Article

Homeschooling the Gifted: A Parent's Perspective

Gifted Child Quarterly
57(2) 121–134

DOI: 10.1177/0016986212469999
gcq.sagepub.com
SAGE

Jennifer L. Jolly[1], Michael S. Matthews[2], and Jonathan Nester[1]

Abstract

Homeschooling has witnessed a dramatic growth over the past decade. Included in this population are gifted and talented students, yet despite this growth there has been no appreciable increase in the research literature. To better understand the gifted homeschooling family, researchers interviewed 13 parents of homeschooled children their parents identified as being gifted. Four major themes emerged from the data: (a) *parents know best*, (b) *isolation*, (c) *challenges*, and (d) *family roles*. Findings reveal that these parents decided to homeschool only after numerous attempts to work in collaboration with the public school and that the mothers bore the primary burden of responsibility for homeschooling in these families. Though the move to homeschooling alleviated many of the issues experienced in public school, it brought a different set of challenges to these families. This exploratory study establishes a better understanding of why parents of gifted children ultimately decide to homeschool.

Keywords

homeschooling, gifted, talented, parents, grounded theory

Homeschooling, once regarded primarily as an educational option for the conservative Christians who still dominate the homeschool environment, has also become an alternative for a wide range of families who have left public schooling for other (predominantly nonreligious) reasons. Gaither (2009) observes,

> . . . most who homeschool still choose this option out of frustration with or protest against formal, institutional schooling and seek to offer an alternative, usually conservative Christian . . . Yet . . . increasing numbers who opt to homeschool do so as an accessory, hybrid, temporary, stop-gap, or out of necessity given their circumstances. (p. 343)

Included in these increasing numbers are families of gifted and talented children.

Scholarship on homeschooling primarily focuses on its relationship with religion (e.g., Blackner, 1998; Kunzman, 2009; Uecker, 2008), despite the growing number of families who homeschool for nonreligious reasons. The journal *Home School Researcher* is a primary outlet for such research. Other empirical research on homeschool families of gifted children is sparse (Isenberg, 2007), and this literature is characterized by opinion pieces, practical applications based on homeschooling families' experiences, and personal accounts by homeschooling parents (e.g., Colfax & Colfax, 1988; Finn, 2007; Kearney, 1999). Curricular and instructional issues with homeschooled gifted children are examined in one dissertation (Killeen, 2000).

Based on the dearth of empirical literature on gifted homeschoolers and their families (Winstanley, 2009), the primary purpose of the present exploratory research is to set the stage for further research. We also attempt to better understand the pragmatic reasons that underlie decisions by families of gifted homeschoolers to homeschool.

Brief History of Education in the United States

Homeschooling has long been part of the fabric of American education. The history of homeschooling in the United States, though varied in type and purpose, dates back to the earliest colonial settlers; however, "there is a key difference between domestic education of past centuries and the homeschooling movement that emerged in the 1970s" (Gaither,

[1]Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA, USA
[2]University of North Carolina, Charlotte, NC, USA

*This manuscript was accepted under the previous editor, Carolyn M. Callahan.

Corresponding Author:
Jennifer L. Jolly, Louisiana State University, College of Education, Department of Educational Theory, Policy, & Practice, 223 Peabody Hall, Baton Rouge, LA 70803, USA.
Email: jjolly@lsu.edu

2009, p. 331). The American schooling experience began as homeschooling, when children were taught basic literacy and numeracy at home prior to the establishment of compulsory public schools, whereas contemporary homeschooling is considered a *movement* that is described as "both a means of educating children according to parental standards and an alternative social movement embracing a unique set of cultural norms and values" (Collom & Mitchell, 2005, p. 274).

During the colonial era and later with the expansion of the United States, the absence of a concentrated critical mass of students in a mostly agrarian society made formal schooling impractical; homeschooling was the only choice. Certain wealthy colonists, particularly in the middle and southern colonies, hired tutors. As the nation expanded, Western frontier families also homeschooled until the local population grew to the point that enough children were present to allow for the founding of permanent public school sites. Members of disenfranchised groups, such as African Americans and women, also were largely absent from formal schooling during that era and were taught at home or in secret (Gaither, 2008). From the colonial period forward to the early 19th century, the "family remained the most important agency in passing on knowledge, skills, and moral values from one generation to the next" (Katz, 1976, p. 13).

The early 1800s witnessed the initiation of state-funded compulsory public schools. A number of different factors prompted this action, including the influx of large European immigrant populations, growth of urban centers, and industrial expansion (Katz, 1976). Reformers like Horace Mann envisioned the common school as an instrument to encourage democratic patriotism and to reduce ignorance and crime. By 1890, the majority of states had compulsory attendance laws, and by the early 20th century, public schooling had become the norm rather than the exception. The original impetus for homeschooling became obsolete, as public schools became the transmitter of knowledge, skills, and even societal values and principles (Katz, 1976).

Modern homeschooling emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, especially "within the countercultural and libertarian political left" (Collom, 2005, p. 309), by individuals who sought to rebel against the establishment and bring their children's education more directly under parental control. This homeschooling movement brought the choice of curricular knowledge and skills back under parental purview, and allowed parents to provide instruction that aligned with their specific cultural and social views.

The 1980s saw the growth of a new type of homeschooler, conservative Christian families whose views fell largely on the political Right, and these families formed the population that today is most associated with the homeschooling movement. These families wanted to incorporate religious values into the curriculum and protect their children from "the secular forces of modern society" (Collom, 2005, p. 309). Although families who homeschool their children for religious reasons remain a chief segment of the homeschool population, during the past two decades, homeschool families have grown to represent a more diverse population who are disillusioned with the public school system in other ways (Isenberg, 2007). The three most important contemporary reasons for homeschooling include families who reported homeschooling for religious reasons (30%), who indicated a poor learning environment in school (31%), and who expressed dissatisfaction with the curriculum (16%; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2006). Included in this most recent surge of homeschoolers are families of gifted children, whose needs have also been overlooked in years following the No Child Left Behind legislation (Goodwin & Gustavson, 2009) due in part to the limited or nonexistent programming available for students with gifts and talents under the No Child Left Behind legislation. Other reasons likely include a more general lack of fit attributed to gifted children's asynchronous development—where academic ability far exceeds the child's social and emotional readiness (Killeen, 2000). The growth of the Internet and the opportunities it provides to network with other homeschoolers and to access online resources have also contributed to the overall growth of homeschooling (Isenberg, 2007).

