



## The Chronicles of Homeschooling Gifted Learners

Jennifer L. Jolly<sup>a\*</sup> and Michael S. Matthews <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>School of Education, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia; <sup>b</sup>College of Education, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, North Carolina, USA



### ABSTRACT

Homeschooling only has become a choice for many families of gifted children during the last two decades, as the number of gifted families has grown steadily along with the general homeschool population (Lubienski, Puckett, & Brewer, 2013). The current study examines a group of homeschooling mothers of gifted children who publish and maintain publically available blogs about their homeschooling experiences. In this qualitative study, four themes emerged (a) unintentional homeschoolers, (b) curriculum pivoting, (c) reflection as progress, and (d) reaching forward and back. In the current study we have identified some interesting but preliminary findings about families who homeschool their gifted child or children. We should continue working to understand the phenomenon of gifted homeschooling and its implications for schools and for society.

### KEYWORDS

blog; education; gifted; high-ability; homeschooling

Homeschooling increasingly has become a choice for many families of gifted children during the last two decades, which is reflected in a steady growth in homeschooling overall (Lubienski, Puckett, & Brewer, 2013; Redford, Battle, Bielick, & Grady, 2016). Despite this growth, there is a curious ambivalence—one might even say lack of interest—among public schools toward understanding the reasons why they are losing these learners, and in addition there is a dearth of research on this particular population. Initial studies suggest that homeschool families of gifted children vary considerably from the general homeschool population (Jolly, Matthews, & Nester, 2013). These families enter homeschooling for different reasons when compared to traditional homeschool families—gifted learners’ curricular choices and scope and sequences are markedly dissimilar, and furthermore, gifted homeschool families often feel misunderstood and isolated from conventional homeschooling support systems. To further understanding of these differences, in the current study we examined a group of homeschooling mothers of gifted children who publish and maintain publically available blogs about

**CONTACT** Jennifer L. Jolly  [jjjolly1@ua.edu](mailto:jjjolly1@ua.edu)  School of Education, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW 2052, Australia.

\*Jennifer L. Jolly is currently affiliated with the Department of Special Education and Multiple Abilities, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL.

© 2017 Taylor & Francis

their homeschooling experiences. This public record of these families' homeschooling activities provides additional insight into the curricular choices, learning trajectories, and activities and resources that these mothers draw upon in their efforts to provide what they believe to be an appropriate education for their gifted child or children.

### **Reasons for homeschooling: Moving from fringe to the mainstream**

Homeschooling has long been part of the fabric of education in the United States. By as early as 1642 The Massachusetts Bay Colony General Court required parents to ensure their children could read in order to understand the laws of the colony and the tenants of religion (Gutek, 2013). Thus, the very first education available to children in the United States occurred in family homes; it ranged from parental instruction to private tutoring and remained commonplace from before the country's independence through the late 19th century (Ray, 2013; Tyack, 1974). Following the American Revolution, a movement to establish formal schools grew slowly but led ultimately to the establishment of compulsory attendance laws, beginning in 1852 and with the most recent such law passed in 1918. Rather than placing the onus of educational responsibility on parents directly, parents instead were faced with criminal charges if their children failed to attend school outside the home (Dumas, Gates, & Schwarzer, 2010; Nemer, 2002). The Industrial Revolution also witnessed populations that migrated from rural areas into the new and densely populated urban centers, creating a need for the passage of antichild-labor and compulsory school attendance laws. Together these factors led to the establishment of common schools across the country, mostly eliminating the need for widespread homeschooling even in rural areas, where these were replaced with one-room school houses (Gutek, 2013; Katz, 1976). Public schooling became the customary educational practice for the majority of American children for the next 100 years.

Jumping ahead a century, the 1970s brought distinct social changes. Within the larger counter culture movement, homeschooling once again became a relevant and meaningful school choice for some families (Collum & Mitchell, 2005; Gaither, 2008, 2009; Stevens, 2003). Initially these families were motivated by distrust for the education provided by government-run schools. But by the 1980s, families accessing homeschooling were dominated by conservative Christians (Romanowski, 2006). Van Galen (1988) observed these changes and proposed two discrete categories to explain homeschooling families' choices—pedagogues and ideologues. Pedagogues' criticisms of public education reflected a lack of confidence in schools' ability to meet their child's individual needs. They also considered schools' selection of coursework to be too narrowly focused (Romanowski, 2006). Van Galen's other

proposed homeschooling category, the Ideologues, was populated predominantly by evangelical Christians who felt that public schools no longer reflected their own conservative and religious values.

Van Galen's classifications are useful in understanding the growth of the homeschooling movement during the latter part of the 20th century, but today this straightforward classification fails to reflect the multifaceted reasons why contemporary homeschooling families—including those with children labeled as gifted—exit both public and private schools (Van Galen, 2009). In response to this changing demographic, Nemer (2002) proposed that Van Galen's identifiers be transformed into descriptors—"ideological motivations" and "pedagogical motivations"—which would fall at each end of a continuum of motivations for homeschooling. Nemer's model takes into account "those who dislike the pedagogy of traditional schools but have little ideological motivation for homeschooling" (Nemer, 2002, p. 13) and could describe those parents and families whose motivations fall closer to the center between Van Galen's identifiers.

### ***Organizing for recognition***

During the 1980s, ideologues and pedagogues collaborated in order to support the establishment of laws in all 50 states to legalize homeschooling (Collum & Mitchell, 2005). However, due to the patchwork nature of their adoption, these laws vary widely from state to state in terms of their laxness or stringency. For example, some states including New York and Rhode Island require regular reporting, home visits, and for parents to hold teaching qualifications. In stark contrast, in other states such as Oklahoma or Iowa, there is not even an expectation that the state department of education will be notified when homeschooling is undertaken (Home School Legal Defense Association, n.d.). The legalization and subsequent legitimization of homeschooling, together with the expansion of educational content made available by the Internet, were both likely major factors contributing to the exponential growth of homeschooling (Isenberg, 2007).

Due to the variation in homeschooling laws across the United States, ascertaining the exact number of homeschooled students is difficult, and disaggregation of the demographics of the homeschooled population is nearly impossible. Depending on the source, estimates vary widely. One report suggested a prevalence of 850,000 homeschooled K–12 students in 1999 and 1.1 million in 2001 (Princiotta, Bielick, & Chapman, 2004). However, according to a different source, as of 2003, approximately 507,000 students were being homeschooled, and by 2012 this number had more than doubled to 1,773,000 (Redford et al., 2016). Despite these widely varying estimates, all sources agree that there has been a dramatic growth in

homeschool numbers during the past two decades. Gifted learners and their families also are part of this upward trajectory.

