

PARENTS SELF-REPORT WHY THEY CHOOSE TO HOMESCHOOL

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Department of Sociology

Abstract
of
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This qualitative study observed and recorded 11 Facebook Pages with 14 original posts gathering 402 replies, to see what parents self-reported to their peers on Facebook when asked what the main reason(s) are they choose to homeschool their children. This research found the top three responses from the parents replies to the original posts as: Teacher or School Issues, Curriculum Issues, and Family Time. The reasons for homeschooling have shifted from the stereotypical teaching of a religious based education, with a mid-ranking in this research, to everyday parents with different backgrounds and a variety of grievances with the public education system. The parents reported wanting to help their children do better and be better, and to keep them away from perceived problems within the public school system. The parents are choosing what they think is best for their family and their children.

_____, Committee Chair
Jacqueline A. Carrigan Ph.D.

Date

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Homeschooling in the United States has been and continues to be a controversial subject. Although homeschooling in the United States is on the rise as a choice for educating children, it is still publicly perceived as a viable choice predominantly for the religious, wealthy, or unconventional families to choose this option. It is estimated by the United States Department of Education (DOE) that in the year 2012 3.4% of the children in the United States, approximately 2 million, were being homeschooled and this number is projected to continue to rise (Redford and Bielick 2016). The 3.4% of children homeschooled was an increase from the previously reported 1.7% of children homeschooled in 1999 when the first set of data was collected by the DOE in order to gather information on the estimated number of children being homeschooled throughout the United States. A survey completed by the DOE (2016) reported that homeschooling parents did not list religion in the top three main reasons why they chose to homeschool their children. A wider diversity of parents are turning to homeschooling their children for various reasons, and it is not just religious or eccentric families anymore.

A personal interest in homeschooling arose out of necessity, after watching my youngest son struggle in the public-school setting. I witnessed his teachers struggling to help him catch-up after a negative experience with his first-grade teacher. It was wrong for the teachers, as well as my son, to have to do extra work so I removed him from the public school system and I took back control of his education. This is when I experienced the comments and questions, many negative and judgmental directed towards me: “How

are you able to teach your child?” “What about socializing?” “Only a credentialed teacher is able to teach a child properly.” Having misgivings regarding the public-school system while my older children were navigating through, I joined some homeschool centered Facebook groups and observed that it was not uncommon for homeschool parents to experience these questions or statements of negativity aimed at them. That moment was when this research started, I just did not realize it at that time.

Homeschooling children is not a new revolutionary concept (Brickman 1960), it was actually the norm for the United States up until the late 1800’s (Sloan 1973) then the creation of common schools and the emergence of publicly funded schooling as well as compulsory attendance laws by 1918 in all states (Patterson and Martin 2009), led to the decline from homeschooling to a larger reliance, especially from working families, (Vinovski 1987) upon the public school system to educate their children. The homeschooling numbers had declined so low that some states enacted stringent laws designed to dampen any desire of parents wanting to choose that option (Gaither 2008). Homeschooling parents went underground. The modern homeschool movement that emerged in the 1960’s and 1970’s clashed with the public institutions. The early homeschoolers of the 1970’s, predominantly religious, (Blikstad 2015) joined together to win favorable legislative and judicial outcomes that resulted in the legalization of homeschooling in all 50 states by the early 1990’s (Johnson 2013; Somerville 2001). Homeschool parents became part of the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) social movement, once they chose to handle their child’s education and end their dependency on the government run school system. Wehr (2012) describes DIYers as either an individualist that use the

DIY method for personal gain, coordinators that use DIY within a larger group, or lifestylers that use the DIY method as a lifestyle, they live, breathe, and eat the DIY mentality. The majority of modern homeschool parents fall within the categories of individualist and coordinators, with a small percentage of families embracing the lifestyler group. Modern homeschool families are taking responsibility for their children's education either by themselves or through a homeschool co-op where the teaching duties are shared by other homeschool parents. They feel they can do it better and they do not need the help of the "experts".

With homeschool on the rise, research slowly began studying homeschooled children gathering data and looking for the reason parents choose to homeschool. Multiple reasons were given during these formal surveys to why the choice was made: the parents listed issues with the current mandated curriculum, safety concerns, medical concerns, religious reasons, and disappointment with teachers or class choices. (Green and Hoover-Dempsey 2007; U.S. Dept. of Education, 2009; U.S. Dept. of Education, 2010). The above mentioned issues are systematic issues within the government controlled education system. This research study is designed to see if parents answer differently when not in a formal academic or government setting but casually chatting through a computer on Facebook with likeminded parents, peers and homeschool supporters. While doing formal surveys given by the government or run by a university are the homeschooling parents giving particular responses to why they choose to homeschool? This research will follow multiple Facebook groups and pages to record the parents' own responses to previously posted questions by other parents and

administrators on the site as to “Why they choose to homeschool?” What will parents self-report on Facebook group pages as the reasons they have chosen to remove their children from the public school system and choose to homeschool their children instead?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

History of public school

“Compulsory education, for all children, is in historical terms a recent practice” (Brickman 1960). What was once a luxury saved for the aristocratic children is now a government mandate for all children to receive a basic education provided by the state. Compulsory education laws began in 1652 for wealthy white male children leading to a nationwide movement to include all children in 1921 with The Smith-Towner Bill (1920). The history of students being taught in a classroom by a government certified adult is relatively new and has been battled over since before the United States became a sovereign country. With the institutionalization of education, it became the most suitable means of integrating an individual to a social system, through the socialization of certain morals (Durkheim 1956).

Colonial America

Education was an important element to many that immigrated to the New World. Some of the colonies wanted to recreate in the New World the English school system that they were familiar with. While the English colonies shared a tradition of European intellect, each region developed their own unique educational goals that suited the regional needs of the New England colonies, Middle colonies, and Southern colonies. The function of education for the newly forming colonies was a process of forming new social norms for social integration and moral balance of the citizens (Durkheim 1956), social placement and social and cultural innovations. The New England colonies based

life and their beliefs upon a theological doctrine, with reading and writing being very important, and their first schools were adjuncts of the church and state. These basic educational needs were deemed so important by the New England Colonies that in 1642 a law was enacted that required the parents to attend to their children's ability to read and write, as well as understand the principles of religion and common wealth law. There was no mandatory requirement for school attendance, just strong recommendations of compliance to the curriculum for the parents. Some of the colonial laws that compelled the establishment of schools had as their goal, not the transmission of academic knowledge, but rather the inculcation of moral values (McClellan 1992) The New England colonies demanded that education be a function of society, with moral education being the main structuring and binding factor in society. (Durkheim 1956) More education reform laws followed like the Old Deluder Satan law of 1647 that went beyond just the parent teaching the children, the Constitution Society of Massachusetts Bay (1853) described the law requiring any town of 50 or more families must hire a teacher for reading and writing and towns with over 100 families must have a proper grammar school that teaches Latin. The social impact of these laws was: 1) that the state could now require an education for the children, even if minimal, 2) the state could require a town to maintain teachers and use public funds to support that education, and 3) civil authorities could supervise and control the schools (Gutek 1991). Samuel Morrison (1965) reported the educational laws of the seventeenth century as a means to keep the citizens from growing ignorant and becoming wards of the community, these education laws were enacted for the good of society. The laws were a way of training the young townspeople

for citizenship and service in a civilized state. The religious based education in the New England colonies became an essential tool in socialization, social articulation, and social control. Morrison (1965) also noted some of the townspeople saw these laws as an intrusion of the government into their personal lives and an infringement on their parental rights.