The Contemporary Homeschool Population

Because of the recent growth in homeschooling rates, describing the demographic has become increasingly complex. Kunzman (2009) points out that describing "the typical homeschool family is not unlike describing the typical public school family—the range of demographics, philosophies and practices make such a generalization practically impossible" (p. 313). The state by state variability in homeschooling regulations, as is the case with gifted education regulations as well, presents additional difficulty in efforts to account for and describe homeschool children in generalized terms. Approximately 20 states have moderate to high levels of homeschooling regulations (Lips & Feinberg, 2008). In the remaining 30 states, however, homeschooling is regulated and monitored poorly, if at all. In certain cases, students are kept at home to be educated without government or researchers even being aware of their existence, a practice known as underground homeschooling (Isenberg, 2007). Population estimates range from 1 to 2 million homeschooled children, depending on the data source (Collom, 2005; Isenberg, 2007; Lips & Feinberg, 2008; NCES, 2006; Ray, 2011). How many of these homeschool children represent gifted and talented students also is unknown, and the difficulty in estimation is compounded by the fact that more than half of U.S. states do not mandate gifted education (National Association for Gifted Children [NAGC] & Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted [CSDPG], 2009). Homeschoolers are not likely a random sample of the overall school population, but rather the result of selection factors whose exact nature remains unknown. Extrapolating the current homeschool estimate to gifted and talented students, who are typically thought to

represent 5% to 7% of the school population (NAGC, n.d.) would yield an approximate estimate of 50,000 to 140,000 gifted students who are homeschooled. These estimates correspond to school districts ranging in size from Columbus, Ohio to San Diego, California, respectively.

What Research Reveals About Homeschoolers

Concerted and systematic efforts to collect data on homeschoolers are a recent occurrence. However, these data are limited and inconsistent as a result of irregular data collection, which is a direct outcome of conflicting levels of state regulation (Isenberg, 2007). The lack of large enough sample sizes to allow generalization leads the phenomenon of homeschooling to be examined predominantly through qualitative studies, and in fact these studies are much more pervasive than quantitative studies in the research literature (Isenberg, 2007).

Within this limited literature base, the most common research topic on homeschooling is the reasons parents elect to homeschool their children. Although religious reasons were the driving force behind the growth of homeschooling in the 1980s and 1990s (Bates, 1991; Bielick, Chandler, & Broughman, 2001; Grubb, 1998; Marshall & Valle, 1996; Mayberry, 1988; Morgan & Rodriguez, 1988), the shift away from religious concerns to a more general disillusionment with public education has led to greater diversity among families joining the ranks of homeschoolers. Today's homeschool families still do so not only for religious motives but also for myriad other reasons. These include the perceived negative cultural influence of the public school curriculum or the public school environment (Bates, 1991; NCES, 2006; Pitman, 1987), a desire to meet the special needs of a child or children (Lang & Liu, 1999; Mayberry, 1988), prior negative school experiences (Knowles, 1991), perceived negative peer influences in public school settings (Bates, 1991; Grubb, 1998; Marchant & MacDonald, 1994; Marshall &Valle, 1996), the desire to provide a better education (Bielick et al., 2001; Grubb, 1998; Marchant & MacDonald, 1994), and the perceived low quality of public education (Bielick et al., 2001; Grubb, 1998; Marchant & MacDonald, 1994; Pitman, 1987).

Researchers have attempted to draw homeschool populations into studies focused on parental involvement. Hoover-Dempsey and her colleagues (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2011) have developed a model of parent involvement that conceptualizes home and school involvement as the outcome of parents' motivational beliefs, their perceptions of others' invitations for involvement, and the parents' perceived life context. Motivational beliefs are based in parental role construction and self-efficacy, whereas perceived life context is based in parents' skills, knowledge, time, and energy. Invitations for involvement may come in the form of general or specific invitations from teachers and school, as well as specific invitations from the child (Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2010). These components and subcomponents are correlated with parent involvement. Hoover-Dempsey and her colleagues (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) have applied this model to homeschool families, and their findings suggest that parents of both homeschool and public school children are motivated by similar reasons to be involved in their child's education. However, differences exist between these groups of parents, including "significantly stronger efficacy, role activity beliefs, and social network beliefs" (Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2010, p. 362) on the part of homeschooling parents. The authors suggest that the differences in achievement and socialization between homeschool and public school children may be a result of these parental differences, though they note that their study sample was too small to reliably detect such associations if they were present.

Data on achievement differences of homeschoolers compared with their private- or public-school counterparts are meager. Barwegen, Falciani, Putnam, Reamer, and Stair (2004) found that ACT scores for homeschoolers were significantly higher when compared with the national average. However, when students' perceived high parental involvement was considered, ACT scores were comparable with those of homeschoolers. Rudner (1999) reported that homeschoolers scored higher on standardized tests across grade levels when compared with public/private school students. Both Barwegen et al. and Rudner caution the reader that their comparisons should be tempered because homeschool subjects in these studies are not representative of a cross-section of the total homeschool population and because both studies lacked control groups.

The shortage of research regarding homeschoolers is compounded when subpopulations within this group are considered. The majority of the literature on homeschooled gifted children can be classified as think pieces or as anecdotal experience that lacks an empirical foundation (e.g., Finn, 2007). Therefore, the purpose of this exploratory study was to learn about parents' perceptions of homeschooling their gifted children. Specifically, we addressed two research questions: (a) What factors contribute to parents' decision to homeschool? (b) What are parents' lived experiences with homeschooling?

Method

Participants

Parents of homeschooled gifted children initially responded to a survey administered in 2009. The two lead authors began this line of inquiry with a 37-item survey designed to learn more about the characteristics and perceptions of parents whose children were identified as academically gifted. Survey participants were solicited through a variety of outlets including electronic mailing lists and discussion forum

Table 1. Homeschool Family Demographics.

Characteristic	Interview pool (n = 54)	Interviewed (n = 13)
Ethnicity	50 White 4 "Other"	13 White
Gender	44 Female	1 Male[a] 12 Female
Education	28 Graduate degrees 21 Bachelor's degrees 5 High school diploma	5 Graduate degrees 8 Bachelor's degree
Mother's birthplace	4 Canada 1 Russia 49 United States	13 United States
Family Status	2 Single-parent households 51 Two-parent households 1 Not responding	13 Two-parent households
U.S. states represented	Arizona (1), Arkansas (1), California (6), Colorado (1), Connecticut (1), Florida (2), Georgia (1), Idaho (2), Illinois (2), Kansas (1), Louisiana (1), Maryland (2), Minnesota (4), Missouri (1), Nebraska (1), New Mexico (1), North Carolina (4), Ohio (2), Oregon (4), Texas (5), Virginia (1), Washington (3). Balance (7) entered incompletely.	Arkansas (1), California (2), Florida (1), Illinois (1), Maryland (1), Minnesota (1), Ohio (1), Oregon (1), North Carolina (2), Texas (2)

[a]Female survey respondent referred us to her husband for the interview.

postings by gifted education advocacy organizations; direct contact with parents of the gifted; systematic contact with all parents of the gifted in a given classroom or school by their gifted education teachers, in both high- and low-socioeconomic status (Title I) schools; and dissemination in newsletters and through direct electronic mailings by parent groups to their members.

