

Understanding Families Who Choose to Homeschool: Agency in Context

Andrea Dennison, Jon Lasser, Deidre Awtry Madres, and Yasiry Lerma
Texas State University

Many families elect to educate their children at home rather than enroll them in school. Whereas each family maintains its own reasons for deciding to homeschool, a factor for some families, including families of color, may be found in their response to institutions and systems that have historical roots in inequality, that have intentionally or unintentionally perpetuated inequitable outcomes for their children. This article considers the decision to homeschool in the context of families' efforts to regain agency and self-determination. Implications for school psychologists are discussed and recommendations for policy and practice are provided.

Impact and Implications


School psychologists, who most often serve public school students, may have little training in how to serve homeschooled students. This article encourages practitioners and policymakers to look through an alternative lens regarding the motivations of diverse families for teaching their children at home. Homeschooling is described from a strengths-based perspective to promote appreciation for, understanding of, and culturally attuned services for these families.

Keywords: African American, Black, family autonomy, parental agency, school choice

School psychologists can serve as advocates for homeschool partnerships and help to address educational concerns across contexts, including those needs arising in underserved communities. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) has issued several resources to address social justice issues and has asserted that it is a school psychologist's "critical responsibility to help children and youth see adults as keeping them safe, understand the challenges at hand and within a problem-solving context, and see themselves as active participants in our collective national commitment to liberty and justice for all" (NASP, 2017). Immigrant families have been under increased public and political scrutiny in recent years (Flores & Schachter, 2018). In some cases, they have been forcefully separated, which has the potential to create adverse psychosocial impacts on families, including traumatic separations, loss of income, and children left unsupervised (A Policy Statement by the Society for Community Research and Action, 2018). This is only the most recent manifestation of a longer history of discriminatory and inequitable practices that have adversely impacted families of color, potentially limiting future educational and economic possibilities for their children. One

possible response by marginalized families is to reexert their autonomy by taking ownership of the education of their children; however, this is not likely an easy choice or endeavor (Heuer & Donovan, 2017). School psychologists may serve as facilitators of diverse families' autonomy or, contrarily, may serve to widen the societal divisions, which may further marginalize diverse families, if they are not attentive to the specific needs of those families. Homeschool families often report being disconnected from support and resources provided by the public schools. School psychologists who are earnestly engaged in the pursuit of cultural competence are the intended audience of this article; it is hoped that by considering the choice to homeschool from a strengths-based perspective (Saleebey, 2008), the reader will gain a deeper and nuanced appreciation of families who make this choice. Indeed, our professional organization states that we must include all children in our decision making, even those who we are not typically called upon to serve. The NASP *Principles for Professional Ethics* (NASP, 2010) includes the following: "School psychologists consider the interests and rights of children and youth to be their highest priority in decision making and act as advocates for all students. These assumptions necessitate that school psychologists 'speak up' for the needs and rights of students, even when it may be difficult to do so" (p. 2). Therefore, it is imperative for school psychologists to serve as advocates for children's education in both contexts: the public education system and those outside it, such as homeschoolers.

We aim to describe the choice to homeschool from a strengths-based framework and through a social lens. It should be noted that the perspectives of marginalized families who choose to homeschool are underresearched; school psychologists must continue to take measures to better understand these perspectives. This paper

 Andrea Dennison, Jon Lasser, Deidre Awtry Madres, and Yasiry Lerma, Department of Counseling, Leadership, Adult Education, and School Psychology, Texas State University.

