The Challenges of Researching the Homeschool Population

by

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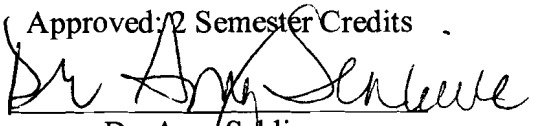

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ABSTRACT

This study critically reviews the published literature on homeschooling in regards to public education and analyzes the history of home education, the federal and state laws governing homeschooling, the academic success of homeschooling, and the socialization process of homeschoolers. This critical researcher met many challenges when analyzing the research, including defining what is quality research, and has attempted to provide readers with a comprehensive look at the homeschool population.

Results indicated that the literature regarding homeschooling is wrought with research flaws and limitations. Some notable problems were the lack of empirical research studies, limited access to research, a plethora of opinion articles, the lack of control of background variables in participants, and the limitation of converging evidence. A reason for the problems encountered is due to the domination of one homeschool researcher who limits access by requiring payment to read his work. Reviewing his literature became a financial burden. Lack of time, space, and

resources also limited access to research and allowed only a few main points to be considered in this review.

Despite this, it can be concluded that homeschoolers who have volunteered to participate in testing consistently ranked higher than public school students. It is important to note that homeschoolers who participate voluntarily can affect the reliability and validity of test outcomes because they create a biased sample. These participants imply their families have the time, financial resources, and ambition to have their students participate in testing, which may not be true of all homeschool families. Since homeschoolers are not required to participate in the same testing and be held to similar education standards as public school students, it is irresponsible to compare the two groups. It is recommended that new and improved research should to be conducted and uniformity to be developed between state laws.

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Chapter I: Introduction

To educate, according to the *New American Webster Handy College Dictionary* (Morehead & Morehead, 1995), is to "impart knowledge and training...develop mentally and morally by instruction" (p. 223). Children are the future and parents want the best for their children when it comes to their education (Wilby, 2005). What is the best though? Some would argue public schools foster the development of children into well-rounded, socialized, democratic adults. For some, this development is considered ideal and a healthy process of life. However, some parents would argue that homeschooling is the best option for educating our nation's future. According to Medlin (2000), Mondloch (2000), and Romanowski (2006), homeschools teach morals, values, flexibility, creativity, socialization, and family ideals. They also allow children to learn at their own pace, free from the pressure of competition that may be evident in traditional schools.

Originally, when I started my thesis journey two years ago, I planned to research the differences between public schooling and homeschooling with a focus on how families help plan for their student's life after high school. I was hoping to answer the following questions: *How do children and families develop their postsecondary plans? How do they learn about college entrance requirements, financial aid, and educational scholarships? Is there a need for a third-party to provide workshops, seminars, or private guidance counseling to homeschooling families? Who is the greatest influence on the student when making important career decisions? A guidance counselor in a public school setting is a wealth of knowledge when helping students to plan for their future, but who is there to help the homeschooled student?*

I decided to ask parent educators and homeschooled students these questions by conducting interviews. My plan was to audiotape the interview and analyze reoccurring themes

in participant responses. After a discussion with my advisor, we decided that this method would be more fruitful, providing more in-depth data than a survey could. The population I planned to study were families who currently or previously taught their children at home aged 12 and older. This group could also include families who had children that were of college age. The age range selected was based on research indicating it was the prime target ages for career development.

When looking for participants I relied heavily on the internet and networking through family and friends. Frequently I would stumble upon a homeschooling organization's website, but contacting the group proved to be difficult. Some organizations only posted email addresses which I often did not get a response from, others had phone numbers but declined to help. Family and friends provided many names for resources, but once contacted, the homeschoolers declined to participate. I also spoke with friends that I knew who homeschooled, but some did not meet my research criteria and the few who did, unfortunately, would not amount to enough participants for my study.

However, I persevered. As time was running out I finally made contact with an organization that had about 150 families as members. The person I spoke with seemed excited about my research and willing to participate, but said she must review and agree with everything to make sure it did not reflect poorly on home education. I sent her my proposal and sample questions with high hopes, but to no avail, her response to participating was no. The reason, she said, was she did not like the word "need" in my title. She did not oppose my questions and research, but felt my title was presenting homeschoolers in a negative light. After a lengthy discussion and a reiteration that the title was not static, she agreed to participate only through an anonymous survey. By this time, it was too late. I was six weeks away from finishing the semester and did not have time to develop a new research instrument that she would possibly

reject a few weeks down the road. Even then, if I had to create my research to meet the needs of my test subjects, I would worry that my results would be biased and not representative of the population of homeschooling. Instead, I thanked her for her time and started my research over with a different approach.

This new approach has led me on a challenging and complicated journey. My focus was to identify important themes to critically analyze and discuss. At first, research was easy to find, but over time I struggled with finding articles that were empirically based. Most information I found seemed to be opinion based, had the same research study cited in two or three different articles, and lacked original research.

Although, what is research? What is considered *good* research? According to Webster's dictionary, research is a "study or investigation of facts, especially scientific, not readily available" (Morehead & Morehead, 1995, p. 570). Though, there are many types of research. Since this study is focused on education, it would be considered educational research. According to Charles (1988), educational research is the

> systematic investigation into any aspect of education. It is done to find reliable answers to questions, to discover the best ways of doing things, to establish principles that can be followed with confidence. Ultimately, the answers to these questions lead to the development of reliable guidelines. (p. 3)

It is necessary to conduct research when a question is posed that does not have a readily available answer.

Determining what is good research seems nearly impossible. Good research depends on who is evaluating the research and what is deemed good and important research to that individual. For example, research studies that are published in academic journals have often been

critically reviewed by experts in the field and are considered reputable research (Charles, 1988). Yet, some reports, which seem weak or flawed in their methodology, still make it into the journal (Pyrczak, 1999). An editor may consider this material publishable because it addresses a topic of current research that encourages further study or is better published with its weaknesses than not published at all.

This can pose problems when research is reported by the media. The public is often bombarded by research studies reported on the news, radio shows, or other television programs. According to Stanovich (1998), if the public is interested in a particular topic, the media will report the story with little scrutiny of the facts. Often, if a scientist will not prematurely comment on research findings, the reporter will seek out someone who will. Stanovich asserts that "proof, truth, evidence, logic, justification, data, and so on have absolutely nothing to do with television talk shows, which are for *entertainment,* period. For information, look elsewhere" (p.190). Thus, it is even more difficult for the public to determine what is considered good research.

Although, the public domain is very important in deciding what is good research. According to Stanovich (1998), scientific knowledge does not exist and is not accepted until is has been submitted to the scientific community to be reviewed, scrutinized, reproduced, and empirically tested. The public needs to be able to verify that the research is not due to errors or biases of the researcher and does not exist only in one particular study. Research is verified through replication studies and peer review processes. All too often, investigators bypass these steps and present their results to the media. Stanovich (1998) recommended that the general public should ask the question "have the findings been published in a recognized scientific journal that uses some type of peer review procedure?" (p. 11) to determine if the study is

legitimate. The answer to this question will help the public determine which scientific claims have been analyzed and tested.

However, according to Ling Pan (2003) and Pyrczak (1999), several guidelines should be followed when deciding what is quality research. First, identify what type of research is being conducted. There are two categories of educational research: quantitative and qualitative research (Ary, Jacobs, & Razaviech, 1996; Ling Pan). Quantitative research seeks to objectively identify the cause of change in variables through numerical and statistical expression (Ary et al.; Roberts, Priest, & Traynor, 2006). This research is conducted through experimental and nonexperimental methods and uses hypotheses to predict research outcomes (Ary et al.). Qualitative research, however, seeks to understand a phenomenon using a holistic approach of exploratory methods and results are expressed using words (Ary et al.; Ling Pan). Ethnography, case studies, and content analyses are types of qualitative research. According to Ellis (2001), there is a heated debate between researchers over which category of research is more accurate. Often, a combination of both types of research is recommended, but is dependent on the questions that are being asked (Ary et al.).

The second guideline for assessing quality research is to examine how research is conducted because that can affect the interpretation of the results. One form of research is empirical research. According to Ling Pan (2003), empirical research is "a research process in which direct, original observations are made in order to create new data or information" (p. 7). Empirical research is important in this debate because researchers often depend on their own observations as a source of truth versus relying on the resources of other experts (Ary et al., 1996). What one observes is reality and fact is more trustworthy and accurate than depending on what others have seen. Some consider this the only form of good research. However, Pyrczak

(1999) cautions that observations have many forms and "there is no perfect way to observe a given variable. Instead, an evaluator must ask: *To what extent* is the observation method used in a particular study valid and reliable for the specific research purposes posed by the researcher" (p. 3).

Third, when evaluating the quality of research, the reviewer should distinguish between research, theory, and opinion (Pyrczak, 1999). Information reported as research-based can be expressed as statistical and numerical data. It provides evidence of what the researcher(s) found. A theory, on the other hand, is a proposed explanation to a natural phenomenon (Morehead & Morehead, 1995). Theories are used in research to construe results and make connections between variables in the form of general statements (Ary et al., 1996). Finally, an opinion is a personal view or a conclusion about a certain issue (Morehead & Morehead, 1995). Researchers will occasionally incorporate the opinions of others into their studies to support their research (Pyrczak). In doing so, researchers need to cite that an opinion is being expressed to avoid confusing fact and fiction.

When assessing quality research, it is important to determine if the research is reliable and valid. Researchers Roberts, Priest, and Traynor (2006) consider reliability and validity important measures in determining the trustworthiness of research findings and explaining the accuracy of the research process. They stated "if research is to be helpful, it should avoid misleading those who use it" (p. 41). Reliability examines if the instrument used to gather data is consistent over time, situation, and examiner. It ascertains if similar results will be reproduced time after time using the same form of research. Validity, on the other hand, is a measure of whether the instrument measures what is says it will measure. If an instrument is not consistent over time and measures inaccurate information, then the research results are not reliable or valid.

Lastly, be cautious of sampling flaws and lack of reported information when evaluating research (Ling Pan, 2003; Pyrczak, 1999). It is nearly impossible to identify all members of a particular population and then obtain a random representative sample from that population. This being the case, the sample and the subsequent results will be flawed because it does not accurately depict the population that is being studied (Pyrczak). Also, there is concern that important information about research procedures may be missing from a published study. Due to limited space in academic journals, editors may only publish a brief version of the research. These articles may omit important facts such as specifics about the sample population or details about the instruments used. This lack of information may affect how readers understand and interpret research results.

