

A MIXED METHODS NESTED ANALYSIS OF
HOMESCHOOLING STYLES, INSTRUCTIONAL
PRACTICES, AND READING METHODOLOGIES

by

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Abstract

Today there is a growing concern for the academic, social, and spiritual state of the public school system in America. In many communities throughout the United States, public schools are no longer meeting the needs of its members. Parents and caregivers across the nation are seeking ways to restructure education, and provide new opportunities for their children. Among the alternative educational options, homeschooling seems to be at the forefront. The research pertaining to this educational phenomenon is growing in depth and breadth. However, there are still areas that need considerable attention. This mixed methods nested analysis will address what influences parental choice of homeschooling style, teaching style, and reading methods and curriculum choices. It is hypothesized that certain family characteristics influence a parent's choice of homeschooling style, teaching style, and reading method or curriculum choice.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my dad. This one is for the both of us!

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While there are many people to thank, there is only one who knows that without him, none of this would have been possible. To my husband, Dr. McKeon, I cannot express what your support, love, and friendship have meant to me over these last 4 years. Thank you so much! You are my heart. To my sons, Brian Jr., Josiah, Gabriel, and Kaleb your patience with me has gone far and above what any parent should ask of a child. I thank you all! To my dad, what can I say? You are why I was able to finish this work and why I know that what I accomplished was worth every tear I shed. To my mom, thank you for keeping me grounded and for always speaking just the right words to help me move forward. To my brother and his wife, I thank you for all the long weekends you put up with my family so I could work. To my sister, Kristen, thank you for your encouragement and friendship throughout this process. I wish you success in your journey. To Kathy Garnas, I am so grateful for the friendship and honesty you have provided me with during this journey. I will never forget my trip to Colorado to share in your joy. To Kate Green, in you I found someone who shares so many of my passions, and a truly fabulous mentor. Thank you! I also want to thank the other members of my committee Dr. Snyder and Dr. Lessner, you both provided me with great insight and wisdom, and I will never forget your contributions to my education. To Dr. Gene Sprechini, I thank you for your help in completing and understanding the statistical components of this study. Finally, to all the parents who homeschool, keep true to your dreams for your children. I thank you for having the courage and strength to follow your passion and for your participation in molding the next generation of men and women of our communities.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Issue

Parental Choice

Today there is a growing concern for the academic, social, and spiritual state of the public school system in America. This concern reverberates loudly from President Bush, as outlined in the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)*, to single parents who may work two or three jobs to educate their children in a private school. The NCLB act (Public law 107-110) is the federal government's attempt to reform a system that appears to be failing many communities throughout the United States. "The purpose of this title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments" (P. L. 107-110, 2002). Many public schools are no longer meeting the needs of its community members. John Gatto (2002), former New York City teacher states:

School takes our children away from any possibility of an active role in community life- in fact, it destroys communities by relegating the training of children to the hands of certified experts- and doing so it ensures our children cannot grow up fully human. (p. 13)

Furthermore, Gatto suggests there is a national, public curriculum founded on seven principles: confusion, class position, indifference, emotional and intellectual dependency, conditional self-esteem, and surveillance. Many parents and caregivers across the nation are seeking ways to ameliorate this national curriculum, and provide new educational opportunities

for their children. Some of the current choices available to parents include private schools, charter schools, e-schools, learning communities, and homeschooling.

Among the alternative educational options, homeschooling seems to be at the forefront. Somerville (2003) theorizes that homeschooling has become one of the most flourishing educational reform movements in America. This is indicated by the fact that homeschooling involves a larger population than charter schools and voucher school systems combined (Bauman, 2001).

As homeschooling continues to increase in participants across the country, so too does the research pertaining to this growing phenomenon. The present research includes: why parents school at home, their demographics, the achievements of the students in both the academic and social spectrums of education, and how parents are approaching the issue of “instructing” their children within the home (Ray 1990, 1994, 1997; Richman, Girtten, & Snyder, 1990; Rudner, 1999).

Growing Numbers

Homeschooling continues to escalate 10 to 15% a year (Cai, Y., Reeve, J., & Robinson, D.T., 2002). Bashman (2001), Ray, (2002), and Rudner (1999) reported between 1.2 and 2 million students, which constitute roughly 5% of the school-age population. However, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2004) reported 1,096,000 homeschooled children in 2003, an estimated one-quarter million increase over earlier projections. Homeschooling is noticeably on the rise as indicated by its 15 % increase nationwide in the last seven years (NCES, 2004; Ray, 2002).

