The Growing Trend of Homeschooling in the Washington Metropolitan Area Muslim Community

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Abstract

This research seeks to explain the apparent increase in the number of Muslim families in the Washington metropolitan area who are choosing to homeschool their children. Despite being a proportionally slim percentage of the homeschool population, they have faced some negative attention stemming from concerns about Muslim homeschoolers' qualifications, expertise, citizenship, and even loyalty to the United States.

Our project attempts to ascertain the motives and reasons behind this growing trend by choosing a representative sample of Muslim homeschoolers and conducting in-depth interviews, engaging in participant observation, and sending out questionnaires. We placed our findings within the broader study of homeschooling, both historically and theoretically, so that it would serve as a cross reference as well as a comparison of Muslim and other homeschoolers. Our findings indicate that the main reasons for this increase are very similar to those noted among other faith-based homeschoolers: religion, family values, and a morally based education in a safe environment.

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Introduction

The idea of homeschooling has always evoked a sense of suspicion and mistrust among the general population due to the connotation of homeschoolers becoming social misfits. These deleterious stereotypes are changing, albeit slowly, as more parents choose to follow this path. Research suggests that such negative assumptions are far from reality, that homeschool children more than hold their own academically,[1] and that they are involved in an array of extracurricular activities. Religion seems to be the main impetus, for current research reveals that some 75 percent of of homeschoolers are Christians who "consciously and conscientiously want to promote their own values."[2]

There is, however, a rising and rapidly growing minority within the homeschooling community,[3] namely, Muslim homeschoolers. According to Brian D. Ray of the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI), "discussion with homeschool leaders across the nation indicates that the number of Muslims in homeschooling is expanding relatively quickly, compared with other groups."[4] He speculates that part of this rise could be attributed to the growth and increased confidence of this population segment in general.

But even though Muslim homeschoolers remain a tiny minority within a minority, they have faced the most negative attention and unfounded accusations among the homeschooling community. For example, some Americans have raised concerns about such children "adequately" fitting in with American life and culture; others have accused Muslim homeschoolers of increasing the community's isolation and cultural distance from the American mainstream or questioned the extent to which they will be loyal American citizens. And then there are those who have labeled Islamic homeschooling as "terror madrassas" sown among an unsuspecting populace, not to mention a means of gender discrimination and isolation of girls both socially and educationally.[5]

These indictments are merely another layer of the hypocrisy and stereotyping that characterize our modern times. The media-created frenzy concerning the social insularity and disconnect of Muslims in the West and the "imagined" fear of the enemy within have further increased speculation and mistrust of Muslim homeschoolers. A right enjoyed by others seems to be begrudged Muslims. Yet another example of faux liberalism, which pretends to say "You have freedom to do as you wish" but actually means that "As long as it's exactly what I want." These accusations only promoted us to conduct research on Muslim homeschoolers. We wanted to find out the real reasons for the increased number of Muslims homeschoolers in the D.C. metro area by actually asking them instead of merely speculating.

We will begin this paper by taking a brief look at the history of homeschooling in the country. We will then consider the reasons for homeschooling and why it is on the increase in general and in the Muslim community, conduct an in-depth study of Muslim homeschoolers in the D.C. metro area, compare the results obtained with the national research on homeschoolers, and state our findings and conclusions.

A Brief History of Homeschooling in the United States

The term *homeschooling* or *home school*, which is known as *home education* in the United Kingdom and Europe, refers to educating children characteristically by parents, but sometimes by tutors, at home rather than in the formal settings of public or private schools. Homeschooling is not a new phenomenon; in fact, it dates back to the earliest human civilizations and was the main method of learning before public education. Although parents and private tutors have been teaching children at home for centuries, in the late 1960s and 1970s for the first time in American history a political movement appeared that adopted this practice as a radical, countercultural critique of the public education system.[6] "Conservatives, who felt that the public schools had sold out to secularism and progressivism, joined with progressives who felt that public schools were bastions of conservative conformity to challenge the notion that all children should attend them."[7]

In the early 1990s, the right to homeschool was granted in almost every state. From the late 1960s until the present day there has been a dramatic increase in the number of homeschoolers.[8] Homeschooling is also swiftly growing in popularity among minorities. For example, about 15 percent of homeschool families are non-white/non-Hispanic.[9] Furthermore, a demographically wide variety of people homeschool: atheists, Christians, Mormons, Muslims, Jews, Hindus; conservatives, libertarians, and liberals; low-, middle-, and high-income families; black, Hispanic, and white families; as well as parents with Ph.D.s, GEDs, and no high-school diplomas.[10]

Homeschooling has been the norm around the world for most of history. During this country's colonial period, the family was the principle educational institution for most children. Historical evidence suggests that a large majority of them were mainly homeschooled in terms of reading, writing, arithmetic, faith, morals, interpersonal relationships, and social skills.[11] "Domestic education [i.e., homeschooling] was common throughout the 1600s and 1700s." According to historian Lawrence Cremin, "The colonists were heir to Ren-

aissance traditions stressing the centrality of the household as the primary agency of human association and education."[12]

Throughout the 1800s to the mid-1900s, homeschooling continued to be the most common form of education for most children. According to United States Department of Education, the average number of days the average pupil attended school per year was only 78; many of those school days lasted for only a few hours.[13] During the nineteenth century, "the school was a voluntary and incidental institution: attendance varied enormously from day to day and season to season."[14] The child

