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Perspectives of Homeschoolers Motivated by Religious and Moral Reasons

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to highlight the association between motivation to homeschool and public school enrollment. Homeschooling parents ($n = 1052$) across the United States responded to questions from a survey administered online. Logistic regression analysis and the chi-square test showed that homeschooling parents who chose the religious/moral answer option on the survey as the reason to homeschool, were less likely to choose to enroll into a public school program. Qualitatively, the narrative data of religious/moral homeschoolers and their reasons not to enroll in public education provided a number of themes, including quality of the environment ($n = 22$) and reasons based on religion and faith ($n = 18$). These findings may prove useful for public school officials who desire to know more about how some families make educational decisions.

Introduction

The number of homeschooling families continues to increase in the United States (Bielick, 2008; Watson, 2018), and Ray (2011) estimated more than 2,000,000 homeschooled students in 2010. One of the evolving aspects of modern homeschooling is the association that homeschooling families make with other educational partners. Bielick (2008) reported that one of five homeschooled students were involved in either public or private school on a part-time basis.

Isenberg (2007) found that homeschooling families often use public schools in addition to their home education, sometimes concurrently, or in later grades. Isenberg (2007), using data from the National Household Education Survey, reported that 55% of homeschooling families use traditional schooling for at least one of their children. Houston and Toma (2003) also noted that homeschooling parents are comfortable using public school alternatives. Because many public schools now interact with a

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variety of different homeschooling families, learning about the motivations of homeschooling families is valuable.

Religion, faith, and morals are often cited as reasons to homeschool (Van Galen, 1991). In a study by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Noel, Stark, and Redford (2013) reported that 77% of families chose to homeschool to provide moral instruction to their children, and 64% of families chose to homeschool to provide religious instruction. Because of the strong association homeschooling families have with their given beliefs, religious motivations will inevitably be part of the discourse.

Those who desire to homeschool for religious reasons have a particular place in the larger educational discourse. In one respect, it is within the United States' democratic environment through pluralistic discourse that families have gained the freedom to homeschool. Many countries do not have this privilege (West & Woessmann, 2009). Even in the United States, parents have had to fight for decades to legalize homeschooling in each of the 50 states (Reich, 2005). In another respect, homeschooling parents in many ways intentionally detach from the larger democratic discourse and privately pursue education within their own homes (Nappen, 2005).

As noted, homeschooling parents have increasingly more opportunities to interact and collaborate with public schools (Bielick, 2008). Many school districts make provisions for homeschoolers to participate in part-time learning programs (Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), 2016). Thus the absence of the religiously motivated homeschooling families from public education may become even more evident based on the growing numbers of many non-religious homeschoolers in public schools.

This article explores the perceptions that religious/moral homeschooling parents have of collaborative opportunities with public schools. In addition, this discussion examines the moral and religious reasons homeschooling parents have concerning their separation from public education.

Background

Stevens (2001), in an ethnographic and historical study, noted that modern homeschooling has been built almost entirely since the end of the 1960s. The following estimates illustrate the dramatic changes in homeschool numbers throughout the past 40 years. The estimate of the total number of homeschoolers for the 1970s ranged from 10,000–15,000 students (Cogan, 2010; Glanzer, 2008). The numbers progressively climbed through the 1980s (Lines, 1999). According to the U.S. Department of Education, the number of homeschoolers increased to between 250,000 to 350,000 in 1990 (Lines, 1999). The National Household Education Surveys Program

(NHES) reported 1,500,000 in 2007 (Bielick, 2008). Ray (2011) estimated more than 2,000,000 homeschooled students in 2010. Despite some skepticism about the statistics, Watson (2018) confirmed that the number of homeschooling students continued to increase.

Taylor-Hough (2010) explained that the history of homeschooling began with the "Liberal Left" in the 1960s, but within 20 years was equally adopted by the "Conservative Right" (p. 2). Van Galen (1991) further categorized the two main groups of homeschoolers as "Pedagogues" and "Ideologues" (p. 66). For Van Galen (1991) the Pedagogues were the offspring of John Holt and the early Liberal Left pioneers. Taylor-Hough (2010) reasoned that the Pedagogues chose homeschooling on the basis of "educational methods, improved learning environments for their children, and greater parental autonomy" (p. 5). The Pedagogues "curriculum" usually consisted of capitalizing on their children's "innate curiosity and creativity," encouraging their children to "pursue their own projects and to work at their own pace using resources that are available in the home or the surrounding community" (Van Galen, 1991, p. 73).

