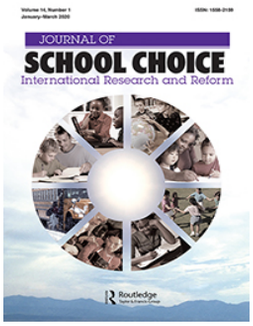

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Contemporary Homeschool Models and the Values and Beliefs of Home Educator Associations: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

Home education support groups and associations are increasingly becoming hubs for home learning communities to share resources and knowledge. This literature review examined (a) motivations for joining homeschool groups; (b) values and beliefs that led to the formation of homeschool groups; and (c) how the culture of homeschool groups aids in children's development. Findings indicated that homeschool families sought groups to share resources, expertise, and common values. Values included the desire for strong family bonds, teaching faith, closely guided social interaction, and responsive pedagogy. Home educators believed that public schooling cannot meet those values. Implications suggest the need for more empirical research exploring how the culture of homeschool groups shapes the development of its members, and additionally, what public education can learn from these alternative educational models.

KEYWORDS

Homeschool associations; homeschool groups; values; beliefs; culture

Introduction

Family-led home-based education has been practiced by cultures around the globe throughout history and has played an influential role in Western civilization (Gordon & Gordon, 1990; Ray, 2000, 2017a). Homeschooling is the parent-directed practice of educating one's own children rather than attending formal schooling (Ray, 2000). In American colonial times, where home education was the norm, children were taught Christian doctrine, reading, vocational skills, and some writing and math, typically by their father (Carper, 1992; Ray, 2017a). Missionary families, diplomats, or travelers used mail-ordered curricula to teach their children as they journeyed to different places. For African Americans, laws criminalizing schooling drove learning to private quarters (Gaither, 2009). Home education combined the efforts of parents, tutors, and older children, and families often banded together to solicit a teacher for additional support (Hill, 2000). Up until the end of the nineteenth century, home-education was

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widely practiced, and formal school attendance was incidental and voluntary, varying day to day and season to season (Tyack, 1974).

Today more than 2 million children are involved in homeschooling (Ray, 2017b). With this increase of home education practices, there has been an upsurge of families' need for support, collaboration, and expertise. Hence, networks and groups for home educators are growing and becoming a new type of educational institution (Hill, 2000). Whether groups are identified as associations, co-ops, or charter schools (Collom, 2005; Hill, 2000), home educators and supporters of this alternative form of schooling are creating new educational models that coordinate parents as educators and incorporate many of the values and processes of homeschooling.

For research purposes, homeschool groups are often accessed to study homeschool children's academic and social success, parental motivations to homeschool, and teaching methods. However, there is little research specifically exploring the values and beliefs on which homeschool groups are formed and operated, and how groups aid in children's long-term development. The purpose of this systematic literature review is to examine home education's current practices, specifically looking for insights into the new alternative models created by home educators that are proliferating across the United States. Furthermore, by examining alternative educational models and parental motivations for forming and joining them, public education can gain valuable insights about meeting the needs of families in the twenty-first century.

Background

Following the adoption of the Constitution, homeschooling was common and regarded as a parental right and responsibility, and part of a child's educational process (Kreager, 2011). In 1852, the first US compulsory attendance law was enacted with Massachusetts's statute requiring that children attend formal school at least 12 weeks unless families were not financially able to do so (Kreager, 2011). By 1918, compulsory school attendance laws were enacted in all states and homeschooling was no longer the norm (Kreager, 2011; Ray, 2017b). If families did not send their children to public school, parents could face criminal charges. Cases reaching the Supreme Court emerged across America, beginning with the 1923 *Meyer v. Nebraska* case where Meyer was convicted at the state level of violating a Nebraska law that "prohibited teaching any subject in a language other than English to any person who had not passed the eighth grade" (Kreager, 2011, p. 19). Meyer taught the subject of reading in the German language to a child of 10 years who had not yet passed the eighth grade. The US Supreme Court characterized the Nebraska statute as an "unreasonable exercise of legislative power," and reversed Nebraska's charges, finding the law unconstitutional (Kreager, 2011, p. 19). Meyer's case was the beginning

of many cases that worked to establish a parental right to control the upbringing, specifically the education, of one's own children.

The right to control the education of one's own children are in part related to religious teaching. In 1972, nearly 50 years after *Meyer v. Nebraska*, the Supreme Court directly addressed the issue of homeschooling for religious reasons with *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (Kreager, 2011). The case involved the Amish community and a Wisconsin compulsory attendance law that required children to attend a public or private school until they reached the age of 16. Members of the Old Order Amish religion and the Conservative Amish Mennonite Church in Wisconsin kept their children from attending public or private high school due to religious beliefs. The Supreme Court affirmed that the Amish community has a fundamental belief that its peoples' salvation requires an active life in the church that is separate from outside influence, and the Court recognized that Amish objections to high school or higher education stemmed from the value that children should be protected from influences of the world (Fischel, 2012; Hill, 2016; Kreager, 2011).