> acquired his values and skills from his family and from neighbors of all ages and conditions. The major vocational curriculum was work on the farm or in the craftsman's shop or the corner store; civic and moral instruction came mostly in church or home or around the village where people met to gossip or talk politics. A child growing up in such a community could see work-family-religion-recreation-school as an organically related system of human relationships.[15]

With new waves of immigrants arriving on American soil, there was an increased impetus for state-based education as "an instrument to create a new public philosophy" to be shared by Americans of every background and persuasion.[16] The main aim of public education was to produce "good citizens" of the state. According to Glenn, "the objective of this state-controlled system of popular education had little to do with economic or egalitarian goals; it was to shape future citizens to a common pattern."[17]

By the mid-twentieth century, public education had become the most dominant form of education, so much so that by 1970 homeschooling was nearly extinct. An estimated 87 percent of all children aged five to seventeen were enrolled in public schools, and their average school attendance was 162 days per year.[18]

> By the mid-1960s, however, growing disenchantment with the ongoing secularization of public education, deepening concern about trends in American culture related to drugs, sex, and disorder; a resurgent evangelical faith ... sparked the phenomenal increase in the number of Christian day schools.[19]

This movement was the forerunner to the homeschooling one that exploded in the United States during the 1980s and 1990s. Two distinct ideologies emerged, both of which emphasized child-centered learning: (1) Liberal critics of public schooling who believed that schools did not adequately respect children as individuals and (2) conservative critics who argued that public schools

undermined traditional values. The number of homeschoolers, whether faith-based or ideological, has continued to grow on a yearly basis as more and more parents become dissatisfied with the public education system.

The growth in homeschooling poses a fundamental challenge to the centuries-long scheme of American public education. It raises imperative questions about how to balance the rights of the family and the community, of the individual and the state. There seems to be no clear-cut answers to these complex legal and ethical issues. The extent to which homeschooling will transform educational practice in years to come seems to be indeterminate. However, one thing is certain: It provides an ideological alternative to compulsory state education and forces of standardization and cultural homogenization. Whether one views public education as a means of reducing inequality or perpetuating social inequality by preserving the status quo, its sole purpose seems to be to produce "good obedient citizens." Homeschooling provides an alternative yet equally valid understanding of "good citizenry."

Figure 1. Number of Homeschooled Children (NCES)
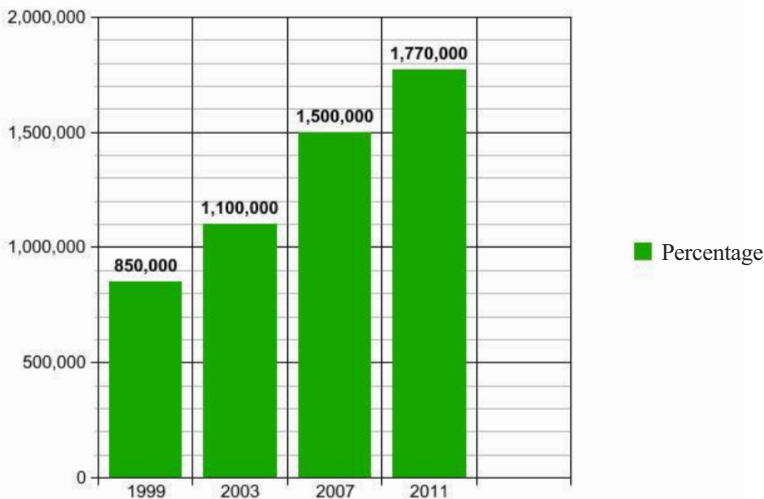
Reasons Why Parents Choose to Homeschool

There is little doubt that the number of homeschoolers is increasing rapidly.[20] In fact, it seems to be the fastest-growing form of education in the United States. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES),[21] 1.77 million American children were homeschooled during 2011-12. In 2007, 2.9% of students were homeschooled, whereas in 2011-12, the number had

risen to 3.4% of students. The rates of homeschooling were 4.5% in rural areas, 3.2% in cities, 3.1% in suburbs, and 2.7% in towns. The percentage of homeschooled K-2 students was 3.1%; it was 3.4% for 3rd-5th grade students, 3.5% for 6th-8th grade students, and 3.7% for 9th-12th grade students.

The reasons and motivations for homeschooling are complex and often hard to categorize neatly.[22] According to Jennifer Lois,

> the truth is that homeschoolers' motivations are very complex, so they are hard to capture. Furthermore, "motivations" for anything are difficult to study in any concrete way; sometimes people report what they *want* their motivations to be, sometimes they don't know what their motivations are, and motivations often change over time, so asking someone why they began an experience does not explain why they continue."[23]

However, broadly speaking some main reasons for homeschooling includes dissatisfaction with the school system, structure, and environment; religious or moral (including the "hidden curriculum"[24]) reasons; and dissatisfaction with the quality of academic instruction.

According to NHERI, most parents and youth decide to homeschool for a variety of reasons that cannot be pigeonholed into neatly defined categories. The most common reasons cited are:

- A need to customize or individualize the curriculum and learning environment for each child in order to meet his/her particular needs.
- A need to accomplish and progress more academically than is commonly achieved in institutional schools.
- A need to use pedagogical approaches other than those typically used in institutional schools, which may not be suitable for all children.[25]
- A need to enhance and build strong family bonds among children, parents, siblings, and the community.
- A need to provide more guided and meaningful social interactions with peers and adults.
- A need to provide a safer environment for children and youth, one that is free of all the physical violence, drugs, alcohol, psychological abuse, and improper and unhealthy sexuality associated with institutional schools.
- A need to teach and impart a particular set of values, beliefs, and worldview to children and youth, which may be lacking or even run counter to the "hidden curriculum" and dominant culture of institutional schools.
- A need to safeguard children from the dominant culture and "hidden curriculum" of institutional schools.