Keeping these important research guidelines in mind, I have attempted to be a critical researcher and tackle the subject of homeschooling. Contained in these pages is what I learned about public education and home-based education as well as the research challenges to studying such an ambiguous group.

* * *

Approximately one million children in Wisconsin were enrolled in private, public, and home schools during the 2005-2006 school year (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction [WI DPI], 2007). Of these, 20,000 were educated in a home-based educational setting. The national average of homeschool enrollment during the same school year was estimated to have been 1.9 to 2.4 million children. It is important to note that as the national enrollment continues to increase, Wisconsin's homeschool enrollment numbers are decreasing (Ray, 2006; WI DPI, 2007).

Homeschooling is governed by each individual state, resulting in different definitions of home education. For the purposes of this study, homeschool is defined by Wisconsin law as education that is provided to a child by a parent or legal guardian (Wisconsin Legislature, n. d. b). Education usually takes place in the home, incorporating subjects such as reading, language arts, science, physical education, social studies, and mathematics (Home School Legal Defense Association [HSLDA], 2005). This type of education replaces full-time attendance at a public or private school (Lines, 1999). However, some homeschooled students will attend public or private schools part-time, enroll in virtual schools, or split lessons with other families.

According to a survey conducted in 2003 by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; 2006), approximately 72% of homeschool families live in urban settings and are concentrated in the southern portion of the United States. These families are predominately white, two-parent households, Christian, and are from the middle-class socioeconomic status (Ray, 2004; Stevens, 2001). Mothers play a predominant role in the education of the children, but the responsibility is often shared by the father. Of these parent educators, approximately 40% to 50% have attended or graduated from a post-secondary institution, but a substantial number only have a high school diploma (NCES; Ray; Stevens). Most home education lasts four to five years, but some families teach well into the high school years.

Why do families choose to homeschool? Crowson (2000) argued that families choose homeschooling to separate themselves from the state's educational system. By doing this, children will develop family values, individualism, and be provided with opportunities that the state can not offer. Having the choice to decide which school to attend has become the philosophy of the future and the driving force behind the homeschooling movement. John Taylor

Gatto, a retired New York public school teacher, argued families homeschool because public schools create

> short attention spans; a dramatic inability to spin out satisfactory lines of meaning in their own lives; a profound weakening of family bonds; an indifference to concepts of duty, loyalty, sustained commitment, principle; a substitution of law for morality; and a massive stupidity in our children. (as cited in Dobson, 1998, p. 23)

However, most families cite religion, the special needs of the child, the development of a family bond, and the educational freedom to teach what the child wants to learn as reasons for homeschooling (Hadderman, 2002; Mondloch, 2000). Additionally, the fear of violence in the schools in the form of bullying, assaults, and school shootings are also a concern for homeschooling parents.

A concern of critics about home education is the academic success achieved by the child. According to Rumberger and Palardy (2005), student test scores are used most often to measure student learning and to rate the effectiveness of public schools. Testing directly measures what and how much the student has learned, therefore reflecting the success of the school to teach and educate its students. Based on this understanding, the federal government developed the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) to hold public schools accountable for the education they provide (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). This act requires all states to measure adequate yearly progress of public schools through annual testing. If a school fails to make progress and student test scores are poor, schools will face punishment in the form of funding cuts and possible restructuring.

As an alternative, Rumberger and Palardy (2005) suggest using multiple indicators to provide a better measure of school effectiveness and student learning. Specifically, four areas

that need to be considered are student characteristics, structural characteristics, school resources, and school processes. These areas provide a comprehensive view of the relationship between school effectiveness and student learning.

Since homeschoolers do not have the same structure as public schooling, assessing their academic performance requires a different system of measurement. Rudner (1999) and researchers from the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI; 2001) have used standardized test scores, such as the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) and the Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP), to compare homeschooled and public schooled students' academic success. Homeschooled students who have volunteered to participate in testing consistently ranked higher than publicly educated students.

Homeschoolers' ACT and SAT placement test scores have also been compared to public schooled students' scores. According to Klicka (2006) and Romanowski (2006), homeschoolers ACT and SAT scores are consistently higher than public schooled students' scores, often ranking several points above the national average. Once in college, homeschooled students have been successful as well. According to Jones and Gloeckner (2004a), graduates of homeschooling had higher grade point averages (GPA) and more credits earned than graduates of traditional education.

Caution is advised when comparing public school standardized tests scores and achievement test scores to homeschooled students' scores because these tests are often created with a scope or sequence specific to public and private school education (Rudner, 1999). Homeschooled students are not required to take these tests, therefore standardized scores have not been developed for these students. Another caution should be taken into account when interpreting test data: the reviewer of the research needs to be aware of how the researcher is

applying the scores and if control variables were accounted for (Ray, 2002; Rudner). Scores are often used to compare students, but should not be used to determine superiority of one type of education over another (Rudner). Lastly, because of NCLB's specific exclusion of homeschools in mandatory standardized testing, participation in these types of tests are voluntary for homeschoolers (HSLDA, 2003; Lubienski, 2003). Homeschool families that choose to have their children participate in testing indicate the parents' interest and commitment to their student's education (Lubienski). It also signifies that the family has the time, the money, and the initiative to encourage their student to participate in testing, which may not be true or representative of all homeschooling families. Their participation can affect the reliability and validity of test outcomes because the sample is biased and cannot be generalized to the whole population (Ary et al., 1996).

Another concern with homeschooling is the socialization of the child. If the children are educated at home, how will they be properly socialized? Answering this question is not easy because socialization is hard to define. According to Medlin (2000), the definition of socialization can be broken into three parts: social activity, social influence, and social exposure. However, Wentzel and Looney's (2007) definition of socialization encompasses the domains of social competence, context, and skills. Their approach specifically addresses the school setting and the development of what can be considered appropriate socialization.

Critics believe parents want to protect their children from succumbing to societal norms or having exposure to people of diverse backgrounds because it will influence their children to rebel against them (Medlin, 2000). Further, these critics believe that parents want their children to only learn their philosophies and be influenced by those who are similar to them. Parents obviously disagree with the critics and cite that it is the schools that push children to conform to

hostile peer interactions and negative societal thinking. Medlin (2000), however, indicates in his research that homeschooled children are very well socialized because they interact with people of all ages, participate in community events and organizations, and their relationships with others are more intimate than those of public school children.

Research Points

There are several points this research addresses. They are as follows:

- Public School
    - History of education
    - Federal and State regulations
    - Academic performance
    - Socialization
- Home education
    - History of homeschooling
    - Federal and State regulations
    - Homeschool movement
    - Profile of homeschool families
    - Academic performance
    - Socialization

Definition of Terms

For this study, the following terms need to be clarified.

Conventional School. A conventional school, as defined for this study, is a public or private school that is financially funded by public money or tuition. According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (WI DPI; 2006), conventional schools are run by "an

administrative unit dedicated to and designed to impart skills and knowledge to students. A school is organized to efficiently deliver sequential instruction from one or more teachers" (¶136). Also referred to as traditional education.

Homeschool. A homeschool is a "home-based private educational program [where] educational instruction [is] provided to a child by the child's parent or guardian or by a person designated by the parent or guardian" (Wisconsin Legislature, n. d. b). This program operates within the confines of Wisconsin's private and home school laws. Also referred to as homeschooling, homeschools, home-based education, and home education (NHERI, 2003).

Parent Educator. The parent educator is the primary teacher of the homeschooled student.

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

It is assumed that there is a need for further research of homeschoolers' academic success and adequate socialization practices as compared to traditionally educated students. It is also assumed there is need for improvements in state and federal laws that govern homeschools. A limitation of this study is the lack of research available, specifically empirical data. Also, due to the endless possibilities when studying homeschooling, it is difficult to find answers to every possible question proposed. Time and space is limited in this study, therefore only several main points can be addressed.

Chapter II: Literature Review

To better understand home-based education, hereafter referred to as homeschooling, this chapter will discuss the history of public education, the development of federal and state regulations, the academic success of students enrolled in the public school system, and the process of student socialization in a public school setting. This chapter will also focus on the history of homeschooling, the formation of federal and state regulations governing homeschools, and the growth of the homeschooling movement. Finally, the chapter will conclude with the profile of homeschooling families, academic performance, and the socialization of home educated students.

Public Education

History of Education. According to Monroe (1940), when Christopher Columbus sailed the ocean in 1492 A.D. in search of new lands, education for men and women was centered on the church and understanding the natural world. Learning was not required to be conducted in schools for children, but instead took place in the church, on ships at sea, in nature, in everyday activity, or anywhere a lesson could be taught. Lessons were of practical purposes geared toward the child's future occupation and status in life. Being able to read and write was not important to the average citizen, however "literary education was the accomplishment of a gentleman, the professional equipment of a churchman" (p. 4). Those with wealth or of noble birth were educated formally with books.

Over time and with the emergence of the American Revolution, "values and institutions of the colonial social order" were challenged and caused changes in the "economic, religious, [and] cultural" ways of life (Henretta, Brownlee, Brody, & Ware, 1993, p. 163). The nation struggled with determining and establishing a republican system of government. Who would

have the most power in this new government? The wealthy and first class citizens wanted power because they felt they could make better decisions then the poor on important issues (Cremin, 1951). However, others pushed for a more liberal suffrage where all men, regardless of what class they belonged to, could voice their opinion and participate in the democratic process.

As the nation's government struggled, so did the fight over education. Prior to the American Revolution, "only the larger towns in New England were required by law to build schools. Elsewhere, education was neither free nor public" (Tyack et al., 2001, p. 20). Many schools were founded by citizens pooling their money together to hire teachers and construct buildings for classes to be held. Schools and access to education was sporadic across the country and no child was guaranteed an education.

