	Most Important Type of Information Charter n = 209	Most Important Type of Information UMSI n = 350
Operational/structural issues	50.7	30.1
Disciplinary issues	1.0	0.3
Curriculum content	32.1	52.0
Academic achievement	3.4	8.9
Teachers	2.4	2.3
Facilities, technology, and extracurricular activities	2.9	0.3
School demographics	0.0	0.0
Other	7.7	6.3

Table 5. Types of past schooling and primary past schooling, percent.

Answer Options	All Past Schooling (n = 195)	Primary Past Schooling (n = 191)
Public school	71.3	51.3
Full-time homeschool	28.7	13.6
Charter public school (hybrid)	21.0	13.6
Charter public school (full time)	9.7	2.6
Private school	18.5	8.4
Other (please specify)	12.3	10.5

"Other" responses to this question included answers such as Montessori, or noted the fact that their children had only been in preschool before enrolling in this charter hybrid homeschool program.

Discussion

These results as a whole are in many ways similar to Wearne's (2017, 2016) surveys of hybrid homeschoolers in independent and UMSI network schools. UMSI is the largest network of hybrid homeschools in the U.S. and provides the broadest base of comparison for the families involved in the unique charter school surveyed here. Families are making similar structural changes to their children's schooling experiences in the cases of private and public hybrid homeschools; this survey explores some of the reasoning behind these decisions. In terms of their decision-making processes, these hybrid homeschool parents seem more interested in finding a generally better learning environment and more individual attention at school for their children, as opposed to religious or political reasons, or specific academic opportunities. Similar to parents in private hybrid homeschools, these respondents noted a desire for more time with their children and appreciated the flexibility the hybrid homeschool schedule could provide them. As in those previous surveys, no parents selected higher standardized test scores as their most important reason for choosing a hybrid homeschool. Also similar to previous surveys, these parents reported an appreciation for schedule flexibility and an appreciation for having more time with their children. A final similarity is that though large numbers of both these charter parents and UMSI parents value small class sizes, relatively few of either group report it as the "most important reason" for choosing a hybrid homeschool. This seems to be an item that parents care about broadly, but not necessarily deeply. Taken together, some of these results sound something like what a typical group of parents at a conventional public school might say they value. Others sound like possible homeschool parents' answers.

The responses of these charter parents and those of the private UMSI respondents also differ in noteworthy ways. Some of this is likely due to the nature of the schools themselves (private, religious

Christian schools vs. a public, secular charter school). And as noted above, the demographics of the two groups are quite different on a number of measures. Perhaps unsurprisingly, no charter school parents reported religious education as their most important reason for choosing a hybrid home-school (compared 18.3 of UMSI parents who said so, the most popular response to that survey). The percentage of UMSI parents who named "more meaningful opportunities for parental involvement" as their most important reason was 16.2, whereas only 4% of charter parents did. Conversely, 16.3% of parents named "more attention to the unique needs of my child" as their most important reason compared to 5.4% of UMSI parents. Although these questions seem to be getting at similar notions – more individualization of the school experience – the different responses do perhaps highlight a difference in these two groups, in that the UMSI parents see themselves as closer to traditional homeschoolers, wanting to retain some control of their children's education and assuming they would serve the unique needs of their children, whereas the charter parents want the school itself to pay more attention to their children's needs, albeit with more of their input. More differences can be noted from parents' "Other" responses. Although a number of UMSI parents mentioned the Common Core State Standards negatively, along with their perception of negative politicization of conventional public schools, very few of the charter parents did so. Althhough Common Core is a decreasingly salient issue over time, the charter parents generally avoided criticizing other options as a group; this is less true of the UMSI and other private school parents. The charter parents seem more "pulled" into the hybrids, whereas the UMSI parents had a variety of reasons including a number who felt "pushed" out of public schools over curriculum. On the other hand, several of the charter parents mentioned technology negatively, in that they wanted less of it in the schools, whereas the UMSI parents did not mention this as an issue. Regarding character education and academic achievement, charter parents were more interested in a school's character education program than UMSI parents, perhaps a stand-in for their lack of interest in religious education (though even this value seems to be only loosely-held), but less interested in information about whether or where a hybrid homeschool's students attended college compared to UMSI parents.

Finally, formally classifying these families remains difficult, in part because of the diversity of hybrid homeschools' foci and their families' experiences and desires. Just over half of parents surveyed here said that their children had primarily been educated in conventional public schools before coming to their current hybrid homeschool. But again, 13.6% had been primarily full-time homeschoolers; this is more than those who had primarily been in full-time charter schools or private schools combined. As noted above, hybrid homeschoolers do often tend to fit neatly within Murphy's (2012) various frameworks (though not all in the same one), and are by far most likely to be categorized as "Structured" home-schoolers by Beck's groupings (2012). Zeehandelaar & Winkler's (2013) larger survey and classification of parents does not fit those hybrid homeschool parents as well; their universe of parents surveyed seems to have quite different motivations from many hybrid homeschoolers. This group of hybrid homeschool parents in southern California has its own unique set of differences even within Murphy's and Beck's frameworks. This group is not extremely concerned about a school's religious or character education in their decision-making. Murphy's conception of homeschooling parents being disappointed by the academic deficiencies, social/environmental factors of conventional public schools, and having particular family issues, is a closer match, though even here these charter school parents' tone as a group seems to be less negative toward conventional public schools compared to the tone of independent or UMSI parents; they had few truly negative remarks to make about their reasons for choosing a hybrid homeschool. In terms of particular personal issues, these hybrid homeschool families named flexibility for sports and family time, as have other hybrid homeschool families, but multiple families also listed unnamed particular medical issues as reasons for wanting that flexibility. In terms of Zeehandelaar & Winkler's (2013) categories, all of these families simply seem to belong in some unnamed other category altogether, based on a shared concept of small-scale schooling, with a heavy home and family influence.