In the survey conducted by the NCES, parents were given a list of options to choose from for the reason(s) they choose to homeschool.[26] The reason(s) they chose are as follows:

- A concern about the environment of institutional schools: (worded as, "You are concerned about the school environment, such as safety, drugs or negative peer pressure?"): 91%
- A desire to provide moral instruction: 77%
- A dissatisfaction with academic instruction at institutional schools: 74%
- A desire to provide religious instruction: 64%
- A desire to provide a nontraditional approach to child's education: 44%
- Other reasons (e.g., family time, finances, travel and distance): 37%
- Child has other special needs: 17%
- Child has a physical or mental health problem: 15%

Figure 2. Reasons for Homeschooling (could select more than one). Source: http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013028pdf. 2011-2012 study).
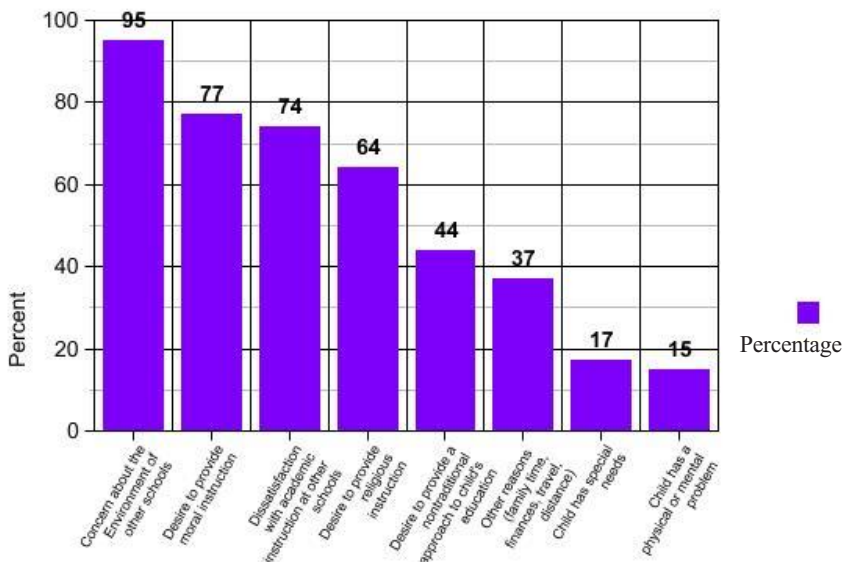
When asked to pinpoint what the "most important" single reason for homeschooling, parents responded as follows[27]:

- Concern about environment (worded as, "You are concerned about the school environment, such as safety, drugs or negative peer pressure?") of institutional schools: 25%

- Other reasons: 21%.
- Dissatisfaction with academic instruction in institutional schools: 19%.
- Desire to provide religious/moral instruction: 16%

Researchers on homeschooling in the late 1980s proposed defining home-schoolers as either "ideologues" who homeschool for religious and moral rea-sons, or "pedagogues" who homeschool primarily for academic purposes.[28] This broad way of simplifying the complexities of homeschooling and home-schoolers is still widely used today. When studying homeschoolers in general and Muslim homeschoolers in particular, it becomes clear that these two cat-egories are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they often overlap. For example, one common thread that connects all homeschoolers is their dissatisfaction with the formal educational system, which educators, advocates, and social scientists have criticized in a number of ways. The main criticisms can be summarized as follows:

- The system of formal education inherently intrudes on the children's rights.[29]
- The system of formal education intrudes on the rights of parents.[30]
- Historically, the system of formal education is not guided by philan-thropy (as is often assumed).[31]
- The system of formal education implicitly teaches authoritarianism.[32]
- The system of formal education fails children, as the variety of their indi-vidual growth cannot be supported within an imposed single structure.[33]

Opponents of homeschooling, such as the National Education Associa-tion, an American teachers' union and professional association, as well as so-cial scientists, criticize this undertaking for the following reasons:

- Inadequate standards of academic quality and comprehensiveness.
- Lack of socialization with peers of different ethnic and religious back-grounds.
- The potential for developing religious or social extremism/individualism.
- The potential for creating parallel societies that do not fit into standards of citizenship and community.[34]

Moreover, according to Stanford University political scientist professor Rob Reich, homeschooling can possibly give students a one-sided viewpoint, as parents may, even inadvertently, downplay other viewpoints. He also argues

that reducing students' contact with peers reduces their sense of civic engagement with their community.[35] Although critical to this ongoing debate, te question of citizenship and civic engagementis often neglected. In an educational policy analysis study, A. Bruce Arai argues:

> Homeschooling has grown considerably in many countries over the past two or three decades. To date, most research has focused either on comparisons between schooled and homeschooled children, or on finding out why parents choose to educate their children at home. There has been little consideration of the importance of homeschooling for the more general issue of citizenship, and whether people can be good citizens without going to school.

