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To cite this article: Andrea Vieux (2014) The politics of homeschools: Religious conservatives and regulation requirements, The Social Science Journal, 51:4, 556-563, DOI: [10.1016/j.soscij.2014.06.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2014.06.004)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2014.06.004>



Published online: 09 Dec 2019.



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The politics of homeschools: Religious conservatives and regulation requirements[☆]



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 15 March 2013

Received in revised form 16 June 2014

Accepted 17 June 2014

Available online 9 July 2014

Keywords:

State politics

Religion

Education

Homeschooling

ABSTRACT

Over the last few decades, the number of homeschools in the United States (US) has grown, and a large proportion is attributed to increases in religiously affiliated homeschools (Kunzman, 2009). However, empirical analyses of the relationship between religion and homeschooling are lacking. This analysis begins to fill that void using a culture wars framework, and indicates that states with higher percentages of evangelical residents are less likely to regulate homeschooling. Consistent with Deckman's (2004) claim, these findings demonstrate the culture wars are active in education policymaking.

Published by Elsevier Inc. on behalf of Western Social Science Association.

1. Introduction

Since the 1980s, the US has experienced an increase in the number of homeschooling families. It is estimated that the number of homeschooled children has grown 15–20% annually (Bauman, 2001) and now totals about two million students (Murphy, 2012). While the population of homeschooling families is considered to be heterogeneous – such that parents homeschool for various pedagogical, ideological, and/or religious reasons (Gaither, 2008; Isenberg, 2007; Kunzman, 2009; Van Galen, 1991) – much of the growth in the number of homeschoolers is attributed to an increase in the number of conservative Christian homeschoolers (Cibulka, 1991; Kunzman, 2009; Lines, 2000, 1991; Murphy, 2012; Van Galen, 1991).

Homeschooling is generally defined as schooling which occurs outside of an institutional school setting, where parents are the primary instructor or supervise instruction. Fundamental to the debate surrounding the rights of all homeschooling families is the degree of state regulation of homeschools. There are those who push for more state regulations and maintain that states should implement a bare minimum set of requirements to ensure that all homeschooled students receive an adequate education (Cibulka, 1991; Kunzman, 2009; Lubienski, Puckett, & Brewer, 2013). Alternatively, many homeschooling parents distrust any state imposition of educational standards (Murphy, 2012). They hold that there is no evidence to suggest an educational adequacy issue (Cibulka, 1991; Murphy, 2012), and past studies of homeschooled children suggest that they perform better on standardized tests than public school students (Cibulka, 1991; Kunzman, 2009; Lines, 2000; Ray & Eagleson, 2008; Ray & Wartes, 1991; Ray, 2013, 2010). To fully assess the academic achievement and scholastic engagement of homeschooled students, analyses that control for individual, family, and community level factors are needed. For example, Havermans, Botterman, and Matthijs (2014) find that parent–child and parent–parent relationships effect student engagement and achievement – it may

[☆] The author would like to thank the comments received from the discussant, chair, and panelists at the 2010 meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, from Elaine B. Sharp Donald P. Haider-Markel, Allan Cigler, Alesha E. Doan, and Robert J. Antonio, as well as those from the anonymous reviewers.

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be the case that homeschooling enhances these relationships and enhances positive academic and engagement outcomes.

This study considers whether or not state regulations imposed on homeschools are influenced by the religious characteristics of the state of residence, and adds to the growing literature on the existence of culture wars in educational policy-making (Cigler, Joslyn, & Loomis, 2003; Deckman, 2004; Vieux, 2014). Hunter's (1991) culture wars theory suggests that there are distinct differences in policy preferences between religious conservatives and non-religious or religiously moderate individuals, and these opposing groups mobilize around and lobby for preferred public policy. The basic assumption is that religiously conservative homeschoolers are against state interference in their homeschools, and that states with larger percentages of religious conservatives are expected to impose fewer regulations on homeschool operations. To explore this question, a brief description of the homeschool movement and the culture wars framework is provided, followed by an examination of these findings' implications for the future of the homeschooling movement.