In response, we received 987 valid responses over a 3-month period from respondents, many of whom who belonged to gifted parent groups, forums, advocacy organizations, or electronic mailing lists. Among these respondents, 85 (11%) reported having homeschooled at least one gifted child during the 2008-2009 school year. Results from this initial survey were disseminated at national and international education meetings in 2009-2010 and through published articles (Garn, Matthews, & Jolly, 2012).

One survey question asked parents whether they would be willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview. Approximately 27% of all parents who responded to the survey also agreed to be interviewed and provided contact information. Among all respondents who volunteered to be contacted (N = 265), 44 respondents reported a homeschool setting for educating their gifted children. This means that homeschool parents were somewhat more willing to be interviewed (52%), in comparison with parents who reported that their child attended a private or public school (23%). For the current study, we sought to contact and interview the 44 parent respondents who reported homeschooling at least one of their children. We selected these respondents using purposeful sampling because of "what could be learned" from these particular families regarding their homeschool experience (Moore, Lapan, & Quartaroli, 2012, p. 253).

While some parent contact information was no longer current or parent schedules did not allow for an interview in the time frame available, 13 interviews ultimately were completed (29.5%), representing 12 mothers and 1 father. Respondents represented all four regions of the United States. These parents represented 22 children, including 14 males and 8 females who ranged in age from 5 to 22 years. Demographic data and other sample characteristics are summarized in Table 1 and geographic representation of the 44 initial volunteers is depicted graphically in Figure 1 (representation of those completing interviews is not reported to protect these parents' privacy).

Procedures

Research assistants with training and experience teaching gifted students attempted to contact all 44 respondents, set up interview times at each participant's convenience via e-mail or by telephone, and provided an initial orientation to the interview as a part of the informed consent process. The research assistants completed the interviews via telephone within 5 days of the initial contact. The semistructured interviews (Creswell, 2007) included 19 related questions (see the appendix). Questions were developed by the first two authors to address topics identified through a systematic review of the scholarly literature (Jolly & Matthews, 2012) on both homeschooling and giftedness. These questions

Figure 1. Map depicting spatial distribution of 44 homeschool parents who volunteered to be interviewed in response to the initial parent survey.

addressed parents' description of their children's abilities, their experiences with public or private schools, and their perceptions of challenges in their homeschooling efforts (see the appendix).

Research Design

A phenomenological approach guided this study (Moustakas, 1994). This approach focuses on gaining understanding by investigating how individuals feel, interpret, and make meaning of their experiences with a specific phenomenon. In these cases, parents already had made the choice to homeschool their children and to live the homeschooling experience that followed their decision. Our goal, therefore, was to gain a better understanding of the feelings that led parents to homeschool their gifted child(ren) and to highlight these parents' lived realities of the homeschooling experience. As a part of this process, the authors searched for common themes expressed in parent narratives using a grounded theory approach.

Researcher as Instrument

Because we followed a phenomenological and grounded theory approach in this study, it was important for researchers to recognize and confront their personal biases toward homeschooling in order to represent the parents' experiences authentically (Patton, 2002). No members of the research team had ever been homeschooled, though one had a younger sister who had been homeschooled successfully for 1 year. Initial discussion among the research team highlighted the following viewpoints/biases, though not all viewpoints were shared by all team members: (a) a general skepticism toward the proliferation of homeschooling, (b) the thought that some gifted children may benefit greatly from homeschooling, (c) the knowledge that quality homeschooling is highly dependent on the resources/environment that parents provide/create, and (d) the possibility that gifted children who are homeschooled may need to seek out specific opportunities for social integration with their peers. Furthermore, we recognized that the authors are both educators of teachers of the gifted, which potentially could create bias. We reflected on our biases and viewpoints prior to, during, and following data collection and analysis to ensure that to the extent possible we would convey an accurate voice of the parents involved in this study.

Data Analysis

Inductive analysis and constant comparison were used to generate higher order themes (Patton, 2002). This process began with research assistants conducting and then transcribing interviews verbatim. To help establish trustworthiness, all participants were asked to conduct a member check of the transcriptions of their respective interviews (Maxwell, 1992). Seven of the 13 participants made minor edits to

clarify meaning during the member check process. The two primary researchers then read the transcripts independently to gain a holistic perspective of their content. Next, the two primary researchers independently reread the transcripts and attached meaning units to the transcripts on a line-by-line basis. This was done inductively, wherein no predetermined categories guided the process. The two primary researchers then compared their meaning units in an iterative process, until reaching agreement on four initial categories of the analysis. The following step consisted of organizing these categories into a data base (i.e., quotes with the same category were placed together) and investigating patterns across categories. Patterns were compared, discussed, and refined by the researchers until consensus emerged regarding higher order themes.

Results

Four themes emerged from the data. These include *parents know best* in relation to interpreting their child's giftedness, the decision to homeschool, and curricular choices; *isolation* from larger groups and its impact on both parent and child; *challenges* resulting from homeschooling, which included transitioning, balancing familial needs, and the cost and knowledge needed to access curricula and other educational resources; and *family roles* in terms of both who will be in charge of delivering homeschooling instruction and the personal duty of the child to carry out his or her work. Representative data are reported verbatim below, using pseudonyms to identify respondents. We selected quotes that, in our judgment, best represented the sentiments expressed in each of the themes we identified.

Parents Know Best

Parents know best describes parents' interpretation of their child's giftedness, the decision to homeschool, and programming and curricular choices. Parents arrived at each of these decisions after much thought and careful consideration, always centered on their child's best interests and needs.

Interpretation of giftedness. A parent's decision to interpret his or her child's giftedness was described as the first step on the road to homeschooling. Parents' interpretation of their child's giftedness influenced how they perceived the success or failure of a particular school environment to meet their child's unique academic needs. Whether their child(ren)'s giftedness was perceived to be global, manifested in specific content areas, or manifested as the child's qualitative differentness in both academic and social realms, remaining in traditional private or public school no longer made sense for the child or the family.