Deidre Awtry Madres is now at the Austin Independent School District, Austin, Texas.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Andrea Dennison, Department of Counseling, Leadership, Adult Education, and School Psychology, Texas State University, 601 University Drive, San Marcos, TX 78666. E-mail: andreadennison@txstate.edu

is aimed to explain what is known about diverse families' choice to homeschool and what still needs to be explored. In preparing this article, we searched EBSCO databases (Academic Search Ultimate, African American Historical Serials Collection, Chicano Database, eBook Academic Collection, Education Source, ERIC, Family and Society Studies Worldwide, PsycARTICLES, Psychology and Behavioral Science Collection, Race Relations Abstracts, Social Sciences Full Text, and Urban Studies Abstracts) using the keywords: homeschool and family autonomy or parental agency or school choice. Having found 390 articles in that search, we narrowed the search further by adding the search modifiers: African American or Black or Hispanic or Latina or Latino or Latinx, which produced 12 resources, of which eight were from peer-reviewed sources. After screening the non-peer-reviewed sources for relevance, they were excluded from inclusion because they lacked sufficient content related to the topic of this article. We reviewed the eight peer-reviewed sources, which included two governmental reports, and excluded one of the peer-reviewed articles that was not relevant to the current topic. We then reviewed the citations from the remaining seven sources and further sought additional sources such as books, foundation reports, and national governmental databases to provide demographic and contextual data. Our search was comprehensive and iterative but not exhaustive, as one might embark upon during a meta-analysis. Indeed, because of the paucity of literature addressing this topic, as directed to an audience of school psychologists, we have by necessity pulled from diverse and intersecting literatures. Because we are scholars working from a social justice orientation, we are interested in bringing attention to the needs of families who often are neglected in the literature. This motivated our unique focus on the interests of Black homeschooling families, who are emphasized herein; although we sought to include Latinx families and other ethnic groups, they are all but absent in the homeschooling literature. We first describe what social factors may impact the choice to homeschool. Then we describe the demographics and motivations of homeschooling families. Lastly, we discuss a school psychologist's potential role when working with homeschooled children.

For some children who may be particularly underserved by traditional educational models, homeschooling may provide a path toward greater autonomy and liberation from perceived exclusion and/or oppression. After all, it has been only a handful of decades that Black children have been legally permitted to attend the same schools as White children; this legacy of segregation lives on, as reflected in the school-to-prison pipeline phenomenon that disproportionately impacts children of color (Mallett, 2016). It is critical that in the 21st century, culturally engaged school psychologists understand the motives of homeschooling families, not only to broaden our cultural consciousness and increase our compassion for these families but also to know how to serve them well when we are called to do so.

Contextual Considerations

In this article we focus our attention on homeschooling as a choice made in response to changing social contexts, including the diminishing role of individuals and families as self-determining systems. This is perhaps especially true for families who belong to marginalized groups (Yoon & Lubienski, 2017). We discuss some

implications of conceptualizing homeschooling within a philosophical framework, in an American context, and ultimately make recommendations for policy, research, and practice.

Socioeconomic Status and Social Class

In the United States, a person's social class has extensive consequences, and socioeconomic status (SES) is tied to potential access to resources and opportunities. Social class is circumscribed by family income, parents' occupations, educational attainment, and where a family lives. A person's social class has a significant impact on their physical health, ability to receive health care, resources, nutrition, and their life expectancy (Braveman, Cubbin, Egerter, Williams, & Pamuk, 2010; Cundiff & Matthews, 2017). Social class impacts children's lives in various ways, affecting the organization of daily life, language use, and interactions between institutions and families, for example. A growing number of families in America experience poverty; those who experience developmental insults related to lacking basic resources such as safe shelter, clean water, and healthy food, and who additionally have experienced marginalization by social systems, may be considered to be at increased risk of adverse outcomes. Having diminished access to needed resources can create an unstable environment in which short-term needs, such as safety and sustenance, are prioritized over long-term considerations, such as professional and academic preparation. The relative absence of social safety nets for economically disadvantaged families in American society places an increased burden on families who face urgent, daily economic pressures.

According to Lareau (2011), "In America, social class backgrounds frame and transform individual actions. The life paths we pursue, thus, are neither equal nor freely chosen" (p. 343). Children are directly impacted by their parent's social class, which thus affects the child's life experiences and possibilities. Furthermore, social class is one of the many factors that impact the opportunity families have to homeschool. Homeschooling is not as easily accessible for lower SES families, disproportionately families of color, who may not have the ability to stay home and homeschool their child because of work obligations. Those parents, then, who do make the choice to homeschool despite economic and other barriers, are to be understood as making a liberating and empowering choice (Heuer et al., 2017).