2. History of homeschooling

There were no compulsory attendance laws in early US history, and common schools were not widespread; however, homeschooling was an option (Reich, 2002). However, as states began to adopt compulsory public schooling laws, by 1920 homeschooling became socially unacceptable and illegal (Knowles, Marlow, & Muchmore, 1992; Murphy, 2012; Reich, 2002), and the number of homeschooling families declined (Knowles et al., 1992). Religious parents at the time did not take issue with compulsory attendance laws, because public schools included Protestant Christian values and teachings in the curriculum (Deckman, 2004). Homeschools were, however, an option for liberal-minded parents who did not agree with the nationalistic, capitalistic teachings in public schools, or those who favored more pedagogically oriented, child-driven instructional approaches (Gaither, 2008; Knowles et al., 1992; Murphy, 2012). This began to change in the mid-twentieth century when public schools incorporated evolution in the science curriculum (Gibson, 2004) and no longer included bible readings (*School District of Abington v. Shempp*, 1963) and prayer (*Engel v. Vitale*, 1962). As a result, homeschooling became an option for religious-minded parents. This set the stage for conflict between religious parents and school districts over the enrollment of children in local public schools (Knowles et al., 1992).

Acceptance of homeschooling shifted after the Supreme Court ruling in *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972), which stated that forcing Amish children into the public school system infringed on their parental and religious freedoms, posed a threat to their cultural group, and violated their constitutional rights. During this era, the arrest and imprisonment of homeschool parents was a media field-day, particularly in some cases where homeschoolers were local church leaders (Knowles et al., 1992). This resulted in state changes to compulsory attendance laws and their enforcement (Knowles et al., 1992). In 1987, the 6th Circuit Court

of Appeals heard the case in *Mozert v. Hawkins County Board of Education* in which a local school board was challenged on the use of textbooks that fundamentalist parents felt exposed their children to secular humanism and futuristic supernaturalism. While the court sided with the district (*Mozert v. Hawkins County Board of Education*, 1987), the case got the attention of states wishing to stay out of the crosshairs of religious conservatives and avoid lengthy court processes. All states altered compulsory attendance laws by 1993 (Reich, 2002). The inclusion of evolutionary theory (Gibson, 2004) and other public school texts and programs deemed morally questionable (Doan & Williams, 2008), the teaching of civil rights, diversity, and tolerance education in public schools (Deckman, 2004; Wilcox & Robinson, 2011), the establishment of school based health centers (Wald, Button, & Rienzo, 2001; Williams, Litvak, & Moriarty, 2004), and the repeal of religious teachings and practices from public schools led religious parents to re-evaluate the homeschooling option (*Engel v. Vitale*, 1962; *School District of Abington v. Shempp*, 1963). From 1999 to 2008, the estimated number of homeschooled children more than doubled (Ray, 2008), with most of it attributed to increases in religiously motivated homeschools (Cigler et al., 2003; Knowles et al., 1992; Kunzman, 2009; Lines, 2000, 1991; Reich, 2002; Stevens, 2003; Van Galen, 1991; Wilcox & Robinson, 2011). Supporting these claims, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) finds that "the most common reason parents gave as the most important [reason for homeschooling] was a desire to provide religious or moral instruction (36% of students). . . Parents of about 7% of students cited the desire to provide their child with a non-traditional approach to education" (NCES, 2009).¹ Thus, while some parents still homeschool for pedagogical reasons, they do not compose a large proportion of the homeschooling population. Furthermore, a recent Cardus Education Survey noted that, of the homeschooling families surveyed, about 80% did so for religious reasons (Pennings et al., 2011).² As homeschooling is constitutionally legal, particularly for families with religious justifications, religiously oriented homeschool advocates have set their sights on state regulations (Cibulka, 1991; Kunzman, 2009). On the face, this contemporary trend suggests that homeschooling policy is an area where Hunter's (1991) culture wars theory continues to be relevant to the study of US public policymaking.