Adrienne (all pseudonyms were selected by the respondents) described the complexity in trying to understand her children's giftedness:

> I have three children and all three, we have had some professional testing with them and all three test in the gifted range. And now, having said that, it gets a little bit murkier after that depending on who is doing the defining. . . . The younger son is only 12 and we don't have a firm grasp on what his area of strength is. It appears he also is going to be gifted in the math and science area. However, since we started down this road with the elder boy, then I [am] no longer thrilled or in awe by testing nor by the label. And so . . . we stopped being worried about such things and decided to just live life. (Individual interview, July 24, 2010)

In another case, Lisa revealed that her three children,

> are all gifted in the areas of math and science, and logic . . . If you look at their standardized tests, such as the SAT-10 tests, they are pretty much across the board in the 98th percentile . . . however the language [score] is what would be at the 90th percentile. (Individual interview, July 21, 2010)

As a result of such identification, certain expectations for their children's abilities and school performance arose. Based on her son's gifted identification in mathematics, Karen noted, "Math and science he does extremely well and doesn't need a lot of help" (Individual interview, July 23, 2010). Parents' understanding of their children's gifted identification factored deeply into decisions made thereafter regarding their children's educational options.

Decision to homeschool. The eventual decision to homeschool only occurred after these families worked with public and/or private schools in an attempt to have their child's academic and social needs met; only one family had homeschooled their child from the beginning. Among the other 12 families, 3 children had experienced success to a point in traditional schools, but there came a time where their parents decided that not enough growth had been made in the traditional school setting. The remaining nine parents reported that they witnessed relatively little or no academic growth of their children in the traditional school environment. Even when gifted services were available, these were perceived to be inadequate. The traditional school environment simply did not align with what parents believed schooling should be for their children.

The majority of the parents in this study homeschooled only after multiple failed attempts to find satisfaction with public schools, in those schools offering gifted programming/services and those without them. Sybil explained,

> Sitting down and writing . . . was really not interesting to him, and so it was painful and slow and [he] would end up writing far below his ability just because that was uninteresting to him. (Individual interview, July 21, 2010)

The teacher in this particular case also was unwilling to allow the student to type his work, and as a consequence, Sybil stated, "his learning began to stagnate."

Lisa's children were enrolled at a school that had gifted programming. She explained,

> . . . [it was] a pull-out program . . . they did look forward to it just because it actually was something interesting, but it didn't help their education . . . and [they] were just terribly, terribly bored. So in a way it was almost more difficult because they got a taste of something a little more interesting, but then they had to go back to the original classroom. (Individual interview, July 21, 2010)

Janet described,

> . . . we put them in what we thought was "the school," but we figured out that they were simply being taught to memorize material and take a test . . . they weren't learning in a way that we thought would help them in the world. (Individual interview, July 24, 2010)

The decision to homeschool resulted from these parents' recognition that their child/children's progress in school had stagnated or in some cases even regressed, in relation to the potential and learning expectations that their gifted identification status had implied.

Programming and curricula. Once the decision to homeschool was made, the real work of homeschooling began in locating appropriate programming and curricula. Interestingly, most families did not have backgrounds in education, and they relied on other homeschool families or on trial and error to find curriculum that best fit their children's needs. Twelve out of the 13 families described an eclectic approach (NCES, 2006) to providing curricula, whereas the remaining family was comfortable with a prepackaged curriculum. Most families considered the interests and ability of their child and family resources when cobbling a curriculum together, to provide the individualized learning and challenge that was lacking in the child's prior learning environment(s) in the traditional school setting.

Parents used a variety of strategies to develop relevant curriculum for their children. Mindy described her approach, saying

> I do use elements of other curriculum packages either as a spine or as just sort of guidance or sometimes I will try it out for a while . . . most of the things that I find and buy get recommended through a group of homeschool families. (Individual interview, July 17, 2010)

Pam sought to tailor her daughter's curriculum around interest, noting,

> . . . we did a more eclectic way. Like my daughter was very interested in all things Russian, so one year we did, [her instruction so that] every part of our school program other than math and science was related to Russian literature . . . history . . . the arts. (Individual interview, July 18, 2010)

Parents also relied on a network of personal relationships. As Karen explained,

> with math, he takes mathematics through Stanford University's Education Program for Gifted Youth. Spanish, we hire a tutor that comes in once a week. Physics, he has a physicist at the University of Texas that he can e-mail his questions. We take him up to Texas A&M for physics seminars. I try to make use of the experts I have access to. (Individual interview, July 23, 2010)

As these statements show, homeschooling can offer the quintessential differentiated education. Parents, drawing from their own resources and a network of other homeschool families, fashion an educational strategy that is closely tailored to the ability and interest profile of their children.

Isolation

Child's isolation. According to parents, both children and their parents reported experiencing a sense of isolation. Children often were described as having been an outsider while attending public or private school, sometimes feeling this severely enough to have led to stress-related illnesses. Their sense of isolation sometimes did not abate with homeschooling, and in a few cases, it even intensified, which parents attributed to issues of asynchronous development. Pam noted,

> My oldest [12 years old] does not have friends and that is an ongoing issue. . . . It's hard to find friends who can keep up with her and challenge her mentally, much less share her passions. I am trying to find older friends for her—but then they are not always so nice, due to the age and social issues. (Individual interview, July 18, 2010)

Grace revealed, "[my son] doesn't have somebody he interacts with every day . . . he feels isolated. He doesn't have the chance to build the social network that he would have if he were averagely intelligent" (Individual interview, July 20, 2010). Janet observed,

> . . . and my two younger children for example did not want to play, just sort of what I would call freestyle, playing and running like other children did. They saw no point in it. And they would ask what other children were doing and why they were doing that. And then they would say, well, that's stupid. (Individual interview, July 24, 2010)

For these families, issues of asynchronous development remained even when the everyday experience of being misunderstood in traditional school settings was mostly eliminated by the change to the homeschool setting. Still, for these parents, identifying engaging intellectual and social peers for their children continued to present a challenge.

Parental isolation. Parents themselves reported feeling isolated, both from mainstream parents whose children attended public schools and from other parents within the homeschool community. This isolation was due both to their child's gifted status and to their nonreligious motivations for homeschooling. In discussing their child's giftedness, some parents felt judged by other parents as if they were boasting, and consequently these parents tended to either avoid the topic or use alternative vocabulary to describe their child's advanced academic abilities (Jolly & Matthews, in preparation).