Conclusion

Parents' stated preferences about why they value hybrid homeschools are becoming clearer, though this charter school version of the hybrid homeschool model did produce some meaningful differences compared to the private, religious schools studied in other related surveys. A desire for schedule flexibility, time with family, and more intimate learning environments do seem to be commonalities.

Students who attend these schools are not quite "homeschoolers," though they share much in terms of family motivations to choose this schooling model, what they value about the model, and how they are able to operate during their days at home. But generic terms like "charter school student" or "private school student" or even "alternative school student" do not sufficiently capture these entities either. These schools cannot be neatly categorized, as the families and administrators themselves often disagree about whether they are homeschoolers or private schoolers. State legislators and agencies will increasingly be in the position of making policy decisions that affect these students, but the dividing lines between them are not always clear. Defining them as "homeschoolers," or as "private school students," or, as in the case of the students attending the charter network surveyed in this study, as "public school students" may not fully capture the essence of these groups. The stakeholders themselves will likely want different things for their students and their schools as these definitions evolve.

The results of this survey are only descriptive, and imply a few potential lines of future inquiry. The first is the need for a more qualitative exploration of families' expectations, experiences, and motivations, beyond what can be captured in these surveys. The second is to more systematically explore the relationships between why parents leave a particular school for a hybrid homeschool and what they say they value. A third implied research line, which may have a stronger bearing on how states and districts try to define these schools, is to look more closely at the quality of instruction and academic outcomes, although based on families' responses to existing surveys, plain academic success as it is typically measured is likely not the main goal of a significant number of these families, or of the schools themselves.

Author bio

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Appendix A. Reasons for choosing a hybrid charter school, response percent.

Answer Options	All Reasons Charter n = 219	Most Important Reason Charter n = 227	Most Important Reason UMSI n = 371
Formal Academic Reasons			
Better preparation for college	26.9	1.8	6.2
Higher standardized test scores	14.2	0.0	0.0
Would prefer full-time private school, but the hybrid is more affordable	13.2	2.2	1.9
Safety and Order			
Less time wasted during the school day	44.3	4.0	3.2
Improved student safety	40.2	3.1	0.8
Other students would be a better influence on my child	30.6	0.0	1.3
Better student discipline	27.4	0.4	0.5
Less gang activity	26.9	0.9	0.0
Personalized Attention			
More individual attention for my child	67.6	11.5	6.5
More attention to the unique needs of my child	60.3	16.3	5.4
More meaningful opportunities for parental involvement	37.9	4.0	16.2
Greater respect for my rights as a parent	36.5	2.6	6.5
Teaching and Learning Environment			
Smaller class sizes	81.7	10.1	3.5
Better learning environment	74.9	17.2	9.4
More responsive teachers and administrators	53.9	2.2	0.8
Better education	52.5	11.9	8.9
Greater sense of community	40.2	1.3	1.9
Better teachers	29.7	0.4	0.0
Other parents would be more concerned about their children's education	25.6	0.0	0.3
More tutorial and other supplemental learning services than at a five-day school	20.6	1.8	0.0
More extracurricular opportunities	16.0	1.8	0.5
Religious education	5.9	0.0	18.3
Other (please specify)	15.1	6.6	7.8

Appendix B. Types of information.

Answer Options	All Types of Information Charter $n = 196$	Most Important Type of Information Charter $n = 209$	Most Important Type of Information UMSI $n = 350$
Operational/Structural Issues			
The ratio of students per teacher and the average class size	75.5	35.9	12.0
The duration of the school year and the hours spent by the students in class	38.3	9.1	6.3
Evidence that the school is accredited by a recognized school accrediting agency	38.3	3.8	8.6
Whether parents have access to the head of school to express any concerns	20.9	1.4	2.9
The financial condition of the school	9.7	0.5	0.0
The governance of the school, including the members of the board of trustees	3.1	0.0	0.3
Disciplinary Issues			
The disciplinary policy of the school	13.3	0.5	0.3
The frequency and nature of disciplinary actions	7.7	0.5	0.0
Curriculum Content			
The curriculum (i.e., content of instructional areas) and course descriptions	62.8	27.8	22.0
Evidence that the school teaches character education	12.8	3.3	9.7
Whether the school teaches your religion or any religion with which you are comfortable	2.6	1.0	20.3
Academic Achievement			
The average performance on standardized tests by students in different grades	16.3	2.9	2.9
The graduation rate for students attending the school	12.2	0.5	0.9
The percentage of students who are accepted and attend college	9.2	0.0	3.7
The colleges attended by graduates of the school	4.1	0.0	1.4
Teachers			
The years of teaching experience and credentials of the teachers at the school	20.4	2.4	2.3
The percent of teachers and administrators who leave from year-to-year	13.3	0.0	0.0
Facilities, Technology, and Extracurricular Activities			
The quality and availability of extracurricular activities	14.3	2.4	0.3
Whether students have access to tablet, laptop, and classroom computers	15.3	0.5	0.0
Whether computers are used effectively in classroom instruction	11.7	0.0	0.0
School demographics			
The racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic makeup of the student population	6.1	0.0	0.0
Other			
Other (please specify)	11.2	7.7	6.3