### ***A diversifying population***

A diversification and fission of the homeschooling population has occurred due to a climate of greater acceptance toward school choice in general, and to the greater acceptance of homeschooling in particular. Although school choice is most closely associated with the charter school movement, the idea that parents should have other options besides traditional public or private schooling to address their child's educational options (Renzulli & Evans, 2005) also helped to reduce the stigma previously associated with homeschooling.

During this same time, beginning in the early years of the 21st century the focus of public schools turned toward basic proficiency, leaving little attention for those with advanced academic abilities. The era of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) paralleled that of school choice and placed the priority on bringing all students to proficiency, leaving the ceiling for learning very low or even introducing a floor of achievement as the only educational standard for schools to meet. The educational needs of academically advanced and identified-gifted learners were generally ignored because the overwhelming majority of these children had reached basic proficiency before the school year even started (see Makel, Matthews, Peters, Rambo-Hernandez, & Plucker, 2016). Teachers accordingly felt pressured to turn their efforts to learners who had not mastered basic standards, even though they simultaneously were aware that gifted learners needed additional supports and different learning experiences (Jolly & Makel, 2010). This ambivalence of the traditional school environment toward gifted learners was part of the impetus for the dissatisfaction and frustration parents of gifted learners experienced in the time leading up to their decision to homeschool their child (Jolly et al., 2013; Winstanley, 2009).

The limited empirical literature available suggests that families of gifted children often decide to homeschool only after numerous attempts to work with traditional public and/or private schools. The decision to remove the child from the traditional school environment typically appears to be precipitated by a combination of factors, rather than by any single difficulty (Jolly et al., 2013). The salient factors included schools' lack of understanding of the concomitant factors of a learning disability and advanced intellectual ability, parents' perceptions of an increased intensity of social and emotional issues faced by their child within a specific school environment, the teacher or school's inability or unwillingness to provide accelerated curriculum or

differentiated learning experiences, and/or the school's decision to prioritize its struggling learners (Jolly & Matthews, in press).

### **Homeschooling empirical evidence**

Only two empirical articles appear to have addressed homeschooling of gifted learners (Jolly et al., 2013; Winstanley, 2009). The empirical literature on the greater homeschool population informs the borders and boundaries of the practice of homeschooling, which on the whole has positive outcomes for learners' academic achievement, social and emotional development, and psychological well-being. Despite this body of literature, substantial resistance remains among educators, policy makers, and other stake holders toward this type of school choice (Ray, 2013).

Academic achievement is one clear line of research integral to the homeschooling literature. The research findings on this topic suggest positive achievement gains for those who homeschool (Murphy, 2012; Ray, 2013; Rudner, 1999). However, none of these studies has parsed out whether the homeschooling treatment itself was the cause of the greater achievement, or if these students would have performed just as well if they had been enrolled in a public or private school instead of being homeschooled (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Lubienski et al., 2013; Ray, 2013).

Homeschooling parents' motivations to homeschool constitute an emerging line of interest for researchers, especially as the population engaged in homeschooling continues to diversify. A greater number of parents are choosing to homeschool because they perceive their children's individual needs are not being met by schools; these parents include, among others, those from African American families and those whose children have special learning needs.

Ray (2015) explored African American families' motives for undertaking homeschooling and the subsequent achievement of these students. He found that these families, though relatively new to the homeschooling community, entered into the practice of homeschooling for similar reasons. Black homeschool students' academic outcomes were generally above the national average, and these learners significantly outperformed Black students attending public schools (Ray, 2015).

Some African American families turned to homeschooling after ongoing experiences with teachers who held low expectations for their children, and also after encountering a curriculum that they did not consider to be culturally relevant (Mazama, 2016; Mazama & Lundy, 2012, 2013). Negative classroom experiences were also cited as a reason for homeschooling of African American children; although they had received individual attention in the schools, it was consistently negative (Mazama, 2016). Homeschooling allowed African American parents to tailor curriculum to

include cultural representations more reflective of their experiences and to create positive learning environments for their children (Mazama, 2016; Mazama & Lundy, 2015).

Families of special education students also sought homeschool environments for their children with exceptional needs. Duvall, Ward, Delquadri, and Greenwood (1997) investigated parents' ability to provide basic skill instruction in language arts and math. Their findings suggested that students were just as engaged as public school students, even though these parents were not professionally licensed teachers. In a subsequent study, Duvall, Delquadri, and Ward (2004) found homeschooled students with ADHD were afforded a more instructionally responsive environment in comparison to their public school peers. The authors suggested this is largely due to the smaller student-teacher ratio in the home environment, which allows more time to be spent on instruction rather than on classroom management, relative to the public school setting. Some special education parents' issues were less about the curriculum and focused more around the limitations of the services their children were provided at school; in many cases these parents felt that teachers were working from a deficit model, one in which the disability limited what their children were considered capable of learning (Cook, Bennett, Lane, & Mataras, 2013).

Hanna's (2012) longitudinal study of 250 homeschooling families over a 10- year period (1998–2008) was influenced by the exponential growth of the Internet during this same time period. Over time these families transitioned to a lesser use of prepared curricula, sourcing the public library, acquiring textbooks from their local school district, employing computer and online application in the home, seeking guidance from tutors and specialist teachers, and networking and sharing resources with other homeschool families.

Given the dearth of research on families of gifted children who homeschool, and the apparent rapid growth in this population over the past decade or so, in the present study we attempt to learn more about these families' decision to homeschool by examining their publicly posted web logs (blogs) and by conducting targeted interviews with the blogs' writers. Provided that there are approximately 4 million mothers who identify themselves as bloggers in the United States, only a select core of bloggers who are considered influential earn an income through their blog activities (Laird, 2012). In addition, one half to two thirds of bloggers desert their blogs within the first 2 months of their establishment. Researchers identified a number of reasons why mother bloggers engage and persist in the medium. These include finding connection to others, gathering and exchanging information, a medium for self-expression, recording life events, and maintaining community (Baumer, Sueyoshi, & Tomlinson, 2008; Jolly & Matthews, 2017).