The homeschooling alternative is ideal for religious parents because it provides them control over the content of their children's education and the opportunity to insulate them from mainstream, secular society. Proponents have consistently pushed for less government intervention in the educational choices made on behalf of their children, from the allowance of homeschooling to the regulations and restrictions placed on those homeschools (Bates, 1991; Cibulka, 1991; Cigler et al., 2003; Gaither, 2008; Kunzman,

¹ The other responses were: school environment (21 percent), dissatisfaction with academic instruction (17 percent), other (14 percent), and child needs (6 percent).

² For a more elaborate discussion of this survey and its limitations, see Milton Gaither's (2011) blog entry "The Cardus Education Survey and Homeschooling".

2009; Lines, 2000; Wilcox & Robinson, 2011). Members of the Christian Right, the Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), and other state-level organizations have lobbied state legislatures in an effort to limit regulations on homeschool activities, bookkeeping, content, instructor qualifications, and student assessment (Bates, 1991; Cigler et al., 2003; Kunzman, 2009; Wilcox & Robinson, 2011), and to ensure parental and religious rights to make educational choices (Bates, 1991; Farris, 2009, 2013; HSLDA, 2009). The continued mobilization and professionalization of the homeschooling organizations has been “tied to the general and continued growth of the religious right during the [1980s]” (Knowles et al., 1992, 218), and is evidenced today in grassroots lobbying efforts (Bates, 1991; Cigler et al., 2003) and national organizations such as the HSLDA.

While constitutionally legal, states maintain control over the restrictions on homeschools, leading to a system where there is a great deal of variation in the regulation of homeschooling. With the rise in homeschool numbers, there has been a simultaneous decrease in the restrictiveness of homeschools (Reich, 2002). One reality of the current system is that some states, such as Alaska, do not place any requirements on homeschools—even a requirement to notify the state or local board of the intent to operate a homeschool. As such, there is no definitive way to know how many children in the US are being homeschooled (Knowles et al., 1992; Lines, 1991; Reich, 2002)—let alone the quality of homeschool education (Lines, 1991; Ray & Wartes, 1991; Van Galen, 1991). States like New York are highly regulatory, monitoring everything from curriculum and testing to attendance and recordkeeping. Virginia has regulations in name only, in that religious homeschools are exempted from regulations imposed on other homeschools – particularly testing requirements. In other states, homeschools can be categorized as private schools or satellites of private schools such that unregulated homeschools can receive funding with favorable voucher or scholarship tax credit programs.

3. Culture wars and education

This research falls within the greater body of literature on culture wars, such that religious and secular elements within society, and even conservative and mainline elements within religious groups, battle within political institutions over moral issues (Hunter, 1991). These moral battles have historically been waged within the educational policy arena, making educational policy issues leading areas to test hypotheses of religious influence (Deckman, 2004). To date, most research and analysis has focused the pursuit of change within the public school system, such as the removal of evolution from the curriculum (Cigler et al., 2003), refocusing sex education to abstinence-only education (Doan & Williams, 2008), and ridding schools of health facilities (Wald et al., 2001). Recent work has begun to assess the role of religion in state school choice policymaking; finding that evangelicals are a predictor of reduced charter school regulation (Vieux, 2014). Regarding homeschooling, religious parents take issue with the public school curriculum, programs, and facilities, and prefer homeschools to the public schools they deem

immoral. Thus, states with a large percentage of evangelicals are expected to be less likely to regulate homeschools.

4. Data and methods

4.1. Evangelical Christians

Evangelical Christians are highly mobilized and have been identified by other scholars as key actors within the homeschooling movement past and present (Cigler et al., 2003; Deckman, 2004; Murphy, 2012; Stevens, 2001; Wilcox & Robinson, 2011).³ A measurement of the percentage of evangelical Christians in a state's population is used.⁴ It is consistent with academic definitions (Wald & Calhoun-Brown, 2007; Wilcox & Robinson, 2011) and is based on operational definitions by Steensland et al. (2000).