Whereas the Pedagogues chose home education based on academic reasons, the Ideologues, led by Raymond Moore and the Conservative Right, chose home education for religious and moral reasons (Taylor-Hough, 2010). Cai, Reeves, and Robinson (2002) found that many families chose to homeschool "out of a desire to pass on to their children a particular set of values, beliefs, and worldview" (p. 378). Beyond the traditional subject matter, the Ideologues also "want their children to learn (both intellectually and affectively) that the family is the most important institution in society" (Van Galen, 1991, p. 67).

These two groups attacked public schooling from different angles. From the extreme end of the pedagogical point-of-view, John Holt (1964) claimed that public education provided a poor environment in which to learn and that it was a harmful place for children. Holt (1964) described the processes of schooling as "absurd and harmful nonsense" (p. 174). From the ideological perspective, Carper (2000) wrote that the public school system espoused a belief system that was at odds with the one expressed by conservative Christian parents. Also, as indicated by Stevens (2001), the academic program and social climate that flourished in public schools were unfavorable to children and undermined the values of the home.

Despite dissonant views and motivations, Pedagogues and Ideologues share a number of similarities. They both reason that they have a right to control the education of their children. Furthermore, both groups have seen homeschooling, not as an isolated activity, but as part of a more comprehensive worldview (Murphy, 2012, p. 33). As the movement has become stronger, and possibly more united, the general public, as well as some

educators and politicians, have become advocates for this schooling choice (Murphy, 2012). As Nemer (2002) expressed, "Homeschooling is now a widespread, diverse, and important segment of education in America" (p. 5).

More recent studies have also found the convergence of Pedagogical and Ideological values. For example, the three main themes that emerged from Sabol's (2018) analysis of homeschooling parent perspectives were a flexible learning structure, quality time with family, and the support from like-minded others. Other researchers have looked past traditional motivations and have begun to explore new reasons to homeschool. For example, Pannone (2017) explored the notion that the homeschool can be an ideal educational environment for nurturing future entrepreneurs.

Homeschooling, which was illegal in 30 states in 1980, became legal in all 50 states in 1993 (Reich, 2005). As homeschooling has become more accepted, the families making up the movement have represented a more diversified body. Ray (2015) reported that homeschooling has quickly grown in popularity among minorities. Huseman (2015) calculated that black families, "one of the fastest-growing demographics in home-schooling," made up about 10 percent of the homeschooling population (para. 2). Jolly and Matthews (2018), in an examination of homeschooling mothers of gifted children, indicated more families of gifted children have been choosing the homeschool option in the past two decades.

Ray (2015) noted a great deal of diversity among homeschoolers—a variety of religious and political backgrounds, all levels of income, and various levels of parent education. The role of the parents in home-schooling may be changing too. A study by Carpenter and Gann (2016) showed that with families using online courses and private tutors, home-schooling parents find themselves in roles more similar to facilitator or director than teacher. Collom (2005) explained that due to the diverse population of homeschooling families, motivations can no longer be neatly categorized into two or even multiple categories. "This is a het-erogeneous population with varying and overlapping motivations" (Collom, 2005, p. 331).

One of the main reasons given for the strength of the movement has been its emphasis on associations and support groups (Gaither, 2008; Mayberry, Knowles, Ray, & Marlow, 1995; Moore & Moore, 1994). Lyman (2000) documented that the participation rate for homeschooling support groups was around 85%. Other factors that have been mentioned in home-schooling success included the accessibility of new technologies (Wilhelm & Firman, 2009) and the fact that parents of public schooled children have seen homeschooling work in their own families (Cheng, Tuchman, & Wolf, 2016; Taylor-Hough, 2010).

As one of the fastest growing forms of education in the United States (Ray, 2009), the impact of homeschooling has been felt by other educational entities. A number of analysts have observed the variety of connections that are being made between homeschools with public and private schools. Muntes (2006) believed that the "relationship between public school districts and home schools is dynamic and evolving" (p. 12). These changes, unifying the different forms of education, have created what is an altogether new type of educational system. Gaither (2008) observed:

Recent political and legal developments have made it much more difficult to draw sharp distinctions between homeschools and plain old schools. Homeschoolers are increasingly creating hybrids that blend elements of formal schooling into the usual pattern of a mother teaching her own biological children at home" (p. 211).