Consequences of Industrialization

Sociologist Anthony Giddens (1991) notes that modernity distinguishes itself from the premodern by rapidity and broad scope of change as well as the nature of modern institutions. The rise of industrialization and weakened importance of kinship paved the way for modern organizations and what Giddens refers to as expert systems. In this context, institutions such as governments provide roles and functions based on a system of trust. For example, parents must trust that the public school system, an extension of the modern government, will provide their children with the skills and knowledge necessary to be productive, happy citizens. Implied in this system of trust is the notion that parents have handed the responsibility for educating children over to the state government, which functions as a de facto expert with respect to setting and achieving educational goals. In exchange for entrusting the edu-

cation of youth to expert systems, a large measure of choice, and certainly of control, is relinquished by parents of public school children.

To some families, the trust they have been made to place in expert systems has been mishandled or may be seen as never having been legitimate in the first place. The legacy of government-sanctioned abuses of people and communities of color (e.g., the unsanctioned sterilization of Black males during the Tuskegee study, the unauthorized use of Henrietta Lacks' cancer cells for decades after her death) has persisted to varying degrees, and racism continues to pervade popular institutions. The lack or loss of trust in institutions may prove to be a considerable barrier toward building culturally relevant expert systems that equitably serve the needs of a diverse society.

Changes Impacting Schools

Since the birth of our nation, changes in American educational systems have responded to changes in the culture at large and in some cases have precipitated those changes. The *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) Supreme Court decision predated the height of the Civil Rights era, although actual ethnic integration of schools lagged, and in practice segregation continued for many years after the legal precedent was set.

Insofar as change is cyclical, ideas that emerged many years ago have newfound support in the ranks of lawmakers and industry chiefs in the 21st century. Two years after the United States was founded, famed economist Adam Smith devised the notion of the voucher system in education, which has enjoyed a resurgence of support in recent years. Although the 10th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution leaves the powers of education almost entirely to the states, in recent years, a growing movement of federally situated bureaucrats has, perhaps paradoxically, proposed a shift toward school choice vis-à-vis privatization of educational systems. This movement is related, theoretically, to the values of enhanced local and family control; however, the political case made by lawmakers and corporations may be more motivated by a desire to monetize systems that have long been entrusted to public control and therefore are considered missed opportunities to make a financial gain. This diverges from the realities and choices faced by numbers of parents. The broader school choice movement is associated with individualization for the child's educational needs to be met and may be viewed as a response to the lack of choice in traditional school settings, through the family's exercise of greater control.

Reed (2015) provides a detailed account of the legacies of *Brown v. Board of Education* for Black children, including the impact that educational reforms, such as those involving charter schools, magnet schools, vouchers, and homeschooling, have had for Black children. Reed cites Kunjufu (2013), who asserted that homeschooled Black children have higher educational achievement than nonhomeschooled Black children. Findings reported by Ray (2015) suggest that Black homeschoolers perform as well as or better than both Black and White public school children on measures of reading, math, and language, making a compelling case for homeschooling as a possible answer to persistent achievement gaps that occur in public schools. Although more research is needed in this area, these findings may provide some support for Black families seeking validation of their choice.

The Choice to Homeschool

Could homeschooling be a way to respond to a waning sense of control, agency, and power experienced by families at the margins of society? To address that question, we review the relevant literature regarding the choices that families make in homeschooling their children, implicit in an examination of who homeschools and why various groups choose to homeschool.

We recognize the decision to educate children at home is complex, varied, and multidimensional. Financial, religious, political, cultural, and psychological factors may impact any family's decision-making process related to the selection of the most appropriate way to educate their children. Moreover, some families undoubtedly invest more time, energy, and thought in such decisions than others. We maintain that the decision to homeschool children deviates from the norm and therefore implies divergent family consideration and independent thought.