The newly required larger Grammar schools were attended by the New England social, political, and religious elite. These boys were taught Latin language, grammar and literature, so they could continue their education further in college then return to obtain a political career or run a ministry of their own (Cremin 1970). Gutek (1991) explained the newly formed education system was being used in the New England colonies as an instrument of literacy for the children but also a religious indoctrination and a conservative means of transmitting cultural heritage to children. Morrison (1965) pointed out that the religious aspect of the laws may have been enforced to gain better compliance from lower-class families who loathed government intrusion, but their fear of God was greater than their distrust in the governmental interference. Cremin (1970) felt that the educational laws were being used to loosen parental rights and for the state to gain control of the children's education. The town leadership felt the parents were failing at their duties and the towns had to step in to educate these young boys, the education was seen as a variable depending on social aspects, the immediate function of which was to maintain social order. (Durkheim1956) These educational laws did lay a significant foundation for the common schools that were established in the nineteenth century as states delegated power to local school districts.

The Southern colonies educational system was created to perpetuate the ideologies of white supremacy and class superiority especially for the rich aristocratic society of the South. The education in the Southern colonies was based on an ethical code of old Englishmen chivalry and plantation management. The Southern colonies wealthy white children were taught at home by their parents or a private tutor, the plantations were too far apart to have an organized town run school like the upper colonies. The southern educational system was further separated into socioeconomic categories since each had a different need from education. The wealthy white children were taught plantation management, while the poor white children learned the needed skills to live off the land and run a single household. This form of economic separation produced a class of illiterate white citizens, although they did not waiver in their sense of superiority over the newly transplanted black slaves. “Thus, a set of mores and folkways based upon economic and social conditions of a slave society reinforced the doctrine of white supremacy.” (Gutek 1991). In the Southern colonies the plantation’s that owned blacks did offer a small amount of education to the slaves, but only in the skills needed to make that plantation run smoothly. Any more of a formal education was shunned in fear of an educated slave would organize and revolt. Especially in the Southern colonies all academic culture was arbitrary since its validity came solely from the culture of the ruling class, the wealthy white plantation owners, and was imposed on the whole as if the only form of objective knowledge (Izquierdos and Minquez 2003). This reproductionist form of education would continue to reproduce the already established hierarchy of the South and reinforce the deeply rooted southern traditions of elite white supremacy. Educational

progress in the Southern colonies fell behind the Northern colonies and lacked that sense of community and common community goals due to the distance between the plantations.

The Middle colonies had different religions and cultures immigrate to the area making it difficult to have an educational system as specialized as the other two regions. With the lack of funds from the local governments to intervene this area energized the growth of private schools run by the different cultures or religions as well producing specialized schools that taught trade and utilitarian skills. The various religions coming over seeking freedom from governmental control over education, opened their own schools to be attended only by parishioners and paid for by those attending, not using any town funds (Butts 1978). Each region had unique needs and requirements they deemed important to the region to be implemented into their educational system. One commonality between these regions was the heavy influence of religion and the fear of God, this would dominate the curriculum through the nineteenth century until a more secularized curriculum was pushed to the forefront.

Revolutionary and Post-Revolutionary Era

As the soon to be country was getting ready to fight for independence, the colonies had their own vision of how the education of the new country should be run. At this time in the evolution of education going hand in hand with conflict theory would be Critical theory, which endorses the idea of defining the interaction of family, culture, and education as a collusion made by a small group of industries in order to keep school as “a mechanism for reproduction in the division of labor” (Apple 1995:35). Each region running their schools as they saw fit abiding by the earlier educational laws. Private

schools appeared to answer public funded schools. The educational system of the uniting colonies was important for the future of this newly formed country. "A republic of self-governing citizens would function effectively only if such a government rested on a firm foundation of education of its citizens." (Guttek 1991). Education early in the United States fulfilled a dual role, on one hand guaranteeing social order reproduction and accumulation, on the other hand promoting democratization through the development of individual autonomy and active participation (Izquierdos and Minquez 2003).

The old values of the separate regions needed to be replaced with a unifying feeling of an American Culture identity in the citizens and their children. In 1787 the national government passed the Northwest Ordinance that declared, "Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall be forever encouraged" (Edwards and Richey 1947). This act was the first to endorse knowledge as a worthy goal, while confirming the country's allegiance to religion and morality. The act marked the beginning of a shift in education's mission. During this era, education was strongly focused on nationalism and the effort of unification of the different regions by establishing a culture independent of Europe and its aristocratic ways. The schools were to act as agents of cultural and ideological hegemony to teach the new norms, values, dispositions and culture that contribute to the ideological hegemony of dominate group (Apple 1995:38). The schools would educate the masses in a dominate culture, the American culture. The thirteen colonies began adding democracy into education with the provision of providing an education "free for all", but this "all" was not as inclusionary as today. The original

colonies did succeed in providing a free or affordable education through grammar school, and underprivileged scholars were able to work their way through college or use goods (farm animals, agricultural bounty, merchandise, etc.) to pay down their tuition if needed. Nonetheless “all” did not include females, most poor boys, and it did not include those that could not master Latin to move through the school system (Morrison 1965). Public funds were set aside nationally for education but the newly forming government desired to avoid centralizing educational power into a federal authority. Haubenreich (2012) noted the marked increase in tension between the states and the newly formed government as to who would oversee educating the country’s population. A problem found from having local control of the educational system in the eighteenth and nineteenth century was rural schools were inferior to larger urban schools; the public funds were not readily available. With this lack of equal funds, the education system was at an early stage of developing a gap between the classes of children. The Upper class children were receiving more funds allowing them to receive a better education and continue their participation in the upper class as the lower class children with the underfunded school were allowed to suffer and continue a perpetuated decline further into poverty. Revolutionary theorist Samuel Smith stated the United States’ was to serve as a model to the world on Democracy and that education provided a means of social control, it established a distinctive American Culture and an educational commitment to scientific attitude which would promote progress (Guttek 1991). Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson expressed suggestions for the educational system, they wanted to create a sense of nationalism in the citizens, along with a curriculum with scientific