The modern mixed educational programs are far removed from the traditional homeschooling concepts of the past. Kunzman (2005) captured this evolution, writing, "It appears that the 'home' in homeschooling is rapidly becoming a misnomer" (p. 4). For example, homeschooling is taking place at other parents' houses, cooperative meeting places, and association gatherings at church buildings.

Homeschooling appears to be in its adolescence while significant growth is still being observed. Not only is the movement growing, the polar extremes that were so evident in its initial stages seem to be diminishing. More associations with public schooling are being made, and it has been projected that these interactions will only increase.

However, even with the recent trend of blending homeschooling with public education, it remains to be seen if the original extremes—the Pedagogues and Ideologues—are also shifting their views. Are families who homeschool for religious reasons just as likely to interact with public schools? Are they just as likely to enroll their children into part time public school programs? Wilhelm and Firmin (2009) noted the great impact of the Supreme Court decisions in the 1960s that "effectively removed religious influences from government-run schools" (p. 307). Do past legislative decisions, and the current socioreligious conditions of public schools still matter, or are those who homeschool expressly for religious and moral reasons just as likely to attend part-time public school programs as their counterparts?

Home education has become a safe-haven for many religious families, and as Kunzman (2010) explained, "For conservative Christian homeschoolers, the education of their children is a God-given right and responsibility, and one they can delegate only at great moral and spiritual peril" (p. 23). Although this article will explore the perspectives of families who homeschool for religious and moral reasons, this study will show that these

families who may have been categorized as Ideologues in the past, now have much in common with the beliefs and values of the Pedagogues.

Data and methods

This study was conducted primarily using qualitative methods, in addition to comparative analysis, and binary logistic regression. An email was sent to more than 800 homeschooling group/association directors asking for their assistance in recruiting participants. The directors were asked to provide their members with the link to the online survey (Appendix A). The surveys were totally completed by 1055 participants from the 1282 who began the survey, which is an 82.3% completion rate.

The results from the survey were sent directly to the online Qualtrics Research Suite (Qualtrics, 2015). Initially, only descriptive methods were used to analyze the data. However, after sorting through the data, a decision was made to analyze the data using quantitative methods. In addition to organizing the data, Qualtrics was also used to cross-tabulate the numerical data. The chi-square test was used to compare the following questions from the survey: (1) "Which reason best describes your motivation to homeschool", and (2) "Would you consider enrolling your child into a mixed educational program where he or she would be in a public school part-time?" The hypothesis given for this study: A parent's motivation to homeschool is a good predictor of the parent's decision to enroll into a public school program.

The SPSS Statistics software package was used to run two binary logistic regression outputs: (1) with multiple independent variables (education level of the primary instructor, number of children in the homeschool, and motivation to homeschool), and (2) with the single independent variable—motivation to homeschool. In both analyses, the dependent variable was whether parents would enroll in public school. The Wald statistic was used to interpret results at a significance value of .05. The choices provided for the motivation to homeschool question were the following:

1. Academic reasons
2. Moral/Religious reasons
3. Safety reasons
4. Another reason

The choices provided for desire to enroll in a part-time public school program were *Yes* or *No*.

For the narrative data, the same two questions were used from the quantitative portion of the study: (1) "Which reason best describes your

Table 1. Sample statistics.

	Responses	Percent
Gender		
Female	1,180	97
Male	36	3
Educational Level		
Less than high school	3	0.25
High school	48	4
Some college	290	24
Bachelor's degree	521	43
Graduate or postgraduate degree	354	29
Marital Status		
Single	16	1
Married	1,167	9
Divorced	22	2
Years of Homeschooling Experience		
Less than 1	87	7
1	144	12
2	146	12
3	124	10
4	84	7
5 or more	614	51
Hours of Planning per Week		
Less than 1	219	21
1	253	24
2	272	26
3	124	12
4	73	7
5	36	3
6 or more	68	7
Number of Children Homeschooled		
1	400	33
2	455	38
3	206	17
4	89	7
5 or more	51	4
Age of Students		
5	245	21
6	196	17
7	208	18
8	200	17
9	202	17
10	207	17
11	223	19
12	183	15
13	166	14
14	145	12
15	114	10
16	119	10
17	95	8
18	60	5
19	23	2

Note. Percentages are based on the number of participants who answered each question.

motivation to homeschool", and (2) "Would you consider enrolling your child into a mixed educational program where he or she would be in a public school part-time?" Only participants who responded with "Moral/Religious reasons" for the first question, and " No" for the second question were used in this study. On the survey, another question was asked of the participants, "Since you answered 'no' to the last question, what is the

main reason you would not enroll your child into a part-time public school program?" The responses for this question became the focus of the qualitative portion of the study.