A family's decision to homeschool might be interpreted by others as a critique or rejection of public education. This characterization may overlook a critical component of homeschooling: the family's desire to exercise control over their children's education. Conceptualized this way, homeschooling can be seen not as a movement that aims to disparage public education but rather as an indicator of empowerment, self-reliance, and autonomy (Heuer et al., 2017). These are not only principles of psychology but also may be considered as fundamental values espoused in U.S. culture, evocative of the image of the rugged individualist, the self-made businessperson, or the pioneering innovator that are all pieces of the foundational American identity.

Albert Bandura is one of the preeminent scholars in psychology of the last century, whose work has broad influence in the domains of education and learning. In his Social Cognitive Theory, Bandura introduced to psychology the notion of agency in human behavior (Bandura, 2006). The foundational concept of agency is that people can intentionally influence their life circumstances. They do not, however, operate as autonomous agents, nor is their behavior wholly determined by situational influences. Rather, human functioning is a product of the interplay of intrapersonal, behavioral, and environmental determinants. This entails the recognition of the essential nature of humans as interdependent, interconnected beings, who exist in specific social, economic, political, and cultural contexts and who make decisions with respect to the input from those in their immediate spheres of influence, including friends, family, colleagues, employers, role models, church and community leaders, and cultural icons. Consequently, families who homeschool have the potential to leverage the influence of relational and environmental factors in the home for the children's educational and socioemotional benefit.

Mazama (2016) has contributed perhaps more than any other scholar at present to the theoretical and empirical literature regarding Black homeschoolers' motivations and methods. In one of the few empirical examinations of the motivations for homeschooling Black males, Lundy and Mazama (2014) interviewed parents in the U.S. Northeast and Midwest regions and found recurrent themes: the desire to protect their sons from negative messages about their self-worth, to promote a healthy identity related to Black masculinity, and to shield their sons from involvement in the criminal justice system. These authors describe complex motivations, both protectionist and empowered, serving to enhance the "agency and

leadership” (p. 64) of families in shaping young Black male identities in a society in which these are too often portrayed negatively. These findings suggest that Black families may choose to homeschool as a means of cultivating learning environments for children that are responsive to the unique needs of Black students while trying to buffer societal threats to an optimal education.

Generally, a majority of those who choose home education are two-parent families with one stay-at-home parent (most often a mother) who typically takes on a majority of the responsibilities associated with homeschooling (Lois, 2006; Mayberry, Knowles, Ray, & Marlow, 1995). For families, there is both an opportunity cost because of lost wages of the teacher/parent as well as costs associated with purchasing curriculum, supplies, equipment, and other necessities to homeschool. The parents who have the financial resources to bear the brunt of these costs as well as the time and energy to make home education feasible tend to be well educated and middle class (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007; Morton, 2010). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2017), of approximately 1,773,000 children (3% of the school-age population) who were homeschooled in 2012, 83% were White, 7% were Hispanic, 5% were Black, 2% were Asian or Pacific Islander, and 11% were living in poverty. Compared with the demographics of the schoolage population of the United States in which one in five live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018) and a growing minority are non-White, homeschoolers tend to look more like the America of the 20th century than the America of the present and presumed future.

Despite this overall demographic, the number of Black homeschoolers almost doubled from 1999 to 2012 (Ray, 2015). Fields-Smith and Kisura’s (2013) research into this notable increase in the number of Black homeschoolers best articulates this theme of the primacy of agency: “Much of the literature written about Black families, and even work written by Black authors, portrays them as disadvantaged and somewhat passive agents” (p. 269). Their study “contrasts sharply with these widely held beliefs by identifying some ways that Black homeschoolers are actively engaged in the lives of their children” (p. 269). Notably, Fields-Smith and Kisura (2013) consider the choice to homeschool a “radical transformative act of self-determination” (p. 265).