knowledge and utilitarian skills, allowing citizens to be valuable contributions to society, politics, and professions (Cohen 1974; Spring 1990). The schools need the feeling of nationalism to break down the provincialism to reflect the American Dream. They had the belief that a republican government and democratic decision making required an educated and literate citizenry. They wanted the educational curriculum to be political and more secularized moving away from the religious based curriculum. Jefferson also felt that control of the education responsibilities should stay in local state control, and every white child should receive three years of a primary education provided by the state. His plan although democratic was also elitist, it provided some education for all white children, but it only allowed the wealthy elite to continue. The educational system was being used as a tool to keep the class differential favoring the upper class lifestyle which the lower class children could not achieve that unattainable goal. Noah Webster wanted to use education as way towards national unity and cultural separation from foreign attitudes, he wanted to form a purely American Culture like Franklin and Jefferson. Webster pushed to reshape the old English language into an American language, the children would learn to think, believe and act American. Webster saw schooling as a method to social stability, social control, stressing obedience, loyalty and duty to an established authority. These educational plans reflected a common desire to educate citizens to be able to participate a specific way in the republic society. The meritocratic society that was created through the use of education system was a way to get the common citizens submit to the dominate ideology allowing the reproduction of power and class relations (Althusser 1969). It was portrayed in a way of hard work would one

day allow the lower class citizens to climb that social ladder and join the upper class, it just took that hard work.

The number of immigrants coming in influenced a change and shifted the educational system towards an industrial based curriculum focusing on time management and morality and less general knowledge. Morally educated citizens were considered more orderly, respectful, and have a greater willingness to comply with rules and regulations of the factories, as foretold by Webster in his educational system suggestion towards social control. By 1870 free tax supported schools were established and a law was passed banning the Bible from public-school curriculum (Katz 1971). This would be the end of an era with religiously moral based curriculum giving way to more secularized and science based curriculum.

Industrial Era

The young country was growing at an exponential rate and education remained at the forefront of many discussions, trying to figure out how to get an educated population that would lead to more productive, less dependent, just overall better citizens of the United States. Common schools were increasing in number and is said to be one of the most important contributions to the history of education (Guttek 1991). Common schools were the result of a largely successful campaign to attain universal public funded school at the elementary level (Sloan 1973). With the common schools the poor were being educated to a limited level to be able to work in lower levels of the factories. By 1830 the control of the clergy had diminished, losing support from churches in education, making way for civil, patriotic and utilitarian curriculum in its place. Philanthropic schools

opened prior to the rise of the common school, but some citizens saw these schools as a way for the wealthy to control the urban working class and to gain social order and control among the lower-class citizens. Attendance at the newly formed common schools was sparse to begin due to the prevalent Indian threat and the expansiveness of the town limits. As the towns became more urban and the Indian threat ceased attendance increased. The first common schools were set up using the Monitored method of teaching and the Parroting method of teaching, both of which can still be seen in modern classrooms. The Monitored Method teaches large groups at a time. Chalkboards were used in place of books, and older children were used to teach younger children. The Parroting Method is the technique of teaching then having the children repeat that curriculum back to the instructors (Guttek 1991). Citizens felt these methods were not teaching the children to have the ability to think for themselves and limited the poor from gaining real knowledge. Henry David Thoreau after his failed stint at being a district school teacher saw something artificial about the new common school and teaching methods being used. The schools were decent but inferior to the village and nature, the classes were becoming artificial (Reese 2001). Knowledge at this period was still seen as power and was limited only for the wealthy giving them control, if given to the poor it could be used for social change leading to change in government control. The citizens in favor of giving knowledge to the poor said it as a way to include them in nationalism, as well as social and economic improvement for the individual and the country. "A just society must contribute to the advantage of the least advantaged. Its structural relations must be such as to equalize not merely access to but actual control of cultural, social and

especially economic institution” (Apple 1990). Horace Mann believed that education can liberate the human intelligence and bring about social reformation. He argued that education should serve as a means of social mobility and provide new opportunities to a class of people who otherwise confined to low-status labor (Laud 1997). Others perceived common schools could obliterate class distinction and lump all kids wealthy and poor into one class and one education. The Midwest towns and Southern plantation were too far apart to make the centralized and public funded schools financially feasible. Affluent members of society sent their children to private schools and did not want to have to pay for their own children’s education as well as the burden to pay someone else’s child education. They did not believe in the philosophy that ignorance breeds poverty and lowers the abilities of the citizens to make educated, informed decisions to better the population.

Common schools introduced vocational programs for the children unable to carry on into higher education expressing the goal of developing a well-rounded citizen. Common schools whether well intentioned did perpetuate the division of the classes and led to an increased gap between the upper and lower class children. The upper talent pool was flooded with affluent parent’s children giving them the advantage of obtaining the higher paying jobs and running their own businesses. The poor were left with the menial jobs in factories working for someone else or the lower rungs of management. Higher education was suggested for the poor to be able to eliminate the need for prisons and jails and increase the productivity of the poor. Mann wanted common schools and higher schools to teach stronger morals as well as knowledge and improve society, he wanted

the schools to take of some parental duties (Vinovski 1987). Lower class parents were unable to instruct their children in a proper manner to benefit society, so Mann took it upon the duty of the schools to teach the missing pieces. The lower class parents had to work more hours and jobs to support their families some did not have the time; underprivileged parents were sending children as young as 2 to 3 years old to the new schools for free childcare. By sending their children to these schools the parents relinquished parental duties as well as control in curriculum the schools had chosen and the loss of choice in discipline. To instill virtues teachers relied heavily on corporal punishment or public humiliation such as dunce caps or large notes pinned on children, describing their infractions. By the 1800's, some of the common schools shifted to encouraging methods to foster moral growth (McClellan 1992), a progressive education of child-centered education. In sum, educators from the seventeenth through the nineteenth century used curricula, discipline, and teacher example to instill moral values in "sinful" youth, creating hard working, obedient and morally stable citizens. William Torrey Harris suggested that, "It is clear that man can live in society and constitute a social whole only so far as individuals are educated out of their natural animal condition and made to respect social forms more highly than mere animal impulses" (Harris 1969). By the end of the nineteenth century, moral education had as its goal civility and a successful democracy. This progressive education was multi-focused depending on the child's class level. The middle and upper class children received instruction to provide cultural and social capital and encouraged social mobility. The lower class students received instruction in discipline, control, and moral uplift, nothing to encourage social or

economic mobility in their instructions. The child centered progressivism became a part of widened educational discourse, questions of social bias would never disappear (Reese 2001).