By triangulating these sources of information, we aim to develop a greater understanding of the attitudes and reasons that led to these families' decisions to homeschool these particular children at this point in time.

## Procedures

### *Participants and data sources*

We employed a combination of web searching and purposeful sampling to identify study participants who penned blogs about their experiences in homeschooling one or more gifted children. Our selection criteria included identifying blogs written by mothers, residing in the United States, who had been homeschooling and maintaining a blog about parenting a gifted child for at least a year. In addition, we decided that blogs had to be currently maintained as of the time we interviewed their authors for this study, but that we would review all posts dating back to the founding of each blog (this covered a range of dates from approximately 2010 through 2015, inclusive). Many of the blogs we initially identified included embedded links to other blogs, which we also examined for a potential snowball sample (Cohen & Arieli, 2011); snowball sampling is particularly appropriate for the study of marginalized or less visible populations who may be inaccessible using other selection approaches.

Applying these procedures and criteria, we compiled a list of gifted homeschool parents who blog, using an Internet search. We elected to use the search terms homeschooling, blog, blogging, gifted, twice-exceptional, asynchronous, high ability, and talent, based on our knowledge of the literature and our experience as scholars who work in gifted education and who have previously researched homeschoolers of gifted children. Fifteen bloggers were initially contacted, either through their blog or by e-mail, with a request to participate in the study. Four bloggers (27%) responded and agreed to participate within the study's time frame. The bloggers interviewed do not blog to earn a source of income, review products for profit, or obtain revenue from their blogs. We also used the blog posts from some of the bloggers not interviewed (see Table 1) for purposes of triangulation and verification.

Three of the mothers participating in our interviews were White and one was Asian. All but one were native English speakers and born in the United States. Their children ranged in age from 10 to 17. All four held a bachelor's

**Table 1.** Additional Blogs (Not Interviewed).

Bloggers	Years blogging	Number of children
Janice	2	3
Crystal	2	3
Julie	3	3
Ally	2	1



degree, and three of the four mothers also held a graduate degree. Two of the four indicated that their child had a learning exceptionality in addition to giftedness; these included dyslexia and Aspergers syndrome. All mothers reported that either a school-based or private psychologist had identified their children's giftedness and any other diagnoses prior to the child's transition from formal school to homeschooling. [Tables 2](#) and [3](#) summarize participant characteristics.

### **Researcher as instrument**

Both authors of this study are parents of gifted children who at present range from upper elementary to college age. Our experiences working with teachers and schools include public neighborhood and magnet schools as well as private, parochial, and charter schools in settings ranging from rural communities to cities and large urban districts in the United States and Australia. Our own parenting experiences together with our positions as university-based scholars of gifted education led us to begin studying the experiences of parents of gifted students in 2008–2009, and ultimately to develop an ongoing line of research and several publications related to parenting, gifted learners, and homeschooling (Garn, Matthews, & Jolly, [2010](#), [2012](#); Jolly & Matthews, [2012](#), [2014](#), in press; Jolly et al., [2013](#); Matthews & Jolly, in press a, in press b; Matthews, Ritchotte, & Jolly, [2014](#)). The current study represents the most recent of our efforts in this area.

### **Data analysis**

To analyze blog content and interview data with participating blog authors, we adopted a grounded theory approach in which inductive analysis and

**Table 2.** Mother/Bloggers.

Mothers/ Bloggers	Education/Occupation	Marital status	Years homeschooling	Years blogging
Simone	BA/Writer	Married	8	7
Florence	MS/Writing coach	Single	7	8
Zoe	MS/Not employed	Married	6	5
Marion	MS/Part-time Physicians Assistant	Married	4	2

**Table 3.** Children of Mothers/Bloggers.

Mothers/Bloggers	Number of children	Gender	Gifted or 2e
Simone	1	Male	All children gifted
Florence	2	2 Male	Both males 2e
Zoe	4	3 Male 1 Female	All children gifted
Marion	2	2 Male	Both males 2e



constant comparison were used to generate high order themes (Patton, 2002). Individual interviews were conducted over the phone from May to June 2014. Each interview lasted on average 75 min and was recorded using the Call Recorder application. Each recorded interview was downloaded as a file from Call Recorder and transcribed verbatim. Each participant's transcript was sent back to her for review and member checking to solicit changes or clarifications. None of the participants made clarifications or requested changes in their transcript. Researcher-selected pseudonyms were used to identify respondents and we have attached these pseudonyms to selected interview and blog data that represent the identified themes. Textual data from blogs whose authors were not interviewed are identified using researcher-selected pseudonyms for parent and child names.

The two researchers read the transcripts independently to gain a shared understanding of the interview content. The researchers again read the transcripts, this time assigning codes to each line of text. An inductive process was employed as we did not formally identify or predetermine any categories prior to the analysis stage. Next, we convened to examine each participant's transcript together, comparing our initial units of meaning until reaching consensus on the grouping of these codes within four thematic categories. We triangulated text from blog posts by both interview participants and nonparticipants with the interview responses to identify consistencies or gaps in the data from these complimentary sources. The transcripts are 1,385 (Zoe), 7,883 (Florence), 7,228 (Simone), and 3,248 (Marion) words in length, counting only the respondents' own words.

To provide a sense of the representation of the themes we identified across different portions of the interviews, in [Table 4](#) we list the representation of the four themes within interview responses to questions six through 22 (questions one through five provided demographic information, so are not included in this tally). Each interviewee provided between 15 and 20 responses coded across the four categories. The number of questions that elicited a response related to each theme ranged from two

**Table 4.** Question frequency in relation to themes.

Themes	Participants			
	Simone	Florence	Marion	Zoe
Unintentional Homeschoolers	Q6, Q9, Q12, Q13	Q6, Q9	Q6, Q11	Q6, Q10
Curriculum pivoting	Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9, Q22	Q7, Q8, Q10, Q13	Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9, Q13, Q22	Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10, Q13
Reflection as progress	Q10, Q11, Q17, Q18, Q21, Q22	Q12, Q15, Q18, Q21, Q22	Q10, Q13, Q15, Q17, Q18	Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q21
Reaching forward and back	Q9, Q15, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q21	Q15, Q17, Q19, Q21	Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q21	Q15, Q17, Q18, Q21

Note. Q1–Q5 are demographic questions included in [Tables 2 & 3](#)

to six within each interviewee's responses, with a median of six (25%). Response counts were tallied independently by the first author and another individual unaffiliated with the study, achieving an inter-rater agreement of 93%.