Although some may question the degree to which marginalized and/or low-SES families have the resources to adopt homeschooling as a viable option, research on homeschooling parents suggests that many do so in spite of economic hardships (Heuer et al., 2017). Whereas homeschool families, in general, are more likely to be “near poor” than either public or private school families (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010; as cited by Heuer et al., 2017, p. 12), it is less clear whether this trend is upheld in Black homeschooling families. Of the 71 Black families interviewed by Mazama and Lundy (2015) regarding their motivations to homeschool, who represented the broad range of the SES spectrum, 25% earned at or above \$100,000 per year. Regardless of ethnicity or SES, many parents who choose homeschooling are also electing to give up earning opportunities in exchange for the benefits of homeschooling.

The motivations of parents who choose to homeschool have been discussed in home education research for almost 30 years; however, varying methodologies, a lack of quantitative data, and the absence of a consistent theoretical framework limit the possibility of a meaningful meta-analysis (Isenberg, 2007; Morton,

2010; Spiegler, 2010). In its most basic form, school choice is tied to the desire of parents to choose where, and how, their child is educated. Green et al. (2007) hypothesized that psychological motivators and feasibility are the two main considerations for parents who choose to homeschool. They measured parental role construction for involvement among homeschooling parents and found that, as expected, homeschooling parents see themselves as primarily responsible for their children’s educational outcomes. Within the context of parental role construction, homeschooling is the most intense form of parental involvement (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013).

Van Galen (1988) initiated the homeschooling research on parental motivation by identifying two categories of motivation for parents who homeschool: pedagogical and ideological, describing that parents are motivated by different push and pull factors. Ideologues often identify pull factors—like religion, lifestyle choice, or a desire to live outside the mainstream—for educating their children at home. Pedagogues are interested in a more flexible approach to schooling that caters to the individual needs of the child. As such, pedagogues often associate their motivation with push factors related to experiences at school that appear to be a rejection of the public school system (Rothermel, 2003). Indeed, Morton (2010) identified families whose decision was not one of personal prerogative but as a last resort. This was especially evident in studies of children with special educational needs (Cook, Bennett, Lane, & Mataras, 2013; Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013).

Parents of children with special needs often cite as a motivation to homeschool their ability to provide more adequate and individualized instruction (Cook et al., 2013). In a study of motivations of parents with children with autism spectrum disorder, participants echoed a belief that their child’s success was their responsibility (Hurlbutt, 2011). Considering the added strain on the family that this may create, homeschooling in this context may be more of a lifestyle choice than an educational one as it can often be for those who identify ideological reasons for homeschooling (Hurlbutt, 2011). Even though these parents identify with push factors, or a lack of choice, their goals appear more aligned with autonomy-related considerations, to exercise control over their children’s education. This is a sentiment that has been expressed among a variety of special needs subgroups including parents of gifted children (Jolly, Matthews, & Nester, 2013), children who experienced bullying, children with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (Cook et al., 2013) among others. This sense of agency among special needs parents stems from the view that their children are individuals, with individual needs that require individual solutions. Upon closer examination we find that individualism and the idea that parent knows best (Jolly et al., 2013) are commonalities among the pedagogues and ideologues (Van Galen, 1988). Whereas some scholarship exists regarding the choice of Black families to homeschool, little if any research examines this choice for diverse families in the context of having a child with a disability. Although the motives of Latinx homeschooling families are unknown because of a lack of research in this area, the Latinx cultural value of familismo, in which a heightened importance is placed on familial relationships and unity, fits well within the previous discussion of parental agency.

The dearth of reliable data and the wide variety of subgroups within the homeschooling community make it difficult to draw

definitive conclusions about the specific motivations, demographics, or sociocultural points of view of families that homeschool (Cook et al., 2013; Jolly et al., 2013). Although much of the homeschool research is viewed through the lens of a critique or rejection of public education, there are underlying themes of empowerment, self-reliance, and autonomy identified in the literature (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Morton, 2010; Rothermel, 2003).