After the American Revolution, there was a need in the country for a universal education (Monroe, 1940). Leaders such as Thomas Jefferson fought for an education that would be available to all citizens, rich and poor. To create a truly free society, education was needed to help citizens make informed decisions when voting (Wagoner, 1976). This goal was drafted in a bill by Jefferson and G. Wythe in 1779:

> ...certain forms of government are better calculated than others to protect individuals in the free exercise of their natural rights, and are at the same time themselves better guarded against degeneracy, yet experience hath shown, that even under the best forms, those entrusted with power have, in time, and by slow operations, perverted it into tyranny; and it is believed that the most effectual means of preventing this would be, to illuminate, as far as practicable, the minds of the people at large, and more especially give them knowledge of those facts...(as cited in Honeywell, 1964, p.199)

Jefferson fought a long, hard battle for public education, but it was not until the 1830s and 1840s when change became evident (Tyack et al., 2001).

Massachusetts politician and reformer, Horace Mann, proposed a system of schools that would "teach a common body of knowledge that would give each student an equal chance in life" (Tyack et al., 2001, p. 29). This common knowledge would be of the highest quality, free of charge, controlled and funded by the state, and would ultimately improve society. Not only would there be equal access to these schools, but children would desire to attend because of the superior education it would provide. This proposed system of schools would be called the "common schools" (p. 29).

Unsurprisingly, Mann's vision was met with opposition just as Jefferson's did many years before (Tyack et al., 2001). However, what was in question was the type of curriculum that would be taught (Henretta et al., 1993). Upper class citizens wanted curriculum to center on reading, the arts, and an elitist structure that directed the student towards higher education. Farmers, artisans, and laborers disagreed with this structure and wanted their tax money to support basic instruction in the "three R's: reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic'" (p. 267). Their children would not attend schools of higher education because their children would enter the work-force by the time they were 12. Therefore, they did not want to financially support schools past the elementary level.

Religion was also center stage in the argument of curriculum. Early education in America was often founded on the teachings of the King James Bible; the basis for Protestant worship (Henretta et al., 1993; Tyack et al., 2001). This angered many Catholic immigrants who argued the Protestant teachings sought to destroy the Catholic religion and created a biased and segregated school system. Catholic families should be allowed to teach their children in a way

that was conducive to their religion, in a school of their own, and using money from the common school fund (Tyack et al.). This sparked heated debates during the 1840s when leaders from other religious sects joined in the fight. Who should gain control of the money and what common curriculum should be taught? The debates resulted in the schools sifting out negative and offensive references to Catholicism in textbooks and the establishment of a privately funded system of Catholic Schools. As the nineteenth century came to a close. the "great American experiment of universal education was well under way" (p. 58).

Federal and state regulations. As education changed throughout the decades, laws were developed to govern the schools. According to the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA; 2006), the 10th Amendment of the Constitution guarantees that the federal government will not establish rules and regulations in areas that are not outlined in the Constitution. Since educational standards are not regulated by the Constitution, the responsibility of developing and maintaining education laws becomes the duty of each individual state.

The first state laws regarding compulsory education became evident during the early 1600s in the form of labor laws (Ensign, 1969). States required that children be taught a trade to be productive members of society and during this instruction or apprenticeship, it was the parent's or master's responsibility to educate the child to read and write. However, it was not until the 1800s that school attendance laws were developed which delineated age restrictions, attendance requirements, and freedom from labor while attending school. Massachusetts passed the first attendance law in 1852, but as expected, the law was met with opposition (Nemer, 2002).

During this time, Wisconsin emerged as a leader by defining compulsory attendance and child labor (Ensign, 1969). Wisconsin's first compulsory attendance law was enacted in 1897

and by the early 1900s Wisconsin had successfully defined attendance and child labor restrictions, had high rates of school attendance, and achieved quality enforcement procedures. Today, Wisconsin's compulsory school attendance law §118.15 states "any person having under their control a child who is between the ages of 6 and 18 years shall cause the child to attend school regularly" (Wisconsin Legislature, n. d. a). This requirement guarantees that each child in the state of Wisconsin will receive an education. Neighboring states such as Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, and Michigan have similar attendance laws as well.

Academic Performance. The success of any type of school is often measured by the academic performance of its students. According to Rumberger and Palardy (2005), "in both the policy and research arenas, school effectiveness is most often assessed via student test scores. Test scores provide a direct measure of student learning, which is viewed as one of the most important outcomes of schooling" (p. 4). Therefore, to compare public schools to private education, or in this case homeschooling, test scores would be a good indicator of student academic success.

However, researchers Rumberger and Palardy (2005) have found that test scores alone are not enough to accurately measure school performance. Instead, they suggest using multiple measures to obtain a more accurate depiction of school effectiveness. In their comprehensive review of the literature, they found that previous research has been guided by theoretical perspectives and conceptual frameworks. Theoretical perspectives encompass the common view, which is that the factors that affect learning determine if a student will stay in school (test scores, dropout rates and attendance), and the differentiated view that a variety of factors will impact student outcomes (social engagement, resources, and policies). These views outline the

relationship between the school and student performance and is the foundation for research on school effectiveness.

The research that supports these views can be broken down into four areas: student characteristics, structural characteristics, school resources, and school processes (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). These areas highlight the factors that impact student performance and school effectiveness. First, student characteristics refers to factors that directly effect the student, impact performance at an individual and social level, and cannot always be controlled. These factors consist of student ethnicity, gender, family structure, social economic status, and previous achievement and retention. Research demonstrates that students are impacted by these factors; however, the level of impact is inconsistent across studies.

Second, structural characteristics play a role in student academic performance and school effectiveness. These characteristics consist of school location (urban, suburban, rural), type (public or private), and school size (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). However, research remains unclear on what part of structural characteristics influences achievement: the structural characteristics themselves or the relationship of student characteristics and school resources influenced by the structural features of the school.

Third, the impact of school resources, such as fiscal and material resources (teachers and textbooks), is debatable (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). There is a consensus that teacher quality and quantity contributes to school effectiveness, but the extent to which it affects the school is undetermined. Teacher characteristics, such as credentials and experiences, are also indistinguishable. Not included in this study, however, were factors such as program reductions or eliminations due to budget cuts in cash-strapped districts and their influence on school effectiveness and student academic performance.

Lastly, school processes affect the climate that students learn in. School processes consists of decision-making practices of schools, teachers, and parents; district and school policies; democratic governance; teacher expectations, efficacy, interests, and instructional practices; course offerings; and amount of homework completed by students (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). This area of research is the most promising for understanding and increasing school performance because schools have more control over the climate they create than other factors previously mentioned.

What Rumberger and Palardy (2005) concluded in their review of literature is that an array of characteristics influence indicators of school performance (such as dropout rates and test scores), but how these characteristics influence school effectiveness is diverse. This means, "the characteristics that promote learning may not be the ones that promote lower dropout or transfer rates. As a result, schools that are effective in raising test scores may not be effective in retaining students" which is also important in student performance (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005, p. 9). Rumberger and Palardy also recommended that schools should not rely completely on test scores to indicate school and academic performance because "test scores alone are insufficient for measuring performance" (p. 26). A multifaceted approach using complimentary measures would provide a more accurate picture of school effectiveness and student academic achievement.

Also, when discussing academic performance in public schools, a review of public law is necessary. During the tumultuous time of the 1960s when the effects of the Civil Rights movement and the *Brown v. Board of Education* decisions were being felt, Francis Keppel, Commissioner of Education proposed an act that would provide financial support for educational services to local education agencies (Albuquerque Public Schools and University of New Mexico ESL/Bilingual Summer Institute [APS/UNM ELS/BL SI], n. d.; Elementary and Secondary

Education Act of 1965 [ESEA], 1966). The purpose of the act was to "strengthen and improve educational quality and educational opportunities in the Nation's elementary and secondary schools" (ESEA, p. 27). It would provide federal money to school districts for professional development of educators, for education materials and resources, and to promote parent participation (APS/UNM ELS/BL SI, n. d.). The overall goal was to provide special services to low-income and educationally deprived families (ESEA, 1966). This act would also provide money to expand programs to include preschool services.

This act became a reality on April 9, 1965 when President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA; APS/UNM ELS/BL SI, n. d.). Over the past 40 years, this law has experienced many revisions and has seen many presidencies. It has also influenced the development of vital acts such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Bilingual Education Act, and the Goals 2000: Educate America Act.

Today, the law is known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). Shortly after his inauguration in 2001, President George W. Bush proposed a revision to ESEA that required states to conduct annual tests and become more responsible for their education standards (APS/UNM ELS/BL SI, n. d.). President Bush developed this revision because he felt that children in need were still being left behind in educational services (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). On January 8, 2002, the revision became law.

NCLB is important in understanding public school students' academic success because of the standardized testing and accountability that it requires. NCLB is based on four ideologies which include more state and school district accountability, more flexibility in using federal funds, using educational practices that have been proven to be effective through scientific research, and more choices for the parent in determining which school the child should attend

(U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Under increased accountability, states are required to implement annual testing of students, develop standards in reading and mathematics, and meet annual state progress goals that require all students to reach proficiency by 2014 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). The overall goal is for schools and school districts to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward meeting these proficiency standards. Testing and progress results are broken into categories "by poverty, race, ethnicity, disability, and limited English proficiency to ensure" that no child or specific "group is left behind" (p. 1). If schools fail to make AYP, they will be subject to corrective action and possible restructuring. Also, if schools fail, parents have the choice to have their child(ren) sent to another district that is making AYP at the cost of the home school district.

However, NCLB is not without controversy. Staunch critic Gerald W. Bracey, a college professor and researcher, identifies several "absurdities" of the NCLB law (Bracey, 2004, ¶ 1). First, as mentioned earlier, all students are to be proficient in subjects of reading, math, and science by 2014 (Bracey; U.S. Department of Education, 2002). However, according to research conducted by testing expert Robert Linn, he "projected [that] it would take 61 years, 66 years, and 166 years, respectively, to get fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-graders to the proficient level in math" in that time (¶ 5). Bracey highlights that to be 100% proficient is "so irrational it is unconstitutional" (¶ 6).

Secondly, the NCLB law requires that research, specifically scientifically based research, support programs that are to be used in educational settings (Bracey, 2004). However, Bracey (2004) emphasizes there is a lack of scientifically based research that supports NCLB's mandates or supports the idea that testing will help improve schools, making this requirement seem counterintuitive. He states that the lack of research supporting NCLB is because the law depends

on punishment as a form of corrective action. According to Bracey (2004), "as schools fail to make the arbitrary AYP, the law imposes punitive, increasingly harsh sanctions. The law is in the tradition of 'the beatings will continue until morale improves'" (¶ 3).