In the southern colonies after the Reconstruction Era, African American's mobilized to bring public schooling to the region, including making alliances with the white republicans to rewrite the state constitution and guarantee free public schooling for all. It was an uphill battle, critics emphasized that books have no place in education for African Americans. The ex-slaves were labeled as lazy and extensive book knowledge was a luxury that society could ill afford. Ultimately this misrepresentation was dispelled and schools for the African American appeared in all regions of the United States. At the turn of the twentieth century the U.S. government started to get more involved in state run schooling and begin to laydown laws and supreme court rulings that effected the state-run schooling system. In the beginning of the twentieth century many states were faced with the push to include all minorities and immigrants in the states free schooling system as required by the U.S. Supreme court. In 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson, the supreme court ruled that Louisiana has the right to require "separate but equal" railroad cars which flowed over into the education department, recognizing segregation as legal as long as the schools were equal. (Hillstrom 2013) This did not happen and schools for minorities were chronically underfunded, lowering standards and performance from these schools. These underfunded and poorly ran schools, bureaucratized meritocracy left these children with unequal cultural capital which lead to a differential access to social and economic capital, (Dahrendorf 1968) the school were not "separate but equal", they were just separate.

With the inclusion of minorities, the school system fulfilled its original goal of acculturation and assimilation of minorities into American life. If the schools did their part for humanity class conflict, industrial , and urban violence would be averted. The minority children would learn their place in society. Some cultures saw this inclusion as cultural suicide, especially the Native Americans who were granted a controversial U.S. citizenship in 1924 (Allen and Hecht 1974). By 1918 all states passed compulsory school attendance laws making every child in the United States required to attend at least some formal schooling (Patterson and Martin 2009). By having mandatory attendance laws and giving the Native Americans citizenship they were now mandated by law to attend the public schools and get educated in the ways of the United States in government run schools. They were poorly funded and poorly ran causing a lack of education to these children. Cremin (1988) reported on the 1940 census showing that children attending the segregated schools were not receiving the same education nor receiving the same federal or state funding as the white schools leaving this whole population at a disadvantage into their adult life continuing class difference and separation. The Supreme Court case in 1954 *Brown v. The Board of Education* was a unanimous decision putting the federal government on the side of desegregation (Cremin 1988). Segregation is still a problem in modern schools, with the way the boundaries drawn and the ability of affluent parents to pull their children and attend different schools or have the financial means to pay for a private school leaving the lower class, mostly minority children, in the underfunded poorly run urban schools.

In April 1983 the DOE released *A Nation at Risk*, David Gardner, the council chair wrote an open letter to the nation in hopes of seeing how education was run changed in the United States. He reported that the educational institutions had lost sight of their basic purpose of schooling, and the high expectation and discipline needed to attain them. The educational system was not changing and adapting to new technology and curriculum needed to keep pace with advances. A nation at risk reported 23 million American adults are functionally illiterate by the simplest of test of everyday reading, writing and comprehension. More young people were emerging from high school not ready for college and not ready to work, this shortage put a strain on the economy and public assistance programs. The recommendation of the report was that higher attaining students may need a curriculum enriched and accelerated while lower attaining students would need a special curriculum, smaller class sizes and individual help to master the presented material. This report caused the implementation of new standards in the public education system in an effort to raise the level of competency in the American children.

After the new standards were put in place the DOE expected they had a good foundation on moving the United States forward and back into competition with other advancing nations. By the time the new centennial rolled in United States students were still lagging behind their peers. Another revamping of the education system took place. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was the program of choice in an effort to raise test scores and abilities of the children in the United States. NCLB measured success through standardized test scores in two skill-based subjects, with the expectation that this limited training would strengthen the nation's economic competitiveness with other countries

(Ravitch 2010). The pressure being put on the child to perform and the new curriculum in place to teach that child to take the test was seen as limiting side effect of this program pushed schools to get their student to perform well on standardized tests resulting in some districts teaching only what was found on the test, federal school funding was based on those test scores.

Another revamping of the system took place in the second decade of the twenty-first century, common core standards which began to be written in 2008 was slowly implemented across the United States starting in 2012 and finalizing its foothold by 2015. The new standards were written once again in an effort to teach the children the fundamentals of reading, writing and mathematics with a basis to understand the process of the subject. The Common Core standards are written to help the child learn a process and work towards critical thinking and not just test regurgitation as NCLB had become.

The educational system of the United States is ever evolving and continues to make changes in the name of progress, this does not settle well with all citizens of the United States, they see the institution of education as just another cog in government handing out qualifications and positions in society. Parents want to be involved with the choices in educating their children and do not feel that the state has the sole right to dictate the curriculum. With a feeling of loss of control in their children's education parents have chosen to leave the public-school system for a different choice in schooling, be it charter, private, or home-school. All of the changes made through the years to the education system from common schools and desegregation to common core and

standardized testing all, have a foundation in or is the reason that the parents have chosen to educate their children away from publicly funded schools.

History of homeschool

Homeschool has been the norm around the world for most of humankind (Ray, 2010) and public schooling, the act of handing your child's education over to someone else is a new concept. As defined by the Department of Education (2012) homeschool is the practice of the parents or others teaching a child at home or in a home like environment. Homeschool was around before the formation of the United States but has not always been an accepted form of educating a child in the United States.

Homeschooling was considered a success for the time with most adults receiving very few years of formal schooling if any at all. Patterson and Martin (2009) went as far to state that evidently homeschool had been working since all founding fathers were homeschooled, and the founding fathers wrote two very important historical documents. The major source of information at the time was through newspapers and other reading materials, like the Federalist Papers, these readings today cause problems for college students today, but the average American was able to read and comprehend the information. Patterson and Martin attributed this ability to the success of the family led education of the time. By 1918 all states had enacted state compulsory school attendance laws and homeschool had declined and nearly been wiped out. While Patterson and Martin (2009) saw the early introduction of the state-run schools as the death of homeschool, others did not see the imminent demise as that early. Brian Ray (2010) agrees that the state-run schools did cause a decline in homeschooling, he also noted that

according to the DOE that the mandatory attendance in the early years was still relatively low, putting a large portion of education still within the family. The DOE also reported in 2010, the attendance to public schools in 1870 was around 65 percent. Ray interpreted this information that the family must have been doing the rest of the education so homeschool was still relevant during this era. Homeschool nearly extinct by 1970 with .03 percent of school aged children, approximately 13,000 children while 87 percent of children were enrolled in public school (Lines 1990). While at its lowest percentage in the 1970's this is also the decade when homeschool, began a resurgence in numbers. The fundamental Christians and the hippie movement are credited by most as the catalyst groups that began the rebirth of homeschooled children. The fundamental Christians were upset with the direction public school was going and the secularization of the curriculum (Ray 2010). The hippies were upset with the materialistic approach of the curriculum and saw the public school as part of the governmental establishment which meant it was something to be avoided. A main problem with this resurgence of homeschool was the mandated attendance laws on the books. If a parent was choosing to homeschool they could face jail time, since it was against the law for a child not to attend school. The Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) founded in 1983 by Michael Farris and Michael Smith has been a guiding influence into making homeschool legal in all states again and is credited with helping legalize homeschool and allowing the parents to come out from hiding and take control of their child's education without fear of prosecution.