The parents' responses were analyzed and organized into themes according to the suggestions of Bloomberg and Volpe (2008). For this current study, the researcher read participant responses and categorized them based on word repetition. Key words were used to create categories that were not premeditated. The original key words were used to make associations with similar words. The categories were analyzed and used as the basis for constructing the given themes in this study. The participant responses in this study are represented by the letter P (participant) and the number for which a response was recorded on the spreadsheet, after filtering for themes; for example, the seventh recorded response is represented by P7.

The first question on the survey asked parents to identify where they live and homeschool. Appendix B presents this information. In addition to location, the survey also gathered other information from the homeschooling participants.

Results

Logistic regression

As a set, the predictors used for the logistic regression analysis reliably distinguished between those who would enroll in part-time public education programs and those who would not ($\chi^2(12) = 85.04$, $p < .001$). The Wald criterion demonstrated that *reason to homeschool*, especially the *religious/moral* selection, was a significant predictor ($p < .001$). Exp(B) value indicated that a person who chooses to homeschool because of religious or moral reasons, is 2.6 times more likely not to enroll in part-time public education. The SPSS output can be found in Appendix C.

Chi-square test

There was a significant association between the religious/moral motivation to homeschool and whether parents would consider enrolling into a mixed educational program χ^2 (3) = 45.98, $p < .001$. Table 2 presents the chi-square analysis.

Narrative themes

The following religious and moral themes were derived from the participant responses: quality of the environment ($n = 22$), reasons based on religion and faith ($n = 18$), reasons based on morality ($n = 5$), negative

Table 2. Cross tabulation: reason to homeschool and public school enrollment.

	Would you consider enrolling your child into a mixed educational program …		
	Yes	No	Total
Which reason best describes your motivation to homeschool?			
Academic reasons	274	245	519
Moral/Religious reasons	34	119	153
Safety reasons	13	9	22
Another reason	164	195	359
Total	485	567	1052

influences in public schools ($n = 7$), and secular teaching in public schools ($n = 9$). These themes were selected to bring further insight into the significant relationship finding from the binary regression analysis. Specifically, the *religious/moral* reason to homeschool is a significant predictor of whether a family would enroll in a public school program. The various themes are related, and overlap can be seen among the responses. However, the particular emphases within the parents' responses provided a basis for making a distinction between each of the themes.

Other themes not specifically religious or moral in nature were derived from the participants who chose to homeschool for moral/religious reasons: poor academic quality ($n = 23$), the lack of need for public schools ($n = 17$), personal preference ($n = 12$), and special needs for child ($n = 1$). These themes will not be discussed here. The religious/moral themes are presented in following text.

Quality of the environment

Parent responses from this theme emphasized the condition of the environment, both from a positive and a negative perspective, as a reason not to enroll in public school programs. For example, one parent stated, "I would never put my child in such a perverted environment" (P15), and another said, "I don't want my children in the public school setting" (P14). A number of other responses were similar, merely stating they would not want their children in any type of public school setting. In most cases, parents did not clarify their specific objections when they gave "poor environment" as their reason.

Other parents emphasized the benefits of their own home environment. One such parent responded, "Because my children thrive better in a home environment" (P12). Other parents expressed the importance of being able to control the environment. Related to the idea of control, a participant expressed, "I would never want a local public school to have any control over what is taught in our homeschool environment" (P2).

Thus, parents within this category either expressed negative views of the public school environment or positive views of their own educational environment.

Reasons based on religion and faith

This theme comprised responses that centered on the families' religious beliefs as the main reason for not enrolling in public school programs. Some participant responses expressed concern that their children would encounter a non-religious environment inside the public school. This type of reason can be represented by the parent who exclaimed, "I have had a child in public school for one year. Oh my!!!! They are not anywhere on our planet. We desire to raise our children to honor God and to love and serve others" (P105). In addition, other responses spoke to the value of being able to teach about the family's faith within their own homes. This type of reason can be represented by a parent who stated, "I want to ensure that they are taught the Truth according to the Bible … ." (P99).

Most participants in this category did not clarify the particular faith of the family. For example, several responses were very short, with participants answering, "Religious" (P96), "Religious reasons" (P97), "for reasons of faith" (P98) and "lack of religious focus" (P100). Some responses mentioned God: "God called me to HOMESCHOOL so that requires keeping my children home" (P94) and, "God gave ME my child to raise, instruct and train in the way of right living and good character" (P108). In all of these responses, aspects of parents' religious beliefs were given as the reason not to enroll in a public school program.