Homeschool parents appear to decide to homeschool not so much because they believe that public schools cannot educate their children but because they believe that they are personally responsible for their child's education and are capable of educating their children well in ways consistent with their priorities. (Green et al., 2007, p. 278)

For Black families, these educational priorities may be uniquely responsive to the standard practices in many public schools that do not represent inclusive pedagogical practice or curricular relevance to the Black experience in America. The priority for such families, in addition to providing high-quality education suited to their children's needs, may involve components of culturally situated practices, which allow the curricula chosen to be reflective of the family's culture and inclusive of Black perspectives.

From Van Galen's pedagogues and ideologues (Van Galen, 1988) to Morton's concepts of homeschooling either as a last resort, a social choice, or a natural choice (Morton, 2010), the themes of empowered decision making and self-determination emerge. These reflect notions that are embedded in the concept of agency posited by Bandura (2006).

The decision to homeschool has been called "perhaps the most contentious domain of school choice" and has been attributed to a number of variables (Bosetti, Van Pelt, & Allison, 2017, p. 19). Many have come to understand parental decisions to homeschool in the broader context of school choice and have then focused more specifically on choices made in a particular sociocultural context. For example, Butler, Harper, Call, and Bird (2015) considered family cohesion as a relevant variable in their analysis of the decisions families make regarding homeschooling. Others have examined homeschooling as a choice through the lens of attachment parenting, with an emphasis on parenting style and its alignment with the decision to educate children at home (English, 2015). Whereas parenting style or preference may be worthy of consideration, the homeschool choice may also be framed and understood through philosophical and political frameworks.

In their exploration of liberty as a construct as it pertains to school choice, Merry and Karsten (2010) note that "in all liberal democracies the freedom to choose the type of education one wishes his or her child to have . . . is an assumed parental right" (p. 498). Moreover, in their view, the decision to homeschool is the epitome of parental liberty by rejecting public schools. One problem with the analysis is the assumption that parents are consumers, education is a product, and school choice functions much like much like shopping for laundry detergent or computers. An alternative approach that incorporates the lens of intersectional identities suggests that parental choice regarding homeschooling does not operate like a market of commodities, but rather as "historically and culturally constructed and tied in multiple ways to families and parenting" (Stambach & David, 2005, p. 1653).

Discussion and Recommendations

We have, in addressing the contextual considerations around decisions to homeschool in the United States, attempted to portray this as a choice for families who seek to reassert autonomy in the educational decisions made regarding their children. What, then, is the potential role for school psychologists who are called to serve homeschooling families, particularly those from marginalized groups?

Collaborative Outreach

To begin, the collaboration of school psychologists with homeschooling parents can be strengthened by establishing a welcoming presence for families who may seek to access public school services. This may include taking a proactive stance in reaching out to communities of homeschoolers, to share with them the knowledge of school-based services such as assessment and related services for children with disabilities. These families may have taken their children's education into their own hands, but many times may feel isolated, and/or lack awareness of the opportunities that exist in schools for their children's social integration. In some cases, a public school (where allowed by law) may choose to welcome the children of homeschooling families to attend part of the school day on their campus, in order to offer specials, recess, or other electives to which homeschooled children might not otherwise have access. Recognizing the paucity of literature addressing the needs of families of color with children with disabilities, practitioners may choose to employ action research in this area, penning case studies to address this gap.

Knowledge of Laws

Knowledge of laws impacting homeschooling families can be beneficial to the school-based practitioner. For example, Texas is one of the most homeschooling-friendly states in America (Kaplan, 2015). According to *Texas Educational Agency v. Leeper* (1991), Texas law states that homeschools operate as private schools. In Texas, homeschoolers may be eligible for services and assessments funded by both the state and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act* (2004). To homeschool legally in Texas, the instruction must be bona fide, in visual form, and must include the five basic subjects of mathematics, reading, grammar, spelling, and good citizenship. Texas' homeschoolers do not have to register with the school district, submit their curriculum for approval, or have to submit to home visits. Although all 50 states have laws regarding homeschooling, homeschool laws vary from state to state. Bhatt (2014) summarized the legal statutes affecting homeschooling in each state and presented these with an analysis of the likelihood of children being homeschooled following the passage of homeschool-friendly legislation. Some scholars have advocated for homeschooling to be considered a federally protected right. There is much unreconciled debate over the right to educate at home that crosses socioeconomic and ethnic lines.