He concludes, "homeschoolers are carving out a different but equally valid understanding of citizenship and that policies which encourage a diversity of understandings of good citizenship should form the basis of citizenship education both for schools and homeschoolers."[36]

Why Muslims Families Choose to Homeschool

The aim of this paper is not to prove or disprove the claims of homeschooling's supporters or critiques. Nor is it to compare schooled and homeschooled children in terms of academic performance or life accomplishments. Rather, we hope to find out why Muslim families in the Washington metropolitan area are choosing to homeschool their children and the broader implications of this decision in terms of citizenship. We wanted to see why and how Muslim parents are interpreting a different but equally valid understanding of education and citizenship.

Both of these are crucial components for promoting and understanding diversity and tolerance, the cornerstones of a multicultural society. We compiled two different questionnaires for the parents. The first one was worded very similarly to the survey conducted by the National Center for Educational Development on the reasons for homeschooling so that we could establish a statistical comparison.[37] The second questionnaire was openended in order to get a broader and more comprehensive understanding and to avoid imposing preconceived notions and structure on the parents' responses. This was done to avoid an unintended outcome on the part of the participants. We had hoped to give parents the opportunity to express their views without a predefined structure. We also studied homeschooling families through participant observation to acquire a more insightful understanding of family dynamics and values.

We contacted over 120 Muslim homeschooling families in the Washington metropolitan area, explained our research, and requested their participation. Only fifty-seven families responded, and out of this group only eight allowed participant observation in their home and homeschooling group sessions. Most expressed the desire to remain anonymous. We sent out two questionnaires to the fifty-seven respondees; we received completed questionnaires back from fifty-five of them. We conducted more in-depth, in-person interviews with the eight families that agreed to participant observation of their homeschooling sessions.

In our original sample of 123 families, every effort was made to select a representative sample in terms of the parents' level of education, race, ethnicity, and gender as well as the number of their children being homeschooled. We acknowledge that our sample is far too small to be able to draw any generalized conclusions. Nevertheless, we feel that it provides an in-depth understanding of the reasons why these families had chosen homeschooling and provides a point of comparison with the relevant national statistics as well as leeway for future research.

It is important to consider the issue of "hidden curriculum" in more depth here before we proceed with our fieldwork and findings. It may conceivably be argued that Muslim homeschoolers, like their non-Muslim counterparts, are concerned with the public schools' secular value system, which is located at the core of the public education system and an apparent part of its curricula. To this extent, it might be beneficial to review the literature available on the concept of "hidden curriculum."

State authorization, sponsorship, funding, and control of mass education first developed in western Europe and North America during the nineteenth century. This system of mass education later became a central feature of a highly institutionalized model of national development that had spread throughout the world by the mid-twentieth century.[38] European and North American states became engaged in authorizing, funding, and managing mass schools as a part of an endeavor to construct a unified polity. Within such a polity, individuals were expected to find their primary identity with the nation and education was considered the social foundation for the formation of a modern nation-state.

The argument that elites wanted to expand educational opportunities because fledgling citizens needed to be socialized into their roles as citizens has been used to explain the earlier expansion of education opportunities in North America.[39] Many historical analysts of the education system have argued that public education in the United States was promoted for the purpose of citi-

zenship in the nineteenth century, not for the purpose of individual material advancement.[40]

In his *Schooling, Bureaucracy, and Childhood: Bureaucratizing the Child*, Tony Walters makes the case that children are the raw material on the bureaucratic assembly line produced by schools.[41]

> This is the raw material that the public schools take and put through that 12- to 13-year process. At the end, the schools produce someone who retail stores and restaurants seek to put behind cash registers to patiently conduct tedious transactions for an eight-hour shift. Factories of course seek them out to operate the modern complex machinery of assembly lines. Universities and colleges are ready to train them further, and militaries are ready to recruit them. Perhaps the most surprising thing is that this process of creating adults, which is inherited from nineteenth-century factories, somehow works. After all, the military, universities, and employers all routinely demand a high school diploma as the basic indicator of adult competency.[42]

He argues that the process of public education is how every modern country creates adults by creating a large bureaucracy controlled, albeit unevenly, by a central government.[43] "The school bureaucracy creates a curriculum to control the manufacture of adults in a fashion that is efficient, predictable, and calculable."[44] Furthermore, the function of bureaucratized public schools as pseudo-parents is taken for granted in the same way that individual rights, egalitarianism, freedom, free markets, and self-determination are.[45]

According to Walters, schools are part of the reproduction of society in both formal and informal ways and, as such, they contain both a "formal" and an "informal" (hidden curriculum) curriculum.[46]

> This explicit formal curriculum reflects ideals about the role of education in serving the economy and preserving equality of opportunity. But there is also an implied or hidden curriculum, which is rooted in the need of society to recreate that status quo. An important consequence of such hidden curriculum is that students are tracked toward different roles in the work force, typically based on the social class they are born to.[47]

The sociology of education contains a number of theories that may help elucidate the hidden curriculum's meaning and structure.[48] Primarily, it consists of what students learn by attending school rather than the stated educational objectives of such institutions.[49] It may be argued that a hidden curriculum is a side effect of mass education ("intended" or "unintended," depending on which social theory one adopts) such as the transmission of norms,

values, and beliefs systems conveyed in the classroom as a social environment and an agency of socialization.[50]

The relevant sociological theories can be broadly divided into (1) structural-functional theories of schooling,[51] (2) a phenomenological view related to the "new" sociology of education, and (3) a critical view corresponding to the neo-Marxist analysis of the theory and practice of education. The structural-functional view focuses on how norms and values are transmitted and accepted within schools as social necessities for a functioning society. The phenomenological view suggests that meaning and the social experience of schooling are shaped through social interactions and interpretations that make the knowledge "somewhat objective."[52] The critical view takes into account the relationship between the economic infrastructure and cultural reproduction and stresses the importance of the dominant ideology or the manufacturing of hegemony as inseparable from the social practice of learning.