Reasons based on morality

The responses that made up this theme centered on morals without any association with faith or religion. Several responses were rather short and did not elaborate on their reason. For example, one participant simply said, "morals" (P25). Other responses described public schools in terms of morality: "The moral atmosphere in our public school district is deplorable and getting worse every day" (P26) and "concerns for moral atmosphere for public schools" (P27). One parent connected the moral conditions to the government, saying, "I do not trust the ethical and moral position of the government. Agenda- and special-interest-driven points of view rule the day" (P28). These responses represent those who chose not to enroll in public school programs for reasons of morality. None of the responses in this theme mentioned religion or faith.

Negative influences in public schools

The responses in this theme are somewhat related to the previous theme, *moral reasons*, and likely related to *faith/religious beliefs* theme. However, this category was created because it was not entirely clear what parents meant by "negative influences." Were parents solely concerned about moral standards, or were they connecting negative influences with their religious views? For example, one participant stated, "I don't want the public school influence on my child" (P30). A couple of the other responses in this category had similar wording.

Other parents provided a little more detail in their answers. For example, one participant answered, "The social interactions and character-influences derived from public school are not beneficial in helping us to raise virtuous children" (P32). And another parent responded, "We are not interested in our children being negatively influenced any more than they already [are] because of internet and television" (P34). These responses represent parents who chose not to enroll in public education programs due to concerns about the potential for schools to negatively influence their children.

Secular teaching in public schools

The responses within this theme stressed the instruction provided by public schools. Similar to the previous category, *negative influences*, parents in this category were not always clear regarding their specific concern. Some responses could have been related to moral standards, but most were likely based on religious beliefs. A parent answered, "I am not interested in secular based education" (P119). Another word that came up in this category was "worldview"; a parent said "I don't want my child to gain a worldview from a public school" (P111) and, "world view of the public school material" (P113).

Participants also used the word "humanism" to describe public school teaching. For example, participants responded by saying, "My child will not be a part of the public school system, to the Common Core or the secular humanism teachings in such a program" (P117), and "Humanist influences as a result of current teacher training philosophy" (P118). These responses represent the parents who chose not to enroll in public school programs because of the secular nature of public school teaching.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between home-schooling motivation and whether parents would enroll in public school on a part-time basis. Furthermore, this study sought to learn more about why

the parents who answered that they homeschooled based on religious/moral motivations would not enroll their children into public school programs.

The chi-square test showed a significant relationship between those who homeschool for moral/religious reasons and their decision to enroll in a public school program. The binary logistic regression model showed that the religious/moral reason to homeschool was a good predictor of whether parents would enroll in a public school program. Specifically, the model showed that if parents homeschooled for moral/religious reasons, they were less likely to choose to enroll in a public school program.

These results then lead to the why question. Why were homeschoolers motivated by religious reasons less likely to associate with public schools? The narrative themes were intended to help provide insight to this question. Although some of the religiously/morally motivated homeschooling parents provided reasons that were not directly related to religion or morals—academic quality, personal preference, and special needs being some of those reasons— many of the parents did provide reasons that could be closely related to religion and morality.

The five themes supply a foundation for further conversation between homeschooling families and public school officials. For example, without an understanding of parent perspectives, there may be a tendency to bias reasons on preconceived notions, such as, "The religious homeschoolers do not want to collaborate with public schools because public schools do not teach about their given religion." As the variety of themes and the diversity of content within each theme have shown, there are many different perspectives that religiously/morally motivated homeschoolers have. Based on this study, a person who chooses to homeschool for moral/religious reasons is more likely to reject public school based on concerns about the quality of the environment ($n = 22$) more than on concerns about secular teaching ($n = 5$). Thus, there are distinctions within the group that need to be addressed further in future studies.

The quality of the environment was one of the most common reasons parents gave for choosing to homeschool. Although this reason is not surprising, some of the comments within this theme may help in understanding what parents mean. For example, parents emphasized their desire to have a greater amount of control concerning the learning environment. This focus seems like an area in which school districts could work with parents. There is a desire for parents to collaborate more with teachers and administrators (Thomas, 2015). More needs to be done to fully understand the concerns of parents. If school administrators can learn more about the issues parents have, then more can be done to address those specific issues.