## Results

Four themes emerged from these data sources. These include *unintentional homeschoolers*, as homeschool families used this exact language as an identifier. *Curriculum pivoting* encompasses the curricular decision-making processes that mothers employed for their children. *Reflection as progress* describes how these mothers used the blogs as a way to document and track their progress over time in response to the nonlinear nature of their children's learning. *Reaching forward and back* describes the opportunity that blogging provided for these homeschool mothers to return the courtesy that was afforded them by others during their homeschool journey. In the following discussion we share relevant quotes from the four respondents we interviewed (Simone, Florence, Zoe, and Marion), with additional supporting material from bloggers not interviewed (Julie, Crystal, and Ally), to represent the themes that we identified through this interpretive process.

### *Unintentional homeschoolers*

Every mother interviewed had experienced 4 or more years of homeschooling at the time of the interview. Each had entered into homeschooling without any long-term plan or agenda. Typically, the decision to homeschool came about following a series of poor interactions and responses from traditional private or public schools in response to the parents' queries regarding how the school would address their child's advanced learning needs. Among the two respondents whose families included children identified as twice-exceptional or 2e (that is, as academically gifted with a concurrently diagnosed learning disability), schools additionally had been either unwilling or unprepared to address these specific learning needs. Two of the four mothers (Simone and Florence) had decided to homeschool in response to a crisis situation, leaving traditional schools in the middle of a term, while Zoe and Marion had decided to homeschool at natural transitions in the school year, either just before the school year started or following the end of a school year.

Simone and her husband decided to send her son to Kindergarten in order to address the loneliness they thought he must be feeling because he was an only child. After visiting the local public school, she instinctively felt that there was something amiss and decided instead to enroll him in a well-regarded private half-day Kindergarten program. She recalled, "He suddenly

stopped asking questions. And that was the first red flag.” By the third week, Simone observed that her five-year-old’s behavior had changed dramatically. She recounted him, “not eating, not sleeping, not asking questions, and hiding behind his backpack in the car ... And the only thing I could think of doing was homeschooling.”

Florence’s son began at a Montessori school with a teacher who recognized his needs and adjusted her instruction accordingly to meet his advanced learning needs. But, in moving to the first grade classroom, the new teacher was not sympathetic or understanding of her son’s learning needs, so she made the decision to move to a public school. Although this new setting provided him with intellectual peers in a gifted program, no accommodations were made for the mathematics acceleration he had received previously. A diagnosis of dysgraphia in the second grade was what finally forced his mother into the decision to homeschool. Florence recalled,

We left in the middle of second grade and were just out of options. I had a 3 year-old at home who is definitely high-maintenance, so we said “Okay, we’re just going to figure it out, until we can figure out something else.” And that was 9 years ago.

Homeschooling had always been in the back of Zoe’s mind, but she lived in a good school district and her neighborhood school had an equally good reputation. Homeschooling seemed like it would be unnecessary, and her son Parker’s Kindergarten experience seemed to reinforce this view. However, first grade did not support this same optimism. Zoe described her son that year as being “very very sad because he felt like he wasn’t learning a lot at school.” She was also concerned about the lack of science curriculum available to lower elementary students. It was during his year in Kindergarten the diagnosis of dyslexia was made. However, Zoe explained:

We were going to be doing vision therapy and outside tutoring on our own, in addition to school so it just seemed like a lot of work and a lot of burden on him to do a full school day and do tutoring and homework. So it made it a very easy decision to homeschool for him.

While she moved Parker to homeschooling, her younger son, Ryan, decided to continue on in public school “with the option to come home any time he wanted to.”

Marion’s son was reading at a 4-year-old level in preschool, where he occasionally acted out by “talking while the teacher read and climbing on the tables. I asked him once why he was behaving like that and he said it was because he had already [read] the book himself.” Her son’s late birthday put attending Kindergarten off for another year, and provisions for early entrance were not available. Marion explained her reasoning, “I searched for options and came upon homeschooling. I figured we had a ‘gap’ year and

if didn't go well, I could send him to Kindergarten the following year. We loved it and just kept going."

Julie, a blogger not interviewed, noted on her blog that by the time her son was in third grade she had concluded:

what no one seemed to understand was that he needed something different. He is wired differently. He wasn't able to do what they needed him to do because they weren't giving him what he so desperately needed. We ended pulling him out of school. (posted May 19, 2014)

Julie's statements also suggest an unintentional entry into homeschooling that followed her child's unsatisfactory experience with the traditional school environment.

The initially unintentional or short-term view of homeschooling indicated by these mothers ultimately drove the other themes that emerged from their interviews, including backward lesson planning, curricular pivoting, and the reach forward and back. None of these mothers had planned for homeschooling to be a long-term solution. However, they took on the challenge, researching the appropriate path for their child, even though the way was not always clear or even linear. Despite their unintentional pathways into homeschooling, these initial decisions led to them to develop a particular directness in their educational practice, as described in the following theme.

### *Curricular pivoting*

One of the main drivers for these families in choosing homeschooling was the lack of learning their children had been experiencing in schools. Homeschooling provided the opportunity to adjust curriculum and content to their children's interests, abilities, and learning pace in a timely and appropriate manner. Traditional schools are limited to mandated curricular scope and sequence pathways that guide learning for each grade level, while home learning allowed parents to pivot and turn according to the individual academic and extracurricular needs of their child. We have labeled this *curricular pivoting* in the present discussion.

Zoe, whose daughter is also a talented musician, remarked, "Homeschooling allows her time to practice violin in chunks throughout the day ... in many areas of study she is a number of years ahead of where the school would place her age-wise." In Zoe's blog she provided the rationale for her daughter's 2015–2016 school year:

This is technically Paige's 8th grade year ... I am trying to keep everything doable with our busy music/travel schedule while still covering everything I want her to learn and that she wants to learn. I went back and forth with science this year. She did high school level biology this year and my original plan was Chemistry but then with all her other subjects especially a rather heavy history plan (and lack of a

burning desire to actually do chemistry), I decided Chemistry can wait until next year. (posted September 5, 2015)

Zoe further noted, “This plan is not set in stone and may change depending on how the year progresses and leaving room for some bunny trails as needed” (posted September 5, 2015).