The critical view of schooling provides the most insight in terms of the hidden curriculum, for it takes into account the economic, social, and cultural aspects of education as well as the function of reproducing knowledge as instrumental knowledge that serves the economic system that produces it. According to Elizabeth Vallance, the hidden curriculum's functions include "the inculcation of values, political socialization, training in obedience and docility, the perpetuation of traditional class structure-functions that may be characterized generally as social control."[53]

Whether or not one accepts any of these theories, the concept is nonetheless useful because it (1) sees mass education as not simply a "neutral" pursuit of knowledge, but rather as the production of knowledge for a particular purpose with specific economic, social, and cultural roots and (2) problematizes the definition of knowledge, which grew out of a historically particular definition of knowledge as instrumental in terms of "applied scientific technological knowledge" and progress in terms of the extent of the domination and control of nature. One may argue that this is at odds with the traditional (including Islamic) definition of knowledge, which is more holistic, and its epistemology is based on transcendentalism rather than empiricism. To this extent, the underlying value system or hidden curriculum of public education is at odds with the core values of Islamic knowledge.

It is our hypothesis that Muslim families are increasingly opting to home-school because their definition of knowledge and progress differ from that of the public schools. It will be interesting to see whether our research proves or disproves this hypothesis. It must be added that so as not to impose our hypothesis on the focus group, we will not present it to the group. Moreover, we

will take extra care in the wording of the interview questions in order to avoid indirectly influencing the interviewees. The full texts of the interviews will be included in the paper, as well as our notes taken during the participant observation sessions.

Figure 3. Muslim Families Reasons for Home Schooling
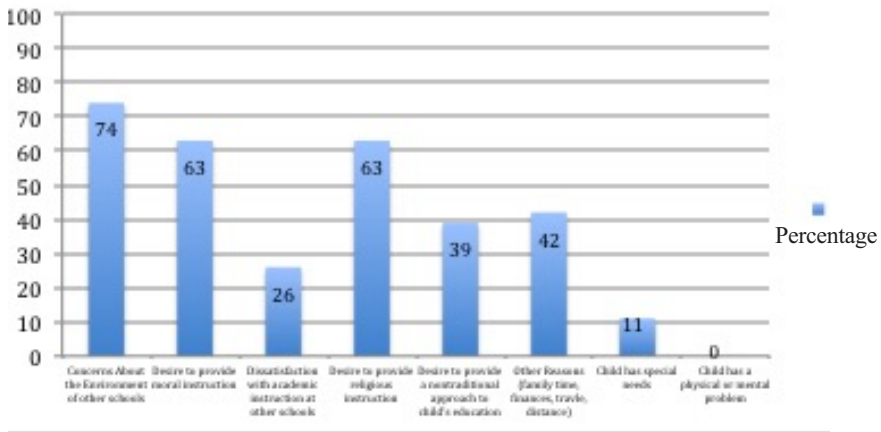
As can be seen from the sample[54] of Muslim homeschoolers, the reason(s) given are comparable to those that appear in the NCES-conducted survey.

- A concern about the environment of institutional schools: (worded as, "You are concerned about the school environment, such as safety, drugs or negative peer pressure?") **74%** (NCES: 91%)
- A desire to provide moral instruction: **63%** (NCES: 77%)
- A dissatisfaction with academic instruction at institutional schools: **26%** (NCES: 74%)
- A desire to provide religious instruction: **63%** (NCES: 64%)
- A desire to provide a nontraditional approach to child's education: **39%** NECS: 44%)
- Other reasons (e.g., family time, finances, travel, distance, and others) **42%** (NECS: 37%)
- Child has other special needs: **11%** (NECS: 17%)
- Child has a physical or mental health problem: **0%** (NECS: 15%)

When we asked Muslim homeschoolers to pinpoint the "most important" single reason for homeschooling, they responded in the following way:

- **45%** (NECS: 25%) chose concern about the environment (worded as, "You are concerned about the school environment, such as safety, drugs or negative peer pressure?") of institutional schools.
- **46%** (NECS: 16%) chose desire to provide religious/moral instruction.
- **9%** (NECS: 21%) chose other reasons.

Based on the parents' survey and openended interviews that we conducted, there are two main reasons why Muslim parents chose to homeschool:

1. Concerns about the school environment, such as safety, drugs or negative peer pressure.
2. A desire to provide religious/moral instruction.