Policymakers may facilitate the inclusion of homeschooled children in communities by enacting proactive policies for the meaningful involvement of these families in civic life as well as including these families to the degree possible in the systems of support open to all children through public schools. The *Coalition for*

[Responsible Home Education \(2017\)](#) calls for greater oversight by lawmakers of homeschool practices both to ensure the quality of instruction and to prevent child abuse and neglect from being hidden by homeschooling parents.

Culturally Attuned Practices

Culturally attuned practice begins with a rigorous self-examination of one's own culturally constructed identity and an awareness of internalized, biased attitudes toward any given group. Bias may arise in any situation in which an adversarial mentality (or a dynamic of superiority/inferiority) is adopted toward a marginalized group. The school psychologist who is asked to serve homeschooling families through providing assessment or other services may further need to overcome internal resistance to the idea that White privilege exists in the United States ([Shriberg, 2016](#)) and, further, that it is harmful to all children and that professionals may unconsciously perpetuate White privilege if they are not willing to consciously participate in its undoing through engaging in culturally attuned practices. Shriberg suggests following such an awareness with the critical steps of listening to others with diverse viewpoints, thinking critically about how one's actions may perpetuate rather than remedy inequities in education and acting with such remedies as a goal. From the earliest qualitative research examining the motives of Black homeschoolers in the 1990s to the present, the themes reported by Black families as rationale for their choice to homeschool echo concerns over the diminished status of Blacks in the United States and that schools, in spite of increased diversity, are engaged in the perpetuation of institutionalized racism, Eurocentric perspectives, and pathologizing of Black children ([Mazama et al., 2015](#); [McDowell, Sanchez, & Jones, 2000](#)).

Ultimately, it is important for school psychologists to be aware of their own biases, which may skew in the direction of supporting the public school systems in which they primarily function. This preference, should it exist, may be overcome by engaging in authentic conversation with families, focusing on the needs of the child, and asking questions of the family regarding their own set of motivations to homeschool. Another source of resistance may stem from a concern that the professional's ability to judge the suitability of the homeschool curriculum may be compromised. The judgment of whether rigorous curricula or research-based interventions have taken place in the home should be secondary considerations to whether or not the student shows evidence of a disabling condition requiring special education supports. Evidence of such a condition should be communicated with appropriate urgency to the parent along with possible opportunities for the child in the public school, home, or community settings. Whenever possible, a strengths-based approach ([Saleebey, 2008](#)) should be taken in assessment and intervention activities.

Use of the Cultural Formulation Interview, which is included in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (fifth edition; [American Psychiatric Association, 2013](#)) may be a starting place for conducting a parent interview in assessment practices because the Cultural Formulation Interview frames the questions relating to the child's difference in light of a family's unique descriptions of the nature and context of the problems observed. Use of multicultural approaches to counseling and consultation, although beyond the scope of the current article, should also be

considered whenever there is a cultural difference or mismatch between the student and the adults who serve them ([Ingraham, 2000](#); [Sue & Sue, 1990](#)).

Attention to Critical Pedagogies and Liberated Literacies

The need to address the multiple and interacting systems of oppression—complex, overt, or covert practices that originate from individuals and groups as well as institutions—that create and perpetuate inequity ([Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016](#)) is of utmost concern to educators and researchers interested in elevating the position of marginalized groups in U.S. society. The ideologies that gave rise to the social construction of superiority based on skin color were based in pseudoscience, yet the legacy of examining cultures from a comparative ethnic framework is a persistent product of that legacy. Since Freire wrote the seminal *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1970 ([Freire, 1970/1986](#)), critical theorists interested in education across the Americas have made important contributions to the philosophical and applied literature that go largely excluded from popular consideration, yet these frameworks have new relevance in the current cultural landscape of the United States. One of the approaches suggested in this literature involves an infusion of culturally relevant ways of knowing and learning into traditional learning spaces. [Mazama and Lundy \(2013\)](#) interviewed 74 Black homeschooling families and found that dissatisfaction with Eurocentric curricula was a common theme. By creating spaces for students in public schools to safely and critically investigate historical inequities, and through listening to those whose voices have been marginalized, educators can elevate and uplift these voices, creating a message of inclusion, curiosity, and acceptance.