4.2. Alternative explanations

Other state-level factors are controlled for in this analysis.⁵ These factors are consistent with other state politics research and are used to control for partisan control and interest group influence (Allen, Pettus, & Haider-Markel, 2004), legislative professionalization and state capacity (Berry & Berry, 1990; Squire, 2007), and state motivation and need (Berry & Berry, 1990; Sharp & Haider-Markel, 2008).

The political climate of the state is measured via party control of the legislature and citizen ideology. Republican control is measured by the percentage of legislative seats held by Republicans; higher values indicate a more conservatively oriented legislature.⁶ Citizen ideology ranges from zero for least conservative to 100 for most conservative.⁷ For both political measures highly conservative states are expected to be less likely to regulate homeschools. However, past studies have found mixed results for citizen ideology (Sharp & Haider-Markel, 2008; Shober, Manna, & Witte, 2006), suggesting it may not be an important predictor of state education policy. The ideological diversity of homeschooling families suggests that, similar to others' findings, citizen ideology will not be a strong predictor of regulation. Models are included to test for this possibility.

In addition to party control of the legislature, legislative capacity is an important concept to state policy-making; it is commonly operationally defined using Squire's (2007) index of legislative professionalization.⁸ Higher values

³ Mitchell Stevens (2001) also suggests that online networking may have altered the influence of religious homeschoolers in contemporary politics as more non-religious homeschoolers begin to network online. However, it may also be suggested that it enhances the networking capability of religious homeschoolers. This coupled with the results of the NCES (2009) surveys, suggests that religious reasoning is still a relevant factor in the decision to homeschool.

⁴ Glenmary Research Center (2000).

⁵ As the dependent variable is coded from 2009 and the Glenmary data is collected from 2000, where possible, additional measures were selected based on proximity to the Glenmary data to keep the time lag consistent across measures.

⁶ For the year 2000.

⁷ Citizen ideology is measured with Berry et al.'s (1998) measure.

⁸ Legislative professionalization is used to “assess the capacity of both individual members and the organization as a whole to generate

suggest higher levels of professionalization. Highly professionalized legislatures are expected to be more likely to adopt and regulate policy, and are therefore likely to have a more restrictive homeschool policy. However, similar to the voluntary lifting of homeschooling prohibitions to avoid additional controversy, states with highly professionalized legislatures may be more aware of potential fallout and may not wish to regulate homeschools.

State motivation and need is captured by measures of support of public education, urbanization, and school quality. States that supply larger proportions of the public school budget will encourage families to opt out of the public schools and will be less likely to regulate homeschools.⁹ States with large rural populations will want to allow for schooling that does not require traveling long distances, and are therefore more likely to allow homeschooling. Thus, lower levels of urbanization are expected to decrease the likelihood of homeschool regulation.¹⁰ The quality of the state public schools may also influence homeschool regulations. If the quality of public schools is low, states will be more open to other types of schooling and less likely to regulate homeschools. School quality is measured using the dropout rate, higher dropout rates correspond to lower school quality.¹¹

Finally, homeschooling policies have attracted attention of oppositional forces like teachers' unions. Although these organized interests have not been successful in maintaining state compulsory attendance laws, they continue to pursue regulations and restrictions of homeschools (Reich, 2002). Teachers' unions are expected to support a minimum requirement that the parents notify the state of the plan to homeschool. Consistent with other measures of the strength of organized interests (Vieux, 2014; Sharp & Haider-Markel, 2008), this analysis utilizes a weighted index of teachers' influence which ranges from zero for no influence to four for highly influential.¹² Finally, including the size of a state's homeschooling population would be

an ideal component in the model; however, that information is unavailable. Since some states do not require simple notification of the existence of a home school, they cannot and do not provide information on the number of homeschoolers.