Parents as Change Agents

Today, the scores of parents electing to homeschool undoubtedly suggests that this group has begun to inquire about and to assess the public school's ability to develop the social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions of their children. Furthermore, the rise in alternative forms of education indicates that many members of society have reservations about the transmission approach to learning as well as the national curriculum described by Gatto, which has been established by the institution of public schooling. John P. Miller defines the transmission approach to learning as inducting children into the established values, beliefs, and accepted knowledge of the existing society or community by having them absorb, memorize, or master external data (as cited in Miller, 2000). This form of learning is further refined as educational policy "expressed in standards, state-mandated textbooks, high stakes testing, and relentless control over teaching and learning" (p. 203).

Some educational institutions have begun to recognize that young people are individuals and therefore require a more sensitive approach to learning known as a transactional approach. R. Miller (2000) summarizes this approach as students, along with a teacher, constructing knowledge as they experience it. Proponents of these ideas included John Dewey and Jean Piaget, commonly referred to as humanists. However, in this model the teacher, while not an authoritarian, still plays a large role in students' learning by engaging them in dialogue, questioning, and being a mentor (Miller, 2000).

When individuals start to question the status quo of an established institution, it is clear that new alternatives begin to arise. Park (1993) posits, "Society evolves as a continual process of transformation in which people collectively inquire, evaluate, and take action to change their

life circumstance” (p 35.). R. Miller (2000) would reason that parents who choose alternative forms of education seek something more from education. R. Miller concludes education that is transformational in its approach to developing the entire individual is essential for the next generation of students to become fully participating citizens.

Essentially, this approach [holistic education or transformation] sees human development within social and cultural, as well as ecological and spiritual, contexts. To educate a human being is not merely to make her or him a knowledgeable, productive member of society (transmission), or an active, engaged citizen (transaction), but also to help each person discover the deeper meaning of his or her life (Miller, 2000, p. 203).

In the United States of America, homeschooling appears to be an action taken by certain parents to change the educational circumstances of their children. Many of these parents have decided to re-invent the learning process by addressing the identified needs of their children academically, socially, physically, and spiritually within a cultural context. In every state across the nation and within nearly all ethnicities and belief systems (Lyman, 2000), the homeschooling movement continues to shed light on how students learn in an individualized fashion and not in an institutionalized environment. Ron Miller (2000) further suggests that a society cannot sustain itself when forced to work, learn, and play in such institutionalized ways as the public school system. It is not in the nature of man to thrive in such a controlled and contrived setting.

Background of the Study

Though once thought of as alternative education for the Caucasian, middle-class and religious communities, now many minority populations are using homeschooling as a preferred method of educating their children (Cloud & Morse, 2001; Jonsson, 2003). Romanowski (2001) states, “One of the most fascinating facts of this educational movement is that today’s homeschooling families represent a diverse sampling of the American population” (p. 79). It is

estimated that 75 % of home school educators are conservative Christians who stress its Scriptures and its values. The remaining 25% are ideologically liberal and include families with various belief and value systems (Cai et al., 2002). One of the fastest growing groups of homeschoolers in America is made up of those that practice the Muslim faith. There is even a national website dedicated to the efforts of the Muslim homeschooling family (Byfield, 2001). Somerville (2003) believes no other reform movement has had the impact that homeschooling has had on the educational system in America. Isabel Lyman (2000) believes homeschooling stands as one of the most significant educational developments of the century.

According to the professional body of research, the positive influences of homeschooling surpass those of the classroom environment (Bashman, 2001; Cloud & Morse, 2001; Rudner, 1999). Parents prefer homeschooling for a variety of reasons. One of the reasons listed by parents for homeschooling their children is the desire to strengthen the quality of their relationship with them (Romanowski, 2001). Romanowski further suggests “home schooling enables families to build tight bonds amid a society where the family institution is falling apart” (p.80). Other reasons for homeschooling include: exposure of children to multi-aged, positive social models; deep moral and ethical character development; the ability to design curriculum, assessment, instruction, and an environment that is customized to a child’s specific needs; protection from violence, drugs, alcohol, psychological abuse, and ill-timed sexuality; and the ability of children to accomplish significant academic achievements as well as becoming effective democratic citizens (Ray, 2002; Romanowski, 2001; Somerville, 2003).