Definition of current school choices in the United States

Parents now have choices for their children's education in 2018. When states began mandating educational choices dwindled between two choices, traditional public or private schools, but in 2018 there are many choices that qualify as fulfilling the mandated education requirements. There is brick and mortar public school, public charter school, public magnet school, private school, online academies, and homeschool listed by the Department of Education (2009) website as viable choices to educate a child in the United States. The definitions below are summarized from the DOE and each choice may be defined differently by individual states, this research will use the definition provided by the United States government.

Traditional Public School

Traditional public school can be seen referred to as Brick and Mortar schools are the evolution of the public schooling system since its inception in seventeenth century. The traditional public schools are what has transitioned from all the laws, mandates and efforts put in by the State and Federal government to provide schooling for all children free or close to free of cost. The curriculum is decided upon by the government and the teachers' salaries, building maintenance and financing is funded primarily by public taxation. Most children in the United States are eligible to attend a public school in their state following the states specifications for the boundaries.

Public Magnet

Public Magnet schools are set up to focus on specific subjects or themes in efforts to attract students from diverse social, economic, ethnic and racial backgrounds. The magnet themes or subjects differ from school to school using specialties like S.T.E.M or

the arts and follow different careers themes like business/technology and communications/law. Some magnet schools require passing an exam or demonstration of knowledge to attend their school. A public school may not administer any test for administration requirements. The funding for a magnet school is the same funding as traditional public schools in addition to grants from private benefactors and/or corporations in support of the specific curriculum for the school.

Public Charter

Charter schools are public schools that operate with limited state regulations. Charter schools are run by private groups, parents, or school districts and are sponsored by local, state or other organizations that hold them responsible for their curriculum and academic results. The funding is provided the same as traditional as well as through private grants from groups with the same interest as the school.

Private

The majority of private schools in the United States are religiously affiliated, and the non-religious schools are listed as college preparatory programs.. The majority of funding for these schools comes from the attending children's parents, grants and scholarships provided from alumni, and grants from private investors in support of their program.

Homeschool

Homeschooling is when one (both) parents or tutors undertake the responsibility to provide schooling for the children in their home. Some parents provide their own materials and create their own curriculum through the internet. While other parents use a

homeschool co-op where parents share the responsibility of instruction in subjects that they are unfamiliar with in exchange for teaching other children in subjects they are comfortable with. Accountability for curriculum and states standards is different for each state. Funding for homeschool is provided solely by the parents. There is legislation pending with the possibility of providing some funds for the parents.

Virtual Academies

Virtual academies provide instruction through the internet and is used by public schools and homeschools. Some public schools have transitioned to public funded schooling completed at home through internet access and teacher guidance. The same programs used by the public-school system can also be purchased by homeschool parents to follow the public school curriculum although the funding is solely by the parent. This allows parents to adhere to state standards without any intervention from public school system.

How do homeschooled children fit within a society, especially one that has become so heavily based in the importance of education and following the specified national curriculum? This research will attempt to understand the sociological impacts on education in the United States from the inception in the colonial days to modern common core curriculum, and the force that has pushed parents into the realm of homeschooling, feeling they can do it better than and without the help of the “experts”.

Homeschooling simply defined is a parent or hired tutor undertaking the responsibility to provide schooling for the children in their home. Some parents provide their own materials and create their own curriculum, while other parents use a

homeschool co-op where parents share the responsibility of instruction in exchange for teaching other children in subjects the parents are comfortable with. Participation in homeschool has been continuously rising since 1999, so as its popularity is increasing nationwide, so is the interest in researching homeschool children and their parents. Why would anyone choose to take upon themselves this task, especially one as important as a child's education? One misstep could leave a child stuck in a lower socio-economic class with a decreased chance of social mobility. Follow the wrong curriculum and upward social mobility is as limited as college prospects. These homeschooling parents have many reasons why they are taking on this heavy responsibility, on the political side, they have a distrust in the government and the ways the government has handled educating the youth so far, to a self-interest side, of wanting to take responsibility for educating their own children.

The homeschool movement is not an organized singular group, it is more a sparse collection of small pockets in society that are run independently of each other, many times unaware of what other groups, states, or regions are dealing with. This is lessened with the creation of social media sites allowing the different factions to be in communication with each other continuously. This research is an attempt to understand why the parents have chosen to homeschool their children and see what issues either personal, socially, or systematically have influenced their choice.

What are the theoretical concepts that help explain why parents choose to homeschool their children in place of using the government run publicly funded schools? Using a conflict theory approach shows that the theory of meritocracy, and the theory of

reproduction, lead to class inequality through the lack of cultural capital as well as economic capital, especially when all children were mandated into the public school system through the enacted educational laws (Izquierdo and Minquez 2003). The theory of meritocracy can be defined as a social system in which a person's career or status in life depends primarily on their talents, abilities, and effort, the people advance on the basis of their merit. The theory of reproduction is defined as the emphasis on the structures and activities that transmit social inequality from one generation to the next, there are four types of capital that contribute to social reproduction in society. They are financial capital, cultural capital, human capital, and social capital (Doob 2003). Even with the ever changing requirements, curriculum, and testing standards implemented to alleviate these inequalities the lower class and minority children are not given a truly equal chance to succeed no matter how hard they work, they will more than likely just continue in the socio-economic class and lifestyle of their ancestors of past.