Simone, now a 10-year veteran of homeschooling, experimented quite extensively in her first 2 years of homeschooling. She initially started out with an independent learning program where “we were doing curriculum that was about 2 years ahead, I think [staying with] that would have killed him.” Her son, Adam, worked through math and science content so quickly that it was difficult to keep pace, and eventually she hired a math tutor for him. From age eight to 10 they covered “algebra, geometry, algebra II, and now he’s doing pre-calculus and college level geometry ... he’s doing honors level physics this year ... It just jumped; we jumped.” In Simone’s blog she describes Adam’s learning plan, in which

he is following the community college route again ... and has chosen four courses (this four-subject CC course load seems to be just right) and is taking a fifth math course at home through MIT Open Courseware. Community college math is just not sufficiently challenging anymore. (posted August 22, 2015)

Florence’s approach echoes the other mothers’; as she observed, “I ask them, and I’ve always done that, from the minute we brought Kane home, within boundaries, ‘What do you want to do?’” She described, “We just kind of pick and choose ... and there’s more online stuff, we started relying more on that.” However, despite asking her children for their preferences, Florence does recognize her role in steering the curriculum in which her sons engage:

As a homeschooling parent, all curriculum has to pass through just one set of eyes: mine. No committees, no superintendents, no teachers. Just me. Like many home-school parents, I make dozens of bigger curriculum choices a year, often including mid-course corrections when my carefully laid plans bomb by December. I’ve rejected curriculum because it was too boring, not challenging enough, too challenging, or not helping us enough to bother. I’ve let curriculum go that didn’t include what I’d like it to (evolution, for example). (posted January 13, 2012)

Her background in chemical engineering has influenced how Marion has approached the teaching of science, allowing her sons to explore science topics in deep and complex ways, such as by incorporating regular nature walks building on her sons’ natural curiosity about the various topics. Marion recalled, “So when it comes to math and science we’re never just following the book. We go off on tangents to explain why this is going to be important to you later.” Not all science involves nature walks; in her blog, she also has posted about the boys’ computer science experiences, explaining “the boys are learning about computer science in a variety of ways. We included computer science in our ‘engineers’ week’ last spring by playing around

with Scratch and Light-bot.” Building on previous learning experiences, Marion also posted,

Through FLL team E has learned quite a bit about programming the Lego NXT robot and this summer both boys took a week long programming class through the local science center. They worked through the lessons offered through the Hour of Code website during Computer Science Education Week. (posted December 30, 2013)

These personalized approaches to curriculum and her continual evaluation of her son’s progress and realignment of his learning goals likely would not be practical—or even possible—in the majority of school-based classroom settings.

### ***Reflection as progress***

For these mothers, their blogs initially began as platforms from which to share resources, activities, and experiences. However, upon reflection, they all found the blog to also provide a digital scrapbook or lesson plan book that turned into a living record of their attempts and accomplishments as a homeschooling family.

Simone shared practical suggestions in the blog regarding the collection of her son’s work, particularly as college applications arise in their near future:

It’s that time of the year when we have to start looking for space to stash away kiddo’s notebooks, loose-leaf papers and textbooks he might not use again. In the younger years, it was easier to discard things that I felt he would not need again while keeping what was important in collapsible file holders or boxes. It was easier for me to decide what to save, what to shred, what to donate or what to sell. But this year, I feel as if I need to save everything just in case some college admin person in kiddo’s future decides it is something s/he really needs to see in order to approve his application and/or grant him credit. (Posted May 27, 2015)

The blog also provided Simone the framework from which to organize content and activities that had been undertaken. She recalled,

The blog gave me an avenue to structure things. Just being able to make sense of all these things we were just going through so quickly and always felt like we were never finishing curriculum from the first page to the last page ... we might only use 10 pages and I just needed a place to write it all down ... I had a very clear purpose, a place to park homeschooling ... ideas, it was easy to maintain the blog because there [were] tons of ideas.

Other examples provided the opportunity to reflect on how the focus of what and how their children studied had changed over time as these families gained experience in homeschooling over an extended period. Florence posted on her blog

... my sons' growing prowess with words delights me, wordsmith that I am. At the start of our homeschooling experience, science and math ruled the house. Looking back, I can see they dominated our plans and energy at home mostly because they weren't as easily available in school. For years, science, math, history were our subjects of focus. I worked language arts into the edges for many years. However, in the last year, there's been a swing toward all things wordy. (Posted on January 2, 2012)

Marion described her blog as

a record and to say this is what we're doing and it really is so helpful for me to sometimes to look back and be able to say we did a lot especially from a science standpoint. It's such a part of our life sometimes it can feel like we didn't do enough . . . it just helps to look back at the pictures and the record and say oh ya that's what we did to look back and remember that's why we do this when it's a rough day.

Zoe kept a journal before she began blogging and felt that the blog was a natural progression of the journaling and "a way to keep track of our homeschooling." In her post "First Mini-Tour" she recounts her children's first time to travel out of state for "performing in multiple venues without other things like camps going on as well" (Posted September 5, 2015). In addition, Zoe posted pictures and a description of the tour, including the fact that homeschooling was not at the forefront during these several days and that this departure was okay.

Crystal, another blogger not interviewed, philosophically reflected,

I started looking for a theme to the year—an overarching sense of mission, or purpose, or accomplishment, that I could find anchorage in. Was there something that tied it all together? There was. But it was different for each of them. (posted May, 2014)

Though this was not initially her purpose in authoring the blog, Crystal found in looking back that it provided a useful tool for reflecting on the progress she and her children had made during the preceding year's homeschooling experience.

### ***Reaching forward and back***

Each of the mothers interviewed for this study entered homeschooling from a profession other than education. They came in with a basic understanding of how homeschooling worked, but little knowledge of the day-to-day process and few if any resources that specifically addressed homeschooling of gifted children. The learning curve for these mothers was long and steep. Their blogs served as way to reach out to give back to those who were entering the homeschooling world, and also to reach forward by leaving a record for those who were still to come. We have labeled this theme accordingly as *reaching forward and back*.