Finally, in the 1970s, after many cases like *Meyer v. Nebraska* and *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, the Supreme Court established two broad rights: (a) parental right to control the upbringing of children in areas including education under the Fourteenth Amendment, and (b) the right to homeschool under the Free Exercise Clause when a religious motivation exists (Kreager, 2011). Still, it was not until 1993 that homeschooling was legal in all 50 states (Kreager, 2011; Patterson et al., 2007). Lines (1991) and Ray (2016) estimated there were roughly 13,000 K-12 students in the early 1970s to currently, approximately 2.4 million children are involved in homeschooling (Ray, 2017b). Besides the evidence these numbers provide about the growth of the homeschooling movement, the power it has gained legally, politically, and socially cannot be denied (Cooper & Sureau, 2007).

Hadeed (1991) described the choice to homeschool as a resistance to the imposition of educational norms and to be able to determine a better way of educating one's children. Gaither (2009) echoed this position, arguing that homeschooling is a conscious "political protest against, and alternative to, formal educational institutions" (p. 332). Further, in the theoretical essay entitled "Homeschooling as an Act of Conscientious Objection," Morrison (2014) proposed the decision to homeschool as an act of conscientious objection. The term, originating from an individual's objection to military enlistment, represents the act of decision-making according to one's own conscience, or ethical beliefs, even if those values counter society's laws and normative practices. Accompanying these political-social ideologies that exist at the core of many families' choice to educate their own children, additional pedagogical values and practical reasons chain to create a complex system of motivations that lead families to choose homeschooling over public education (Collom, 2005; Ray, 2000, 2015; Thomas, 2016).

Commonalities in beliefs and motivations, and the choice to homeschool attract home educators to each other seeking support and collaboration. Families do not want to experience isolation, and they rely on services and resources from experts; they form teams and solicit others' support, often through organized groups (Collom, 2005; Hill, 2000) which are growing to represent new educational models. The advantages of these models may go well beyond familial collaboration with the contribution of public funds that provide materials and resources, facilities, and administration's time (Hill, 2000). As Ray (2017b) estimated, millions of children are part of today's homeschool movement; the number of children in home schools is larger than the New York City public school system and even larger than the Los Angeles and Chicago public school systems combined (Hill, 2000; Ray, 2017b). Looking at the alternative and innovative models for home education and the beliefs and values that guide these models could provide valuable insights for improving education for all children, including those in public institutions.

The purpose of this systematic review is to discover (a) home educator motivations for choosing to join formal homeschool groups; (b) underlying personal, social and political values and beliefs that led to the formation of homeschool groups, associations, co-ops, or charters; and (c) how the culture of formal homeschool groups is described and aids in the development of children. While few empirical studies specifically addressing any of these issues were found, each of the studies selected for this review offers inferential insight into the aims of this article. However, mining empirical studies that address differing topics related to the phenomenon of homeschooling cannot sufficiently address the goal of this review. Thus, the final purpose of this study is to assert the need for research that seeks to understand how the culture of contemporary homeschool education models can shape America's next generation of citizens as well as education itself in the twenty-first century.

Methods

A variety of searches took place in several phases for this systematic literature review. For the first phase, EBSCOhost databases were accessed, including Academic Research Complete, Education Research Complete, and ERIC. The first inclination of this search was to take a broad look at the available body of homeschooling research to map the landscape of existing literature. Search terms included *homeschooling* with the subsequent additions of the terms achievement, social-emotional development, policy, public school partnerships, support groups, networks, associations, and co-operatives. The search limits were narrowed to peer-reviewed articles in English, with a specific focus on homeschooling in the United States, history, literature reviews, and empirical studies with samples of both children and parents who participated

in home education practices in some way. Many articles were initially excluded because their foci were about home-to-formal school connections and relationships, not *homeschooling*. From these search terms, 40 articles were selected for further inspection. Additional exclusion occurred with studies that focused on college academic achievement of students who had been home educated. Also, this systematic literature review aimed to report on the most current research in the twenty-first century; thus, empirical studies of the initial 40 articles that were from before the year 2000 were removed. Finally, 18 articles were included from this first phase of research which included historical essays, literature reviews, and empirical studies.

In the second phase, an ancestral search was conducted using the most recent literature's (2015–2018) reference lists, with a specific focus on empirical studies that spoke of homeschool associations or support groups in some way, even if minimal information was provided. From this, seven more articles were selected, one of which was a philosophical piece, two others offered homeschool statistics, and lastly, one study was found that specifically examined homeschool co-ops.