Positive implications derived from this theme of *quality of the environment are*: (1) parents are concerned about their local public schools, (2)

parents desire to provide a better learning environment for their children, and (3) parents are willing to make the effort and sacrifices to provide a homeschool environment, and "make it work." School officials would do well to tap into this energy. School districts could allow parents to have a greater role in designing, implementing, and managing the learning environment. Although there may not be funds to compensate parents, there may be other ways to acknowledge and show appreciation to parent–volunteers.

Understandably, many parents in the *religious/moral reason* category would cite reasons related to religion and morality in their decision not to enroll into a public school program. This area may be where the value of mixed educational programs needs to be emphasized. As noted earlier, mixed programs combine components of both public schooling and homeschooling. What if there were more opportunities for homeschooling families to connect with public schools? Although parents may be very strong in their desire to pass on religious teaching and spiritual guidance to their children, they may also desire to have their children learn core content from professional teachers. School districts could do more to implement part-time programs that allow homeschooling parents to choose which courses they would like their children to take in the public school. These measures may appease the parents who were concerned about the secular emphasis in some content areas.

These themes should also cause school officials to stop and think about the moral environment of their schools. Although many parents in this study associated their faith with their criticisms of the public school system, many responses focused solely on morality. Other parents merely stated they saw the school environment as something negative. Reasonably, a fuller understanding is needed about what parents mean by "negative influences," but some understanding is needed that these feelings exist. School officials could do more to show a greater awareness of the immoral activity that is allowed in and around public schools. Non-religious parents also care about moral issues. Have schools done enough to protect students from bullying, verbal abuse, drug use, gang-related activity, and other harmful influences? Further investigation could help clarify parents' values, and provide for greater understanding for future discourse.

The idea of pluralistic discourse in a democratic society can be interesting, especially from a historical perspective. Cogan (2010) explained that prior to compulsory education, homeschooling was the primary form of education in the United States. Christians were in direct control of the curriculum and instruction, and they found themselves governing educational discourse. Kunzman (2010) argued that even in the early twentieth century, conservative Christians "saw themselves as cultural insiders and the state as

a means by which to bring transgressors against cultural norms back into line" (p. 21). Where do Christians find themselves today?

Many would argue that the major achievement of public education in past years has been its willingness to hear the various voices coming out of our communities. Jennings (2011) highlighted some of public education's accomplishments that were borne of pluralistic discourse: affording a more accommodating environment for immigrant students, breaking down racial divides, providing assistance for those with special needs, broadening the educational opportunities of females, and offering nontraditional education such as vocational training. Although religion is in an altogether different category, it currently stands as an entity outside of education.

Interestingly, the characteristics of the two early divisions of homeschooling groups—the Ideologues (Conservative Right) and the Pedagogues (Liberal Left) (Van Galen, 1991)—were both represented in this study by one single group. Based on their reason to homeschool, the parents in this study would have been classified in the past as merely the Conservative Right. However, the parents in this study, claiming to homeschool for moral/religious reasons, were also found to be very concerned about matters important to the Pedagogues—academics and the learning environment. In fact, the greatest number of parents in the religious/moral group selected academic quality ($n = 23$) as their main reason not to enroll into public school on a part-time basis. This finding confirms the idea that the dissonance between the two homeschooling groups is lessening (Murphy, 2012). A united homeschooling community may prove to be important in future educational developments.

Although this study does not supply all of the answers, much can be learned about the current perspectives of a particular group of homeschoolers. Similar to the work of Neuman and Guterman (2017), who analyzed the educational objectives of homeschooling parents, this article provides a space for reflection and thought. Allowing the voices of those who are homeschooling because of religious and moral reasons to be heard provides an opportunity for public school officials to better understand them. This opportunity will be important, especially knowing the close relationship some homeschooling families have with public education (Bielick, 2008; Isenberg, 2007) and the continued increase of families choosing to homeschool (Ray, 2011).

Limitations

Although this study had participants who resided all across the United States, the study was limited to participants who had emails and access to the Internet. Although homeschooling parents were encouraged to send the

survey link to other homeschooling families they knew, it might have been the case that only those within a homeschooling group or association were part of this study. In addition to this limitation, homeschoolers who did not have access to the Internet could not have been a part of this study.