Some elements of the homeschool community do not appear to have embraced the subpopulations of gifted homeschoolers or their parents. As Barbara expressed it,

> . . . what I've found is you can brag about your child if they are good at art, or you can brag about your children if they are a star football player, but if you brag about your child being smart, that's not really accepted. (Individual interview, July 20, 2010)

Lisa reiterated this sentiment, saying "people accept the fact that kids are good at sports, but don't want to hear that kids are really smart" (Individual interview, July 21, 2010). Sybil commented,

> . . . the first line of defense is don't talk about it . . . I can't even discuss him with parents of [other] highly gifted kids . . . they don't get the 2e [twice-exceptional] part and so they just think, like everyone else, they just want to say they are not gifted. (Individual interview, July 21, 2010)

Mindy described the complexity of the situation, saying,

> the vast majority of home-school support groups are Christian based. As a non-religious family—we have had to "hide" our true identities to blend into the local support group. We are a minority within a minority: 1) we homeschool, 2) my girls are gifted, 3) we are not religious. This leads to a sense of being the only ones like us. (Individual interview, July 17, 2010)

These parents generally did not belong to organizations that support gifted children. This situation is fueled by differing priorities and by the perceived lack of relevance for families of gifted children who homeschool. Mindy noted, "I think of them [organizations] as being pretty school specific. I think of advocacy as being advocating in schools, and that's not going to specifically help me in my task at hand" (Individual interview, July 17, 2010). Maryanne elaborated,

> if people have moved to homeschooling out of frustrations with what the system was doing, they are not as invested in trying to change the public school system. Another [reason] would be that the organizations . . . looking to advocate or promote gifted education aren't geared toward the homeschool population. (Individual interview, July 22, 2010)

As Pam stated perhaps more bluntly, "most such organizations do not offer much of value to the homeschooling parent" (Individual interview, July 18, 2010). Grace also felt that these organizations did not address her constituencies, saying,

> it just seems like they are advocating for funding that isn't necessarily impactful [sic] for the local school community and . . . I don't feel there's much connection between the advocacy work that they do and what is happening in school . . . I don't feel like the gifted organizations are willing to really address the kids who are extremely gifted. (Individual interview, July 20, 2010)

The families of these homeschoolers generally do not report seeking out help or resources from mainstream organizations that support gifted learners. From their comments, it appears that they perceive a disconnect between the mission of these organizations and the needs of homeschooling families of the gifted.

Challenges

In depicting the many aspects of homeschooling, parents described incidences and situations that emoted the idea of challenge. These struggles encompassed a wide range and diverse combinations of issues including transitions, family focus, lack of resources, stressors, and motivation.

Transitioning. Despite the opportunity to take control of their child's educational and social and emotional needs, the initial transition to homeschooling was met with some barriers. Most transition issues dissipated within the first year, as new roles emerged for both mother and child(ren). However, some parents encountered lingering problems that they continued to struggle with.

Paula explained, "transitioning into homeschooling and the difficulty there was becoming more self-motivated and

simply adjusting to having . . . the mom factor in homeschooling . . . that was a new role for both of us" (Individual interview, July 19, 2010). Grace noted, "we had problems with him taking correction from me. . . . It's very difficult being around each other 24 hours a day sometimes" (Individual interview, July 20, 2010). Karen emphasized, ". . . he was happy to be home. It was more of an adjustment for me [the mother], I think" (Individual interview, July 23, 2010). Barbara described,

> The first year was probably the most difficult. . . . So the biggest challenge was the fact that they were being challenged . . . especially for my oldest. . . . He felt like this wasn't good because it was really hard. (Individual interview, July 20, 2010)

The transition to homeschooling presented challenges for both mother and child. As with most other situations that require change, an adjustment period was necessary.

Balance with other family members. In families with more than one child ($n = 7$), finding the right balance to address needs of different individuals within the family was problematic for some families. Sybil explained her family's situation as "balanc[ing] his education with the needs of our daughter who needs intensive physical, occupational, and speech therapy" (Individual interview, July 21, 2010). Mindy noted, "I have a 6 year age gap between my kids, so it's very hard for me to do things, to be present full time with both of my kids because they have such different needs" (Individual interview, July 17, 2010). Christine reflected that

> . . . we had to make adjustments, you know, how are all the other kids [in the family] who are moving up, because I am not in school to work with them either and that's something I really wanted to do. (Individual interview, July 23, 2010)

Families having multiple children with diverse needs presented an ongoing challenge for parenting, typically handled by the mother. Reaching an equilibrium that would meet these needs was not always possible, and these mothers felt pulled in various directions.

Cost and access. With the majority of these homeschooling families relying on one income from the father only, how monetary funds were used to access curriculum and other activities was an overarching consideration. Despite a growing number of online options, parents continued to seek out opportunities for their gifted child to be around peers who would be matched both intellectually and socially to their child.

Bob, the only father interviewed, said "Cost is definitely a factor. We also live in a semi-rural area and there are lots of things that we might like to do. . . . So distance is a factor for us also" (Individual interview, July 20, 2010). Mindy related that "a pretty high percentage of our money goes towards our homeschooling . . . we spend a fair amount of our disposable income on educational things" (Individual interview, July 17, 2010). Christine phrased this concern as

> . . . you don't want to go out there and spend the money and make the commitment. So to me that's probably the most aggravating, and then in my case, having three kids who are different situations also can be a challenge. (Individual interview, July 23, 2010)

Lisa described her family's approach as "we try to present the children with as many options as possible, based on what's available. We go through it with them and let them choose one or two activities depending on the cost" (Individual interview, July 21, 2010).

Parents weighed several factors when trying to access curriculum and enrichment opportunities for their children. Cost was a defining factor in this decision-making process.

Family Roles

Because of the nature of homeschooling, the parent at home during the day bears the majority of responsibility for their child's learning. Parents, particularly mothers, were responsible for the majority of organization, coordination, and implementation of homeschooling curriculum. Mothers also assumed the responsibility for arranging extracurricular activities, finding social peers for their child, carrying out regular household duties, and in three cases also working part-time from home. If mothers had worked outside the home prior to homeschooling, refashioning their own life also became a consideration. Maryanne described these multiple roles, saying,

> I wear a lot of hats. . . . I'm a preacher's wife, I practice law. I've written a book. I had a child who was being homeschooled, elderly parents. So yes, I have some issues [about] whether in my own life I take enough time for my friends and do enough social things. (Individual interview, July 22, 2010)

Karen felt that homeschooling was a good fit for her family, but explained,

> I have struggled with having to give up my career in order to homeschool my son. I spent many years earning a Ph.D. in order to be a research scientist. I really loved my work and had invested a lot of time and energy, so I had a hard time walking away from it. (Individual interview, July 23, 2010)

Sybil offered a similar sentiment, saying,

> I have basically given up balancing my own life to homeschool my kids. Quite honestly, I left my career and I miss that enormously and am struggling to figure out how I am ever going to get back to that after taking a ten year hiatus. But that's a big price right there but [it] is what has made it all possible. (Individual interview, July 21, 2010)

Although fathers' monetary contributions made homeschooling possible, the mothers ultimately were the driving force behind day-to-to-day homeschool operations.