Dr. Brian Ray's research was referenced numerous times from previous searches; thus, the third phase of this systematic search consisted of using Google to learn more about Dr. Ray and the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI) of Salem, Oregon. Google was used to find NHERI and gain access to its own peer-reviewed journal, *Home School Researcher Journal*, that focuses solely on homeschooling issues and research. Two additional empirical studies were selected from this journal.

The last phase of selection involved implementing the final criterion which aimed to exclude any article that did not mention a homeschool group, association, or network in any way. Articles repetitively discussing policy and regulation, critiques of empirical data to empirical studies whose populations came from colleges were removed from the compilation of literature. Additionally, even if a study discussed motivations to homeschool, it was removed if there was no mention of homeschool support groups. This highly selective criteria that eliminated sources of knowledge about homeschool was employed in order to home in on every minute detail that could be found or gleaned about support groups and associations' values, beliefs, and culture. From each of these phases, 14 studies are included and reviewed in the findings section.

Findings

The results have been divided into sections based on the central ideas the articles examine and depth/level of discussion about homeschool groups. While nearly all articles' participants were gained through contacts of homeschool associations, for some articles, this was the only mention of associations, indicating the lowest level of insight to be gained. These were included for the opportunity for inferential understanding into the population of participants and the particular

data that came from them. On a deeper level, some studies briefly developed a basic understanding, history, or practices that occur within homeschool support groups in their conceptual framework or findings. These bits of information offered valuable insights into basic guiding principles that precipitate home educators' needs to come together. On the deepest level, there were four studies that examined single homeschool groups, seeking motivations as to why parents chose to join and offering information about how and/or why the group was formed. Lastly, directly addressing the political-social critiques of the homeschooling phenomenon, research that explored partnerships between homeschool educators and public education offered implications that denote new possibilities for American education. Several studies provide understandings at multiple levels and the findings will return to them throughout, while other studies will only be explored in a single section.

Table 1 organizes the empirical studies discussed in these findings by the level of depth of information offered within each selected article. Specifically, the depth/level of homeschool group information is categorized and numbered. The lowest level (1) is categorized as *Use of homeschool associations to access participants*. At the next deeper level (2), the article *Develop*(s) *homeschool associations briefly*. At the deepest levels, articles (3) *Studied a homeschool group* and (4) *Determine*(d) *motivations to join*. The fifth category (5) looks at *Public education and homeschool partnerships, and the future of education*. This method of categorization became the tool used to analyze and gain information from the reviewed research.

Level 1: use of homeschool associations to access participants

Accessing participants through homeschool associations was a common way to gain samples. Nearly every study in this review initially communicated with directors of homeschool associations requesting to disseminate surveys to homeschool families and gain participants for interviews and focus groups. The following studies aimed to understand parental motivations for choosing to homeschool and measure aspects of homeschooling such as academic achievement and social-emotional development by utilizing association members. Little other explicit evidence is offered about the homeschool associations accessed. However, it is important to note that these data come from homeschool group members, thus, may imply an association with the nature of the groups from which these data came.

Determine parental motivations

Understanding the reasons behind a family's choice to homeschool is a common topic within the body of homeschooling research. To address parental motivations, Ray (2015) employed an exploratory, cross-sectional and explanatory nonexperimental study with 81 student participants and their families through

Table 1. Empirical homeschool research shown by author, design, purpose, and depth/type of information offered about homeschool groups.

Author, Date, Journal, Impact Factor/Acceptance Rate	Purpose of Study, Methodological Approach	Depth/Level of Homeschool Association Information (1–5)
Collom (2005) *Education and Urban Society* 0.658	Investigate factors determining parental motivations to homeschool and the determinants of the student achievement of home-educated children Quantitative survey data, Regression analysis	(1) Use of homeschool associations to access participants (2) Develop homeschool associations briefly (3) Studied a homeschool group (4) Determine motivations to join (5) Partnerships and future of education
Dahlquist et al. (2006) *Journal of School Leadership* 6–10% acceptance rate	Identify current reasons for homeschooling, describe dimensions of homeschooling experiences, and understand ways homeschool families intersect wit public school resources, programs and personnel Survey data Chi-square analysis and ANOVA	(5) Partnerships and the Future of Education
Mazama and Lundy (2013) *The Journal of Negro Education* 0.59	Capture the voice and motivations for African Americans to homeschool Qualitative interviews, focus groups, and survey Includes descriptive statistics	(1) Use of homeschool associations to access participants
Medlin (2006) *Home School Researcher* Information not available	Examine social skills in homeschooled children from their own point of view Quantitative survey and t-tests	(1) Use of homeschool associations to access participants
Muldowney (2011) Doctoral dissertation	Learn about the history and operations of one co-op Case study	(3) Studied a homeschool group
Pannone (2017) *Journal of Unschooling and Alternative Learning* Information unavailable	Discover the experience of *new* home educators Qualitative Interviews and online discussion board focus group	(1) Use of homeschool associations to access participants
Patterson et al. (2007) *Journal of Thought* 33% acceptance rate	Lead to a more balanced and less emotionally charged discussion about why parents elect to homeschool their children and how the practices of parent educators might inform public education Case study	(2) Develop homeschool associations briefly (4) Determine motivations to join (5) Partnerships and future of education
Author, Date, Journal, Impact Factor	Purpose of Study Methodological Approach	Depth/Level of Homeschool Information