Homeschool Academic Achievement

Homeschooling appears to be successful across multiple dimensions (physical, emotional, and intellectual) according to standard means of measurement. A study done by Lawrence Rudner in 1998 showed that academically, homeschoolers were doing as well as, if not better than their public school counterparts on nationally normed standardized achievement test (1999). The average SAT score for a homeschooler in 2000 was 1100 compared with 1019 for the average public school student (Cloud & Morse, 2001). Concurrently, the US Department of Education has also stipulated that over the last 15 years homeschoolers have consistently scored above average on major standardized tests as well as college entrance exams. “Almost one-quarter (24.5 percent) of home schooled students perform one or more grades *above* their age-level peers in public *and* private schools” (Bashman, 2001, p. 12). The statistics seem to indicate, regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status, that homeschoolers are making the grade academically (Rudner, 1999).

Homeschool Social Achievement

Larry Shyers’s (1992) dissertation dispelled the notion that homeschoolers lag behind their peers in the social arena. His study found no real differences between homeschooled and public schooled students in self concept and assertiveness as measured by a social development test. However, he did find that homeschoolers appeared to be better behaved and had higher self-esteem than public schooled children. A second study done by Knowles and Muchmore (1995) of the University of Michigan found that adults who were homeschooled as children emerge as content, hard-working adults with a strong sense of right and wrong. Finally, observations of over 1500 homeschoolers by Professor A. Bruce Arai (1999) of Wilfrid Laurier University in

Canada suggest that homeschoolers make conscientious citizens. Arai found a high number of homeschoolers participate in various volunteer work and activities outside of the home (Lyman, 2000).

Importance of Teaching Reading

A predominant number of educators within the academic community believe that teaching reading is fundamental to the success of students (Bafile, 2005; Osborne & Lehr, 1998). The importance of teaching reading skills has always been at the forefront of the academic agenda of schools. Most recently, Congress itself highlighted its importance. In 1997, Congress appointed a panel of 14 leading reading experts to address this issue in the public schools and how teaching reading is being accomplished. The panel produced its report in 2000 titled *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction-Reports of the Subgroups*.

Learning to read is an essential element throughout the primary and secondary years that eventually opens up opportunities such as college acceptance, a military career, and/or learning a trade to provide future success for students. Reading allows students to participate in various academic endeavors, to experience other cultures, and it assists them in developing their own ideas and beliefs (Gadsden, 1998). Ekwall and Shanker (1988) point out “an alarming percentage of individuals who do not succeed in our society-individuals that are unemployed, on welfare, or incarcerated-cannot read” (p. 4). The current research on homeschooling provides minimal insight into the world of homeschool literacy and the individualized methods parents utilize to teach reading.

Little is known about how homeschooling parents view literacy, the ways they construct definitions of literacy, their ability to understand their children's literate behaviors, the literacies they value most, and the value they assign to literacy in general. Standardized assessments indicate that homeschoolers are able to read as evidenced by their above average scoring.

In this study, the issues to be addressed are whether certain family characteristics of homeschooling parents influences their homeschooling philosophies, their instructional practices, and reading curricula choices; additionally, there may be foreseeable benefits to the traditional educational community from the literacy success of homeschooled students.

Importance of Individualized Curricula

Richard Allington (2001) surmises that because virtually all known programs, methods, and materials have accumulated some evidence that they work, it is not necessarily the program, materials, and methods used to teach reading that make successful readers. He suggests that because children differ in their needs and interest, finding the program that meets the student's needs and interests is what makes children successful at acquiring reading skills. The homeschooling movement has established a strong preference for individualized learning, which many parents credit for the success of its students.

Just as important as the individualized methods parents are using to teach their children to read in the homeschool is the issue of choosing an appropriate individualized curriculum to enhance early reading skills and to provide competencies toward more advanced reading skills. According to the Home School Legal Defense Association (1999), homeschooling parents select a wide variety of curriculum and deliver the instructional content in an individualized manner. Sergiovanni (1987) suggests that curriculum is a complex component that must be considered

carefully within the learning process. Stone (1999) proposes that curriculum and instructional practices are determinants of successful outcomes in the classroom.