Also, Bracey (2004) points out that the private companies that create standardized tests, that provide test preparation assistance and tutoring, and the other companies that provide additional educational services are not held to the same strict standards as the school districts. Bracey (2004) suggests

> The ironic, some might say hypocritical, aspect of the law, though, is that while public schools are held accountable for making progress or not, the law imposes no such accountability on these private companies. The test preparation and tutoring companies have no obligation to *prove* that their programs or methods actually work. No one is looking at the results of the Supplementary Educational Services. The attitude seems to be that once a service is provided by the private sector, accountability is no longer needed. (¶ 16)

This also includes the companies that administer the ACT and SAT (ACT, Inc., 2007c; CollegeBoard.com, 2007b).

Lastly, "schools alone cannot possibly accomplish what NCLB requires" (Bracey, 2004, ¶ 11). According to Zigler and Finn-Stevenson (2007), NCLB needs to address developmental issues in its laws as factors that contribute to students' educational performance to be successful. They recommend reaching children through early childhood readiness programs to prepare them for the rigors of school. Bracey supports this idea, recognizing that the academic gap begins before children attend school. Factors such as poverty and being from a low-income immigrant family have a negative effect on student academic achievement by providing less educationally

enriched opportunities to learn from before entering school (Bracey, 2004; Zigler & Finn-Stevenson, 2007).

Then again, for academic performance to be measured it is necessary to determine what tests are evaluating. What should children be taught in schools? This question is not new to the United States, dating back to the first common schools (Kliebard, 1995; Tyack et al., 2001). According to Pinar (2004), the theory behind curriculum is a complicated and symbolic concept. However, it is important to study because educators need to be aware of their role in the educational process as education changes. The concept of curriculum theory "is the interdisciplinary study of educational experience...it is a distinctive field of study, with a unique history, a complex present, an uncertain future" (p. 2).

Curriculum is an area of education that is wrought with controversy. According to Kliebard (as cited in McNergney & Herbert, 2001), the debate is because the population is heterogeneous and frequent changes in the economy make for contentious decisions in curriculum matters. Even the definition of curriculum is controversial. For some, curriculum is subject matter to be learned and is contingent on students' performance on standardized tests, but for others it encompasses everything that happens in the school setting (McNergney & Herbert). According to Pinar (2004),

> to educate the public requires us to teach academic knowledge, but configured around faculty and student interests, addressed to pressing social (including community and global) concerns. To educate the public suggests that we teach popular culture as well, not only as a pedagogical lure to engage students' interests, but, through the curriculum, to enable students to connect their lived experience with academic knowledge, to foster students' intellectual development, and students' capacities for critical thinking. (p. 21)

Curriculum has seen many changes throughout the decades. According to Kliebard (1995), several notable changes in education were during the 1800s. During 1800 to 1830, the Lancastrian system, where subjects of study were divided into standard units of instruction and work, was popular in some major cities in the United States. The McGruffy reading series and the blueback spellers were also influential during the 1800s. As technological advances in society were made, the amount of older students attending school increased as well, creating a need for a secondary education curriculum. Other curriculum developments were fueled by various education activists whose theories influenced how children should be taught. Humanism was one perspective, in which educators emphasized that children should develop their reasoning skills to be successful in life. By the turn of the century, developmentalists were active in promoting their curriculum theory. They believed that children should be taught according to the natural order of their development. Changes continued throughout the 1900s, most notably, the Kennedy Administration's push for more rigorous academic programs, the reemergence of the idea that the mind is a muscle needing to be worked, and the push toward vocationalism after the launch of the Soviet Union's Sputnik satellite in 1957 (Pinar, 2004). These are just a few theories and concepts promoted in schools over the past several decades.

Today, Pinar (2004) suggests that with the development of the Age of Information and laws such as NCLB, schools and curriculum have become "business-minded" (p. 16). Schools and teachers are losing control to politicians over what should be taught to children. According to Pinar (2004),

> in its interest in and commitment to the study of educational experience, curriculum theory is critical of contemporary school "reform." Indeed, "educational experience" seems precisely what politicians do not want, as they insist we focus on test scores, the

> "bottom line." By linking the curriculum to student performance on standardized examinations, politicians have, in effect, taken control of what is to be taught: the curriculum. Examination driven curricula demote teachers from scholars and intellectuals to technicians in service to the state. (p. 2)

Teaching and learning are undermined by political control and children's learning becomes restricted. Pinar (2004) further explains that,

> "accountability" is not about "learning," but about controlling what we teach to our children. It is about controlling the curriculum. To achieve this control—which is, finally, control of the mind—the public schools are severed from both the social and the subjective. Teachers are reduced to technicians, "managing" student productivity. The school is no longer a school, but a business. (p. 26)

Still, the question remains, what should children be taught? A recent lecture conducted Dr. Alan Block (personal communication, December 2006), proposed the idea that there is no one way to correctly teach children. If there was a way, then curriculum would not have seen as many changes through the years.

Socialization. Although the role of the school is primarily academia-focused, it does emphasize the importance of student socialization (Wentzel & Looney, 2007). However, what does socialization mean? Durkin (1999) suggests that socialization is "the process whereby people acquire the rules of behavior and the systems of beliefs and attitudes that equip a person to function effectively as a member of a particular society" (p. 614). Medlin (2000) further breaks the meaning of socialization into three parts: social activity, social influence, and social exposure. Social activity involves allowing children to interact with friends, play sports, participate in extracurricular activities, and attend various functions such as prom. This type is

concerned with having the opportunity to connect with other individuals. The second, social influence, is instructing the child to conform to societal norms. Assimilating cultural norms helps the child to blend in with society and become a respected adult. Lastly, social exposure is providing opportunities for the child to be exposed to various backgrounds, value systems, and cultural identities.

Yet, Wentzel and Looney (2007) explain the term socialization in the context of the school system instead of giving it a single definition. They believe schools offer social experiences that are similarly provided by peers, families, and the community. Due to the structure of the school, students have a less intimate and close relationship with their teachers as they do with their parents. This causes the student to be more independent and autonomous, yet more dependent on other students for social experiences and support than would be necessary in most family settings. The goals of the school system are to concentrate on a small set of abilities and skills to socialize students to be good citizens and workers. This includes being socially responsible, accountable to group goals, behaving prosocially and cooperatively, competing successfully, and exhibiting expert skills in areas of interest. To accomplish appropriate socialization, three factors must be taken into consideration: social competence, social context, and social skills.

First, a student must have social competence which is defined as "a balance between students' achievement of positive outcomes for themselves and adherence to school-specific expectations for behavior" (Wentzel & Looney, 2007, p. 383). To have social competence, a student needs to meet personal goals that result in personal satisfaction and positive mental health, at the same time, receive social acceptance and approval. The student needs to have the knowledge to set appropriate goals and accomplish them. For example, a personal goal could be

to receive approval from peers. If the peers do approve of the student, then the student would be considered competent because the social approval goal was met. However, to achieve success depends on the environment and the opportunities that it can provide to the student. Without a positive environment conducive to the student's goals, balance between personal satisfaction and social integration will not be achieved.

Social context is a factor in school socialization because it molds and shapes opportunities for personal social goals to be met (Wentzel & Looney, 2007). Social context affects social competence by providing supports and opportunities in which to develop competency. These resources and opportunities can come in the form of class sizes, teacher/student ratios, type and quality of relationships between teachers and peers, school budget, teacher characteristics, and basic school structure and policies, just to name a few. According to Wentzel and Looney, school structures can create significant differences in student socialization outcomes.

Lastly, a student's social skills are basically social goals that are accepted prosocial behaviors (Wentzel & Looney, 2007). Social skills are the goals that peers, teachers, and parents expect the student to demonstrate. Teachers and peers seek individuals who are "cooperative, conforming, cautious, responsible...[they] share, [are] helpful, responsive to rules...persistent...intrinsically interested...[and] loyal" (p. 385). If the student exhibits these characteristics, he or she is considered well socialized. Wentzel and Looney use the example that "socially accepted students tend to be highly cooperative, helpful, sociable, and self-assertive, whereas socially rejected students are less compliant, less self-assured, and less sociable and more aggressive, disruptive, and withdrawn than many of their classmates" (p. 386).

To expand on Wetzel and Looney's (2007) definition of socialization, it is necessary to address it through a multicultural lens. According to Bennett (2003), socialization is a "sociopsychological process, whereby the personality is created under the influence of educational institutions (and agents)" (p. 406). Part of the socialization process is meeting the goals of "cultural consciousness, intercultural competency, and eradication of ethnic and racial prejudice and discrimination" (Bennett, 2003, p. 406). The process of socialization is based on the individual's attitudes toward past, present, and future behaviors and how these attitudes are shaped by these experiences. It takes a multicultural education to become appropriately socialized to one's culture, to produce change amongst its members, and to obtain the skills to resolve problems that threaten a way of life and the welfare of humanity (Bennett, 2003). Koppelman & Goodhart (2008) add, a "multicultural education is based on a commitment to pluralism; its guiding purpose is to prepare students to be active participants in a diverse, democratic society" (p. 310).

A multicultural education is a way of teaching and learning based on democratic values and beliefs that creates mutual respect among cultures of diverse societies (Bennett, 2003). The goal is to have an equitable society free of racism, sexism, and classism which can be achieved through education. In the United States, equity is based on the "nation's democratic ideals [of] basic human rights, social justice, respect for alternative life choices, and equal opportunity for all" (p. 22). Providing a multicultural education will challenge issues of racism and ignorance and work to eradicate them from society. Equity begins in the classroom where students receive equal opportunities to develop to their highest potential. However, to reach their highest potential students are dependent on the knowledge of their teachers. According to Bennett (2003),

> ...the major goal of multicultural education is the development of the intellectual, social, and personal growth of all students to their highest potential, it is no different than the educational excellence goal. However, it depends upon the teacher's knowledge, attitudes, and behavior, and whether he or she provides equitable opportunities or learning, changes the monocultural curriculum, and helps all students become more multicultural (i.e., helps them develop or at least appreciate multiple systems of perceiving, evaluating, believing, and doing). This goal includes those students in monocultural classes and schools. (p. 19-20)

The process of socialization, according to Wetzel and Looney (2007), has three phases for the student to go through. First, the social context provides the opportunities that can help or hinder the development of social competency. Second, social interactions teach children about themselves and the values and norms required to be accepted members of their social worlds. They develop and exhibit their behaviors to achieve social competence. Lastly, the qualities of their relationships and social interactions will provide motivation and internalization of the goals and expectations valued by others. This will assist in determining the success of future relationships.