Zoe reflected, “I did not make the blog public at first but came to enjoy learning about other homeschoolers through their blogs. I thought my posts might be helpful if any other homeschoolers were going through similar challenges or issues.” In reflection to another post she had read, Zoe recalled:

Parents on some of the gifted forums I visit are often listing curriculums for their very young (3-4yo) children asking if they are doing too much or not enough for their brilliant children. Then they get upset when experienced homeschoolers suggest allowing “school” to be child-led because they feel their parenting style is being questioned. I wish they realized the gift they are being given and that it is in no way questioning parenting style nor is it the “they are young, let them play” answer. Child-led learning is a lot of work for a parent because the parent must provide opportunities for learning and resources ... create a smorgasbord for the child to sample from. Some of the things you provide will hardly be used and with others, you’ll have to be willing to find more to fill the child’s need. (posted August 8, 2010)

Marion envisioned her blog as a way to encourage other homeschoolers. She noted, “I try to make it so I share things that will give other people ideas or create a sense of community.” Her posts reflect this type of encouragement as well:

This was one of my ‘I LOVE homeschool’ weeks. We all have our times of vulnerability, but for every time like that there are so many others when I say, ‘YES!’ I love my job and there is no place else I want to be at this point in our journey. (posted March 15, 2015)

Simone felt great gratitude toward several mothers in particular:

I was very very grateful to the veteran homeschool mums who very freely shared their resources. You asked a question and everyone is so willing to help. So supportive. This is support that you couldn’t get from real live people not because people weren’t supportive but because people were very ignorant about homeschool.

Simone also lends encouragement to others. On her blog she queries her readers,

Do you second guess yourself and agonize over your homeschooling decisions ...? If you are an engaged parent, if you are constantly looking for ways to keep challenging your child while also injecting humor and refusing to assign meaningless tasks, then do be easy on yourself. You are doing the best you can. There’s no such thing as perfect. There really isn’t. There is such a thing as your best. Strive for that as often as you can. And don’t forget to hug your child(ren) often. I need to remember this more myself. (posted September 27, 2013)

Florence’s motivations stemmed from wanting to

let other people know they were not alone. I think there’s something about saying “This is what is hard.” Because I don’t write a lot about what is easy, I don’t like reading blogs about how everything is wonderful. I like that people are happy ...

but I don't learn from those. I learn and grow from the ones that say, "This is incredibly hard, and I don't know what to do." (posted September 9, 2010)

The following post exemplifies the directness or lack of camouflaging Florence presents in her blog:

Now despite the trepidation I've felt this year I'm in for the long haul . . . . It's been delightful, when not utterly exhausting, to be intimately involved with their learning, learning that is far from linear but rather comes in fits and spurts, one skill bounding while another takes a rest. (posted September 9, 2010)

Ally, another blogger not interviewed, was even more candid regarding the function of her blog as a lifeline to other homeschoolers:

I feel certain that I am not alone in needing to figure all of this out. If anyone knows the answer, please tell me. (As I type this, PK is interrupting me—for the third time!—to tell me about some kind of Minecraft shit. HELP. Bonus incentive: if he'd stop interrupting, I'd blog more often . . .). (posted September 30, 2012)

## Discussion

Through the process of interviewing four mothers who homeschool their gifted children, and who also maintain web logs (blogs) about their experiences in this process, we have been able to develop a preliminary picture of both the "why" and "how" of this increasingly popular educational option. Textual evidence from blogs by other mothers we did not interview also supports this picture. Consistent with earlier findings (Jolly et al., 2013), mothers of gifted children in the current study moved into homeschooling only after multiple attempts to work with their child's teacher and schools had proven unsuccessful. Though our investigation did not specifically focus on these parents' interactions with their child's teachers and schools, it seems likely that schools' deficit perspective, as related by homeschooling families of African American children and children with exceptionalities, may also be relevant to understanding families in the current study as well as others with gifted or twice-exceptional children.

The families we studied initially viewed homeschooling as a short-term decision. However, once adopted, its benefits—including matching the pace of learning to their child's needs, interests, and ability levels, addressing curricular areas perceived to be lacking in school-based programming, flexibility of scheduling, and the higher motivation and happiness their children felt due to being more in control of their own learning—more than made up for the uncertainty, difficulty in locating appropriate curriculum, and extensive time commitment that providing an effective homeschool experience required of these mothers.

These homeschooling blog authors were themselves well educated, with three of four holding graduate degrees. This level of formal education is

consistent with the broader population of homeschool families' characteristics as noted in the literature (Murphy, 2012; Redford et al., 2016). Though not universal, children identified as gifted also often come from families whose members have higher levels of formal education (e.g., Robinson, Weinberg, Redden, Ramey, & Ramey, 1998). Though it required substantial effort, these relatively well-educated mothers appeared to effectively transfer their academic skills and knowledge from other domains into the development of effective learning experiences for their gifted children. This suggests there may be a positive relationship between formal education and success in homeschooling; further study in this area would be relevant to the continued development of state policies surrounding homeschooling, and perhaps also may inform lateral entry licensure and related issues in teacher education.

Returning to the salient point about parents' educational backgrounds, the successes evident in their children's educational outcomes came despite the fact that the four mothers in the current study (and the additional blogs consulted for the study) had not had any formal training in pedagogy. This did not seem to limit their ability to provide an appropriate education for their children; in fact, with the benefit of experience and hindsight, these mothers desired to share their accumulated knowledge of homeschooling with other parents who might now or in the future engage in homeschooling efforts. The use of the online medium to share knowledge with other homeschoolers is a logical outgrowth of homeschooling parents' increasing reliance over the last several years on the Internet as a source of information and of specific curricular resources (Hanna, 2012; Isenberg, 2007; Redford et al., 2016). Maintaining a public record of their experiences via the blog format served this purpose, and also fostered the secondary purpose of maintaining for their own future use a long-term record of the education they had provided for their children. Record keeping was one key motivational factor for blogging and was consistent with bloggers from other perspectives. Other identified factors from this set of mothers included self-expression, social interaction, information exchange, and maintaining community, which are also described in the research literature (Hsu & Lin, 2008; Jolly & Matthews, 2017). Monetary benefits rarely contribute to an average bloggers motivation to maintain a blog and the same status extended to this group of mothers (Morrison, 2011).

### **Limitations**

As noted earlier, this study faced limitations similar to those identified in other studies of homeschoolers. Although the child's giftedness was self-reported by parents, one advantage this study has over previous empirical literature is that the level of work undertaken by students could be verified by samples uploaded to the blog. Though not a standardized observation

process, we did not notice anything in their posted work that would lead us to question the gifted diagnosis for these children.