Critics of public schooling assert that inadequate curriculum choices together with low expectations are at the root of the poor personal achievement throughout public schooling (Riley, 1993). In addition, a curriculum must support the culture of its students. Today's public school curriculum does not support the culture of many families who are interested in curriculum which defines the destiny of the individual as an individual within his or her cultural setting, not as a member of a group, institutionalized or otherwise. Many educators, like Ivan Illich, believe that institutionalized curriculum is a fatal barrier to personal fulfillment both socially and academically (Reid, 1992). Illich believed the development of curriculum should be delegated to small groups outside of the institutions, because he warned, the interest of institutions inevitably work against the interests of society (Illich, 1971; Reid, 1992). The homeschooling movement is such a small group and the understanding of curriculum from the perspective of those within the group is essential to harnessing its benefits.

Statement of the Issue

Homeschooling is growing across ethnicities. Within various ethnicities, there is a range of philosophical reasons for the style of homeschool a parent chooses to operate. Researchers need to illuminate the very fabric of the homeschooling process and the diverse backgrounds of parents who choose homeschooling. At present, there is very little research regarding what influences the style of homeschool a parent operates. Furthermore, there is minimal research regarding the instructional practices of homeschooling parents and what may influence the methods parents choose to instruct their children. Most important is the care and concern with

which parents subscribe to certain curricula. Research needs to detail how parents choose reading curriculum and what ultimately influences their choices. Therefore, what needs to be known is what influences homeschooling styles, instructional practices, and the reading curriculum choices chosen by homeschooling parents to develop literacy in their children.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine what influences parental choice of homeschooling style, instructional practices, and reading curriculum in the homeschool. This study was specifically designed to address the following:

1. To determine if particular geographic locations within the United States influence the style of homeschool operated by a parent, the instructional practices implemented by a homeschooling parent, and the reading curriculum choices used to develop literacy skills in the homeschool.
2. To determine if the ethnic identity of a homeschooling family influences the style of homeschool operated by a parent, the instructional practices implemented by a homeschooling parent, and the reading curriculum choices used to develop literacy skills in the homeschool.
3. To determine if religion influences the style of homeschool operated by a parent, the instructional practices implemented by a homeschooling parent, and the reading curriculum choices used to develop literacy skills in the homeschool.
4. To determine if the style of homeschool a parent engages in influences the type of instructional practices a parent uses and the type of reading program he/she uses to teach initial reading skills in the homeschool.

Rationale

A homeschool is a unique blend of the individuals who live and learn within its setting. Each one embodies the beliefs and culture of the individuals as well as their community. Understanding how the beliefs and culture of a family and the community in which they live, influence their choices is essential to comprehending the homeschool phenomenon. Furthermore, since homeschooling encompasses educating a child, it is important to understand how that education is influenced by such factors. Literacy skills are required for all academic subjects. Historically, compared with their counterparts in public schools, homeschoolers have performed as well as or better on standardized assessments of reading (Frost, 1988; Ray, 1997; Rudner, 1999; Wartes, 1991). The literacy practices of American homeschoolers offer potential insights and understandings for the traditional educational community regarding literacy. Furthermore, this study purposes to address the larger question of how literacy education functions when it is embedded within a compatible cultural context such as the homeschool.

Research Questions

This research study was designed to provide answers to the questions, defined as primary and secondary in nature.

The primary question of this research study was:

1. Do certain family characteristics influence the style of homeschool operated by a parent, the instructional practices (teaching style) employed in the homeschool, and the choice of reading curriculum used to teach literacy in the homeschool?

If they indeed do, then the following secondary questions are of significance:

2. To what extent are the style of homeschool operated by a parent, the instructional practices employed in the homeschool, and the choice of reading curriculum used to teach literacy in the homeschool influenced by:
 - a) Ethnicity
 - b) Religion
 - c) Geographic location
3. To what extent does a parent's homeschooling style influence the type of teacher they are and/or the type of reading curriculum they use in the homeschool?

According to Yates and Ortiz (1995),

Each social group holds certain important cultural values and beliefs that children consciously or unconsciously learn. The result of such socialization is the transmission of language and cultural traits that are manifested in particular behavior and distinctive ways of perceiving the environment (in Podemski, Marsh II, Smith, & Price, 1995, p. 138).

A family's ethnicity, religion, and the community in which they reside certainly help to define a family's culture. Therefore, these aspects need to be illuminated within the context of the homeschool to establish their role in defining the homeschooling style, the instructional practices, and the curriculum choices of the parents within this alternative educational choice.