Home Education

History of homeschooling. During pre-revolutionary America, children were taught lessons in reading and writing while gathered around the family hearth. The hearth was the "heart of the home [and] the center of communication" (Sloane, 1972, p. 1). The lessons the children learned were usually taught by parents, tutors, and older children (Hill, 2000). Some could argue that home education began during this time. However, it was the development of compulsory attendance laws following the American Revolution that brought a shift in

educational roles from the parents to a more institutionalized setting (Nemer, 2002). This shift brought conflict and lawsuits over who should have educational control. These lawsuits span from the 1920s and continue today.

It was not until the 1960s and the writings of teacher, author, and critic, John Holt that a massive homeschooling movement began to develop (Stevens, 2001; Wade, Moore, & Bumstead, 1980). Holt's critique coincided with the civil rights movement and the Christian Right movement helping to fuel parent's decision to educate at home (Nemer, 2002). In his book, *How Children Fail,* Holt criticizes the traditional education system for extinguishing a child's natural curiosity and replacing it with fear, anxiety, and competition (Stevens). Holt believed that "nobody starts off stupid...what happens is that [our capacity for learning] is destroyed, and more than by any other one thing, by the process that we misname education" (Holt, 1964, p. 167). Instead, Holt advocated that "we should try to turn out people who love learning so much and learn so well that they will be able to learn whatever needs to be learned" (p. 177). This belief became known as "unschooling" (Moore & Moore, 1994; Stevens). Stevens described that parents and children should be "stripped of their assumption that education was instruction" and instead ask important questions and then seek the answers (p. 37). Thus, schools would become "a great smorgasbord" of intellectual ideas and activities "from which each child could take whatever he wanted, and as much as he wanted, or as little" (Holt, p. 180).

While Holt pushed for change, Dr. Raymond Moore, a college professor, and his wife Dorothy, a reading specialist, questioned the difficulty that some children have in school because of early entrance ages (Moore & Moore, 1994). They combined their efforts, and with help from federal grants, the Moores began to research full-time the effects age had on education. In the mid 1970s, the Moores published their results and found that children were entering school at too

early of an age. They stressed that the children's development and maturity level at the ages of five and six were too young for a structured environment. Instead, the children should be at home receiving guidance from their parents on free exploration where they could learn at their own pace. The Moores advised that children should be at home until they were between the ages of eight and 10 when, developmentally, they would be more receptive to structured learning. This process was nicknamed "homeschool[ing]" (p. 246).

Homeschool federal and state regulations. Soon after compulsory attendance laws were put into place in the late 19th century, homeschooling became illegal in many states (Jones & Gloeckner, 2004b). Children were to be educated in public or private school settings, ensuring the education of all students. However, by the 1960s and 1970s, parents wanted more for their children than the schools could offer. Lawsuits were issued and compulsory attendance laws slowly changed allowing home-based education regulations to be developed. In Wisconsin, some key legal cases were *Wisconsin v. Yoder* and *State v. Popanz,* which argued that the compulsory attendance laws were too vague and unconstitutional (Klicka, 2005). In 1983, when *State v. Popanz* was decided, Wisconsin became the fourth state to legalize homeschooling. By 2003, homeschooling was legal in all 50 states.

Since education is state controlled, homeschooling rules and regulations vary from state to state. For example, in Wisconsin, families are required to provide "at least 875 hours of instruction," submit a "statement of enrollment to the department of education by October 15th of each year," be "sequentially progressive in curriculum," and be "privately controlled" (HSLDA, 2005, WI-1). Minnesota is similar in that it requires a report to be filed with the state each year, but differs by requiring students to take an annual standardized test (HSLDA, 2007). It also differs from Wisconsin by requiring the home educator to meet certain requirements. If the

parent does not hold a teaching license or a bachelor's degree, the parent must be supervised by a certified Minnesota teacher and/or submit a quarterly report to the local school district demonstrating the child's achievement in each required school subject.

In further comparison, some states such as Michigan and Iowa provide homeschool families with options. In Michigan, families have two options to choose from: operate as a "home education program" or as a "nonpublic school" (HSLDA, 2007, MI-1). As a home education program, parents are required to teach certain subjects, but are not required to submit records or administer tests (HSLDA, 2007). However, as a nonpublic school the instructor needs to hold proper teacher certification, submit paperwork to the state, and maintain records of achievement. Iowa's options are similar in teacher qualifications, but requires notice of homeschooling be given to the state under both options.

Interestingly, when comparing home education laws in Rhode Island and Illinois, Illinois' only requirement for homeschool is to "generally" provide 176 days per year of instruction in subjects such as language arts, math, and health (HSLDA, 2007, IL-1). The statute, as a result from the legal case *People v. Levisien*, recognizes homeschools as private schools offering more freedom for parents in educational choice (HSLDA, 2007). Rhode Island, on the other hand, is one of three states that require parents to gain approval from local school districts to educate their children at home (Klicka, 2005). Not only do homeschools require local approval, but families generally need to maintain attendance records, submit to annual assessments, teach certain subject areas at each grade level, and attend school hours that are considerably equal to public schools (HSLDA, 2007).

This comparison of state laws was conducted to demonstrate that homeschool regulations lie on a continuum and can vary greatly between states. The states that were compared were

selected based on the types of laws they have and their proximity to the state of Wisconsin, which is the home state of this researcher and location from which this study is being conducted. The exception to this rule is the state of Rhode Island. Rhode Island was chosen because of its unique regulations and to emphasize the vast difference in state laws.

The homeschool movement. Ever since legalization, the number of homeschooling families has risen. It is estimated that nationally the homeschool population is growing 7 to 15% annually (Jones & Gloeckner, 2004b). According to Reich (2002), "home schooling is probably the fastest-growing segment of the education market" (p. 56). Although there is "growth" in the number of families choosing to homeschool (Jones & Gloeckner, 2004a, p. 17), researchers have not been able to pinpoint an accurate statistic of students choosing to homeschool. According to Hadderman (1999), research showed there were 640,000 to 958,000 estimated homeschooled students in 1999. By 2000, Hill (2000) estimated there were 1.2 million homeschooled students, if not more. Mondloch (2000) put the estimate higher at 1.5 million students. Discrepancies continued with Ray (2002) citing there were up to 2 million students in 2002 whereas Reich estimated the number only between 1 million and 2 million. However, Pearson (2002) covered all estimates citing the homeschool population was between 500,000 to 2 million students. That is a range of a million and half students. Considered the "fastest-growing" educational choice, Cooper (2007) estimated the number to be 1.35 million. Albeit, it is estimated that by 2010, there will be "approximately 3 million homeschool K-12 students living in the U.S." (Ray, 2004, p. 10).

However, in Wisconsin, the growth of families' homeschooling has not been quite as evident. During the 1984-1985 school year, 966 students were homeschooled. Twenty years later, showing a dramatic increase, 20,743 students were home educated (WI DPI, 2005). On the

other hand, home-based education has been declining since the 2002-2003 school year. Between the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 school years, enrollment declined about 1.38% (WI DPI, 2007). During the 2005-2006 school year, homeschool enrollment dramatically decreased by 2.02% and only 0.82% by the 2006-2007 school year. During this time, public school and the private school enrollment has fluctuated as well. As of the end of the 2006-2007 school year, Wisconsin had enrolled 20,157 home educated students, 876,700 public school students, and 133,419 privately educated students. In total, since 2002, homeschool rates in Wisconsin have decreased 4.22% and public school enrollment, after a short decrease in 2004, has increased 1.37%.

As mentioned earlier, the social movement of homeschooling began with reformers John Holt and Raymond and Dorothy Moore. During the 1950s and 1960s when Holt was advocating unschooling, the homeschool movement began as a liberal alternative to public education (Lines, 2000). Public schools were considered too conservative; therefore parents pursued a more freethinking view of education. When the Moores published their views on education and recommended homeschooling in the 1970s, a strong Christian following developed (Moore & Moore, 1994). The homeschool movement was supposed to be for a progressive pedagogy, but the domination of conservative Christians involved in homeschooling reflected a shift towards a more religious expression of education (Carper, 2000; Reich, 2002).

As the movement gathered steam, further criticism of public education was fueled by a government study published in the 1980s titled *A Nation at Risk* (Mondloch, 2000). The study exposed startling problems in the United States public education system, specifically identifying academic failures among a large number of students (Mondloch; Zigler & Finn-Stevenson, 2007). This criticism combined with the Christian Right produced a time where homeschool

families educated their children according to their "ideological, conservative, [and] religious" views (as cited in Reich, 2002).

> Today, families of all types are involved in homeschooling. According to Lines (2000), both the left and right wings of homeschooling are active...and many families have both philosophical and religious reasons for their choice. Joining them are many homeschoolers who simply seek the highest quality of education for their child, which they believe public and even private schools can no longer provide. (p. 74)

Profile of homeschool families. The central key to homeschooling is the family unit. Homeschool families are usually stereotyped as white, middle-class, strict Christian conservatives who want to battle societal norms. Although a majority of homeschool families are Caucasian and Christian, a wide variety of families from diverse backgrounds choose to educate their children at home. According to Ray (2004), 95% of homeschool families are made up of two parent households and have a typical annual income of $25,000-$49,000. The mother is most likely to be the primary educator for the children, but fathers do engage in teaching as well. A majority of the homeschooling parents have attended college and approximately half have earned an undergraduate degree or higher, but a considerable number only have a high school education.

As required by Wisconsin law, children are taught reading, writing, math, and science, but lessons are often supplemented with religious studies (Ray, 2004). Curriculum can be purchased at homeschool stores or on-line, obtained from other homeschooling families, or designed by the teachers (Hill, 2000; Mondloch, 2000; Pearson, 2002; Reich, 2002). Having the ability to choose the curriculum allows for flexibility in what the child learns, but also leaves room for "volunteer community work, political internships, travel, missionary excursions, animal

husbandry, gardening, and national competitions" (Ray, p. 6). Homeschooling allows the child to use creativity, freedom for self-paced learning, and a choice in what he or she is learning about.