(*Continued*)

Table 1. (Continued).

Author, Date, Journal, Impact Factor/Acceptance Rate	Purpose of Study, Methodological Approach	Depth/Level of Homeschool Association Information (1–5)
Rathmell and Collins (2013) *Home School Researcher* Information not available	Gain a better understanding of the stress that families incur when they choose home education Heuristic inquiry design utilizing the Occupational Stress Inventory – Revised (OSI-R), focus group, and individual interviews	(2) Develop homeschool associations briefly (4) Determine motivations to join
Ray (2000) *Peabody Journal of Education* 0.79	Look at academic achievement and the factors that contributed to that achievement Quantitative mailed survey	(1) Use of homeschool associations to access participants
Ray (2010) *Academic Leadership Live: The Online Journal* (No longer in publication)	Examine the educational history, demographic features, and academic achievement of home-educated students and the basic demographics of their families, and to assess the relationships between the students' academic achievement and selected student and family variables Nationwide cross-sectional, descriptive study using survey instrument and standardized testing services	(1) Use of homeschool associations to access participants
Ray (2015) *Journal of School Choice* 0.19	Explore the motivations of African American parents for choosing homeschooling for their children and the academic achievement of their Black homeschool students Exploratory, cross-sectional, and explanatory nonexperimental study	(1) Use of homeschool associations to access participants (2) Develop homeschool associations briefly
Sabol (2018) Doctoral Dissertation	Explore the variety of learning environments that homeschool parents utilize to teach their children multiple-case study	(2) Develop homeschool associations briefly (3) Studied a homeschool group (4) Determine motivations to join
Thomas (2016) *The Qualitative Report* 0.62	Extract the motivations behind homeschooling instructional decision qualitative surveys and interviews	(4) Determine motivations to join (5) Partnerships and future of education
Wearne (2016) *Journal of School Choice* 0.19	Explore the reasons parents in the metropolitan area of a city in the state of Georgia in the southeastern United States say they choose to send their children to hybrid homeschools descriptive survey	(3) Studied a homeschool group (4) Determine motivations to join

a nationwide homeschool support organization that served mainly African Americans. Mazama and Lundy (2013) recruited participants from local and national homeschooling associations and captured African Americans' motivations to homeschool through the use of interviews, focus groups, and a demographic survey. Additionally, questionnaire surveys and interviews with 1,282 homeschooling parents across the United States extracted, specifically, motivations behind homeschool educators' instructional decisions in Thomas's (2016) ethnographic study.

Members of homeschool associations across these studies (Mazama & Lundy, 2013; Ray, 2017b; Thomas, 2016) expressed similar motivations to educate their children at home, including reasons of faith, to transmit values, beliefs, and a worldview, develop strong family relationships, and to customize or individualize the education of each child to his or her particular learning style and interests. Additionally, some parents were concerned about public school environment, dissatisfied with the academic instruction at other schools, and wanted to use alternative pedagogical approaches, with African Americans placing special attention on black history and culture (Ray, 2015), as some believed Eurocentric curriculum interferes with their children's self-esteem and sense of purpose (Mazama & Lundy, 2013). Thomas (2016) identified that families deeply valued community resources and rich experiences for their children, with participants sharing that they scheduled home-based instruction around community resource classes and activities. Further, parents' curricular motivations and decisions were often built on community activity.

Determine academic and social emotional achievement

Research repeatedly aims to answer the question: Do homeschooled children progress and develop academically and socially-emotionally as well as their public school counterparts? Homeschool association members were accessed to examine each component of this multifaceted question through the use of a social skills survey and t-test analysis (Medlin, 2006) and a questionnaire survey combined with testing (Ray, 2000). Ray supported this sampling method by stating that the use of "support organizations for making contact with a variety of home education families has been used successfully in prior research" (p. 79).