Significance of the Study

The educational alternative known as homeschooling is affecting more and more children in the United States and throughout the world. Therefore, it is imperative that researchers begin to inquire into the educational practices of homeschooling families. The purpose of this study is to understand if style of homeschool, reading curriculum choices and instructional practices can be generalizable to the homeschooling community through identifiable characteristics.

Furthermore, knowledge concerning homeschooling and its educational practices may be beneficial to traditional public school classroom teachers.

The larger implication of this study may be that ethnic identity, and/or the religion of a homeschooling family are able to predict the style of homeschool operated by homeschooling parents, the type of reading curricula and instructional practices utilized by identified homeschooling styles in certain geographical areas with the United States. Furthermore, the type of homeschool a parent runs may predict the kind of teacher they will be and the type of reading curriculum they use to teach reading in the homeschool.

Additionally, the results of this study may support the efforts of homeschooling parents in the areas of instructional practices and reading curricula choices. It may be useful to publishing companies because they may find certain curricula more acceptable in certain geographic locations or with certain styles of homeschools. This study may clarify the types of curricula families prefer, or the opposite may occur; perhaps however, there are no generalizable implications for what type of curriculum homeschooling families with various dynamics prefer.

Definitions of Terms

For the purposes of this study, special terminology is defined as:

Homeschooling. The education of school-aged children under general parental monitoring, replacing full time attendance at a traditional campus school.

Instructional Practice

The following terminology defines the type of instructional practices identified in this study:

Formal/Authoritative. This is a teacher-centered approach with the teacher feeling that he/she is responsible for providing and controlling the flow of the content and the student is expected to receive the content (Shaw, 1995).

Demonstration. This is a teacher-centered approach with an emphasis on demonstration and modeling. The teacher acts as role model by demonstrating skills and process, and then as a coach helps students develop and apply these skills and knowledge (Shaw, 1995).

Facilitation. This approach is student-centered with a focus on activities. There is a great deal of responsibility placed on the student to take the initiative for meeting the demands of various learning tasks (Shaw, 1995).

Delegation. This approach is student-centered. The teacher is not an authority or a mentor. Learning springs from the learner; the teacher is merely a resource for the learner (Shaw, 1995).

Reading Curriculum Choices

The following terminology defines the type of reading curriculum choices utilized by homeschooling parents to teach reading:

Linguistic approach. A system referred to as decoding skills, which emphasizes use of word families. The stories the students read are limited to words taught previously and sometimes seem nonsensical (McCormick, 1988).

Skills-based approach. A system in that teaches reading by stressing phonics skills that are taught in isolation with the expectation that once sound-letter relationships are learned, meaning will follow. Emphasis is placed on intensive phonics instruction that is sequential (McCormick, 1988).

Language experience approach. A system that teaches reading instruction based on activities and stories developed from the personal experiences of the learner. The stories about personal experiences are written down by a teacher and read together until the learner associates the written form of the word with the spoken word (McCormick, 1988).

Balanced literacy approach. A system that teaches reading using an explicit, systematic instruction in phonics and exposure to rich literature, both fiction and non-fiction (McCormick, 1988).

The following terminologies are the most utilized pedagogical forms of homeschools engaged in by today's families:

Traditional. This style is also known as the "boxed curriculum" and is the most common type of approach to homeschooling. This style is the traditional, pre-packaged curriculum shipped ready for use (Reference.com, 2000a).

Unschooling. This style can be defined as one that focuses upon the choices made by the individual learner. Those choices can vary according to learning style and personality type of each student (Unschooling.com, 2005).

Eclectic. This style is more relaxed or laid back type of homeschool. Parents use a mixed combination of boxed curriculum, homemade curriculum, and/or individualized curriculum. They can operate as borderline unschooling or borderline school-at-home, or anywhere in between and be considered eclectic. Relaxed homeschoolers have many options available to them for homeschooling (Electronic reference, 2000a).

Classical. The core of Classical Education is the *trivium*, a teaching model that seeks to tailor the subject matter to a child's cognitive development. The *trivium* emphasizes concrete

thinking and memorization of the facts of the subjects in grade school; analytical thinking and understanding of the subjects in middle school; and abstract thinking and articulation of the subjects in high school (Reference.com, 2000b).

Assumptions

Initially, it should be understood that the researcher herself is a homeschooling parent of four elementary aged school students and may present some unrecognized biases because of her close relationship to the topic in this research study. The researcher employs an eclectic pedagogy in her homeschool. With regard to instructional practices, the researcher employs a facilitative approach and uses a variety of curriculum choices depending on the expressed needs of her children.