Additional limitations of this study include the relatively small sample size, and the potential for response biases of mostly unknown magnitude and direction due to the moderate (27%) response rate of bloggers who were willing and available to be interviewed for this study. As a small sample, though consistent with larger trends in the demographics of homeschooling families, diversity among the study participants (in terms of family economic status, parental education, racial/ethnic background, etc.) was limited. It is unclear whether the relatively high rate of dual exceptionality (half of participating families) is or is not representative of the population who choose to homeschool gifted learners, though it seems plausible that these learners may be engaged in homeschooling at higher rates than their presence in the overall school population would suggest.

### ***Future directions***

Future studies addressing the homeschooling of gifted children should seek larger samples; ideally these would be representative of the homeschooling population at large, though due to the issues mentioned earlier (i.e., the lack of any central database that collects information on homeschool students or on gifted learners in general), these characteristics still are not well documented.

In the current study, we have identified some interesting but preliminary findings about families who homeschool their gifted child or children. We expect that this topic will become increasingly important as traditional school attendance continues to shrink due to the rapid growth of charter schools, the increased awareness and exponential growth of homeschooling, and other reactions against the perceived and actual limitations of traditional neighborhood-based public schools. Based on the small number of examples we were able to examine in this study, it seems clear that for the children involved, the decision to homeschool has turned out quite well; they are engaged in their learning, motivated to continue it, and are facing success in gaining access to college. It would be interesting to follow the lives and careers of these learners into adulthood, and to see what sorts of educational experiences they ultimately select for their own children in the future.

Considering gifted children specifically, every loss of students from this marginalized population in the public school setting risks diminishing the already-thin margin of support for gifted education programs and services. From a resource standpoint, school administrators could easily justify eliminating gifted education programs as some students and their parent advocates exit the brick and mortar building, especially in locales where gifted students are already underserved. It seems puzzling that despite legal

protections guaranteeing a free and appropriate public education for all children, some children in the United States in particular still are not receiving appropriate services in the schools. This is despite parents' best efforts to inform teachers of their child's learning needs, desires, and strengths. The jump to homeschooling represents a leap of faith across a broad chasm of uncertainty for parents, and one that likely would not happen in the absence of a strong (if unintentional) push in that direction from teachers and schools. If public education is, as has been widely suggested, key to the success of a democratic society, we should continue working to understand the phenomenon of gifted homeschooling and its implications for schools and for society.

## ORCID

Michael S. Matthews  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1695-2498>

## References

- Baumer, E., Sueyoshi, M., & Tomlinson, B. (2008, April). Exploring the role of the reader in the activity of blogging. In Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems. (pp. 1111–1120). ACM.
- Cohen, N., & Arieli, T. (2011). Field research in conflict environments: Methodological challenges and snowball sampling. *Journal of Peace Research*, 48(4), 423–435. doi:10.1177/0022343311405698
- Collum, E., & Mitchell, D. E. (2005). Homeschooling as a social movement: Identifying the determinants of homeschoolers' perceptions. *Sociological Spectrum*, 25, 273–305. doi:10.1080/027321790518807
- Cook, K. B., Bennett, K. E., Lane, J. D., & Mataras, T. K. (2013). Beyond the brick walls: Homeschooling students with special needs. *Physical Disabilities: Education and Related Services*, 32, 90–111.
- Dumas, T. K., Gates, S., & Schwarzer, D. R. (2010). Evidence for homeschooling: Analysis in light of social science research. *Widener Law Review*, 16, 65–87.
- Duvall, S. F., Delquadri, J. C., & Ward, D. L. (2004). A preliminary investigation of the effectiveness of homeschool instructional environments for students with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. *School Psychology Review*, 33, 140–158.
- Duvall, S. F., Ward, D. L., Delquadri, J. C., & Greenwood, C. R. (1997). An exploratory study of home school instructional environments and their effects on the basic skills of students with learning disabilities. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 20, 150–172.
- Gaither, M. (2008). *Homeschool: An American history*. New York, NY: Palgrave.
- Gaither, M. (2009). Homeschooling in the USA: Past, present and future. *Theory and Research in Education*, 7, 331–346. doi:10.1177/1477878509343741
- Garn, A. C., Matthews, M. S., & Jolly, J. (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
- Garn, A. C., Matthews, M. S., & Jolly, J. L. (2012). Parents' role in the academic motivation of students with gifts and talents. *Psychology in the Schools*, 49, 656–667. doi:10.1002/pits.21626