When asked if the parents felt that their homeschooled child/children would not grow up to be fully participating citizens, 89% strongly disagreed. There were many detailed response to this question, but we think this particular one sums up the main points rather well: "We are trying to give our children a more holistic education, based on faith, values, and morality, in a safe and loving environment. This builds a sense of responsibility and is the foundation for community. How can you be a good citizen if you don't have strong morals, a sense of responsibility, and sense of belonging?"[55]

Many parents took the time to provide detailed explanations of the great lengths to which they go to expose their children to outside interests and different faiths, to bring their faith to others, and to integrate their children into mainstream culture. Most parents mentioned the various community service and interfaith projects in which their children were involved, ranging from soup kitchens to local environmental cleanup projects. A quote from Priscilla Martinez[56] reflects the broad sentiments expressed by the parents we interviewed: "Our goal is basically to bring up our children who are contributing citizens, who feel that they can and should give back to the world, and ultimately to grow up in peace and be able to live a fulfilling life."[57]

In terms of the concept of a hidden curriculum, only 25% of the parents interviewed felt that such a thing existed in institutional schools. But 64% indicated that the concept of knowledge held by institutional schools did not correspond with their own epistemological approach. They stated that the epistemological paradigm of public education is not holistic and lacks moral instruction. When asked to expand on what they meant by *holistic*, 60% of the participants stressed the importance of a religious understanding of education that is transcendental and emphasizes the interdependence of

learning and morality, which they felt was the basis of good education and citizenship.

It is interesting to note that many religious groups homeschool for very similar reasons; however, Muslim homeschoolers in particular have come under a great deal of criticism from neo-conservative groups that consider Islamic teachings to be at odds with American values of good citizenship. In our survey, 89% of homeschoolers strongly disagreed with this. In fact, they provided a list of community-based services in which their children are involved and dismissed claims that they are cut off from the community at large. They even went so far as to assert that there can be no good citizenry without a strong moral foundation, which they believed was the very premise of their homeschooling philosophy. Thus it can be concluded that Muslim homeschoolers are both "ideologues" (homeschool for religious and moral reasons) and "pedagogues" (homeschool primarily for academic purposes). The either/or distinction between "ideologues" and "pedagogues" does not hold true for them.

Based on our findings, we concluded that the reasons given by our participants by and large reflect those provided for the majority of homeschoolers: concerns about the school environment (e.g., safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure) and a desire to provide religious/moral instruction. Inherent in this argument is a concern with the hidden curriculum, despite the fact, interestingly enough, that only 25% of the parents interviewed felt that such a reality actually existed. In addition, 64% indicated that the concept of knowledge found in such schools did not correspond with their epistemological approach, which is, by definition, what is meant by a hidden curriculum in this context. This may be partly due to the lack of information about this specific concept. We did not provide a definition for or any material on it to the participants.

Conclusion

Muslims are part of the growing trend in faith-based homeschooling. The number of homeschoolers in general and of all religions is on the rise. Religion, family values, and a structured morally based education in a safe environment seem to be the main impetus for most members of this population sector, for many of them feel that there is a value clash between the public schools' secular principles and their religious beliefs and practices. "Home educators aim to create an education in which the parents' values and beliefs are passed on in an easy way that the factory school model cannot de-

liver," says Mark Hegener, publisher of *Home Education Magazine*, of Tonasket, WA.[58] Currently, some 75% of homeschoolers are Christians who "consciously and conscientiously want to promote their own values," says Ray of the National Home Education Research Institute.[59] Our research indicates that the same can be said of Muslim homeschoolers.

Despite the negative hype surrounding Muslim homeschoolers, the rising numbers can be attributed to the growth and increased confidence of the Muslim American population and the result of integrating immigrants into the mainstream culture. This runs contrary to the popular belief that homeschooling is an obstacle to integration. One other contributing factor may be the increase in the size of the American-born Muslim population.[60] The community at large still faces challenges regarding integration; however, the growth in the number of homeschoolers places the onus of objectivity upon American society. In other words, Muslims are no longer compelled to prove their "Americanization." Muslim homeschooling seems to be in its early stages of development and tends to follow the path of Christian homeschoolers, who make up more than 70% of the homeschooled population. According to Ray "homeschoolers whether New Age or conservative Muslims tend to face a lot of resistance from relatives, friends and neighbors.[61] Muslims homeschoolers, however, face a double-edged sword; the stigma of homeschooling and the challenges of "fitting in" with American life and culture.

Second, what does being a "good citizen" mean, exactly? Absolute allegiance to a government even if it seems to be committing immoral acts? Suppressing the voice of dissent and critical thinking? Going through the cookie cutter and coming out exactly the same as the other cookies? Should not the premise of the argument be shifted to raising intelligent, morally conscious, and service-oriented children instead? Is it not more important to be morally responsible and actively engaged in society? The main aims of the Muslim homeschoolers that we interviewed and researched was to teach a way of life, raise morally responsible children, and maintain family values. If these goals produce bad and unpatriotic citizens, then perhaps we need to revise and reevaluate our definition of citizenship and patriotism.

In conclusion, we feel that it is necessary to acknowledge the various shortcomings of this research: the small sample group, geographical limitations, and lack of socio-economic diversity. However, every effort was made to select a diverse sample in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and level of education. In this respect, we feel that our sample group was representative of the greater Washington metropolitan area's Muslim homeschoolers. We also feel that this research is a stepping-stone to a national study of Muslim home-

schoolers. It would be interesting to conduct a future comparative study of this population cross-nationally. Finally, quite a few of the statistics on home-schooling are somewhat dated. Moreover, there is also a need for more up-to-date quantitative and qualitative research on homeschooling both on a national level and in terms of new faith-based groups.