Original data involved in the study were gathered based on the results of an online survey taken by homeschooling parents nationwide who were listed on identified homeschooling e-mail list servers, and/or where referred by an individual who already took the survey. It was assumed that parents completed the surveys in ways that reflect the actual curriculum utilized and the instructional practices families predominantly implemented to teach reading in their homeschool.

Limitations/Delimitations

Due to the very nature of the homeschooling community, certain limitations were inherent in this research study project. The study was also limited by the fact that it was conducted solely online and only those having access to the Internet were included.

1. This study is limited to those individuals who participate in or have contact with the identified e-mail list serves.

2. Only volunteers were included in the sample, therefore the self-selection process may bias the sample.
3. The present study represents only recently homeschooled children, and therefore cannot necessarily speak to past or future homeschooled children.
4. The present study looks at religion in general not at the level of religiosity within a particular family.
5. Lastly, only students who were exclusively homeschooled were included, so parental instruction practices and curriculum choices of partially homeschooled students were not addressed.

Organization of the Study

For many, the appeal of homeschooling is the ability to personalize the learning process of a school-aged child's educational years at home. The homeschooling movement is growing without question, and so too is the research. However, there are still many facets of homeschooling that are unclear both inside and outside the homeschool movement, facets that, if better understood, could ultimately support the education of students in many academic settings. This study serves to shed light on some of those areas.

This study is composed of six chapters. The first chapter introduces the issue at hand. The remaining five chapters are organized as follows. Chapter 2 contains an extensive literature review related to homeschooling, the success of homeschooling both academic and social, the cultural links to literacy, and the impact of instructional practices and curriculum choices on reading attainment. The method used to conduct the research is discussed in chapter 3. The fourth chapter contains the presentation and analysis of the quantitative data, along with the

results of the tested hypotheses. Chapter 5 addresses the research questions through qualitative analysis of the interviews and chat sessions along with a discussion of how the qualitative analysis (SNA) supports or rejects the quantitative analysis (LNA). Finally, Chapter 6 presents a discussion and summary of the findings in addition to conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

With the increasing use of the educational alternative known as homeschooling, it is essential to understand how this form of education has re-emerged in the American system of education. This chapter will look at the current literature on what is education and why parents seek alternative forms of education. Furthermore, it will look at the historical foundations of alternative education, specifically, the alternative form of education known as homeschooling. It will review the reasons why parents homeschool, the progress of the movement, and the research in the field.

As literacy education is the essential component to continued success in academia, this chapter will further look at literacy education and the cultural link to literacy. It will also look at the current research regarding literacy education in the homeschool. Finally, it will address the literature pertaining to the curriculum in the homeschool.

Public Education

The most interpretive question is “Why?”...Why were public schools established?... Were public schools established to ensure that all citizens would be able to protect their political and economic rights? Were public schools established to protect the power of an elite by controlling the economic and political ideas taught to students?... Were public schools necessary to ensure the education of the whole population? (Spring, 2005, p.1)

Many historians question the motives behind the creation of public schools, but the more important question is how should young citizens be educated? Since the beginning of time, a culture has transmitted its knowledge to succeeding generations in one way or another. In

America, we have used 'education' as our means of passing on our knowledge to the next generation. Even a look at early colonial education in New England reveals the important social function of education. The government of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries utilized education to maintain authority and to proselytize religion (Spring, 2005). Consequently, the purpose of educating individuals to read and write was to ensure they could obey the laws of God and the state (Spring, 2005).

What is Education?

What is education and should it be dictated like a recipe for baking a cake? There is always someone or a group of individuals in each generation who question the current *status quo*. Over the years, many philosophers and educationists have questioned formal systems of education. Two schools of thought sit on opposite ends of a continuum when it comes to what education actually encompasses. The traditional side says education is composed of bodies of information and of skills that have been worked out in the past, and therefore must be transmitted to the next generation from without (e.g. schools) (Dewey, 1997). The progressive end of the continuum says that education is transformational, development from within a person depending on natural endowments (Dewey, 1997).