However the homeschool environment is structured, one key element is a constant: the focus is on the child. According to Lubienski (2000), parents make a decision to forfeit time, energy, and money to provide their children with the best education. Lubienski also recognized "the willingness to make such a sacrifice or investment [comes] from the decision to focus one's attention on one's own child" (p. 209).

According to Lange and Liu (as cited in Hadderman, 2002), there are five main reasons parents choose to homeschool: "educational philosophy, a child's special needs, school climate, family lifestyle/parenting philosophy, and religion and ethics" (p. 1). In regards to education, parents often feel that conventional schools rule by authority, not allowing for creativity and flexibility (Medlin, 2000). Approximately 68% of homeschooling parents are dissatisfied with conventional school education standards and believe that they can provide a better education at home (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2006). Having control over their child's education and what is learned is a concern for homeschooling parents.

School climate is another major reason parents homeschool. According to the NCES (2006), 31% of surveyed parents listed environment of school as their primary concern. Parents worry about hostile peer interactions in the form of bullying, peer pressure, and physical and sexual assaults (Mondloch, 2000). School shootings have also become a concern for parents. In 1999, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, students at Columbine High School in Jefferson County, Colorado, went on a shooting rampage at school (Wikipedia, n. d.). They killed 12 students and a teacher and wounded 24 others, before taking their own lives. After the tragedy, interest in homeschooling soared (Associated Press, 1999). The state's largest homeschool organization,

Christian Home Educators of Colorado (CHEC), received 400 inquiries in one month's time compared to their usual 60. Subsequently, homeschooling increased 10% in Colorado, according to Golden (as cited in Luecke, 2001). More recently, in 2005, tragedy struck Minnesota's Red Lake High School where a 17-year-old gunman killed nine people and wounded 15 others (DeRusha, 2005). It is too soon to tell how this tragedy will affect Minnesota's and Wisconsin's homeschool population.

However, the most cited reasons for parents to educate their children at home are for religious, moral, and ethical purposes. Approximately 72% of homeschooling parents reported they homeschool to provide religious education and instill moral values (NCES, 2006). Parents want to provide positive experiences for their children by building self-esteem, encouraging appropriate socialization with peers, and fostering healthy relationships with family and friends (Medlin, 2000).

Academic performance. With the development of NCLB, public education has moved towards monitoring and ensuring student progress in demonstrated competencies rather than be concerned on how these competencies are obtained (Pearson, 2002). Therefore, research supports the effectiveness of a customized homeschool education by focusing on how much a child learns rather than on how a teacher provides instruction.

Some research studies suggest that homeschool students outperform their public and private school peers in many educational areas at all grade levels (Jones & Gloeckner, 2004a; Rudner, 1999). According to Rudner, homeschool students scored extremely high on the standardized Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) and the Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP) with scores ranking in the 70^{th} to 80^{th} percentile with the national average at the 50^{th} percentile. The National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI; 2001) reports the scores

are higher ranking at or above the 80th percentile in all areas of standardized achievement tests. High test scores are consistent across studies, states, and countries (NHERI, 2001; Qaqish, 2007; Ray, 2004). Other research studies also suggest that test scores were not significantly impacted by race, socioeconomic status, or education level of parents (Mondloch, 2000; Pearson, 2002; Ray, 2004). Achievement scores between homeschool students varied by the amount of money spent on education, family income, parent's level of education, and the amount of television watched daily (Rudner).

However, caution is advised when using achievement test data (Rudner, 1999). First, standardized achievement tests are not mandated and participation is these studies are voluntary making it "difficult to measure the total homeschooling academic effort" (Pearson, 2002, p. 6). According to the HSLDA (2003), NCLB specifically excludes all homeschool students from participating in any state assessment. Standardized tests are often created with a scope or sequence that is consistent with public and private school education (Rudner, 1999). However, because of the flexibility of the homeschool environment, students do not always follow the same sequence, thus test results can vary. Also, national norms are developed and controlled by the scores of public school students and influences test result interpretations as well (Qaqish, 2007).

A second caution in determining test results are what are the scores intended for and how will they be used. Results may be used to compare homeschool students to public or private schooled students, but does not determine if one education is superior to the other (Rudner, 1999). Due to research limitations and the lack of control for background variables, studies regarding achievement cannot be cited as evidence against public school education and do not indicate that students will perform better if they are homeschooled (Ray, 2002; Rudner, 1999).

What they do show, however, is that homeschool students are succeeding academically in their educational setting.

Although homeschool students are not required to take state standardized tests, they often take the ACT or SAT placement tests for admission into college. Nationwide, the amount of homeschoolers who are taking such placement tests has tripled from 410 students in the year 2000 to 1,282 in 2005 (Zehr, 2006). This is out of the approximately 2 million total students who take the ACT and approximately 1.4 million total students who take the SAT each year (ACT, Inc., 2007c, CollegeBoard.com, 2006). Homeschoolers only represent a small fraction of students who take placement tests; therefore accurate comparisons cannot be made.

The ACT and SAT are assessments that predict success in higher education (Ray, 2004). The ACT has a top score of 36 and is a curriculum-based assessment measuring knowledge in subject areas of math, reading, English, science, and an optional test in writing (ACT, Inc., 2007b). The SAT measures critical thinking and problem-solving skills and is broken into three sections: reading, math, and writing (CollegeBoard.com, 2007b). Each section of the SAT reports its scores in a range of 200-800 with a total score range of 600-2400. Students can also take optional subject tests in history/social sciences, English, foreign language, math, and science.

Some research studies suggest that homeschool students are as successful, if not more successful, then traditionally educated students on placement tests such as the ACT and SAT. Klicka (2006) reported that in 1996 homeschoolers scored an average of 22.5 in English, 19.2 in math, 24.1 in reading, and 21.9 in science compared to the national averages of 20.3, 20.2, 21.3, and 21.1 respectively. According to Romanowski (2006), the following year homeschool students were above the national average ACT score again. Act, Inc (2007a) and Klicka reported

that in 1997, 1,926 homeschooled students took the ACT and scored an average 22.5 compared to the 959,301 students nationally who averaged a score of 21. The year 1998 yielded similar results with 2,610 homeschoolers scoring an average score of 22.8, slightly above the national average of 21.0. This national average was from a total of 995,039 students who took the ACT in 1998. Above average scores have remained consistent over time; by 2004, 7,858 homeschoolers who took the ACT scored an average of 22.6 which is higher than the 1.1 million students nationally who scored a 20.9 average (ACT, Inc., 2007a; Klicka).

Homeschool students were just as successful when taking the SAT. According to Klicka (2006), in 1999, 2,219 students who took the SAT reported they were homeschool students and together they scored an average of 1083 which was a 67 point difference from the national average of 1016. CollegeBoard.com (2007a) reported, in 1999, approximately 1.3 million students took the SAT. Homeschooled students continued to have higher scores then the national average throughout the next several years. For example, an informal analysis conducted by Mason (2004) reflects similar above average scores at Ball State University, Indiana, where he worked as an admission professional. In 2004 when his article was published, he reported that homeschoolers at Ball State University had an above average SAT score of 1210 and ACT score of 29. Homeschool students also did better academically with a collective GPA of 3.47 compared to the general student population's 2.91. In a study on first-year college performance between homeschool and traditional school graduates, Jones and Gloeckner (2004a) found similar results. The researchers analyzed first-year college students at universities in Colorado and found that homeschool graduates had higher average GPAs, more credits earned, and higher ACT scores then traditional high school graduates.

A critical researcher would warrant caution too when comparing ACT and SAT results. Since the ACT and SAT are considered college entry tests, only those students who desire to attend college are advised to take the tests (ACT, Inc., 2007b). Only those students whose families have the money and the incentive to encourage their students to partake in the test will (Lubienski, 2003). Also, not all students taking standardized admissions tests will identify they are homeschooled, which can skew results. For example, in Qaqish's (2007) study, contact was made with ACT, Inc., the company who developed and administers the ACT, to obtain a sample of homeschool students test scores. According to Qaqish (2007), homeschooled students were identified for this study "if they indicated on their application form to take the test that they were homeschooled" (p. 2). Also not included in the information provided by ACT, Inc. was the length of time each student was homeschooled. These factors could play a significant role when considering research findings because important background characteristics were not controlled in this particular study (Lubienski). Homeschooled students are educated in a variety of ways and often differ from a traditionally educated student, making it difficult to compare the two.

Socialization. A common concern when discussing homeschooling is the socialization of the child. Critics believe that home educated children are isolated from the real world, producing social misfits (Romanowski, 2006). Parents, on the other hand, believe their children are well socialized because they are involved in many activities outside of the home. However, as discussed previously, socialization can have many definitions and is multi-faceted.

Since socialization is taught to homeschooled students by their parents, the fear is the children will only be exposed to their parents' philosophies (Medlin, 2000). Critics feel these philosophies will shelter children from reality, cause problems in getting along with others, become difficult for them to be a part of a democratic society, and brain-wash them to think only

one way (Medlin, 2000; Medlin, 2007). A survey conducted by Mayberry, Knowles, Ray, and Marlow (1995), found that 92% of public school superintendents in their study believed that homeschooled students were not receiving enough appropriate socialization experiences. Some superintendents interviewed believed it was because homeschoolers did not want outside influence in their lives and parents wanted to keep their children ignorant to the external world. Many homeschool parents would disagree with the superintendents because they believe that "conventional schools are rigid and authoritarian institutions where passive conformity is rewarded, where peer interactions are too often hostile or derisive or manipulative" (Medlin, 2000, p. 109).

However it is viewed, research suggests that homeschooled students are indeed well socialized (Medlin, 2000). There are currently three points of view that research is often conducted from: the parent's perspective, objective observers, or from the children themselves (Medlin, 2007). A study conducted from the parents' perspective by Medlin (1998, as cited in Medlin 2000) found that homeschooled students had diverse social interactions. Parents reported homeschooled children regularly interacted with adults outside the family, with children attending traditional schools, with individuals from multicultural and religious backgrounds, and with the elderly. Students' relationships with adults, the elderly, and traditionally educated students were rated as being close, whereas relationships with people from multicultural backgrounds were considered to be only somewhat close.