Jurgen Habermas, a German sociologist, has a term: colonization of the lifeworld, where he states that capitalism takes over social relationships (Wehr 2012). Through the need to make money, which is power, regulations are put in place to capitalize on these relationships. Wehr (2012:8) further explains Habermas sociological idea as the social lives being understood in two different worlds: the world of economic production and politics called "system", and the world of home, play, and sexual experience called "lifeworld". The homeschool parents are rebelling against the bureaucratic school system and are "taking back" the responsibility of education. By taking back control of their child's education with homeschooling the parents have decided to participate in the

decolonization of the lifeworld, a politicized response to the state or the market, demanding reform. Many homeschool parents do not see themselves as the political statement type of people they just want the control over their child's education. Wehr (2012) also mentions that the system does not sit by idly and allow decolonization to proceed unchecked. Through regulatory and bureaucratic practices, the government is able to minimize the loss of funds in response to the homeschool parents joining the decolonization movement. The education system has set standards, curriculum, or regulations that the homeschool parents must follow in order to be given permission to educate their own children.

Homeschooling is a response by the parents wanting to have control of what their children learn and how their children are socialized, they want to dictate what morals are important, and most of them want to break free from "the system" and educate their children their way. Even if there is a distrust in the government run school or a belief that the schools were holding their child back socially or academically the parents are only trying to do what they feel is in the best interest of their family and their child's education. This research will be looking to answer, "What do parents self-report on social media sites as the reason(s) why they elect to homeschool their children?"

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

A qualitative study using content analysis has been conducted to report, “What will parents self-report on Facebook group pages as the reasons they have chosen to remove their children from the public school system and choose to homeschool their children instead?” In order to examine what parents are communicating online about homeschooling, this study analyzed the content of material posted on the social media site Facebook, from the following group pages that discuss issues related to homeschool. The group pages Practical Homeschooling, Homeschool Buyers Co-op, Well Planned Gal, Modern Homeschool Family, Book Shark, and The Busy Mom, are public Facebook pages that are open and accessible to anyone at any time. Crossing Over to Homeschooling is a closed Facebook page, only a member of the group can access the contents of that page. Gaining membership to Crossing Over to Homeschool entailed answering three questions from the administrators of the page, “Do you agree to read the Pinned Post, Group Description and Group Rules?”, “Do you understand if you break the group rules you will be removed and potentially banned from the group?” and “Do you agree not to post any content or links to any entity from which you may receive monies from as a result of said post?” After satisfactorily answering those questions, membership to the page was granted. Two private individual pages with public posts regarding homeschool were also used and analyzed, the individual’s names have been withheld in respect of their privacy.

All of the Facebook group pages are supportive of homeschool by suppling resources and information to people investigating the possibility of homeschooling their children or are already immersed in homeschooling. The group pages serve as an “echo chamber” for likeminded parents to communicate with other parents to vent their frustrations and exchange homeschooling ideas. Only group pages supportive of homeschool were used for this research, due to this study analyzing the reason(s) why the parents have chosen to homeschool their children. This research scrutinized the self-reporting of these parents on the Facebook posts and the keywords or phrases used when discussing their motivations to why they have chosen to homeschool their children. Although they are forums available to the public, these Facebook pages were selected because they are geared towards future and current homeschooling parents.

In order to find out the parent’s responses to why they choose to homeschool their children, the group page posts were searched using the pages post search bar by entering the phrases “Why do you homeschool”, “What are your reasons you homeschool”, and “This is why I homeschool” to discover posts by other parents or the administrators of the page. The original post and the direct responses to the post were observed, recorded, and analyzed. The parents posting, and replying did not know when originally responding to the post that it would be used for research on a future date. The analyzed posts and responses were submitted between June 2014 to October 2018. The original posts and their responses have been transcribed and placed into a spreadsheet to record individual responses and follow up responses to the original posts yielding a total number of responses analyzed. The gender, race and socio-economic level of the parents posting and

responding cannot be determined for this research, no enrollment was required, nor was there any previous knowledge of participation at the time of their responses to ask for and gather this information.

From the identified group pages for this content analysis, the original posts and their responses selected have been printed out and systematically evaluated. All posts and responses originated from other parents or administrators from these designated pages, the responses have been observed and analyzed. There were no interactions between this research and the page regarding any of the original posts or responses. The posts and the responses have been read in their entirety then coded as Answers Question (AQ) or Off Topic (OT). All off topic responses have been discarded due to irrelevance to this research. The AQ responses were read again, further coded and analyzed to find the key word or phrase used when reporting their reasons for homeschooling and placed systematically into one or multiple categories. The designated categories for this research are: Curriculum Issues, Family Time, Government Control/Distrust, Medical, Religion, School/Teacher Issues, Social Issues, and Testing. Each category has a specific set of keywords or phrases assigned to it, once used in a response it was placed within that category immediately:

Curriculum Issues – keywords assigned to this category but not limited to are: Common Core, Curriculum choice, School Subjects/Classes and any other word or phrase that labels a parent's frustration with the public school curriculum.

Family Time – keywords assigned to this category but not limited to are: To be home, Travel, Love to be with their kids, and any other word or phrase that signifies the parents need or wishes to spend time or have more time with the children or family.

Government Control/Distrust – keywords assigned to this category but not limited to are: Money, Government, State, Indoctrinate, Conspiracy and any other word or phrase that indicates a parent’s distrust in the government and the ulterior motives of the government with concern towards education.

Medical – keywords assigned to this category but not limited to are: ADD/ADHD, Illness, Health and any other word or phrase that shows a medical explanation or medical reasoning to homeschool a child.

Religion – keywords assigned to this category but not limited to are: God, Religion, Church, Bible, Spiritual, and any other word or phrase that eludes to a clear religious leaning within the response.

School/Teacher Issues – keywords assigned to this category but not limited to are: Failing School, Class Sizes, Teacher, School and any other word or phrase that defines a school or teacher and any concerns that a parent may have with either one.

Social Issues – keywords assigned to this category but not limited to are: Bullying, Violence, Drugs, Sex, Safety and any other word or phrase that designates a parents concern with a social issue within the schools or the environment outside of the home.

Testing – keywords assigned to this category but not limited to are: Testing, Standardized Tests, Scores and any other word or phrase that expresses a parent’s feelings towards testing in the schools.