4.3. State homeschool notification.

Information on homeschooling regulations is collected from the HSLDA website. The HSLDA is a legal resource for parents who plan to or already homeschool their children. It provides an overall picture of state restrictiveness, as well as in-depth, individualized state legal analyses of different state homeschooling options and restrictions. It also provides legal advice for parents dealing with court cases, curricular materials for homeschooling parents, and has a corresponding Political Action Committee committed to backing homeschool friendly elected officials (HSLDA, 2009). As an organization, it is dedicated to staying abreast of homeschool regulations across states and providing expert advice to its members.¹³

Homeschooling laws are highly varied by state. There are states with multiple options for homeschools, some of which have options specifically designated for the operation of a religious homeschool or classification as a private religious school. For example, Alaska homeschoolers can register as a private religious school or can simply homeschool under the option where there is no requirement imposed – the latter placing the burden on the state to show children are not being taught (HSLDA, 2009). Furthermore, some states that allow parents to homeschool for religious reasons place no regulation on those schools or allow them to exist under an umbrella of a private religious school or as a satellite of a private religious school. For example, Utah parents can either establish an individual homeschool or establish a private group homeschool (HSLDA, 2009). These private schools have minimal requirements, are not governed by the State Board of Education, and are not barred from receiving state or local schooling funds. This suggests that adoption of universal vouchers could have implications for funding these schools.

Culture wars theory suggests that religious conservatives will pursue educational policies that do not inhibit moral instruction. Therefore, where the percent of evangelical residents is high, a state is expected to be less likely to regulate homeschooling. In an effort to keep this analysis straight-forward and limit validity problems with

and digest information in the policymaking process. Professionalism is typically associated with unlimited legislative sessions, superior staff resources, and sufficient pay to allow members to pursue legislative service as their vocation. . . it "can be interpreted as the percentage of professionalism that [the state's] legislature had compared to Congress that year" (Squire, 2007, 211–19).

⁹ The state's contribution to the public school budget is measured using percentage of the education budget that is provided by the state and coded from the Department of Education's Common Core of Data for the year 2000.

¹⁰ Urbanization is the % of state residents living in urban areas, coded from the 2000 census.

¹¹ Coded from the Common Core of Data for the 2002–2003 school year. The school year was chosen due to missing data for multiple states in the school years surrounding 2000, and a desire to cut down on dropped cases.

¹² Derived from the Hrebrenar-Thomas studies of state organized interests (Hrebrenar & Thomas, 1987, 1992, 1993a, 1993b). While the year of these studies of interest groups is not as close to the Glenmary (2000) measure as desired, it is the closest to the variable of teacher influence than other measurements. The index is based on whether a teachers group is listed as influential and the overall classification of strength of organized interests. First, if teachers are listed as one of the most influential groups, then a dichotomous variable is coded one. Next, the categorization of overall influence of organized interest in states is coded four if the state was in the most influential category, down to one if in the least influential category. These two measures were multiplied, creating an ordered categorical measure ranging from zero to four, where zero is not

influential and four is highly influential. For example, if teacher's groups are not considered influential in a state where organized interests are considered influential, the measure is zero; if teachers groups were considered one of the most influential groups in a state where organized interests are, on the whole, not influential, the measure would be a zero or one (depending on the overall level of influence).

¹³ The HSLDA is an organization with an interest in maintaining homeschooling in the United States and overseas, which interest may create some questions as to the validity of the data. However, the ECS specifically links to the HSLDA's website's analysis of state homeschool laws; and, where possible, the HSLDA report was cross-checked with a state's departments of education information—which demonstrated consistency in measurement. Therefore, the information provided by the HSLDA was determined to be reliable and valid.

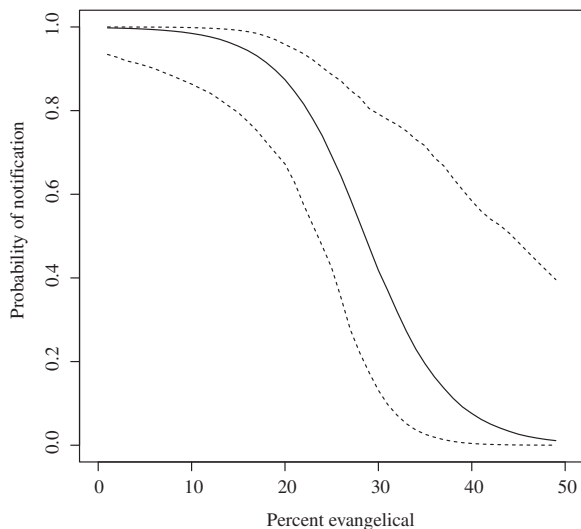


Fig. 1. Predicted probability of state notification requirement. *Notes:* Predicted probabilities are calculated using the Zelig package in R (Imai, King, & Lau, 2008, 2009). *Source:* Home School Legal Defense Association (2008–09).