Research conducted by objective observers yielded similar results. Shyers (1992) matched homeschooled students with traditionally schooled students and used trained observers to evaluate their behaviors. In his study, Shyers (1992) defined socialization as a child who knows the social skills that should be performed, who feels comfortable and is able to

demonstrate those skills, and who can acceptably execute the skills for his or her peers. Participants in the study were given rating skills to determine their level of self-concept and social knowledge. Trained observers were given videotapes of children interacting and used the Direct Observation Form (DOF) of the Child Behavior Checklist to rate their behaviors. This blind study found homeschoolers had lower scores for problem behaviors than traditionally educated peers. Homeschool students in this study tended to be "quiet, nonaggressive, and noncompetitive" whereas traditionally educated students tended to be "more aggressive, loud, and competitive" (p.5). Results to this study were based on the rating scales and the observations that were made, but unfortunately Shyers did not ask the student participants their perception about their interactions with each other. Instead, Shyers used Bandura's argument to explain these research results citing that children imitate behaviors they see most often. Since traditionally schooled students spend more time with their peers and only a few adults, the students' behavior reflects this by being more loud and aggressive like their peers. Homeschooled students spend a majority of their time with their parents and few children, therefore their behaviors reflect a more adult-like reserved role. The results of this research support the belief that homeschooled children have adequate social skills.

From the children's perspective, researcher Chatham-Carpenter (1994, as cited in Medlin, 2000) conducted a study which asked homeschool and public school students to keep track of their interactions with others. Over a one month period, the students wrote down who they talked with, the duration of the interaction, what was discussed, the nature of the relationship (closeness) and how receptive and understanding they thought each person was on their list. Results indicated that public school students met with more people, but their interactions were with mostly peers. Homeschooled students met with less people, but had more variety in their

interactions, including younger children and older adults. Both groups rated their interactions with those on their list as receptive and understanding, but public school students rated their relationships as closer and would be willing to share inner feelings or seek advice with the contacts on their list.

Similarly, in a study conducted by Medlin (2007) homeschooled students were asked to evaluate their own social skills by completing a social skills rating scale. Medlin found that homeschooled students consistently rated their social skills higher than those of public school students. Significant differences and higher scores were more evident in the female population and for older children.

As mentioned earlier, socialization also involves a multicultural perspective. According Koppelman and Goodhart (2008), "the purpose of multicultural education is to prepare children and youth to be active, positive participants in a diverse, democratic society" (p.326). The question becomes, how do homeschool families work to meet the goal of an equitable society and achieve the nation's democratic ideals?

According to Ray's (2004) research, homeschooled students are effective democratic citizens. In his study, Ray surveyed 7,306 adults who had been previously homeschooled to learn about their current involvement in society and compared their responses to those of the general public. Unfortunately, this particular study was not a full report and Ray did not identify the number of respondents who had been publicly educated. To obtain the full report requires purchasing it from the National Home Education Research Institute. Ray (2004) reported that 98% of homeschooled adults read a book in the past six months whereas only 69% of the general population had. However, only 61% of homeschooled adults read a newspaper at least once a week compared to 82% of the general public. Interestingly, when asked to rate the statement

"politics and government are too complicated to understand," about 4% of homeschooled adults agreed with the statement whereas about 35% of adults from the general public agreed (p. 9). Regrettably, Ray's study did not identify the number of respondents who were asked these questions; therefore making comparisons between the groups may be inaccurate. Overall, Ray indicates in his study that the homeschooled adults felt positive about their past experiences with homeschooling, were involved in their community, stayed active in current affairs, were attending college at a "higher rate than the national average, [were] tolerant of others expressing their viewpoints, [and] religiously active, but wide-ranging in their worldview beliefs, holding worldwide beliefs similar to those of their parents, and largely home-educating their own children" (p. 9).

Reich (2002) suggests that homeschooling customizes children's education and insulates their exposure "to diverse ideas and people and thereby to shield them from the vibrancy of a pluralistic democracy" (p. 56). Reich compares homeschooling to consumerism in that parents pick only the best and what type of education their child receives. Education is a product that is meant to satisfy the needs of the customer. Since some families see their child's education as solely under their control, parents "feel entitled to purchase" the type of educational environment they want their child to experience (p. 58). It is also Reich's viewpoint that citizenship means being respectful of other individuals' beliefs, values, and faith, even if it contradicts with one's own. Although opinions may clash, each citizen is considered an equal and students must learn how to interact, relate, and associate in society with individuals who are different from themselves. Since traditional education is a way to achieve goals of equity and respect, homeschoolers are less likely to be exposed to broad democratic views of thinking and more likely to have limited diverse experiences.

Chapter III: Discussion

Along my thesis journey I learned a great deal about public education and homeschooling. I have also learned a great deal about myself. I have spent countless hours sifting through pages and pages of research looking for the one thing that will answer all of my questions, but to no avail. I have found myself left with more questions then what I started with.

Throughout my journey, when I told family, friends, acquaintances, (anybody really), about the research I was working on, I always received their opinion on homeschooling or on public education. A lengthy discussion ensued of fact swapping, information sharing, relaying of tidbits we have heard, and the end result was new questions to consider and ideas to pursue. When the people I spoke with asked me certain questions or pointed out an idea I had not thought of yet, my mind started to race. I sat down at my desk, reread my research and looked to incorporate this new idea into my paper. However, it became too much. I often sat blankly staring at my computer monitor as if I was lost, but inside, my mind was a whir of activity unsure of where to start. I fear during my research process I have opened a Pandora 's Box that is heaped full of endless questions and possibilities, unleashing a flurry of information without much control.

After all of this time and energy spent talking, listening, writing, questioning, reading and rereading again, I am still left with the questions I started with: What is research? Why is this study important? How will this research effect the guidance counseling profession? Are homeschooled and public schooled students receiving an adequate education that shapes them to be productive citizens? Is one type of education better than the other?

In this final chapter I attempt to answer theses questions, and others, and offer suggestions for future research.

* * *

This chapter will discuss the research conducted on homeschooling and draw conclusions in areas of homeschool regulation and the academics and socialization of homeschooled students. These conclusions will be compared and contrasted with public education.

History

According to Monroe (1940), when Christopher Columbus arrived in what is now America, education was religiously based to teach men and women about the world. Lessons were taught on how to navigate the world, to obtain a particular status in life, and to gain a particular occupation. As the United States developed and revolutionized, so did education. During the 1830s and 1840s, a system of common schools was established in which all children could equally receive a quality education for free (Tyack et al., 2001). However, a debate over what should be taught ensued.

According to Henretta et al. (1993), affluent citizens wanted education to consist of reading, classical history, and philosophy so an aspiring student could be on track to attend higher education. Farmers and laborers wanted a basic education that could prepare their children for a life of manual work. Religion, also controversial, took center stage in the debate during the 1840s regarding which religion was best and which should be taught in schools (Tyack et al., 2001). This led to the development of a privately funded national system of Catholic private schools during the 1850s. Homeschooling has its place in these debates as well. Pegged as a social movement starting in the 1950s and 1960s, parents advocated and won the right to teach their children at home (Reich, 2002; Stevens, 2001). This movement in education can be credited to the research and writings of advocates John Holt, and Dr. Raymond and Dorothy Moore

(Moore & Moore, 1994). Without their influence, homeschooling may not be as prominent as it is today.

Federal and State Regulations

Due to the 10th Amendment of the Constitution, each individual state has the responsibility to regulate education (HSLDA, 2006). The first education laws were labor laws and compulsory school attendance regulations (Ensign, 1969). These laws required children to attend school regularly and be instructed in a trade to become industrious members of society.

However, compulsory attendance laws made homeschooling illegal in numerous states (Jones & Gloeckner, 2004b). With the help of several keys lawsuits, such as *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, parents won the right to homeschooling (Klicka, 2005). Slowly, education laws changed and by 2003, all 50 states had legalized homeschooling.

The laws that govern homeschooling vary widely from state to state (Mondloch, 2001). Some states, such as Wisconsin, require parents to register or declare to the state that their child will be homeschooled whereas other states do not require any type of registration, such as in Illinois (HSLDA, 2005; 2007). Similar differences are evident in parent educator qualifications. The state of Minnesota requires a parent to have a teaching license, a bachelor's degree, or be supervised by a certified teacher, while Wisconsin has no specific required qualifications.

Academics

According to Rumberger and Palardy (2005), test scores are a way to directly measure how students and schools are performing. The United States government has put into place laws that require testing to ensure that public schools are providing quality education. The NCLB specifically requires states to conduct annual tests, if they want to receive federal education funds, to ensure that all students are reaching academic proficiency by the year 2014 (U.S.

Department of Education, 2004). Since homeschooled students are specifically excluded from NCLB and from the same regulations as public school students, how can homeschooled students' academic performance be accurately compared to public school students if they are not held to the same standard? According to Ling Pan (2003) and Pyrczak (1999) they should not be compared because research variables cannot be controlled and a true representative sample cannot be obtained.

However, Rumberger and Palardy (2005) also suggest that test scores alone are not accurate enough to depict a school and its students' performance. Instead, several factors need to be considered in determining outcome, such as resources, school procedures, characteristics of the school, and students, but these factors are often overlooked. These elements were not specifically addressed in research conducted by Jones and Gloeckner (2004a), Mason (2004), Qaqish (2007), and Ray (2004).

Unfortunately, often the only research available on homeschoolers' academic success is in the form of test score comparisons. Some research studies suggest homeschooled students are just as academically successful as publicly educated students. According to Klicka (2006), homeschooled students score consistently higher on tests such as the ACT and the SAT than public school students do. Similar results were found when comparing students using standardized achievement tests. Rudner (1999) found homeschooled students ranked in the top percentile of basic skills, proficiency, and achievement tests. These high scores were consistent in studies conducted by Qaqish (2007), Ray (2004), and the National Homes Education Research Institute (NHERI; 2001).

When discussing academic performance, it is necessary to understand the curriculum theory of education. According to Kliebard (1995), curriculum has seen many changes through

the decades. Some curriculum theories focused on providing lessons that coincide with the development of the child. Others focused on developing a child's reasoning skills to be successful in life while other theories moved education towards a more vocational focus (Kliebard, 1995; Pinar, 2004). However, Pinar (2004) cautions that education has taken on a business mindset which could be detrimental to children's learning and teachers' control over curriculum. Unfortunately, the question about what ideology should be taught in school still continues.