When other words became frequent throughout the posts a new category was created for those responses. A consensus for criteria on coding was established with several rounds of test coding performed until a consistency was achieved. All data collected and coded was used to analyze and explain the self-reporting of parents on a social media site as to why they are choosing to homeschool their children.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

To find the top reasons parents self-reported why they choose to homeschool their children, hundreds of Facebook replies to multiple posts were reviewed, analyzed, and coded. The 14 original posts analyzed originated from nine different Facebook groups and two individual pages, by entering the key phrases “Why do you homeschool”, “What are your reasons you homeschool”, and “This is why I homeschool” within the pages post search bar. The 14 original posts and all replies were transcribed and coded looking for keywords and phrases designated to place the responses into a one or more of the final 11 coded categories. As expected, the majority of responses were placed into multiple categories since the parents gave multiple reasons why they choose to homeschool. After transcribing the original posts and all replies to these posts, 413 viable responses were analyzed. After reviewing and coding the 413 responses for validity to the research question, 11 of the response were found to be off topic and did not reply to the given question of why parents choose to homeschool, these 11 responses were then discarded leaving 402 responses to analyze and categorize in this data set. Of the 402 responses used, 377 were original posts and replies, while 25 were secondary responses to the original replies of other parents often agreeing with that person’s reasons and then giving additional reasons why they have also chosen to homeschool their children. In total 11 categories were used to analyze and categorize the data, the original eight categories that were anticipated and three new categories that originated once coding and categorizing began. The original eight categories did not have a place for military families that choose

to homeschool, there was not a designated category for the parents' wanting to help their child or could do better than the educational system, and the last unanticipated category was created for parents that had children that were bored. These bored replies might have fallen under the Curriculum Issues category, but some parents did not list a reason why their children were bored, so unless it was listed specially this research would not make assumptions on why the child was bored. The following list is the final 11 categories in ranked order of most to least responses recorded.

Difficulty with either the teachers or schools (150 responses)

The parents' expressed a frustration that the teachers and/or the administrators were not hearing their complaints or taking their issues seriously. The parents had an issue with the institutionalization of the educational system, they saw the system as the issue, the catalyst that was failing its democratic duty to educate all children. The schools were to act as agents of cultural and ideological hegemony to teach the new norms, values, dispositions and culture that contribute to the ideological hegemony of dominate group (Apple 1995:38). The parents' replies below share their feelings of not being heard and let down by the educational system:

A school's priority is managing children not educating, Teaching to the middle students. The school wasn't addressing their educational or social issues

Issues with the current curriculum in schools (123 responses)

These parents showed disappointment with what was being taught at the schools. They were being let down by the school's mandated curriculum just reproducing the "division in labor" in the United States as well as failing to lift American children into a competitive ranking in the global education race (Apple 1995:35). Below are parents expressing their concerns with the curriculum:

The sheer volume of distraction, misinformation, inappropriate lessons and methods. The cookie cutter concept of learning.

Parents reported a concern with the lack of creativity or individuality in the curriculum, their children were being placed into a box of conformity and made to regurgitate state mandated information opposed to critical free thinking. Below are comments that reflect the lack of individuality through curriculum:

Public school is where you go to learn how to conform and listen to authority. My son has NO CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS! They have been teaching him to be a mindless drone.

These parents expressed their disappointment in the bureaucracy and led to the steps of decolonization of the system by moving to homeschool.

Problems with social issues within the public school system (108 responses)

Parents reported an abundance of systematic social issues afflicting the public educational system. Bullying was the number one mentioned systematic social issue and the schools and district boards are viewed as not doing enough about the grievances brought to their attention. The schools were failing to maintain social order (Durkheim 1956) and fulfill one of its primary functions. The Parents needed to protect their children where the schools would not. Below are replies showing the frustration from the lack of social control in the schools:

My kids were bullied, and the school did nothing about it. School bullying where the schools punish the victim for defending themselves.

The parents wanted other the social issues addressed too: drugs, negative peer influence, and violence within the schools which they report are not getting any better. Below are parents' comments on the increase of frequency in the social issues as well as a noncompliance by the schools to rectify the problem and regain social control:

Drugs and bullying and the school doing nothing about it. negative influence of peers Do you know that there have been 11 shootings since January 1, 2018.

Flexibility and the chance to spend more family time (107 responses)

The parents expressed their gratitude of being able to raise their children and that the responsibility of parenting was not defaulting to the educational system. Below are parents comment expressing their desire to not allow the educational system to teach the moral and social norms deemed appropriate by society, they are handling those duties on their own.

I've seen the village and I don't want it raising my child. I wanted to raise my children not some stranger.

The parents expressed the need to be able to schedule schooling around their own needs not those of the government dictating vacation times as well as the exact number of days of mandated attendance.

Vacation days and breaks are on your schedule, which I have found to be more productive.

These parents can teach their children better (78 responses)

These parents mentioned doing their best and giving the children opportunities not found in other schools, having curriculum freedom to teach what classes and subjects they deemed important. These parents are bypassing the educational institution's ideological imprint of the dominate morals on their children, These parents are participating in the decolonization of the lifeworld described by Habermas (Wehr 2012).

The parents also expressed the ability do better, without the need of the “experts” of the school system.

I knew my kids could weather the system and probably come out just fine...but I wanted something better. I want them to be better educated. So, I can tailor the education to my child and not my child to the education. Wanted to give my son more than a public school could.

Having a child with a medical condition (68 responses)

The parents expressed frustrations with the schools not listening nor providing enough support for the children that have a medical issue. Some parents even reported the lack of support and felt the schools did not want to respond to the medical needs. These parents had fought with the schools to try to get their child’s medical needs met to no avail. They became unexpected homeschoolers, pushed out of the mainstream, by the system leading to a noncompliance between these parents and the institution of education.

My child has a medical condition and the school was trying to pretend it didn’t exist. My special needs children were not getting the adaptations they were promised and need.

Having religious beliefs (54 responses).

The Facebook pages chosen were not religiously based therefore the parents on these pages with a religious background either did not feel comfortable talking about their religious reasons on the page or did not feel that religion was the driving force in their choice. The parents that did respond with a religious affiliation often wrote of God's will or God had shown them the path to homeschooling:

God gave me my children to protect. I did it because the Lord told me to and He led the way.

The parents also expressed a dissatisfaction of the lack of religious curriculum in the public school system and contributes this to the social issues plaguing the public school system, the children are being neglected of a strong moral education. According to these parents the school system has failed at its demanded that education be a function of society, with moral education being the main structuring and binding factor in society. (Durkheim 1956). Below shows the parents experience of loss of religion and the lack of religious morals being taught:

I don't want my children to be indoctrinated by the very non Christian public school system. God is left out of the public school. To be able to teach our kids about Gods word, moral and character.

Parents have a distrust in government and the control over the public school system and the children within that system (39 responses)

The parents expressed a distrust of the government's involvement in the choice of curriculum and the hiring practice of administration and teaching faculty. Some even went as far as blaming the government of trying to indoctrinate their children. These parents reported the government was overreaching by taking away parental rights and parental input into their children's education. The parents see the government as trying to control all social influence and cause the children to be trained not taught anything with the one size fits all curriculum.

I don't want the government raising my children. They are indoctrinating the children to be little robots for specific tasks and not developing the mind.