[Lyiscott \(2017\)](#) described the hesitancy of public school teachers to employ authentic use of Black textual expressions, “the oral, written, visual, digital, virtual, and bodily expressions . . . that saturate Black lives” (p. 48), to engage students in their own identities, cultures, and social contexts, despite the broad literature that supports these practices. She advocates for the use of hip-hop and spoken word poetry in literacy activities, for example, to promote what she terms, liberated literacies. In one example, she refers to the use of Lauryn Hill and Tupac Shakur lyrics for teaching about literary devices and social critique. Homeschooling families may be able to nimbly adapt to the changing cultural landscape by infusing the homeschool curriculum with modern examples of literature, art, and music that may escape the attention of textbook publishers. In interviews with Black parents about the connection between school-based and home-based literacy practices in public schools, [Dudley-Marling \(2009\)](#) found that many Black parents wanted their children to read culturally representative books, such as books that had Black characters. In advocating for diverse families, school psychologists should be aware of the historic underrepresentation in school texts of diverse faces, names, and histories. They may also wish to share this awareness to others working in schools who are interested in inclusive pedagogy and to seek a remedy.

School psychologists may play an important role in the evolution of American educational systems, public and private, as we continue to directly shape our country's future through service to its children. With an enhanced openness to a family's chosen

approach to education and equipped with relevant knowledge of dynamic social systems, the 21st century school psychologist may help to create a more equitable world by increasing access to learning possibilities for children, whether in traditional, home, or other alternative settings.

A Call for More Homeschooling Research

Upon reviewing existing empirical studies and theoretically based literature on the topic of homeschooling, it became evident that homeschooling is an underresearched area and that the ability to make assertions about its role are weakened by a lack of empirical data. This is a significant limitation in our and related fields. Psychological and sociological sciences would benefit from further studies in homeschooling, especially with a focus on how homeschooling practices of families of color may help to improve academic achievement and promote healthy identities in children. Notably, Latinx families have been conspicuously absent from homeschooling literature. We also call for more avenues of investigation into what the social, attitudinal, and behavioral mechanisms are that hinder, or facilitate, children of color achieving at their potential within public school settings. We recommend the use of quantitative, as well as qualitative, methods in the pursuit of intersectional understandings of cultural phenomena, such as those suggested by Else-Quest et al. (2016). A coherent theoretical approach is also called for to structure these inquiries.

Limitations

There are several natural limitations in the exploration of variables in diverse samples of homeschooled youth: the difficulty of locating such a sample because of their sparse presence across wide geographies, the diverse instruction and curricula inherent in homeschooling practices, and the difficulty of comparing these to public school practices. Despite these difficulties, we advocate for urgent action to better serve diverse families through public education systems. We urge future investigators to use a strengths-based lens, in which scholars recognize, value, and respect participants' internal, interpersonal, and community resources and assets. School psychologists would specifically benefit from further research regarding our role in supporting children and families who chose to homeschool because we are called to support all families with children in our communities.

As sometimes happens in a review of multiple and varied sources, an inadvertent omission of relevant literature in this review may have occurred because of the narrow search criteria used by the authors. This was in no way intentional or aimed to exclude the opinion of any author(s); however, the curious, interested reader may choose to search for other resources, such as books, dissertations, and materials published online that were excluded from the current work. It is possible that because of the very nature of homeschoolers' operating outside conventional spheres of education that some published data regarding homeschooling may exist in non-peer-reviewed journals or in other less visible sources.

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