Traditionalists generally support obligation from above while progressive educators believe in expression and cultivation of the individual (Dewey, 1997). Traditionalists support external discipline whereas progressivism supports free activity and self-regulation (Dewey, 1997). Most traditionalists rely on learning through texts and teachers by way of isolated skills and techniques driven by drill, but the progressive view of education says that learning happens through experiences and the acquisition of skills comes as interest arises in an area of appeal

(Dewey, 1997). With these two ideologies at polar ends of the spectrum, there is considerable opportunity for theories and philosophies that fit on transitional points along this continuum. Most views of alternative education fall at various points along this continuum.

Simply put, education is the imparting of opinions, abilities, and doctrines. What really needs to be addressed is how individuals should acquire those skills and whose opinions, abilities, and doctrines they should be? The famous author Mark Twain cautioned, “never let school interfere with your education” (as cited in Reference.com, 2005a). Twain’s words illustrate the distinction between school and education. Attending school does not guarantee an individual an education.

The Latin origin of the word *education* (*educare*), meaning a “*leading out*” or “*leading forth*” (Reference.com, 2005a), may imply developing innate abilities, as the progressive view of education suggests, and expanding ones perspectives, as the traditionalists maintain.

Historical Foundations of Alternative Education

The history of formal education in America aligns most closely with the traditionalist’s ideology of education. With the introduction of compulsory education in the late nineteenth century the traditionalist movement increased in popularity until alternative forms of education where not only rubbed out, but were illegal in most parts of the country. As America entered the new century, so did the ideas of John Dewey. In 1902, he addressed educators gathered at the annual convention of the National Education Association (NEA). Dewey put forth the idea that school should be “an agency providing social services and a community center that would solve the problem of alienation in an urban industrial society” (as cited in Spring, 2005, p. 207). Dewey later in his life became discouraged with public schools because he believed they were

artificially set apart from society and eventually believed it was the most difficult place to experience life. However, he did not necessarily advocate alternative forms of education such as homeschooling, instead he hoped that schools could imitate the ideal home environment (Lines, 2000). He believed in the power the collective and envisioned a school where people's ideas and beliefs came together to create an interdependent society (Lines, 2000; Spring, 2005).

Historical Review of the Homeschooling Movement

The educational alternative known now as “homeschooling” has existed for centuries in various forms. The “education” of children has long been left to the discretion of their parents or caregivers. During early colonial America, the role of the family was multifold: social and vocational skills were taught, religious and moral instruction were instilled, and parents directed and developed a child's education in conjunction with a variety of community supports as they deemed necessary (Spring, 2005). Nevertheless, in the 1870s, solely educating a child at home vanished with the establishment of compulsory school attendance, and prevalent teacher training within institutionalized venues (Bashman, 2001; Cai, et al., 2002).

The inception of obligatory education changed the position of many Americans about informal education and home instruction (Knowles, 1989). According to Spring (2005), the intended goals of a formal public school education in the early 20th Century were not only Americanization of immigrant families, but to remove many qualities in the lower classes that the educational reformist believed to be detrimental. Furthermore, a paradigm shift occurred in the purpose of schools when John Dewey suggested at the National Education Association in 1902 that schools become “social centers” capable of bridging gaps between diverse peoples and

their ideas and beliefs (Spring, 2005). With these goals and a new purpose, leaving education to the family became outdated and did not meet the needs of a growing and changing America.

Even though the use of homeschooling declined in the general population after the 1870s, it continued in restricted fashion in rural areas and amongst highly religious groups (Bashman, 2001). However, it was not until the 1960s that it began to receive new awareness (Bashman, 2001) when an educator named John Holt advocated “unschooling” as an alternative to public schools (Cloud & Morse, 2001). Holt, a liberal educational reformist disenchanted with the public school system, began experimenting with alternative forms of education. For the most part, society regarded Holt’s alternatives to public schooling as a mutinous educational action carried out as a declaration against the general good (Bashman, 2001; Knowles, 1989). In 1967, the term “homeschooling” surfaced to depict this underground phenomenon supported by parents who preferred to home instruct their children (Somerville, 2003).

From the early 1900s, homeschooling was a felony in the majority of the United States. The Judicial system routinely prosecuted parents for homeschooling their children under truancy laws despite the fact that in the 1920s the Supreme Court acknowledged educational freedom as a constitutional right of parents (Somerville, 2003). Homeschooling remained criminal in many states through most of the 1980s and some of the 1990s with the state of Michigan being the last to adopt homeschooling as a viable form of education in 1996 (Bashman, 2001; Somerville, 2003).