Socialization

Are homeschoolers adequately socialized? This is a question commonly asked of the homeschool population, but is often difficult for researchers to answer (Ray, 2004; Romanowski, 2006). The answer to this question is yes, according to some research studies, yet no, due to the lack of a common definition of socialization. Another way to answer this question is to address issues of multicultural respect and the maintenance of democratic ideals.

According to Medlin (2000, 2007), research on socialization is conducted from several different viewpoints and can be conducted in several different ways with a variety of definitions. Some research examines the type, quality, and the number of interactions homeschooled students have (Medlin, 2000). Other studies look at specific social skills such as "friendly," "helpful," and "trustworthy" to determine socialization (p.114). Still others use rating scales to define socialization and compare scores to national norms to determine if homeschooled students are adequately socialized. Parent reports are a common method as well, along with student self-reports of social behaviors, self-esteem, and self-concept. In spite of this, each study has observed that homeschooled children are well socialized. Medlin concluded:

> Although there are still far too many unanswered questions about home schooling and socialization, some preliminary conclusions can be stated. Home-schooled children are taking part in the daily routines of their communities. They are certainly not isolated; in fact, they associate with - and feel close to - all sorts of people. (p. 119)

Then again, what happens when homeschooled students become adults? Are they still considered well socialized and are they active participants in the nation's democratic ideals? According the Ray (2004), they are. Dr. Brian D. Ray is the president of the National Home Education Research Institute and has been "researching the homeschool movement for almost 20 years and is internationally known for his work" (p. 5). He has published several studies on what homeschooled students who have reached adulthood. Ray's most recent study in 2004 was considered the largest in the nation with 7,306 homeschooled participants. In this study, he concluded that homeschooled adults were active in community events, involved in service projects, and civically engaged. Essentially, homeschooled adults are active participants in the Unites States' democratic beliefs and values.

Unfortunately, Ray's research brings to light more questions. First, to review this research article a subscription to his organization is required as well as paying $9.95 plus shipping and handling for the article itself. To date, this is the only way this critical researcher has been able to gain access to some of his work. Is his research considered good if he is publishing the articles to make money? Is his research unbiased and does he approach his topics with a neutral opinion, especially since all eight of his children were homeschooled? Since he is the founder, president, and editor of the NHERI and its journal, the *Home School Researcher,* can Ray truly remain neutral and critical of his own research that the organization publishes? Is his work considered peer reviewed, replicable, and systematically empirical? Although Ray does

publish some of his minor work in academic and peer reviewed journals, such as the *Journal of College Admission* and *Peabody Journal of Education*, can this be construed as free advertising for his national organization?

Another question regarding Ray's research pertains to homeschoolers' interactions with other adults. Ray (2004) found that homeschooled adults were involved in their communities, had a variety of "worldview beliefs," held beliefs similar to their parents, and were "tolerant of others expressing their viewpoints" (p. 9). Despite this, do other non-homeschooled adults feel homeschooled adults were well socialized as children? Are traditionally educated adults comfortable interacting with homeschooled adults? Do homeschooled adults continue to have positive interactions with their peers and do they interact with individuals of other cultures and ethnicities? This critical researcher has had trouble finding research that could answer these questions.

Similar questions and topics have been posed for research that have addressed socialization of homeschooled children. A commonly cited study conducted by Shyers (1992) defined a well adjusted child as someone who has knowledge of the social skill to be performed, who feels comfortable performing the skill, and who performs it appropriately as to be accepted by those around him or her. This study used rating scales to determine social knowledge and self-concepts of the participants and used objective observers to rate the interactions of the homeschooled students with the traditionally educated students. Shyers found that "home school children are socially well adjusted" (p. 7). It was Shyers' use of trained objective observers which has made his research stand out above the rest. Unfortunately, Shyers failed to address how the traditionally educated students perceived their interaction with the homeschooled students. Did these students feel that the homeschooled students appropriately performed skills

in an acceptable manner? Did traditionally educated students accept the homeschooled students? It would be interesting to see if the answers to these questions would change the outcome of his study as well as Ray's study.

Limitations

Several important limitations are evident in this study and worth mentioning here. The United States is a vast country making it hard to compare and contrast. Each individual state interprets federal law and creates its own rules and regulations from these interpretations. This creates considerable differences between states and education laws. This lack of uniformity is difficult to research and to make accurate generalities to the populations being studied.

An overwhelming limitation to this study is the research that is available for review. There is a lack of empirical research, of reproducible work, limited access of some studies, a few irresponsible conclusions, an abundance of opinion articles, and several studies limited to one person's point of view. To explain, the homeschool research world is dominated by one researcher, Dr. Brian D. Ray. As mentioned earlier, Ray has been conducting research for 20 years and is the founder and president of the organization NHERI, which "specializes" in conducting homeschool research. His work is cited in almost every published article on homeschooling and Ray is considered a "leading international expert with regard to homeschool research," and he "speaks to the public, testifies before legislators, and serves as an expert witness in courts" (NHERI, 2007, ¶ 4). However, to gain access to this "expert's" research a subscription to his organization (approximately $59.00) is required as well as paying additional charges for access to his large-group studies. This lack of accessibility is troublesome because it questions the authenticity of his research. According to Stanovich (1998), true scientific knowledge is public; it "does not exist solely in the mind of a particular individual. In an

important sense, scientific knowledge does not exist at all until it has been submitted to the scientific community for criticism and empirical testing by others" (p. 10). If research is not easily accessed, it cannot undergo scrutiny and review by the scientific community.

Another concern is the replication quality of Ray's, and other investigators, research studies. According to Stanovich (1998), for research to be of scientific knowledge, the results must be presented to the scientific community in a way that it can be reproduced and similar results can be obtained. The ability for reproduction guarantees that a particular finding was not due to errors or the biases of the researcher. Stanovich states

> ...for a finding to be accepted by the scientific community, it must be possible for someone other than the original investigator to duplicate it. When a finding is presented in this way, it becomes public. It is no longer the sole possession of the original researcher; it is instead available for other investigators to extend, criticize, or apply in their own ways. (p. 10)

The limited access to Ray's research makes it difficult to obtain enough information to reproduce his work. Other researchers' work is also limited due to some journals' editing procedures before publishing. Important details are often removed due to space limitations in the journal. The loss of information means the work is not replicable.

The lack of empirical research is troublesome as well. As stated in the first chapter, empirical research relies on direct observations to test original ideas or theories (Ling Pan, 2003). This observable data is meant to reveal facts about the nature of the world (Stanovich, 1998). Unfortunately, research on homeschooling is often a regurgitation of other researchers' ideas. There is lack of published studies that directly measure student performance in a homeschool or

traditional education setting. Regrettably, the empirical research that is conducted is frequently used to make irresponsible comparisons.

The amount of opinion papers or persuasive articles published is another limitation in this study. A portion of homeschool research is opinion based rather than factually oriented. According to the *Harbrace College Handbook* (Hodges, Horner, Webb, & Miller, 1998), persuasive writing is "intended chiefly to change the reader's opinions or attitudes or to arouse the reader to action" (p. G-38). Position papers are written from one point of view and only use facts or data in their articles to support their own agenda. Therefore, they are not scientific or considered good research. Some articles are obvious, such as Lubienski (2003) who states in the beginning of his article that his position is "largely theoretical" and is a "range of perspectives" on homeschooling (p. 168). Unfortunately, many articles are not as obvious.

The most disconcerting limitation is the problem of converging evidence. According to Stanovich (1998), converging evidence "tells us to examine the pattern of flaws running through the research literature because the nature of this pattern can either support or undermine the conclusions that we wish to draw" (p. 121). When all experiments are similarly flawed, confidence in the results is lost because that specific flaw is evident in all of the experiments. As mentioned earlier, the research conducted by Ray is questionable. Since his research is used and cited in a majority, if not all homeschool studies, it can be concluded that these studies are questionable or flawed as well. Thus, homeschooling research falls under this principle of converging evidence. Consequently, because Ray and other flawed research articles were used in this particular study, it too is flawed and subject to the converging evidence rule.

Finally, time, space, and resources were limited in conducting this research allowing only a few main points to be addressed. Due to the lack of time, this researcher was unable to address

other areas and groups of homeschooling, such as virtual schools, part-time public school enrollment, students who attended both traditional schools and homeschools throughout their academic career, and groups, such as the Amish and Mennonites. Studying these groups would provide a spectrum of homeschool possibilities including new legal obstacles, more academic evaluations, and social experiences to question and understand. Studying homeschooling raises a plethora of questions, making it difficult to find answers to each and every one of them in a short amount of time.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Several factors can be concluded about this review of literature and several areas need consideration. First, although the research on homeschooling is questionable, it can be concluded that some homeschoolers are successful within their own educational setting. Families who have the time, money, and commitment to devote to their child's educational needs can be successful in a homeschooling environment.

Second, it also can be concluded that new and improved research is needed. As recognized in the limitations section, more original and unbiased research needs to be done. Research articles consisting of empirically based data is difficult to find, but would be useful in understanding the homeschool population. It would also provide in-depth knowledge into the homeschool population that otherwise could not be obtained.

Third, since homeschoolers are not required to participate in the same educational standards as publicly educated students, it is irresponsible to compare the two groups. Homeschoolers who partake in academic research study surveys or assessment tests are voluntary participants. These students are usually the best and the brightest of the group and have the time and initiative to partake in these tests. However, their survey or assessment results are

often compared to publicly educated students who are mandated to participate in testing. The public school sample consists of all students including those who have disabilities, have English as their second language, and come from various backgrounds. Every student from the brightest student to the student who struggles gets included in the research. Therefore, it is recommended that because the two populations are not similar, they should not be compared. Until all homeschoolers are required to comply with all testing requirements, it is negligent to conduct a comparison of the groups.

Lastly, there is a need for more uniform laws between states. It is recommended that state laws become more consistent to provide a better understanding of the homeschool population. Consistency would allow states, and their homeschool populations, to be more easily compared. It would provide a more accurate picture of what, why, and how families are teaching their children. Plus, it could distinguish a precise number of the families who are choosing to homeschool.

* * *

As my journey comes to an end, I feel like I am right back where I started from. I am standing on the brink of knowledge, continuing to look for new homeschooling research to expand my horizons with, and hopeful that in the end I will find the answers I have been looking for.

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