Discussion

In this article, we considered factors that contribute to parent's decisions to homeschool and parents' subsequent lived experiences with homeschooling. Choice seems to be a logical and overarching theme in homeschooling. Perceptions of a lack of choice in traditional school settings is what many of these parents reported as having pushed them to homeschool in the first place. The choices homeschooling allowed provided these parents with a sense of order and empowerment, as they were now in greater control of their child's academic future. If a curriculum was not working for their child, homeschooling gave them the freedom to adjust the curriculum as needed rather than being tied to a set, prepaced curriculum in the traditional school setting. Interestingly, "choice" was not a major theme in the parental motivation framework described by Hoover-Dempsey and her colleagues (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2010). Considered within these authors' schema, the emphasis placed on choice by parents in the current study likely would fall within the broader heading of parental self-efficacy beliefs. Specifically, choice appears to be an important aspect of parents' underlying belief that they are able to help their child succeed. Simultaneously, the fact that these parents have sufficient resources to homeschool one or more of their children also falls within the category of life context variables, which Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler identify as including parent's skills, knowledge, time, and energy; in the absence of sufficient levels of these resources, homeschooling their children would not be possible.

Dissatisfaction with the learning environment at school was another factor that affected parents' decisions to homeschool. These parents felt that the unique learning needs of their gifted children were not being met properly and therefore homeschooling was a better option. Previously researchers have highlighted gifted parents' dissatisfaction with the learning environment at schools. For example, Garn, Matthews, and Jolly (2010) reported that gifted parents often view the learning environment at school as unchallenging and unmotivating. Although the parents in the Garn et al. (2010) study did not make the decision to homeschool, they did report modifying homework and changing assignments to better meet the learning needs of their gifted children. In both cases, parents of gifted students determined that (a) they were the best judge of their gifted child's learning needs, (b) schools were ineffective at meeting these learning needs, and (c) change needed to occur. Creating a better learning environment for their children was a strong motivator for parents to make the switch from traditional schooling to homeschooling. Although it is unclear whether the gifted students' learning needs were better met in the home, these parents believed that this was the case.

As a side effect of creating a better learning environment, parents of homeschooled children reported a sense of isolation not only for themselves but also for their children. When participating in homeschool co-ops or group functions, families of gifted children often found that families of nongifted children could not relate to their children's unique academic needs or had opted to homeschool based on religious rather than solely academic reasons. In either case, families of the gifted felt exiled from the mainstream homeschool population. Parents of gifted homeschoolers' continued decision to homeschool illustrates that learning needs were given preference over the children's social needs, contradicting findings in prior literature that support that gifted students are generally capable of making and keeping friends (Lee, Olszewksi-Kubilius, & Thomson, 2012).

These parents' internal debate about whether to disclose or not disclose their child's gifted label was motivated by the need to protect their child/children from undue scrutiny and negative opinions, which they believed other parents would express regarding their child's academic giftedness. Interestingly, Ice and Hoover-Dempsey (2010) reported that homeschooling parents believed their children to have stronger proximal achievement outcomes (i.e., attributes such as intrinsic motivation, use of self-regulatory strategies, and academic self-efficacy, which lead to increased achievement), in comparison with parents whose children attended public schools. Students' self-reported ratings in the same study did not show this difference. Because formal documentation of achievement or gifted status was not possible within the present study, and because prior findings also have been based on self-report measures, empirical examination of these potential differences in student achievement and in proximal achievement factors seems warranted in future research.

Despite these parents' attempts to remove their child from a potentially isolating situation in the traditional school setting, homeschooling continued to present instances of isolation. Social groups of peers that "got" their child were not readily available, even within groups of other homeschooled children, due to the heterogeneous ability levels within the homeschool groups. Parents' options included either forcing their children into social situations, or letting them chart the course on their own. Parents, likewise, generally did not find peers within groups of local homeschool parents; most other parents in these groups homeschooled for far different reasons, furthering the sense of isolation parents of gifted learners reported. This suggests that these parents found it difficult to access supports within either the gifted or homeschool education communities.

That the responsibility of homeschooling was placed primarily on mothers is undeniable; homeschooling necessarily limits the time devoted to activities outside the home, and in some cases mothers relinquished their own careers in order to fulfill their self-imposed responsibility for fostering their child's academic development. This finding is in agreement with previous research indicating that mothers in homeschooling families bear both the responsibility for instruction and the responsibility for maintaining their household (Ray, 1997). Their comments suggest that despite the difficulties these parents reported, they believed that homeschooling their child was an important responsibility that was worth the sacrifices it entailed in terms of choice, isolation, and responsibility.

Conclusions

It is important to learn more about parents' perceptions because these perceptions can have a reciprocal influence on the special instructional programming students receive in schools. In other words, for an area like gifted education, in which identification and services lack a federal mandate, parental and public support often can be the deciding factor in whether any special programming for academically gifted learners is offered in the public school setting. If large numbers of parents of gifted learners move their children to private or homeschool settings, and if these parents also avoid participating in organizations that advocate for gifted education services (as parents reported in the current study), the number of parents remaining to support gifted programming could dwindle to the point of becoming ineffectual. This erosion of public support is a crucial yet often-overlooked aspect of the larger issue of providing a free and appropriate public education for all students.

Limitations

This study faces many of the same limitations as most previous studies on homeschooling. Though there was no discernable geographic bias among our survey respondents, the sample size was limited, so sampling and response biases whose precise nature is unknown may have influenced the degree to which the outcomes we have observed with these parents may be generalized to other families of academically gifted learners in the homeschool setting. These learners' gifted status was self-reported, which we felt was appropriate for the original survey; although all were located in the United States, many respondents may hail from locales where gifted identification is not mandated in the public schools (i.e., approximately 30 of the 50 U.S. states; see NAGC & CSDPG, 2009). Though unfortunate from a researcher's point of view, there appears to be no systematically collected, national data available about students with gifts and talents or their families. The limitations due to a lack of systematic data collection also apply to homeschool populations, compounding the unavailability of larger sample sizes for study. Results from homeschool populations and their families, though suggestive, may remain ungeneralizable because of small sample sizes.

Finally, as a qualitative study that used a semistructured interview design, our choice of interview questions was based on our own unique understanding of the literature on this topic; other scholars might have developed different questions based on their understandings of the same body of work. However, because there is so little research available about homeschool students in general, and particularly about students with gifts and talents in this setting, we believe that our efforts may help in developing a preliminary picture of these learners and their family environments.

