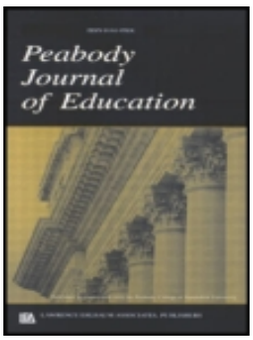

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The Home Education Movement in Context, Practice, and Theory: Editors' Introduction

Susan A. McDowell
Brian D. Ray

As an educational movement, home schooling is growing by leaps and bounds. Currently, an estimated 1.2 million to 1.7 million children (Lines, 1998; Ray, 1999) are home schooled in the United States. Not surprisingly, the number of research studies on home schooling has grown in parallel fashion. Research on the academic achievement and social adjustment of home-schooled children abounds, as well as research presenting the beliefs, practices, socioeconomic levels, educational background, and ethnicity of home schooling parents. Although some voices have offered negative commentaries on the practice of home schooling (e.g., Franzosa, 1984; National Education Association, 1990; Peterson, 1997), research studies indicate that home-schooled students perform well in terms of both academic achievement (Ray, 1997; Wartes, 1988) and social and psychological development (Kelley, 1991; Shyers, 1992). Home education is thriving; its ranks are swelling, and its children—according to the most current research—are flourishing.

The home education movement also is experiencing a growing acceptance in the popular culture (Lines, 1996, p. 65) and finding an increas-

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ingly strong and apparently expanding voice on the political front, as Belz (1997) noted,

> What special interest group in American society right now may be most effective at lobbying the U.S. Congress? If you guessed that it's a band of educators, you'd be right. But if you picked the National Educational Association—the very liberal union of public school teachers that is so active in public affairs—you might well be wrong these days. For according to Rep. William Goodling (R–PA), a 22-year veteran of Congress and Chairman now of the influential Education and Labor Committee, the homeschoolers of our country, and especially those associated with the Home School Legal Defense Association, have developed more expertise than any other group in getting the attention of our nation's lawmakers.
>
> I would suggest that Rep. Goodling's high praise of homeschoolers for their ability to win points in Congress may represent no more than the tip of an iceberg—that it's only a precursor of other ways in which homeschoolers may more and more shape society far out of proportion to their numbers and acceptability to the rest of society. (p. 5)

In sum, then, the home education movement is a growing one. Its numbers are growing, its acceptance is growing, and its power to affect the political environment is growing. With these differing elements being a matter of established fact, an issue devoted to examining the home schooling movement—both empirically and theoretically—in terms of its historical development and context, present practice, and ongoing scholarly debate as to efficacy and appropriateness would seem to be both appropriate and timely.

With this guiding purpose in mind, we have adopted and implemented a four-part organizational framework for this special issue, those four sections being "The Historical, Political, Legal, and International Context of the Home Education Movement," "The Present Practice of Home Schooling: A Look at the Research," "A Dialectic Discourse: The Pros and Cons of Home Schooling," and the concluding section, "The Home Schooling Movement: An Evaluation."

In the first section—"The Historical, Political, Legal, and International Context of the Home Education Movement"—the articles endeavor to place home education in appropriate context by addressing the movement in terms of (a) its history and development; (b) its place in the larger issue of education privatization; (c) its legal difficulties, and how these difficulties shaped current practice (a case study); and (d) its international adoption as an educational alternative.

Specifically, in this section, James C. Carper (University of South Carolina) presents an article titled "Pluralism to Establishment to Dissent: The Religious and Educational Context of Home Schooling," in which he explores the historical background of the home schooling movement, examines the relation of home schooling to the development of institutional education, and discusses the current status of the home schooling movement. In "Home Schooling and the Future of Public Education," Paul T. Hill (University of Washington, Seattle) examines the home education movement in terms of its context within the shift toward privatization and the larger school reform movement (e.g., charter schools and the voucher system).

Also in this first section is an article by Zan Peters Tyler (Founder and President of the South Carolina Association of Independent Home Schools) and James C. Carper (University of South Carolina) titled "From Confrontation to Accommodation: Home Schooling in South Carolina." In this case study, the authors describe the historical background of home schooling in South Carolina (including examination of the original home schooling laws in that state) and discuss the development of the South Carolina Association of Independent Home Schools as a unique means of preserving parental freedom in education while satisfying the state's interest in education. Special attention is given to the shifting political climate for home schooling in South Carolina.

The first section closes with an article by Lesley Ann Taylor (Wales, United Kingdom) and Amanda J. Petrie (University of Liverpool, England) titled "Home Education Regulations in Europe and Recent U.K. Research." In this international look at the subject at hand, the authors examine and discuss the home education movement in Europe and the United Kingdom, detail the differences between the movement in the United States and in the United Kingdom and Europe, discuss national legal requirements in regard to home schooling, and look at current home schooling research in the United Kingdom.

In the second section of this issue, titled "The Present Practice of Home Schooling: A Look at the Research," the articles present research pertaining to the home schooling population and address the inherently important and integral issues of (a) academics, (b) socialization, (c) multicultural participation, (d) special needs children, (e) public school interaction with the home schooling population, and (f) the perceived impact of home schooling on the family and the mother–teacher.

Brian D. Ray (Founder and President, National Home Education Research Institute) authors the first article in this section. In "Home Schooling: The Ameliorator of Negative Influences on Learning?," Ray presents the data and findings on the 5,402 home-schooled students—and

their 1,657 families—that were the subject of his latest nationwide study. This quantitative study attempted a representative national sampling of home schoolers, used descriptive statistics to describe the families and children, and employed multivariate analyses to understand which variables explain the students' high academic achievement. Ray also explores the concept that a heretofore undefined element in the home schooling process ameliorates the negative effects of background variables (e.g., low income, low parent education), and he examines the implications of these and other findings for (a) minorities in particular and families in general, (b) educational policy, and (c) the future of choice in education.