Another limitation of this study was the lack of distinction between those who homeschooled because of religious reasons and those who home-schooled based on solely moral reasons, for example a case in which a person's choice is moral, but not religious. To provide more clarity, the *reason-to-homeschool* question should have provided an option for religion, and another option for morals. Including the two together limited the understanding of the narratives. For example, there was the possibility that someone could have chosen the religious/moral reason to homeschool, and then respond with "negative influences" as their reason not to enroll in a public school program. Was the person's "negative influences" response related to atheistic teaching to the "religious" parent, or was the response related to inappropriate language for the "moral" parent? More might be deduced from this type of response if the choices religious and moral were separate.

Furthermore, this study was limited by the brevity of some of the parents' responses. As noted previously, on multiple occasions the parent was unclear in his or her response. The ambiguity of certain responses caused difficulty in discerning parents' intent. This study was designed so that parents could respond to the survey questions without follow-up questions from the researcher. Thus the researcher did not have the opportunity to more fully develop the thoughts of the participants. Measures could have been taken that maintained privacy, but also garnered more information from parents.

Recommendations

It is acknowledged that homeschooling may not be possible for some public school parents who might otherwise, under ideal circumstances, choose to homeschool for religious or moral purposes. The voices in this study may represent those parents. Further research may be needed to better understand the thoughts, feelings, and values of religious families who are currently being educated in the public schooling systems.

As noted in the limitations section, there is much room for improvement in terms of the methodology of this research study. Now that basic themes have emerged, researchers can do more to capture the deeper feelings of parents who choose not to enroll their children into public schools. One avenue to obtain more information could be in-depth interviews. Another recommendation would be to conduct a similar study involving public

school administrators. What are their perceptions of parents who home-school for religious reasons? What ideas do public school officials have of working with such families? These conversations may help build some bridges that would benefit more than just the families who choose to homeschool.

Conclusion

This study was not designed to promote one educational choice over another—private schooling was not even considered in this investigation—but rather the goal was to more fully understand those who choose to homeschool because of their religious and moral beliefs. Certainly, these beliefs can be strong. As this study has indicated, some homeschool parents—especially those who choose to homeschool based on religious or moral reasons—expressed significant resistance to public school education compared to other groups. If deficits were overcome, would more parents be willing to work with public schools? The possibilities of mixed educational programs are exciting, and there can be advantages in allowing everyone to be a part of the conversation, especially those who hold opposing views. Although it can be expected that some will not want to be a part of future public school educational developments, they should at least be allowed to explain why. Understanding each other, and discovering why we choose certain paths can lead to growth and new insights.

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Appendix A

Homeschool Survey.

Homeschool Survey

Q1 From which state are you located?

☐	AL	☐	IN	☐	NE	☐	SC
☐	AK	☐	IA	☐	NV	☐	SD
☐	AZ	☐	KS	☐	NH	☐	TN
☐	AR	☐	KY	☐	NJ	☐	TX
☐	CA	☐	LA	☐	NM	☐	UT
☐	CO	☐	ME	☐	NY	☐	VT
☐	CT	☐	MD	☐	NC	☐	VA
☐	DE	☐	MA	☐	ND	☐	WA
☐	FL	☐	MI	☐	OH	☐	WV
☐	GA	☐	MN	☐	OK	☐	WI
☐	HI	☐	MS	☐	OR	☐	WY
☐	ID	☐	MO	☐	PA	☐	DC
☐	IL	☐	MT	☐	RI		

Q2 What gender is the main instructor for your homeschool?

☐ Male   ☐ Female

Q3 What is the educational level of the main instructor for your homeschool?

☐ Less than high school   ☐ Some college   ☐ Graduate or
☐ High school   ☐ Bachelor's degree   postgraduate degree

Q4 What is your marital status?

☐ Single   ☐ Divorced
☐ Married   ☐ Widowed

Q5 How many children do you homeschool?

☐ 1   ☐ 3   ☐ 5 or more
☐ 2   ☐ 4

Q6 What is/are the age(s) of your homeschooler(s)? (Select all that apply)

☐ 5   ☐ 6   ☐ 7   ☐ 8
☐ 9   ☐ 12   ☐ 15   ☐ 18
☐ 10   ☐ 13   ☐ 16   ☐ 19
☐ 11   ☐ 14   ☐ 17

Q7 How many years have you homeschooled?

☐ Less than 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 4
☐ 1   ☐ 3   ☐ 5 or more

Q8 Do you use a homeschooling curriculum package? If yes, which one?

☐ Yes _____   ☐ No

Q9 To what extent does technology play a role in your child's instruction? (Select which best describes your homeschool)

☐ Not used   ☐ A key resource

☐ Infrequently used   ☐ The main source of instruction

Q10 Which homeschooling style best describes your instruction? (Options taken from McKeon, 2007)

☐ Traditional – this style is also known as the "boxed curriculum" and is the most common type of approach to homeschooling. It is a pre-packaged system ready for use.