the dependent variable, homeschool regulation is measured with a dichotomous variable of whether or not state notification is required.¹⁴ As the dependent variable is dichotomous, binary logistic regression is used to analyze the influence of religious populations on the state notification requirement. The table reports results for two models, one with citizen ideology included and one with it removed. Results from the first model are used to calculate the predicted probability of a notification requirement and interpret findings. The predicted probabilities are graphed in Fig. 1.¹⁵

5. Results

The first model in Table 1 makes clear that both the percentage of evangelicals in the state's population and the degree of Republican control of the state's legislature are significant predictors of whether or not a state requires notification of homeschooling. Both coefficients are in the negative direction, suggesting that larger percentages of evangelical citizens and larger proportions Republican legislators lead to a lower probability of a simple requirement to notify the state of the existence of a homeschool. To explore the relationship between the percentage of evangelicals in the state's population and its notification requirement, a figure is produced. Where the size of the evangelical population is less than 20% of the state's total population, there is over an 80% probability of a notification requirement. However, there is a steep decline in the probability of regulation for states where evangelicals compose 20–30% of the population. Once the

Table 1

Binary logistic regression of notification requirements in states.

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2
% Evangelical	–0.222*** (0.083)	–0.219*** (0.078)
Citizen ideology	–0.005 (0.065)	
Teacher's influence	0.242 (0.408)	0.254 (0.377)
Urbanization	–0.071 (0.051)	–0.072 (0.051)
Dropout rate	–0.534 (0.360)	–0.528 (0.352)
Legislative professionalization	–7.423 (4.792)	–7.534* (4.575)
State contribution	–0.007 (0.055)	–0.005 (0.049)
Republican legislative control	–0.194** (0.078)	–0.191*** (0.068)
Constant	24.360** (10.839)	23.886*** (8.832)
nPseudo r-square (Cox & Snell)	49 .345	49 .345

Source: Home School Legal Defense Association (2008–09). *Data sources:* Notification requirement is coded from the HSLDA web-site for the 2008–09 school year; % evangelical coded from the Glenmary Research Center's (2000); citizen ideology is the measure created by Berry, Ringquist, Fording, and Hanson (1998); teachers' influence is an index derived from the Hrebrenar & Thomas studies of state organized interests (1987, 1992, 1993a, 1993b); urbanization is coded from the 2000 census; dropout rate is coded from the US CCD for the 2002–03 school year; legislative professionalization is the Squire (2007) measure for the year 2003; state contribution is coded from the NCES for the 2000–01 school year; Republican legislative control is coded from state government websites for the year 2000.

Note: The dependent variable is dichotomous and coded 1 if the state has a notification requirement. Standard errors are in parentheses under the beta coefficients. Results are generated with the Zelig package in R (Imai et al., 2009, 2008).

* $p < 0.10$.

** $p < 0.05$.

*** $p < 0.01$.

evangelical population is more than 35% of the state's population, the probability of a notification requirement falls to below 20%.

The second model in Table 1 demonstrates that the removal of citizen ideology from the analysis does not dramatically alter the results.¹⁶ Similar to the first model, the percentage of the population that is evangelical and the Republican control of the legislature are both significant and suggest a negative relationship. In addition, the Cox & Snell pseudo r-squared values suggest that the models offer the same improvement over the null model. This is consistent with previous work finding little to no impact of citizen ideology on state educational policy regulations (Shober et al., 2006; Vieux, 2014) or other state-level policies (Sharp & Haider-Markel, 2008). Interestingly, in the second

¹⁴ Coded from the HSLDA web-site for the 2008–2009 school year. Notification requirement is coded 1 if there is a requirement to notify the state; there are ten states with no notification requirement.