- Gutek, G. L. (2013). *An historical introduction to American education* (3rd ed.). Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.
- Hanna, L. G. (2012). Homeschooling education: Longitudinal study of methods, materials, and curricula. *Education and Urban Society*, 44, 609–631. doi:10.1177/0013124511404886
- Home School Defense League. (nd). Homeschool laws in your state. Retrieved from <https://www.hslda.org/laws/>
- Hsu, C. L., & Lin, J. C. (2008). Acceptance of blog usage: The roles of technology acceptance, social influence and knowledge sharing motivation. *Information & Management*, 45, 65–74. doi:10.1016/j.im.2007.11.001
- Isenberg, E. J. (2007). What we have learned about homeschooling? *Peabody Journal of Education*, 82, 387–409. doi:10.1080/01619560701312996
- Jolly, J., & Matthews, M. S. (2012). A critique of the literature on parenting gifted learners. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 35, 259–290. doi:10.1177/0162353212451703
- Jolly, J. L., & Makel, M. (2010). No Child Left Behind: The inadvertent costs for high-achieving and gifted students. *Childhood Education*, 87, 35–40. doi:10.1080/00094056.2010.10521436
- Jolly, J. L., & Matthews, M. S. (2014). Parenting. In J. A. Plucker & C. M. Callahan (Eds.), *Critical issues and practices in gifted education: What the research says* (2nd ed., pp. 481–492). Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
- Jolly, J. L., & Matthews, M. S. (2017). Why we blog: Homeschooling mothers of gifted children. *Roeper Review*, 39. [online first]. doi:10.1080/02783193.2017.1289579
- Jolly, J. L., & Matthews, M. S. (in press). Homeschooling and the gifted child. In C. M. Callahan & H. L. Hertberg-Davis (Eds.), *Fundamentals of Gifted Education* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Jolly, J. L., Matthews, M. S., & Nester, J. (2013). Homeschooling the gifted: A parent's perspective. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 57, 121–134. doi:10.1177/0016986212469999
- Katz, M. (1976). The origins of popular education: A reassessment. *History of Education Quarterly*, 16, 381–407. doi:10.2307/367722
- Kunzman, R., & Gaither, M. (2013). Homeschooling: A comprehensive survey of the research. *Other Education: The Journal of Educational Alternatives*, 2, 4–59.
- Laird, S. (2012). *The rise of the mommy blogger*. Retrieved from <http://mashable.com/2012/05/08/mommy-blogger-infographic>
- Lubienski, C., Puckett, T., & Brewer, T. J. (2013). Does homeschooling “work”? A critique of the empirical claims and agenda of advocacy organizations. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 88, 378–392. doi:10.1080/0161956X.2013.798516
- Makel, M. C., Matthews, M. S., Peters, S. J., Rambo-Hernandez, K., & Plucker, J. A. (2016). *How can so many students be invisible? Large percentages of American students perform above grade level*. Retrieved from <http://edpolicy.education.jhu.edu/wordpress/?p=153>
- Matthews, M. S., & Jolly, J. L. (in press a). Parents and the development of gifted students. In C. M. Callahan, & H. L. Hertberg-Davis (Eds.), *Fundamentals of Gifted Education* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Matthews, M. S., & Jolly, J. L. (in press b). The learning environment at home: Parents and families. In J. Roberts, T. Inman, & J. Robins (Eds.), *Introduction to gifted education*.
- Matthews, M. S., Ritchotte, J. A., & Jolly, J. (2014). What's wrong with giftedness? Parents' perceptions of the gifted label. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 24(4), 372–393. doi:10.1080/09620214.2014.990225
- Mazama, A. (2016). African American homeschooling practices: Empirical evidence. *Theory and Research in Education*, 14, 26–44. doi:10.1177/1477878515615734
- Mazama, A., & Lundy, G. (2012). African American homeschooling as racial protectionism. *Journal of Black Studies*, 26, 723–748. doi:10.1177/0021934712457042



- Mazama, A., & Lundy, G. (2013). African American homeschooling and question of curricular cultural relevance. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 82, 123–138. doi:10.7709/jnegroeducation.82.2.0123
- Mazama, A., & Lundy, G. (2015). African American homeschooling the quest for quality education. *Education and Urban Society*, 47, 160–181. doi:10.1177/0013124513495273
- Morrison, A. (2011). “Suffused by feeling and affect”: The intimate public of personal mommy blogging. *Biography*, 34(1), 37–55. doi:10.1353/bio.2011.0002
- Murphy, J. (2012). *Homeschooling in America: Capturing and assessing the movement*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Nemer, K. M. (2002). *Understudied education: Toward building a homeschooling research agenda* (Occasional Paper No. 48). National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education, Teachers College, Columbia University. Retrieved from <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download;jsessionid=0FF77D904B59E56A9DEDD91A67D5DE26?doi=10.1.1.540.9790&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Princiotta, D., Bielick, S., & Chapman, C. (2004). 1.1 Million Homeschooled Students in the United States in 2003. Issue Brief. NCES 2004-115. National Center for Education Statistics.
- Ray, B. D. (2013). Homeschooling associated with beneficial learner and societal outcomes but educators do not promote it. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 88, 324–341. doi:10.1080/0161956X.2013.798508
- Ray, B. D. (2015). African American homeschool parents’ motivations for homeschooling and their Black children’s academic achievement. *Journal of School Choice*, 9, 71–96. doi:10.1080/15582159.2015.998966
- Redford, J., Battle, D., Bielick, S., & Grady, S. (2016). *Homeschooling in the United States: 2012*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U. S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2016096>
- Renzulli, L. A., & Evans, L. (2005). School choice, charter schools, and White flight. *Social Problems*, 52, 398–418. doi:10.1525/sp.2005.52.3.398
- Robinson, N. M., Weinberg, R. A., Redden, D., Ramey, S. L., & Ramey, C. T. (1998). Family factors associated with high academic competence among former Head Start children. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 42, 148–156. doi:10.1177/001698629804200303
- Romanowski, M. (2006). Revisiting the common myths about homeschooling. *Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 79, 125–139. doi:10.3200/TCHS.79.3.125-129
- Rudner, L. M. (1999). Scholastic achievement and demographic characteristics of homeschool students in 1998. *Educational Policy Archives*. doi:10.14507/epaa.v7n8.1999. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED424309.pdf>
- Stevens, M. L. (2003). The normalization of homeschooling in the USA. *Evaluation & Research in Education*, 17, 90–100. doi:10.1080/09500790308668294
- Tyack, D. H. (1974). *One best system: A history of urban education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Van Galen, J. A. (1988). Ideology, curriculum, and pedagogy in home education. *Education and Urban Society*, 21, 52–68. doi:10.1177/0013124588021001006
- Van Galen, J. A. (2009). Ideology, curriculum, and pedagogy in home education. *Education in Urban Society*, 21, 52–68. doi:10.1177/0013124588021001006
- Winstanley, C. (2009). Too cool for school? Gifted children and homeschooling. *Theory and Research in Education*, 7, 347–362. doi:10.1177/1477878509343736



## Appendix: Interview Protocol

- (1) What is your occupation? What is your partner's/spouse's occupation?
- (2) Can you please describe your educational background?
- (3) Region of the country in which you live?
- (4) Year of birth?
- (5) How many children do you have? How old are they?
- (6) Tell me about the factors that led to your decision to homeschool?
- (7) How do you decide what your children will study?
- (8) What resources do you use to educate your children? How do you select them?
- (9) What does a typical "school" day look like?
- (10) What would it take for you to consider sending your children to a traditional (public or private) school?
- (11) What are the plans for your child after homeschooling?
- (12) What outside interests do your children have?
- (13) How do you balance their interests and their academic learning requirements?
- (14) How long have you been blogging?
- (15) What motivated you to start blogging?
- (16) Did you establish the blog due to homeschooling? Or did you already blog?
- (17) What keeps you blogging?
- (18) How do you decide what to post on your blog?
- (19) How do your readers' posts impact what you post?
- (20) Is this your only blog? If not, what other blogs do you have?
- (21) What is the goal of your blog?
- (22) What blogs do you follow? Why?

Copyright of Journal of School Choice is the property of Taylor & Francis Ltd and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.