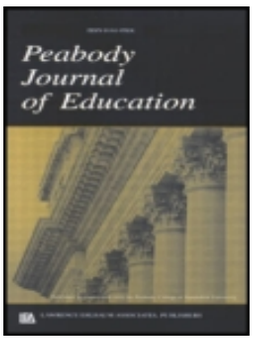

Peabody Journal of Education

ISSN: 0161-956X (Print) 1532-7930 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/hpje20

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To cite this article: Brian D. Ray (2013) Homeschooling Rising Into the Twenty-First Century: Editor's Introduction, Peabody Journal of Education, 88:3, 261-264, DOI: 10.1080/0161956X.2013.796822

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2013.796822

PEABODY JOURNAL OF EDUCATION, 88: 261–264, 2013

ISSN: 0161-956X print / 1532-7930 online
DOI: 10.1080/0161956X.2013.796822

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Homeschooling Rising Into the Twenty-First Century: Editor's Introduction

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It is easy to forget history and that thinkers holding fundamentally different worldviews have been thoughtfully critiquing institutional mass schooling for many decades (e.g., Cole, 2010; Freire, 1970; Gatto, 2001) and calling for something radically different than that which nearly 96% of all American children now experience. It is also easy to forget that institutional state schooling did not involve the majority of what are now called school-age children for most of the "school year" until after 1900 (Ray, 2012). With so many educational scholars, policymakers, journalists, and even the general public forgetting such history, it is not difficult to comprehend why the modern-day, parent-led home-based education movement—that is in many ways radically different from mainstream and institutionalized schooling, both state run and private—stirs up many a curious query, negative critique, and firm praise from those in varied walks of life.

The renascence of parent-led home-based education caused people as recently as 15 years ago to wonder whether homeschooling was just a fad. Now, having grown from nearly extinct by the 1970s to more than 2 million K-12 students (Ray, 2011), homeschooling has become a well-considered choice for mainstream America. It appears that homeschooling will be a stable, if not growing, part of the educational landscape for many years to come.

Some observers of the sudden reemergence of parent-led education (worldwide) are cheering while others are dreadfully concerned. Academics hold subtle discussions regarding the educational benefits (or detriments) of parents being the main teachers and administrators of their children's education. At the same time, policymakers, parents, and advocacy groups—and sometimes academics—get a bit feistier in their dialogues about parental and state rights and responsibilities, effects on the common or collective good, and children's welfare when the often-contentious topic of homeschooling arises.

The *Peabody Journal of Education* devoted a special double issue to homeschooling at the turn of the millennium (McDowell & Ray, 2000). This issue of the journal reviews significant research since then, presents new original research, covers a wide range of salient topics, and offers a forum for various perspectives on the value of parent-led home-based education for both individual students and society at-large.

Since the turn of the century, several changes have become apparent related to the home-schooling movement. First, this parent-led education community has continued to grow in absolute numbers and percentage of the school-age population. Second, it has broadened in

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popularity among families of varied demographic and philosophical backgrounds. Whether atheist, Christian, Jewish, Mormon, Muslim, New Age, or Roman Catholic; low, middle, or high income; unschooler, relaxed homeschooler, or structured-school-at-home educator; or Black or White, many have come together to home-based education, and the variety is more obvious online, at homeschool conferences, and in research reports. Third, concurrent with the growth of homeschooling, the overall school-reform context surrounding homeschooling has changed dramatically, with parental "choice" (e.g., charters, vouchers, magnets, theme schools, and now virtual schools) capturing much more attention nationwide than ever before (and certainly more than a decade ago). The growth in discussions of school choice often have implications for private, non-tax-funded homeschooling. Next and fourth, public schools vary across the nation in their acceptance and "partnering" with homeschoolers, but more of the public-school districts these days appear to be coming to terms with rather than fighting the home-education movement. Fifth, the old disapproving bugbear of "Are homeschooled kids learning proper social skills?" seems to have run its course, but a newer criticism is still alive and well, claiming home-educated children will not learn how to be good citizens—politically and socially—in an increasingly diverse democratic republic. Finally, some are anxious that homeschooling, as a very liberated form of private education and if considered as one of the choice-minded reforms, is being left out of most of the accountability demands (e.g., a common core curriculum, standardized test-score measures of achievement) that still characterize the public sector (including charter schools and tax-funded vouchers).

The first section of this *Peabody Journal of Education* issue presents some empirical research foundations on homeschooling. Many readers will be surprised to find that an increasing number of African American families are moving to home-based education. Cheryl Fields-Smith and Monica Wells Kisura present new research findings from two independent studies in their article "Resisting the Status Quo: The Narratives of Black Homeschoolers in Metro-Atlanta and Metro-D.C." They look for common themes from interviews with Black home educators in Metro-Atlanta and Metro-D.C., while focusing on what were the "push–pull" factors that motivated Black families to favor homeschooling their children rather than using conventional schools. Fields-Smith and Kisura find what repels these parents from public and private schools, and what attracts them into the world of homeschooling.

"What about socialization?" the question that has now been heard by millions of homeschooling parents and children in the modern era, is addressed by Richard G. Medlin in the second article in this section, "Homeschooling and the Question of Socialization Revisited." Medline defines socialization and then reviews the research on whether the home-educated are developing functional competencies in the culture in which they are growing up. Medlin has been doing research in and following this field for many years and adeptly addresses the point that many have shifted the focus of the debate about homeschooling from what it once was—a concern for the welfare of children—to a concern for the welfare of society, from a fear that homeschooled children are socially inept to a fear that they might become totally indoctrinated.