¹⁵ All results are generated from the Zelig package for the R statistical software (Imai et al., 2009, 2008).

¹⁶ Multicollinearity diagnostics were run for both models, and are available upon request. In the first model all tolerance levels are above 0.28 and all Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) are below 3.6 – well above 0.10 and below 10 for each indicator. In the second model, all tolerance levels are above 0.70 and all VIFs are below 1.5. This also suggests that, while there is no multicollinearity problem with either model, the second model is likely a better choice.

model, legislative professionalization has some predictive power and is negative. This finding suggests that highly professionalized legislatures are less likely to require notification – a result consistent with the idea that those legislatures may be trying to avoid controversy by limiting regulations on homeschooling.

6. Discussion

The results are consistent with the growing literature surrounding the culture wars theory and support claims that educational policy-making is one of the key areas where religious influence in US politics can be observed (Deckman, 2004; Vieux, 2014). More specifically, the findings are consistent with claims that religious conservatives were involved in the legalization of homeschooling, and are advocates of limited homeschool regulation (Cibulka, 1991; Kunzman, 2009). That other variables, such as teacher's influence, are not important predictors of notification requirements suggests that evangelicals may be ahead of the pack in lobbying, and have been relatively successful in their efforts. This possibility is supported by findings that religious conservatives are particularly successful in keeping states out of homeschooling (Cibulka, 1991; Kunzman, 2009). Proponents of regulations may be trying to push for greater state involvement, but they are doing so in a highly politicized environment against an easily mobilized base. Even in states where proponents are successful in their pursuit of homeschool regulations, religious interests have been successful in getting religious exemptions from those regulations.

Finally, the lack of findings for citizen ideology is suggestive of a few possibilities. First, since homeschooling families include individuals across the ideological spectrum, perhaps this measure does not adequately capture the diversity of the pressure to limit homeschooling regulation. If that is the case, states with conservative citizens and states with liberal citizens are just as likely to regulate home schooling, so citizen ideology is not influential. However, the same argument could be applied to the dynamics of religious and non-religious homeschoolers, such that state religiosity should not be influential – but it is a significant predictor of regulation. This leads to the another possible explanation consistent with other scholars' findings: in some cases – particularly education policy-making – religiosity is more relevant than ideology. Neither of those possible explanations about the role of citizen ideology can be fully answered here.

7. Limitations

There are two general limitations to these findings, one related to measurements and the other to modeling. First, although the data year is 2000 for most measurements, there are a couple of exceptions: dropout rate and the strength of organized interests. The state dropout rate is coded from the 2002–03 school year, because the other years had multiple missing values, which would have excluded multiple states from the analysis. The measurement used still provides for lag time between independent and dependent variable, is correlated with measures from

earlier years, and is not temporally far from the key predictor. As for measures of the strength of teachers' unions, it is difficult to find a perfect measurement (Shober et al., 2006), and although the measure utilized here is older, it captures more of the components of the desired concept. So, while the age of the measure is a problem, it is a more meaningful, complete measure of the strength of organized interests.

Second, the model is a binary logistic regression of cross-sectional data, which is not as sophisticated as other modeling techniques. There are a few reasons binary logistic regression is used. One, homeschooling laws are very complex; a regulation on one component is often dependent on the fulfillment of another regulatory component. For example, in some states, evaluation requirements are dependent upon the quality of the instructor, so homeschooled where the instructor has a higher level of education are held to the same evaluation requirements as those where instructors do not have a college or high school degree. Coding these requirements creates a heightened concern about the validity of the measurements, and about the influence of the coding choices on the results. While some detail is lost in the use of a dummy measurement instead of an ordinal measurement, the measurement itself poses far fewer issues for the model. In addition, the findings only indicate that there is a relationship. More in-depth analyses such as time series and case study research are needed to fully understand and evaluate these relationships.