A problem with the amount or the importance of testing (37 responses)

These parents had complaints about the exuberant amount of testing and the over reliance on tests to rank the students. The parents voiced their opinions that testing alone does not equate to a well-rounded student or curriculum. They also reported that the schools are busy teaching to the tests, trying to raise test scores, and not focusing enough on teaching the individual child. Standardized testing leads to such a heavy weight based on merit of the child (meritocracy) and not the over all contributions by the child:

We don't want anything to do with common core or high stakes standardized tests. The excessive testing and the teaching only geared for that state exam.

Children were bored (15 responses)

The parents replied their child was complaining of being bored or showing signs of boredom in the classroom. The parents also expressed a concern with these children being unable to thrive and are held back or hindered from excelling due to the boredom created in the static classrooms.

My children were unchallenged and bored. My son was also moving along more quickly than his class and getting bored (and then in trouble).

An active member in the military (9 responses)

The parents reported the flexibility of homeschool and the fluidity of the curriculum is accommodating to the nomadic lifestyle of military families. As well as the lack of restrictions on the scheduling that goes along with being in a military family and the difficulty to adhere to state mandated attendance laws as well as the stringent state mandated curriculum requirements.

We are military and in have seen firsthand the gaps kids have when moving from school to school. Plus, it is hard to keep up with a military schedule and public school.

This research wanted to compare the results with other government and academic studies performed to see if there was a difference in the way the parents replied. In order to have a comparison the results of the survey given by the DOE in 2012 was read and used in order to achieve that goal of this study (Redford, Battle and Bielick, 2017). The DOE survey reported the most commonly selected reason was a concern with other schools' environments, which includes factors such as "safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure" at schools (91 percent). Other commonly reported reasons included, "a desire to provide moral instruction," and "a dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools," (77 percent, 74 percent respectively). When comparing the DOE survey results to this research there was a difference in the ordering of importance to the parents, but they still reported the same reasons. The years that the Facebook posts originated from are later in time than the DOE survey of 2012, as well as the same parents were not evaluated by their Facebook posts. This research had similar findings recorded in the Social Issues category of safety, drugs, bullying and other social problems impacting the parents' choice to homeschool.

Another survey pulled to us in comparison was done by Green and Hoover-Dempsey (2007) at Vanderbilt University asking the question of "Why Do Parents Homeschool?" The results from that academic survey found that the parents wanted a

larger involvement in their child's education with the ability to help their child succeed, as well as the ability to spend time with their children furthering their educational success. Those results aligned with two different categories from this research of Help/Something Better and Family time. While these Government and academic surveys results were similar, they did not exactly coincide with the finding of this research. It is difficult to hypothesize the reason in differences due to the different sample size, different venues chosen to find the data sets and other differing factors. Although the results were different between the different survey they were not so far off that the top categories from the academic or government surveys were still listed within the top results of this research, although in a different order of importance. Could it be possible in the later years priorities for the parents changed or perhaps it was a different mind set at the time of taking the survey that caused the shifted reports in importance of issues of why parents choose to homeschool their children.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The finding from this study suggests families have multiple reasons why they choose to homeschool their children. The self-professed problems range from issues with teachers and schools, the mandated curriculum, medical issues, to the child being bored and the parents wanting to help their child be better. Specifically, the parents had complaints in different areas within the school system that caused them to withdraw their children from the public school system and take the task of educating their children upon themselves. Homeschool while not mainstream, has become an option that is being used by everyday families that have the conviction to undertake this arduous task. These parents have adopted a Do-It-Yourself attitude in order to take control and have total involvement in their children's education to rectify the issues they have with the school system. These parents pursued a nonstandard way to be more involved in their children's education after many self-reported attempts to solve the underlying issues failed causing them to leave.

Although previous research on homeschool has contributed much to our limited understanding of parents' decisions to homeschool, this study demonstrates that parents' will resort to homeschooling their children if they think that the schools are not listening or addressing the issues that they bring to their attention. The parents would rather take the task of teaching upon themselves if they feel that they have no alternative within the system. These parents appear to be motivated to homeschool to improve their children's socialization, provide an institutional free ideology and curriculum, teach autonomy from

society, and due to their disbelief in the school systems abilities to deal with their child's educational needs free from the social reproduction of class inequality.

Although this study provides some insight into parents' responses as to why they choose to homeschool in a casual friendly environment, it was also constrained by some limitations. Because there was no sampling framework on the homeschooling population, it is not known if the contributing parents were representative of all parents who choose to homeschool. This limitation makes it hard to determine if these results can be generalized to all homeschool parents. For example, parents that homeschool due to their religious and moral beliefs may choose to homeschool for reasons different than those of the parents observed in this study. Another limitation was the lack of accessibility to the participants to conduct follow-up question to their responses. Some participants may have expanded on their response in the follow-up questions to help alleviate any misplacement of a response into the categories. Finally, this study used self-reporting free responses, although the participants did not know at the time of their response that it would be later used for a study, the parents' may have responded with a favorable self-report bias trying to fit into the group and respond with what they thought the other parents in the group would want to hear.

Further research should address these limitations. For example, a state homeschool sampling framework would be helpful, where parents are required to register with the state if they will be participating in homeschool curriculum. This would alleviate some of the issues with generalizability of the findings towards the homeschooling population. To alleviate some of the self-report biases a study with a larger sample size

and structured follow-up interviews to get a deeper understanding to the thought path used by parents who are removing their children from the public school system at an increasing number. Some parents are willing to homeschool their children at a great personal and sometimes financial cost that is a burden to the family rather than send their child to a public school.

Further collective research needs to be done on families that homeschool, in anticipation to help us better understand all parents' thinking towards involvement in their children's education, the ramifications of the homeschool movement may be helpful to the national public school system. With this further research and implementation of the findings it is feasible that a mixture of these two educational choices may help a greater number of students in a mass setting like the national public school system and not leave the parents thinking their only option is to remove their child from that system.

Homeschool is a part of the national educational system even if it is sometimes not recognized as a viable option and with its ever increasing numbers it is not expected to disappear anytime soon. The percentage of citizens in the United States that think homeschooling is a viable option has continued to rise during the past two decade (e.g., rising from 16% in 1985 to 41% in 2001; [Rose and Gallup 2001]). Homeschooling has been and will continue to be a controversial issue in the United States as long as the policy makers and educators continue to express concerns about and opposition towards homeschooling despite its legal status. Very little systematic information is available on why parents choose to homeschool over the state funded public school, how homeschooling impacts the community as a whole, or how homeschooling impacts a

child's learning success. The results of this study offer new information about why parents choose to homeschool; in doing so, they may provide a basis for continued investigation into gathering more information on viable options and approaches to educating children in the United States.

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