In "Home Schooling and the Question of Socialization," Richard G. Medlin (Stetson University) examines this most frequent objection to home schooling by first defining the concept of socialization, suggesting objective criteria for healthy social development and addressing the issue of what "normal" social contact should be. In the second part of his article, Medlin reviews the literature on social development in home-schooled children from three differing perspectives: Do home-schooled children participate in the daily routines of their communities? Are they acquiring the rules of behavior and systems of beliefs and attitudes they need? Can they function effectively as members of society? In conclusion, Medlin (a) suggests that home schooling seems to afford the kind of social contact that best fosters healthy social behavior, (b) examines and details the essential features of this particular kind of "contact," and (c) suggests directions for future research.

In this section, the third article—"Participation and Perception: Looking at Home Schooling Through a Multicultural Lens"—by Susan A. McDowell (Vanderbilt University) and Annette R. Sanchez and Susan S. Jones (Nashville State Tech), examines home schooling from a multicultural standpoint. McDowell, Sanchez, and Jones look at the current participation of minorities in the home schooling movement, examine the pertinent extant literature, and present the surprising results of an exploratory research study that examines the perceptions of differing ethnic groups—within the confines of the non-home schooling general population—concerning those families that choose to home school and the efficacy of the home schooling movement itself.

Jacque Ensign (Southern Connecticut State University), in her article "Defying the Stereotypes of Special Education: Home School Students," discusses cases from her 9-year longitudinal study of 100 home-schooled students. The article focuses on students who have been identified as exhibiting learning disabilities and giftedness, chronicles the academic development of several special education students, and examines their parents' educational backgrounds and pedagogical approaches.

In "When Home Schoolers Go to School: A Partnership Between Families and Schools," Patricia M. Lines (Senior Fellow, Discovery Institute, Seattle) reports on visits with public programs in Washington State, at least 10 of which include a longitudinal look at the program over a 3- or 4-year period. According to Lines, success in launching such a program appears to require (a) superintendent support, (b) teacher support for home schooling (at least after the program is launched), (c) a flexible and responsive curriculum, and (d) the support of at least some of the home schoolers in the vicinity. The most interesting aspect of these programs is the wide variety of curricular offering and the imaginative manner in which they are presented.

In the final article of this section, Susan A. McDowell (Vanderbilt University), in her article titled "The Home Schooling Mother–Teacher: Toward a Theory of Social Integration," discusses and details the theory gleaned from her quantitative and qualitative research on the perceived effects of home schooling on the mother–teacher. In the article, McDowell argues that because social integration involves and pertains to several aspects of an individual's life—the chief of which may be termed *social capital*—and because social capital is made up, in turn, of the "norms, social networks, and the relationships between adults and children that are of value for children's growing up" (Coleman, 1987, p. 36), then the element of social integration allowed the home schooling mother–teacher is an extraordinarily empowering one. Also examined in this discussion is a surprising "feminist factor" emerging from the data.

The articles in "A Dialectic Discourse: The Pros and Cons of Home Schooling," the third part of our framework, present theoretical and/or philosophical arguments concerning the pros and cons of the home education movement. In particular, Chris Lubienski (Iowa State University), in his article "Whither the Common Good? A Critique of Home Schooling," argues that the growing movement toward home schooling does not enhance but, in fact, is likely to detract from the common good and, thus, from the democratic and moral essence and capacities of our society. To that end, he examines home schooling on two of its most cherished justifications: that the decision to focus on one's own children is in the best interest of the United States, and that, for many, such an approach is a fundamental aspect in exercising their personal religious liberty.

In the next article, Michael P. Farris (Attorney, Founder and President of the Home School Legal Defense Association) and Scott A. Woodruff (Attorney, Home School Legal Defense Association) look at "The Future of Home Schooling." These authors discuss the present state of affairs in home schooling, look at current trends, and address the future of the movement in terms of the individual and the implications for society.

Michael W. Apple (University of Wisconsin), in "The Cultural Politics of Home Schooling," raises a number of conceptual, political, and empirical questions about (a) the home schooling movement as a whole and (b) the elements behind, and at least partly responsible for, much of the movement. In "Home Schooling for Individuals' Gain and Society's Common Good," Brian D. Ray (National Home Education Research Institute) presents his argument that "five general areas of evidence and reasoning support the claim that home schooling is a good, if not the best, form of education" for both the individual and society as a whole.

The final article of this special issue, "The Home Schooling Movement: A Few Concluding Observations," by Robert L. Crowson (Vanderbilt University), offers a highly thoughtful and analytical appraisal of the articles and arguments presented in the issue. In fact, given the very real help this article might be in placing the entire issue in appropriate context, we suggest that readers consider beginning and ending their reading of this special double issue with this piece. In sum, Crowson offers a scholarly, balanced evaluation of the movement and the issues surrounding it.

It is hoped that this issue as a whole also offers a scholarly, balanced look at the home education—also known as the home schooling—movement. It is an educational alternative that gives every indication of continuing to grow in terms of size, acceptability, and political power. It is also an educational movement that—by its very nature—often finds itself at odds not only with professional teacher organizations and public school systems, but also with state, local, and national governments. Given these various elements, differing considerations, and seemingly conflicting interests, it will be fascinating to watch the direction and development of home education as it moves into the 21st century.

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