8. Conclusion

These findings are part of the bigger picture of US state education regulations, and indicate that conservative religious groups, particularly evangelical Christians, are important factors to consider when analyzing these policies. The findings lend support to the culture wars theory (Hunter, 1991) and demonstrate that religious conservatives are relevant to the regulation of homeschooling. They further confirm Deckman's (2004) suggestion that culture wars are still particularly relevant in analyses of educational policy-making. Religious conservatives are highly mobilized around educational policy issues (Cibulka, 1991; Cigler et al., 2003; Deckman, 2004; Kunzman, 2009; Wilcox & Robinson, 2011). Homeschooling is a type of education that appeals to religious conservatives with concerns over public school curriculum and evangelicals are a significant factor in the homeschool regulatory environment.

One implication of this study is the way homeschools are classified and regulated by states. For some home educators, homeschooling is simply a matter of registering as a private school. This becomes important if the state adopts universal vouchers: a homeschool classified as a private school may be allowed to utilize state monies for its operation. However, at present, school vouchers are not widely available, they are limited to specific student populations such as special needs students, and only about a quarter of states allow any type of private school scholarship program. Private school choice programs encounter intense opposition from groups such as teachers' unions (Constant, 2006), such that there is a low probability that

states will provide financial support for homeschools. Yet, if recent Kansas legislative budget negotiations are any indication, public finance of homeschools is, at the very least, on someone's agenda. Further, although a universal voucher program may not seem likely, scholarship tax credit programs that allow funds to be distributed to homeschools could also have a similar effect. It is not clear, however, that homeschoolers would utilize public funds if given the option.¹⁷

These analyses indicate the importance of religious conservatives in state educational policy decisions and support research about the successes of religious advocates' lobbying efforts (Cibulka, 1991). In the future, it would be interesting to find out if these regulations have become consistently less restrictive, or if there is an ongoing back-and-forth dynamic at play that mirrors the back-and-forth changes to the evolution curriculum in the state of Kansas. As noted, proponents may be doing their best to impose some regulatory framework on homeschooling, only to have opponents mobilize and pressure the legislature to maintain limited regulations. If the political climate is averse to controversy, the legislature will simply exempt religious parents. However, this poses questions about the future of education policy-making in America.

As Reich (2002) asks, are policy-makers responsible only to parents who homeschool or is there also a responsibility to the child or society as a whole? Are the interests of children only definable by their parents? While previous studies have found either no differences or positive gains in the academic achievement and socialization of homeschooled children, the researchers themselves note the major limits of those studies: it is unknown exactly how many children in the United States are homeschooled, it is difficult to get in touch with the population of homeschoolers, and studies of homeschoolers are not representative of the population (Ray & Wartes, 1991; Van Galen, 1991) and therefore have little utility. We just don't know much about the academic aptitude of a large group of homeschooled children.

The lack of state notification requirements does little to solve this issue. While this analysis does not assess the academic aptitude of homeschooled children, it does fit within debates about educational regulations and interests of children, parents, and society. Limited state influence is, of course, one of the reasons parents of all backgrounds and beliefs choose to homeschool, and maintaining that regulation-free environment is an objective of those parents. As Kunzman (2009) notes, many religious conservatives view their homeschools as an extension of their religious faith and family life and feel state regulations are an intrusion into their personal lives. Similarly, homeschooling families with myriad ideological and pedagogical views do so because they do not want state-imposed curriculum or regulation interfering with the education of their children. Therefore, a push to impose notification requirements on homeschooling families is met with a

great amount of opposition, the status quo is maintained, and we continue with very limited information about homeschooled children.

What is clear from this investigation is that scholars should focus more attention on the regulation of homeschooling. In recent years, homeschooling has received more favorable media attention and the network of homeschools has increased, particularly religiously motivated homeschool networks. The movement has expanded into the establishment of religious colleges and universities dedicated to homeschooled students and the pursuits of favorable homeschool regulations.

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¹⁷ It is worth mentioning that some homeschoolers are cautious about accepting public monies to fund home education, primarily because of a concern that that gives the state an opportunity to impose regulation.

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