Medlin (2006) found that his 72 homeschooled children participants had consistently higher social skills scores than those of the comparison sample of public school children, specifically finding homeschool children as more empathetic, self-controlled, cooperative, and assertive than public school children. Medlin deduced that homeschooled children had exceptional social skills. Ray (2000) found similar positive academic results in his study of 1,657 families contacted through homeschool support organizations (or personal networking) throughout the country. Homeschool students scored, on the average, at or above the 80th percentile in all areas tested. In Ray's (2010) study revisiting the matter of academic achievement, the researcher explicitly discussed the use of

home school associations to accrue participants. Ray noted that the relationships explored to help understand homeschool students' achievement involve parents' education level, family income, race/ethnicity, number of years homeschooled, time devoted to formal instruction, and homeschool regulation policies by the state. However, the relationship between support group membership and student development was left unexplored. Thus, from these data, inference allows insights that participants who come from homeschool groups experience achievement socially, emotionally, and academically, yet the connection between groups and achievement has yet to be made.

Level 2: development of homeschool groups

At the next level, studies developed the phenomenon of homeschool groups, with research indicating how membership of groups aided and facilitated home education teaching and learning. While not all of the following studies specifically stated that participants were accessed through a homeschool group, the data and findings from each of the following show that membership played an important role in families' educational structures. Furthermore, in this set of empirical research, structures of homeschool groups, how they facilitated parents, and how they were accessed are described.

Homeschool group setting and structure

Homeschool groups offer a variety of settings and frameworks for families to access resources and supports to facilitate a rich educational experience for their children. Sabol (2018) explained in a multi-case study that often, groups can be found to work out of churches, but may or may not be religiously affiliated. These settings provide a more traditional classroom experience that offers children a school-like structure. Parents are the primary instructors, teaching in areas and subjects of expertise to other group members' children and also their own. Groups offer a way for parent educators to find other families to exchange talents, knowledge, and social activities (Collom, 2005), and parental involvement can be fluid, with families moving between different groups based on their changing interests and needs (Patterson et al., 2007).

Homeschool group support

The differences between the types of groups will be described further in upcoming sections, however, essentially, whether groups are less structured or more formally run, they all provide support for home educators and educational and social experiences for children. Rathmell and Collins (2013) found that joining support groups alleviated the stress parents experience when they choose to homeschool. Through a heuristic inquiry design, the authors discovered that homeschool groups, specifically co-ops, where many extracurricular activities occurred, were a guiding source of encouragement to home educators, especially those who were

new to homeschooling. Pannone's (2017) phenomenological study exploring the experiences of new home educators also found that home educators formed groups to share resources and support each other and their children. Sabol (2018) indicated the high level of reliance parents had on homeschool groups, noting that eight of his 10 participants stated that they could not commit to homeschooling fulltime, so they had always relied on the supplemental support of homeschool groups. Support group settings and enrichment activities offer home-educated students experiences that they enjoy, which provides a win-win situation for parent and child. Because of the presence of these groups, Pannone (2017) learned from her qualitative interviews and online discussion board that new home educator mothers believed that anyone can homeschool due to the abundant amount of resources and support available in communities.

Vygotsky's (1978) and Bandura's (2003) social learning theories were used to frame Rathmell and Collins's (2013) findings of mothers joining support groups to alleviate stress. Data from the participants indicated a significant level of influence support groups had on the participants' successful experience homeschooling their children. When home educators surrounded themselves with others who were able to facilitate learning in different disciplines, the cooperative community contributed to greater learning and success (Vygotsky, 1978). Collaboration and support amongst home educators raised personal efficacy, and group members were able to model strategies for managing challenging situations (Bandura, 2003). Rathmell and Collins's participants gained strength when amongst other home educators, and this was an essential component in creating a positive educational environment for children. Undoubtedly, parents' teaching is very connected to their own learning, and they learn from one another.

Accessibility and opportunity

Home school associations are not hard to come by and can be found simply by searching for them on the Internet (Ray, 2000, 2015). Membership can move fluidly beyond a single group and physical or virtual space based on interest and needs. Groups also share knowledge about professional development opportunities and attend conferences together. Patterson et al.'s (2007) home educator participants attended annual home school conferences in other cities. Conferences provided curricula and instructional materials as well as seminars and workshops designed to develop home educators' instructional skills. These families' guiding motivations included the desire to practice responsive pedagogy and allow for multiage groupings with flexible structures and schedules that provide continuous, unlimited learning (Patterson et al., 2007; Sabol, 2018). The benefit of shared knowledge about professional learning opportunities allowed homeschool group members to strategically improve teaching and learning practices.