Endnotes

1.   According to the National Home Education Research Institute (NEHRI), home-schoolers in general tend to excel academically, performing 15 to 30 percentile points higher on standardized tests than students in public and private schools.
2.   Brian D. Ray of NHERI, http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/feb/21/muslim-families-turn-to-home-schooling.
3.   Scott Sommerville, staff attorney for the Home School Legal Defense Association, in Purcellville, VA, says that there are currently only about 5,000 Muslim homeschoolers, but predicts that their numbers will double every year over the next eight years. Barring the implementation of a nationwide school voucher system, which would convert state and local education dollars into individual scholarship certificates for parents to spend at schools of their choosing, he believes that 60,000 Muslim children will be learning at home by 2010. Muslim Home Schooling on the Rise; http://abcnews.go.com/Health/story?id=117997.
4.   Ray of NHERI estimates that Protestant and Roman Catholic students make up the vast majority of all home-schooled children, whereas research-based data on Muslim homeschoolers amounts to "slim to none." However, this "minority within a minority" is growing fast, "as are the support networks, conferences and faith-oriented curriculum to support the community." http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/feb/21/muslim-families-turn-to-home-schooling.
5.   Muslims turning to homeschooling. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/26/us/26muslim.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.
6.   http://educationnext.org/home-schooling-goes-mainstream.
7.   Ibid.
8.   The number of American children being homeschooled increased by 75 percent during the past fourteen years in all states, according to a report in the online journal Education News. While only 4 percent of all school children nationwide are educated at home, "the number of primary school kids whose parents choose to forgo traditional education is growing seven times faster than the number of kids enrolling in K-12 every year," the report noted. http://www.educationnews.org/parenting/number-of-homeschoolers-growing-nationwide.
9.   NHERI, which conducts homeschooling research, is a clearinghouse of research for all interested parties and informs the public of its findings. It executes, evaluates, and disseminates studies and information (e.g., statistics, facts, data) on

home schooling, home-based education, home education, home school, home-schooling, unschooling, and deschooling [a form of alternative education]); publishes reports and the peer-reviewed scholarly journal *Home School Researcher*; and serves in consulting, academic achievement tests, and expert witness (in courts and legislatures). For more information, see: http://www.nheri.org/.

10.   Ibid.

11.   Edward E. Gordon and Elaine H. Gordon, *Centuries of Tutoring: A History of Alternative Education in America and Western Europe* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990), 245-73.

12.   Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The Colonial Experience, 1607-1783* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 124.

13.   United States Department of Education, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2009* (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2010), 63-64.

14.   David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 16.

15.   Ibid., 15.

16.   Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 10-11.

17.   Charles L. Glenn, *The Myth of the Common School* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts, 1988), 76.

18.   United States Department of Education, *Digest of Education Statistics*, 63-64.

19.   James C. Carper and Thomas C. Hunt, *The Dissenting Tradition in American Education* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 201-03.

20.   As many as almost 2 million American children are schooled at home, with the number growing at 15 to 20 percent per year. Susan A. McDowell and Brian D. Ray, "The Home Education Movement in Context, Practice, and Theory: Editors Introduction." *Peabody Journal of Education* 75, nos. 1&2 (2000): 1-7.

21.   http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/tables/dt12_108.asp.

22.   The definition and categorization of "motivations for homeschooling" becomes problematic when conducting survey research, for participants are given a list of pre-prepared reasons and asked to choose one that most applies to them. So, we conducted open-ended questionnaires and participant observation.

23.   "Paradoxes of Modern Motherhood?" http://www.schoolofsmock.com/2013/03/15/do-homeschooling-moms-show-the-paradoxes-of-modern-motherhood/Jennifer Lois; Associate Professor of Sociology at Western Washington University.

24.   A "hidden curriculum" is a side effect of an education, lessons that are learned but not openly intended. The school, as one of the agents of the socialization process, transmits norms, values, and beliefs as conveyed in the classroom and the social environment. Great Atlantic and Pacific School Conspiracy (Group) (1972). Doing your own school: a practical guide to starting and operating a community school. Beacon Press. p. 95. ISBN 978-0-8070-3172-8. Retrieved 26 May 2013. The concept of the "hidden curriculum" and moral objection to it will be discussed in detail later.

25. There is a tendency toward using a "one size fits all" approach to learning in schools.

26. We will be doing a similarly worded interview to compare the statistics of Muslim homeschoolers to those provided in this survey. It should be noted that before doing that we will first conduct another open-ended interview.

27. You can take a closer look at the study and these statistics by consulting the NCES (National Center for Educational Statistics) pamphlet: Parent and Family Involvement in Education, 2012. http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013028.pdf. You can take a closer look at the study and these statistics by going to the NCES (National Center for Educational Statistics) pamphlet: Parent and Family Involvement in Education… 2012, Tables 7 and 8, on pages 27 and 28, respectively.

28. "Paradoxes of Modern Motherhood?"

29. For more detailed discussion of this concept, see "A Conversation with John Holt – The Natural Child Project." Naturalchild.org. Retrieved 2013-10-05. Holt (1923- 1985) was an American author and educator, an advocate of homeschooling or unschooling, and a forerunner in youth rights theory.

30. N. Branden, "Public Education: Should Education be Compulsory and Tax Supported, as it is Today?" Chapter 5, "Common Fallacies about Capitalism," in Ayn Rand, *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (1963). 89.

31. For more on this, please refer to the works of Murray Rothbard, Philip W. Jackson (*Life In Classrooms*, 1968), Benson Snyder, Paulo Freire, John Holt, Ivan Illich, Neil Postman, Paul Goodman, Joel Spring, John Taylor Gatto, Roland Meighan ("A Sociology of Education," 1981), Michael Haralambos ("Sociology: Themes and Perspectives," 1991), Henry Giroux, bell hooks, Jonathan Kozol, and Martin, Jane. "What Should We Do with a Hidden Curriculum," 122-39.