The shift in relationships between public/state schools and private homeschooling over the past 15 years is a clear and significant one. Donna M. Johnson's article "Confrontation and Cooperation: The Complicated Relationship Between Homeschoolers and Public Schools" provides a detailed history and up-to-the-minute description on this topic. She explains that whereas home educators continue to face opposition from professional educators and the organizations that advocate for them, homeschoolers have also been offered opportunities from public schools,

usually at the local school district level but sometimes as a result of a statewide law or directive. Johnson reports on the more recent phenomenon of some home educators requesting or accessing support and services from public schools, despite the fact that many homeschoolers do not think it is a good idea for the homeschooling community to participle in programs offered to them by state schools. Further, the author finds that the homeschooling movement has been instrumental in bringing about change and increased educational choice for many, not just homeschoolers.

Gene W. Gloeckner and Paul Jones provide the fourth article entitled "Reflections on a Decade of Changes in Homeschooling and the Homeschooled into Higher Education" that answers, at least partially, the question, "But how will the home educated do in college, if they can ever get there?" They look at past research and compare it to current data to assess college admissions officers' perceptions of the homeschooled and to gauge the actual performance in higher education of those who were homeschooled during their K-12 years.

In the final paper of this section, "Homeschooling Associated with Beneficial Learner and Societal Outcomes but Educators Do Not Promote It," I begin with a review of research on home-based education that addresses learner outcomes and homeschooling's effect on communities and societies, with a special focus on my most recent nationwide study. I then identify and evaluate four classes of negativity toward homeschooling and explain how and why the education profession does not promote homeschooling and often actively opposes it.

The second section of this issue provides in-depth understanding, discourse, and disputation regarding key issues surrounding homeschooling. In "Saving Democratic Education from Itself: Why We Need Homeschooling," Perry L. Glanzer explains that democratic identity and narrative function together as a religion in the United States. According to the author, there is a clear danger that such a trend also exists in educational theory and practice. He provides reasons for why a liberal democracy must nurture philosophies and practices of education that allow for a wider focus upon human flourishing and, ultimately, this is why liberal democracies need homeschooling.

Charles Howell's "Hostility or Indifference? The Marginalization of Homeschooling in the Education Profession" argues that ideological hostility does not account for the marginalization of homeschooling and that Thomas Kuhn's concept of normal science does. Among other things, Howell makes the case that the marginalization of homeschooling in academic settings is related to the fact that scientists tend to resist or dismiss competing concepts and methods. He finishes by considering whether a scientific revolution is likely in the field of educational research for the foreseeable future.

Blane Després takes a systemic-thinking approach to exploring why and how the institutional-school culture works to inhibit the growth of homeschooling in his piece entitled "A Question of Resistance to Home Education and the Culture of School-Based Education." His review of literature exposes the factors that inhibit home-education growth and greater inclusion as a legitimate education practice irrespective of credentials, prior training of teachers, or parental choice of education models. Després uses systemic thinking to offer multiple strands of understanding home education, resistance, and the role of education in culture.

"Does Homeschooling 'Work'? A Critique of the Empirical Claims and Agenda of Advocacy Organizations" by Christopher Lubienski, Tiffany Puckett, and T. Jameson Brewer is the fourth article in this section. The authors posit that the phenomenal growth of homeschooling in recent years demonstrates not only the appeal of this educational approach but the notable policy acumen of the homeschooling movement's leading advocates. Lubienski, Puckett, and Brewer examine

and critique the empirical claims made by homeschool proponents to justify further expansion and deregulation of the movement and present what they think is the homeschool advocacy agenda explicit in those claims. The authors think that homeschooling advocates would find more success arguing for greater deregulation and expansion of home education based on grounds such as the satisfaction of homeschoolers or arguments that parents have a considerable right to control the education of their children.

Michael Farris rounds out the section with "Tolerance and Liberty: Answering the Academic Left's Challenge to Homeschooling Freedom." In this article he explains that there are a growing number of academics who say homeschooling must be regulated or banned because it (e.g., Christian home-based education) is teaching children to be intolerant. Farris reasons it is ironic that the very people who advocate the curtailment of these families' religious and parental rights fancy themselves as the champions of human rights, and he thinks that these critics are anything but tolerant of Christian homeschoolers. He argues that a commitment to liberty, human rights, real tolerance, and the Constitution of the United States requires everyone to reject calls from a certain sector of the academic community who seek to curtail the freedom of Christian home educators.

As was cautiously predicted in the 2000 double issue on home education of this journal, the homeschooling movement has continued to "grow in terms of size, acceptability, and political power" (McDowell & Ray, p. 6). Although still creating angst for some scholars, educators, professional education associations, and policymakers, many of those same individuals, as well as the many families choosing and practicing it, have lauded the practice of homeschooling. Some critics think that homeschooling represents an unwanted rebirth of an age-old practice—parents being the ones in ultimate charge of their children's education. On the other hand, people from various backgrounds and occupations are confident that parent-led home-based education makes solid pedagogical and philosophical sense and that the positive outcomes (for both individuals and society at large) associated with it are no surprise (Murphy, 2012, Chapter 8). Another decade or so of study will tell us even more.

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