Levels 3 and 4: studied a homeschool group and motivations to join

Showing the deepest level of development of homeschool groups, four studies accessed and examined the charter, co-op, and hybrid model of homeschool support groups. Through his multi-case study of home educators who accessed a charter school and a homeschool co-op, Sabol (2018) was able to develop current descriptions of the differences between traditional homeschooling and the variety of contemporary models. The author noted that traditional homeschool educators select all curriculum and resources and provide most, or all, of the instruction to their children. In the traditional setting, minimal interaction takes place with other educational institutions, organizations, or groups (Sabol, 2018). Sabol found with a homeschool co-op, families collaborate and share resources and educational responsibilities, focusing on social needs and support. In the hybrid, charter, or partnership model, families work with licensed teachers along with other parents to provide more structured learning environments, while also following guidelines and policies established by the particular organization. Instructional responsibilities are shared amongst parents and staff of the organization (Sabol, 2018). While each of these models represent support groups' differences in structure and function, they also highlight commonalities of all homeschool support groups. Additionally, insight can be gained about the values, beliefs, and culture that can permeate different groups.

Co-op model

In a case study (Muldowney, 2011) examining the history and operations of a homeschool co-op in Texas, two participants designed the co-op together with the purpose of providing better instruction in certain subjects to homeschooled students than they might receive at home, with parents sharing the responsibility of teaching subjects of expertise to each other's children. Muldowney explained that a homeschool cooperative, called a co-op, is a group of homeschooling parents who have come together for the purpose of sharing teaching duties. Shared, similar values, whether those are religious, social, or academic, are identifying aspects of co-ops, built by those who formed it and supported by all who join (Muldowney, 2011). Further, homeschooling parents form co-ops for the purpose of teaching core subjects such as language arts and mathematics, electives from foreign languages to fine arts and religion, and extra-curricular activities and athletics (Muldowney, 2011). With co-ops membership, homeschooled students gain different opportunities to learn with other students and from different teachers who are usually other parents. Parental expectations vary among co-ops, but usually include teaching or assisting in the operations of the co-op in some way and sometimes paying fees for supplies and operating costs (Muldowney, 2011).

The cofounders in Muldowney's (2011) case study wanted their co-op to also be a place where homeschooled students had opportunities to learn formal school-like behaviors that are not typically practiced in the home such as raising their hands to question or comment. Another participant and member of the co-op chose to homeschool her children because military relocation caused inconsistencies in her children's educational opportunities. Religious education was important to her; thus, she found this study's Catholic co-op and found affirmation with finding other families that shared her values and beliefs.

Shared values and beliefs were essential to participants' happiness within the Muldowney's (2011) studies co-op. A participant shared that she was a member of different co-ops, but experienced disappointment because she joined the group to give her children classroom experience, but the other families did not share the particular value. She joined yet another group, but the focus was a solely religious instruction, where this parent desired academic instruction for her child. It wasn't until her third group, the one examined for Muldowney's (2011) study, that she found the balance between religious and academic instruction she sought.

The valued balance between religious and academic instruction as well as socialization for students was just one component of a complex set of values. For example, logistics of scheduling classes and maintaining routines for students were continuously open for change based on proposals from members and voting (Muldowney, 2011). Much of this co-op was run like a formal school with essential operating components such as a parent–student handbook which addressed policies such as supervision of students, illness, weather, tuition, discipline, rules and dress code. All of these policies reflected the values and beliefs on which the group was built, and for this particular co-op, it was driven by Catholic faith and the desire to provide excellent academic instruction (Muldowney, 2011).

Home-based public charter model

A southern California charter school founded by a group of home educators was the setting of Collom's (2005) study investigating parental motivations to homeschool (and join the home-based school charter) and the determinants of student achievement. At the time of this study, 15% of California charter schools relied on home-based education as students' predominant instructional method. Specific to being a charter school in California, the school in this study required its students to participate in the state's standardized testing program. Participants were 235 parents who were teachers at the charter school which served 551 students. With motivations to teach at-home homeschool often coming from parents' desire to have more time and direct influence on their children's learning and development, this kind of educational model supports this specific value. At the charter school, parents were able to offer their children

education from a variety of adults, while teaching others' children at the same site, therefore, retaining the ability to keep their own children close and strengthen family bonds through shared experiences.

Collom (2005) determined that "simplistic typologies cannot capture the complexities of homeschoolers" (p. 331). He did not want to categorize families as having either ideological or pedagogical reasons for homeschooling, yet the liberal roots of the homeschool movement are important as ever. Further, he found that the newest homeschoolers were highly motivated by academic reasons. Moreover, participants' beliefs and values leading to the decision to homeschool could be categorized into four areas: (a) critical of public schools, (b) attracted to home-based public charter, (c) ideological reasons, and (d) family and children needs. In Collom's parent survey, 16 motivations were listed asking parents to identify the importance level of each in the decision to be directly responsible for their children's education and to enroll them at the charter. Results indicated that the home-based charter was the most popular motivation and criticism of public schools was slightly lower in score.