32. Ibid. Also see the work of the Frankfurt School/Critical Theory.

33. Herbert Read, *The Education of Free Men* (London: Freedom Press, 1944), 27-28.

34. Patricia M. Lines, "Homeschooling: Private Choices and Public Obligations," Office of Educational Research and Improvement. US Department of Education Working Paper revised February 1994. http://patricialines.com/files/private%20 choices.pdf.

35. Dan Lips and Evan Feinberg, "Homeschooling: A Growing Option in American Education," Heritage Foundation, http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/ 2008/04/homeschooling-a-growing-option-in-american-education.

36. Rob Reich, "The Civic Perils of Homeschooling," *Educational Leadership* 59, no. 7 (2002-04). Numerous pro homeschooling groups, web sites, and research have addressed this criticism. According the 2003 NHERI survey of 7,300 American adults who had been homeschooled: (1) Homeschool graduates are active and involved in their communities. 71% participate in an ongoing community service activity, like coaching a sports team, volunteering at a school, or working with a church or neighborhood association, compared with 37% of U.S.

adults of similar ages from a traditional education background, and (2) Home-school graduates are more involved in civic affairs and vote in much higher percentages than their peers. 76% of those surveyed between the ages of 18 and 24 voted within the last five years, compared with only 29% of the corresponding American populace. The numbers are even greater in older age groups, with voting levels not falling below 95%, compared with a high of 53% for the corresponding American populace. Also see A. Bruce Arai Wilfrid, "Homeschooling and the Redefinition of Citizenship," *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 7, no. 27 (September 6, 1999).

37.   Bearing in mind that our sample will be significantly smaller than that targeted by the National Center for Educational Development? survey.

38.   http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/2112615?uid=3739912&uid=2&uid =4&uid=3739256&sid=21104920480997. Ramirez & Boli, "The Political Construction of Mass Schooling European Origins and World wide Institutionalization." (1987), 2.

39.   Katznelson and Weir, "Schooling for All: Class, Race, and the Decline of the Democratic Ideal," 1988.

40.   J. Sprin, *Educating the Worker Citizen: The Social, Economic, and Political Foundations of Education* (Prentice Hall: 1980); L. A. Cremin, *American Education: The National Experience, 1783-1876* (HarperCollins: 1980); C. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860 (American Century)* (Hill & Wang, 1983).

41.   Tony Walters, *Schooling, Bureaucracy, and Childhood: Bureaucratizing the Child* (Macmillan 2012), 16-17.

42.   Ibid., 24.

43.   Ibid., 16, 24-25.

44.   Ibid., 25.

45.   Ibid., 19.

46.   Ibid., 28-29.

47.   Ibid.

48.   J. Martin, "What Should We Do with a Hidden Curriculum When We Find One?" in *The Hidden Curriculum and Moral Education*, ed. Henry Giroux and David Purpel (Berkeley: McCutchan, 1983); C. Cornbleth, "Beyond Hidden Curriculum?" *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 16, no.1 (1984): 29-36; M. Apple, and N. King. "What Do Schools Teach?" in T*he Hidden Curriculum*; H. Giroux and A. Penna, "Social Education in the Classroom: The Dynamics of the Hidden Curriculum," in *The Hidden Curriculum*.

49.   M. Haralambos, Sociology: Themes and Perspectives, 1991.

50.   Henry A. Girouxa & Anthony N. Penna, "Social Education in the Classroom: The Dynamics of the Hidden Curriculum." Published online July 2, 2012.

51.   Mustafa Sever, "A Critical Look at the Theories of Sociology of Education," *International Journal of Human Sciences* 9, no. 1 (2012).

52.   With more emphasis on the "subjective" understanding of school experiences

and interactions, in terms of how students make sense of and internalize their schooling experience. This challenges the notions of "value-free" sociology and "objective" knowledge.

53. E. Vallance, "Hiding the Hidden Curriculum: An Interpretation of the Language of Justification in Nineteenth-Century Educational Reform," in *The Hidden Curriculum and Moral Education*, ed. H. Giroux and D. Purpel (Berkeley: McCutchan, 1983), 9-27.

54. We acknowledge that our sample size is not comparable to survey conducted by the National Center for educational statistics. However, every effort was used to ensure a diverse sample in terms of ethnic origins, social class and educational level of parents. However, there was not much geographical diversity as our sample was mainly drawn for the greater Washington DC metropolitan area. All parents that participated in the research considered themselves as "Muslim homeschoolers."

55. This is a quote from one of my interviewees who wishes to remain anonymous.

56. Priscilla Martinez did not participate in the survey; this quote is from an interview by PBS. PBS Religion and Ethics News Weekly. http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2010/04/23/april-23-2010-muslim-home-schooling/6157/.

57. Ibid.

58. "Muslim Home Schooling on the Rise," http://abcnews.go.com/Health/story?id=117997.

59. Ibid.

60. Experts estimate that Muslims are the fourth largest religious group in the United States. Protestants currently comprise 58 percent of America and Catholics, 26 percent. http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/ and http://www.pewforum.org/2013/05/17/the-religious-affiliation-of-us-immigrants/.

61. "Muslim Home Schooling on the Rise."