☐ Unschooling – focus on the choices made by the individual learner. Those choices can vary according to learning style and personality type of each student.

☐ Eclectic – a mixed combination of traditional boxed curriculum, homemade curriculum, and/or individualized curriculum.

☐ Classical – uses the trivium, a teaching model that emphasizes concrete thinking and memorization of the facts of the subjects in grade school; analytical thinking and understanding of the subjects in middle school; and abstract thinking and articulation of the subjects in high school.

Q11 Which reason best describes your motivation to homeschool?

☐ Academic reasons - being able to provide a better learning environment, instruction, etc.

☐ Moral/Religious reasons - being able to provide moral or religious teaching within instruction.

☐ Safety reasons - being able to provide a safer environment (free of violence, gang activity, drug use, etc.)

☐ Another reason _____

Q12 Briefly describe a homeschooling day. What does your routine look like (instruction, breaks, free-time, etc.)?

Q13 Describe your weekly schedule (i.e., do activities change from day to day, do you collaborate with other homeschoolers or community members, go to special events, etc.)

Q14 Which is the best reason for your chosen routines and schedules?

☐ Suggested from a curriculum package

☐ A personal preference

☐ Based on your child's or children's unique learning style

☐ Other _____

Q15 How much time (in hours) does your child spend in academic instruction on a typical day?

☐ 1   ☐ 3   ☐ 5

☐ 2   ☐ 4   ☐ 6 or more

Q16 How much time (in hours) do you spend planning for instruction in a typical week?

☐   Less than 1   ☐   3   ☐   6 or more

☐   1   ☐   4

☐   2   ☐   5

Q17 Would you consider enrolling your child into a mixed educational program where he or she would be in a public school part time?

☐   Yes

☐   No

Q18 Since you answered yes to the last question, what would need to change in your local public school for you to be comfortable with a part-time option for your child?

☐   Nothing, there is just not a part-time program option at the moment.

☐   I would need... _____

Q19 Since you answered no to the last question, what is the main reason you would not enroll your child into a part-time public school program?

Q20 If an ideal part-time public school option existed, which of the following benefits would be most appealing to your family?

☐   Extracurricular classes/activities (music, art, athletics, etc.)

☐   Socialization (variety of people, clubs, collaborative groups, etc.)

☐   Advanced subjects, equipment, or expert teachers

☐   Other _____

Q21 If you were to enroll your child into a part-time program, what goals, desires, or preferences of yours would be most important for the public education system to understand?

Q22 What do you believe is the greatest aspect of your homeschooling experience?

Appendix B

Survey Respondents by State.

State	Responses	Total %	State	Responses	Total %
AL	41	3.60%	NE	5	0.44%
AK	7	0.61%	NV	1	0.09%
AZ	54	4.74%	NH	14	1.23%
AR	7	0.61%	NJ	2	0.18%
CA	59	5.18%	NM	3	0.26%
CO	12	1.05%	NY	11	0.97%
CT	2	0.18%	NC	16	1.40%
DE	2	0.18%	ND	1	0.09%
FL	71	6.23%	OH	10	0.88%
GA	72	6.32%	OK	11	0.97%
HI	1	0.09%	OR	88	7.73%
ID	8	0.70%	PA	57	5.00%
IL	60	5.27%	RI	1	0.09%
IN	13	1.14%	SC	5	0.44%
IA	18	1.58%	SD	3	0.26%
KS	28	2.46%	TN	10	0.88%
KY	18	1.58%	TX	105	9.22%
LA	17	1.49%	UT	1	0.09%
ME	0	0.00%	VT	1	0.09%
MD	75	6.58%	VA	70	6.15%
MA	7	0.61%	WA	23	2.02%
MI	16	1.40%	WV	6	0.53%
MN	55	4.83%	WI	10	0.88%
MS	2	0.18%	WY	1	0.09%
MO	26	2.28%	DC	2	0.18%
MT	11	0.97%	Total	1139	100.00%

Appendix C

SPSS Output.

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Reason			28.778	3	.000	
Academic	−.173	.142	1.476	1	.224	.841
Religious/Moral	.957	.229	17.512	1	.000	2.604
Safety	−.758	.468	2.629	1	.105	.468
Constant	.632	.820	.595	1	.440	1.882