Hybrid model

Hybrid homeschools are typically private entities with an independent board of directors. Hybrid homeschools can be considered more formal, structured versions of homeschool co-ops (Wearne, 2016). Where co-ops offer a select number of classes, hybrid schools are generally full-day schools on the days they are in session. Hybrid schools have selected curriculum, hire teachers, and set full day schedules, and generally take a more dominant role in formal teaching and learning than co-ops (Wearne, 2016). Because they are private institutions, hybrid models do not receive state funding, so they must rely on tuition, grants, and fundraising. Generally, there is an annual tuition, though some may provide a la carte services, charging by the class. Still, hybrid schools and co-ops are similar in many ways (Wearne, 2016).

Wearne's (2016) descriptive survey aimed to discover reasons parents chose to send their children to a hybrid homeschool. Participants were from four different hybrid models, all religiously affiliated. Not surprisingly, a top motivation for utilizing the hybrid homeschools was to offer children religious education. Parents also desired a better learning environment, and compared to public education, the hybrid offered smaller class sizes, a better education, more responsive teachers, respect for parental rights, and excellent peer groups. Additionally, participants stated that the hybrid model supported their home teaching because children were with others that held them accountable for their learning. Having the school outside the home influenced children's understanding of personal responsibility and how to apply it (Wearne, 2016). Wearne's findings showed that hybrid homeschool families had a tendency to value overall school structure (e.g. better learning environment, better education, etc.) over specific outcomes (e.g. higher standardized test scores, more extracurricular opportunities).

Homeschool partnerships with public education and the future

There are school districts who engage in partnerships with homeschool educators. Partnerships allow homeschool students to access classes and programs, while retaining the respect that the child's primary teacher is his or her parent (Dahlquist, York-Barr, & Hendel, 2006). Dahlquist et al. (2006) promoted the stance that public schools should adopt inclusive policies that offer a range of partnership options with homeschool families as a way to improve communication and create more responsive public spaces where responsibilities for raising the next generation are shared.

In contrast to the partnership model between homeschool families and public education, Collom (2005) noted that homeschoolers have a history of creating support groups and organizations, making the enterprise highly collective rather than individualistic. Homeschool group schools are the next logical organizational step for this movement (Lines, 2000). The participants in Patterson et al. (2007) study believed that traditional school structures were not effective or useful in homeschools. Families preferred to not be constrained by the cultural practices associated with public education, and with the educational model they lived by, they owned the insight and power to manipulate the school day, curriculum, and instructional strategies to best suit their children's and families' needs (Patterson et al., 2007).

Thomas (2016) made the connection that if home educators see value in the resources in their community, public school parents may likely feel the same way. Additionally, if homeschooling parents make educational decisions based on the goal of providing high-quality learning experiences, teaching faith, setting student goals, and meeting family needs, public school parents probably have similar desires. Can public schools provide a variety of choices parents are wanting? Is it possible for public schools to provide more customized schedules that fit the changing interests and needs of public school families? Thomas (2016) argued, after examining homeschool families' instructional decisions and motivations, that public education ought to find more ways to listen to parents' needs and understand the educational goals they have for their children.

Discussion

This systematic review of homeschooling literature had three overarching goals: (1) understand home educator reasons for joining homeschool groups; (2) discover underlying personal, social, and political beliefs on which homeschool groups are formed; and (3) unearth descriptions of culture within homeschool groups and determine if and how that culture aids the development of children. Findings suggested, just as Collom asserted at the closing of his study, that simply categorizing motivations, values and beliefs cannot

justly capture the complexity of homeschool families' decisions related to their children's education. However, consistencies were evident across studies that will be discussed here.

Reasons for joining homeschool groups

Parent educators consistently shared in the body of research that their need for support with educating their children and the desire to supplement home instruction in a flexible environment led them to seeking out homeschool groups (Pannone, 2017; Sabol, 2018). The currency of support could come in many forms, including shared teaching responsibility based on personal areas of expertise, shared resources and teaching materials, and opportunities for pedagogical development (Collom, 2005; Patterson et al., 2007). Moreover, parents' motivations extended beyond instructional needs to fulfilling social-emotional and experiential needs for their children. Just as parents need to experience camaraderie for encouragement and to build confidence (Rathmell & Collins, 2013; Sabol, 2018), they were fully aware of their children's needs to socialize with other children of all ages (Medlin, 2006). In the more formal settings of homeschool groups, children gain experiences of working with others, raising their hands (and waiting for their turn) to speak, and having accountability to adults other than their own parents (Muldowney, 2011; Wearne, 2016). The extracurricular activities homeschool groups provide are equally important and frequently accessed (Muldowney, 2011; Rathmell & Collins, 2013).