Implications and Directions for Future Study

This study offers a descriptive window into the perceptions of parents who have made the difficult decision to pull their children out of public education. We believe that these results inform not only gifted education practitioners but also larger issues about the appropriate role of public education in a democratic society. Our data also offer a unique insight into what some mothers forfeit in terms of their own career in order to homeschool their children; this topic merits further investigation.

We believe that our findings point toward a new stream of research for the field of gifted education. Contributing to a homeschool population that grows at a yearly average of 2.5% to 3.0%, approximately 650,000 students left public and private education over a recent 8-year period (NCES, 2009). This forecast suggests that the number of homeschooled gifted children will continue to increase, eventually providing a critical mass of students and their families from which researchers can learn and thereby can inform educators and others about how traditional schools can more effectively meet the needs of these learners.

Current education reform movements focusing on school choice also are influencing the movement away from traditional neighborhood schools. School choice programs are intended to expand the educational options for children and their families who attend low-performing or failing schools. These options may include charter schools, magnet schools, private schools, homeschools, and supplemental educational services (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Coupled with the elimination of the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act in 2011 and the reduction and/or removal of gifted programming in districts across the country due to the shrinking budgets of public schools, we suspect that many more families of gifted children will be pushed to seek alternative educational programming that may include homeschooling. This virtually unknown yet growing group of children and families should intrigue both educators and researchers. Will gifted homeschool families evolve from the fringe to the mainstream? What types of partnerships can be built between public schools and homeschoolers? How can advocacy organizations be more

responsive to gifted homeschoolers and their families? Questions such as these offer fertile ground for future study.

What is conspicuously absent from the literature on families and gifted children, including those of homeschooled children, are studies that include in-home observations. For homeschooled children, the parent–child dynamic involves the confluence of parenting skills with educational practices, specifically teacher–student interactions. The current study offers a starting point for future research about parents, parenting, education, and the schools, as they relate specifically to the unique needs of gifted and high-ability youth.

Future study also should investigate in greater depth the themes of choice, isolation, and responsibility that our interviewees identified, and should endeavor to situate these parents' views within existing theoretical frameworks of parental involvement. Though it is interesting to speculate about how (and whether) views differ among parents who homeschool for academic rather than religious reasons, and how their child(ren)'s academic ability and their perceptions about it may influence these parents' decision-making processes, ultimately more study is needed to provide meaningful answers to these questions.

Appendix

Homeschool Parent Interview Questions

1. Please describe briefly for me the areas in which your child's ability or achievement are in the gifted range, however you define it:
   a. Describe a typical day after school in your child's life. What does he or she do?
   b. How do you and your child choose which activities to participate in? Does cost (in time or money) factor into these decisions?
2. Did your child's public school offer any services for academically gifted students? If so, were the services unsatisfactory in some way? For example, did the school disagree with a placement decision; refuse to grade skip, and so on? Or were there simply no services from the start?
3. When did your child begin homeschooling or private school? Has your child experienced any difficulties in adjusting either to his or her current or prior educational setting?
4. How long did you persist in working with the public schools before opting out in favor of home school or private school?
5. What would it take for you to return your child to public school?
6. Please tell me about where you find your homeschooling curriculum; is it prepackaged, or do you develop it, or is it a combination of these?
   a. Very few of our survey respondents were members of local, state, or national organizations that advocate for gifted education. Why do you suppose this is? Do you belong to any homeschooling organizations, or work with services such as a co-op, online school, and so on?
   b. How do you (would you) address content knowledge when it goes beyond your own?
7. What is the greatest challenge you face in your child's education?
8. Some parents who responded to our survey mentioned motivation as an important issue:
   a. What approaches would you use to motivate your gifted child if you observed a lack of motivation in a particular subject, or on a particular assignment?
   b. What types of help, if any, do you give your child with homework?
9. I'd like to ask you a few questions about sources of stress in your life:
   c. What concerns (if any) do you have in relation to balancing academic and nonacademic priorities in your child's life?
   d. Do you have any similar concerns about balancing work and family priorities in your adult life?
   e. What other stressors in your life influence your child's academic performance?
10. Among our survey respondents from two-parent households, mothers outnumbered fathers by nearly 10 to 1. If you have two parents in your household, how do you divide the responsibility for your child/children's education between you and your spouse? Why?
11. The gifted label can be a sensitive topic in some circles. How do you approach discussions of your gifted child's needs when talking with other parents whose children have not been identified as academically gifted?
12. What else would you like us to know about your experiences as the parent of an academically gifted learner who is not attending public school?

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

Barwegen, L. M., Falciani, N. K., Putnam, S. J., Reamer, M. B., & Stair, E. E. (2004). Academic achievement of homeschool and public school students and student perception of parent involvement. *School Community Journal*, *14*, 39-58.

Bates, V. L. (1991). Lobbying for the Lord: The new Christian right home-schooling movement and grassroots lobbying. *Review of Religious Research*, *33*, 3-17.

Bielick, S., Chandler, K., & Broughman, S. P. (2001). *Homeschooling in the United States: 1999*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Blackner, D. (1998). Fanaticism and schooling in the democratic state. *American Journal of Education*, *2*, 242-272.

Colfax, D., & Colfax, M. (1998). *Homeschooling for excellence*. New York, NY: Warner Books.

Collom, E. (2005). The ins and outs of homeschooling: The determinants of parental motivations and student achievement. *Education and Urban Society*, *37*, 307-335. doi:10.1177/0013124504274190

Collom, E., & Mitchell, D. E. (2005). Home schooling as a social movement: Identifying the determinants of homeschoolers' perceptions. *Sociological Spectrum*, *25*, 273-305.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Finn, K. (2007). Homeschooling with profoundly gifted children. In K. Kay, D. Robson, & J. F. Brenneman (Eds.), *High IQ kids* (pp. 179-185). Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.

Gaither, M. (2008). *Homeschool: An American history*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gaither, M. (2009). Homeschooling in the USA. *Theory and Research in Education*, *7*, 331-346. doi:10.1177/1477878509343741

Garn, A. C., Matthews, M. S., & Jolly, J. L. (2010). Parental influences on the academic motivation of gifted students: a self-determination theory perspective. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *54*, 263-272. doi:10.1177/0016986210377657

Goodwin, C., & Gustavson, M. (2009). Gifted homeschooling in the United States. *NAGC Magazine, Spring*, 26-28.