Personal, social, and political beliefs on which homeschool groups are formed

One of Muldowney's (2011) participants described her experience of changing co-ops several times because she did not share a like-mindedness with the other members about what the content or setting should be for her children. For this participant, she desired a balance between religious and academic instruction, with a focus on classroom-like settings; however, groups she joined were more informal and taught biblical stories, leading her to seek out other settings that offered a structure that suited her goals for her child. From this example, it is evident that variations of groups do exist, and they embody varying values and beliefs. If founders believe that the group should be formed in order to provide children with informal social time and bible stories, then this is how the group will operate. If founders believe in gathering experts in different areas to provide excellent and challenging academic learning opportunities for students, then the group will be driven by this value.

Elements of Morrison's (2014) conscientious objection are infused in much of the research detailed in this review, where parents shared values and beliefs related to strengthening family bonds, teaching faith, closely guided social interaction,

responsive pedagogy. They believed that public schooling cannot meet those values, thus they chose an alternative path of education, outside society's norm (Collom, 2005; Muldowney, 2011; Sabol, 2018; Wearne, 2016). Further, it was found that families do indeed resist the bureaucratic structure as Patterson et al. (2007) suggested, and this was shown through the expressed desire for flexible schedules and individually selected learning goals and curriculum (Mazama & Lundy, 2013; Ray, 2015). Additionally, Collom (2005) found that criticism of public schools was the second most popular reason for homeschooling. In contrast, some families simply chose to homeschool for pragmatic reasons similar to colonial families, because homeschool most feasibly met the needs of their way of life, such as with military families who frequently experience relocation (Muldowney, 2011). Hybrid, co-ops, and charters were formed with all of these values in mind, with special emphasis placed on each value in varying ways.

Culture within homeschool groups and the development of children

What was not found in the literature was an indication that homeschool groups embodied a culture of 'deliberate political protest' against institutionalized education that Gaither (2009) suggested could be found amongst homeschool groups. The studies found for this literature review showed that families focused on providing their children with a quality educational experience through the choice to homeschool, but shared their choices and experiences with a sense of excitement for the unbounded learning homeschool provides, reciprocity within homeschool communities, acceptance of one another, and deep familial bonds within these cultures, shown through quantitatively and qualitatively identified motivations. Further, studies whose only discussion of homeschool associations was to mention they provided participants – some of that research coming from large samples – showed that homeschool association families are not rejecting the outside world (the norm) and instead, are open to share their inner worlds and spread the knowledge, values, and beliefs they have about education in positive ways with a greater population (Maxama & Lundy, 2013; Pannone, 2017; Ray, 2000). Additionally, from these larger studies that accessed homeschool families, results made evident that homeschool children are widely successful in their academic and social development (Medlin, 2006; Ray, 2010), and while no direct relationship was found or has ever been studied, results across these studies widely indicate that affiliation with homeschool groups aids not only in children's academic and social development but in parents' as well.

Implications for future research

This systematic review found that homeschool groups play an intrinsic role in the contemporary homeschool movement. Varying models of groups offer

support to families by sharing resources, knowledge, and expertise. While commonalities exist, no single entity is alike, as any given group embodies a unique culture based on the values and beliefs of its members. To date, there is yet to be a study that specifically examines a homeschool group's permeating culture and the values and beliefs that built it. Additionally, it is unknown how a homeschool support group aids in future achievement and forming qualities of citizens in the next generation. Research addressing these gaps in knowledge is needed to better understand the impacts home education support groups have on future success, and this research could provide insight into how successful these alternative models of education really are. Furthermore, insights could offer implications for public school institutions. Children who are raised in formal public schooling may come from families who do have similar beliefs and values as homeschool families. Families who send their children to institutionalized education may benefit from many of the practices within home education support groups, associations, co-ops, charter schools, and hybrid models. Research aiming to highlight what can be gained from homeschool families' groups could offer ideas for public schools aiming to better meet their populations' changing needs.

Conclusion

The prevalence of homeschool support groups and associations is growing across the United States. Members of these groups come from a variety of backgrounds, but all have a shared interest in providing quality education for their own children. What has emerged from this like-mindedness is a movement of millions across the United States not only to educate one's own child, but to come together and form groups which lead to a greater impact on children's learning and parents' teaching. What is unforeseen still is the impact these groups are capable of having on the American educational system. Collom (2005) stated: "As people who are engaged in practices once considered marginal or alternative become more networked, their influence will grow" (p. 332). As the movement continues to grow, the values and beliefs that extend from the choice to educate alternatively may directly affect America's current model of public education, offering ways to improve the current system that benefit every family in the ever-evolving United States.

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