Green, C. L., & Hoover-Dempsey, K. V. (2007). Why do parents homeschool? A systematic examination of parental involvement. *Education and Urban Society*, *39*, 264-285. doi:10.1177/0013124506294862

Grubb, D. (1998, November). *Homeschooling: Who and why?* Paper presented at the meeting of Mid-South Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (1995). Parental involvement in children's education: Why does it make a difference? *Teachers College Record*, *97*, 310-331.

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Walker, J. M. T., Sandler, H. M., Whetsel, D., Green, C. L., Wilkins, A. S., & Closson, K. (2005). Why do parents become involved? Research findings and implications. *Elementary School Journal*, *106*, 105-130.

Ice, C. L., & Hoover-Dempsey, K. V. (2010). Linking parental motivations for involvement and student proximal achievement outcomes in homeschooling and public schooling settings. *Education and Urban Society*, *43*, 339-369. doi:10.1177/0013124510380418

Isenberg, E. J. (2007). What have we learned about homeschooling? *Peabody Journal of Education*, *82*, 387-409.

Jolly, J. L., & Matthews, M. S. (2012). A critique of the literature on parenting gifted learners. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted, 35*, 259-290.

Katz, M. (1976). *A history of compulsory education laws* (Fastback series). Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappan.

Kearney, K. (1999). Gifted children and homeschooling: Historical and contemporary perspectives. In S. Cline, & K. Hegeman (Eds.), *Gifted education in the twenty first century* (pp. 175-194). Delray Beach, FL: Winslow Press.

Killeen, M. F. (2000). *Curricular and instructional landscapes in home schools for gifted learners* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Utah State University, Logan.

Knowles, J. G. (1991). Parents' rationales for operating home schools. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *20*, 203-230.

Kunzman, R. (2009). Understanding homeschooling: A better approach to regulation. *Theory and Research in Education*, *7*, 311-330. doi:10.1177/1477878509343740

Lange, C. M., & Liu, K. K. (1999). *Homeschooling: Parents' reasons for transfer and the implications for educational policy*. Minneapolis, MN: National Center for Educational Outcomes. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED433595)

Lee, S.-Y., Olszewski-Kubilius, P., & Thomson, D. T. (2012). Academically gifted students' perceived interpersonal competence and peer relationships. *Gifted Child Today*, *56*, 90-104. doi:10.1177/0016986212442568

Lips, D., & Feinberg, E. (2008, April 3). *Homeschooling: A growing option in American education* (Backgrounder No. 2122). Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation. Retrieved from http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2008/04/homeschooling-a-growing-option-in-american-education

Marchant, G., & MacDonald, S. (1994). Home schooling parents: An analysis of choices. *People and Choices*, *2*, 65-82.

Marshall, J. D., & Valle, J. P. (1996). Public school reform: Potential lessons from the truly departed. *Educational Policy Analysis Archives*, *4*. Retrieved from http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v4n12.html

Maxwell, J. A. (1992). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. *Harvard Educational Review*, *62*, 279-300.

Mayberry, M. (1988). Characteristics and attitudes of families who homeschool. *Education and Urban Society*, *21*, 32-41.

Moore, T. S., Lapan, S. D., & Quartaroli, M. T. (2012). *Case study research*. In S. D. Lapan, M. T. Quartaroli, & F. J. Riemer (Eds.), *Qualitative research: An introduction to methods and designs* (pp. 243-270). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Morgan, P. T., & Rodriguez, R. C. (1988). Homeschool parents: A rural survey. *Rural Educator*, *10*, 15-18.

Moustakas, C. E. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

National Association for Gifted Children & Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted. (2009). *2008-2009 State of the States in Gifted Education: National Policy and Practice Data* [Report on CD]. Washington, DC: National Association for Gifted Children.

National Association for Gifted Children. (n.d.). *How many gifted children are there in the United States*. Retrieved from http://www.nagc.org/index2.aspx?id=548

National Center for Education Statistics. (2006, February). *Homeschooling in the United States: 2003* (Statistical Analysis Report, NCES 2006-042). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2009). *The condition of education 2009: Indicator 6: Homeschooled students*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe_hsc.pdf

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pitman, M. A. (1987). Compulsory education and homeschooling. *Education and Urban Society*, *19*, 280-289. doi:10.1177/0013124587019003005

Ray, B. D. (1997). *Strengths of their own—Homeschoolers across America: Academic achievement, family characteristics, and longitudinal traits*. Salem, OR: National Home Education Research Institute.

Ray, B. D. (2011, January 3). *2.04 Million homeschool students in the United States in 2010*. Salem, OR: National Home Education Research Institute. Retrieved from http://www.nheri.org/HomeschoolPopulationReport2010.pdf

Rudner, L. M. (1999). Scholastic achievement and demographic characteristics of homeschool students in 1998. *Educational Policy Analysis Archives*, *7*. Retrieved from http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v7n8

Uecker, J. E. (2008). Alternative schooling strategies and the religious lives of American adolescents. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *47*, 563-584.

U.S. Department of Education. (2009). *Public school choice: Non-regulatory guidance*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/schoolchoiceguid.pdf

Winstanley, C. (2009). Too cool for school? Gifted children and homeschooling. *Theory and Research in Education*, *7*, 347-362. doi:10.1177/1477878509343736

Author Biographies

Jennifer L. Jolly is an associate professor of elementary and gifted education and director of the gifted education program at Louisiana State University. She also is the undergraduate coordinator for the School of Education. She is the editor of *Parenting for High Potential*. In 2010, she received the Award for Excellence in Research from the Mensa Education and Research Foundation. She serves as the secretary for the Association for the Gifted (CEC-TAG) and is an active member of the National Association for Gifted Children. Her research interests include parents and families of gifted children and the history of the field of gifted education.

Michael S. Matthews is an associate professor of gifted education and graduate coordinator for the Academically & Intellectually Gifted program at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. In 2010, he was awarded the NAGC Early Scholar Award. He is the coeditor of the *Journal of Advanced Academics*, and is an active member of the Research & Evaluation network of NAGC and the SIG-Research on Giftedness, Creativity, & Talent of the American Educational Research Association. Currently he also serves as the vice president of the North Carolina Association for the Gifted & Talented. He is the author of three books and more than 20 peer-reviewed articles in gifted education. His research interests include gifted education in science and mathematics; motivation, underachievement, and parenting of advanced learners; education policy; and the assessment and identification of learners from diverse backgrounds, especially those who are English-language learners.

Jonathan Nester is currently a teacher of advanced mathematics at Woodlawn High School in Baton Rouge, LA and a PhD candidate studying gifted education at Louisiana State University. He holds a BA in mathematics, an MAT in secondary mathematics education, and an EdS from Louisiana State University.