Although the majority of states considered homeschooling illegal, Indiana and Illinois had long permitted homeschoolers to function under the private school laws of those states, because they had concluded that a school was a place where children were educated (Somerville,

2003). One of the first states to decriminalize homeschooling after that was New Jersey in 1967, when the courts determined that homeschooling satisfied the states obligation that children be given lessons equivalent to that of public school students in similar grades (Somerville, 2003). As time went on, many states followed suit. However, three states continued to prosecute homeschoolers on a regular basis into the late 1980s and mid 1990s: North Dakota, Iowa and Michigan. Michigan was the last state in 1996, to allow any parent to teach their child at home (Somerville, 2003). Historically, each state set its on regulations regarding homeschooling, from relatively high regulations like those in New York State to low regulations like those in the state of New Jersey (Somerville, 2003).

As political actors, homeschooling parents are typically more vigorous than public school parents are in political campaigns; they actively participate in protests and boycotts, sign petitions, and write numerous of letters to their political representatives (Somerville, 2003). Their lobby is so effectual that on September 14, 1999, the Senate declared the week of September 19 –25, 1999, National Home Education Week (Bashman, 2001; BrightWord Creations [BWC], 1999). Through the work of the Homeschoolers Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), created in 1983 by Michael Farris and J. Michael Smith, homeschoolers have made a momentous impact in the legislative arena. Today many states have either eradicated or drastically abridged the restrictions and regulations vis-à-vis homeschoolers (Bashman, 2001; Somerville, 2003). Numerous states are now sponsoring programs aimed at supporting homeschoolers. California and Texas are forging the way by allowing homeschooled students to sign up to take various classes at their local public school (Cloud & Morse, 2001). In the fall of 2005, the governor of Pennsylvania signed into law a measure that now allows homeschooled

children to participate in all extra-curricular activities at their local public school (Raffaele, 2005).

Growing numbers. Homeschooling continues to escalate 10 to 15% a year (Cai et al., 2002) with present numbers estimated to be between 1.2 and 2 million students, which is roughly 5% of the school age population (Bashman, 2001; Ray, 2002; Rudner, 1999). Today, the scores of parents electing to homeschool undoubtedly suggests that this group has begun to inquire about and assess the effectiveness of the public school system to educate their children.

Homeschooling is on the rise.

Re-emergence. Homeschooling essentially reemerged in the 1960s as a pedagogical mutiny against public schools (Bashman, 2001). John Holt and others who advocated alternative methods of educating children did so based on the pedagogical conviction in a child's inner capacity to channel his or her own life in a style that is both personally satisfying and socially constructive (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). However, in the last two decades, parents with a different agenda have championed the homeschooling cause. These parents claim to be seeking more ideological explanations for their return to a more family-centered, parentally controlled education.

Ideologists and Pedagogists

Van Galen (1988) first separated homeschoolers into two major camps: ideologists and pedagogists. The ideologist's rationales for homeschooling often include exposure of the children to multi-aged, positive social models; deep moral and ethical character development; protection from violence, drugs and alcohol, psychological abuse, and ill-timed exposure to sexuality (Van Galen, 1988). Those alleging a pedagogical justification list the ability to design

curriculum, instruction, and environment customized to a child's specific needs and the ability of children to accomplish academically more than they would in the public schools, in addition to producing effective democratic citizens as their *raison d'être* for homeschooling (Ray, 2002; Romanowski, 2001; Somerville, 2003).

Pedagogists. Homeschoolers of the 60s were considered pedagogists who believed that schools were over run by bureaucrats and regulations; today pedagogists are not necessarily critics of what schools teach, but they believe that schools are inept at teaching their children. Van Galen (1988, 1991) asserts that while pedagogists are diverse in many aspects of their lives, they strongly respect their child's intellect and creativity. Furthermore, pedagogists believe that children learn best when pedagogy explores a child's innate desire to learn. These parents bend towards some form of "unschooling" or creative homeschooling, which allows the child to fulfill his or her human potential rather than to educate for the next step on the educational ladder of academic progression (Rivero, 2002). They utilize instructional practices such as digressive learning and immersion learning. These parents use the homeschooling experience to help the child answer personally relevant questions and to solve real life situations rather than master subject matter (Rivero, 2002).

Ideologists. The ideological approach to homeschooling stems from right wing conservative Christian organizations that arose in the late 1970s and early 1980s against the liberal agenda of the public school. Ideological parents cite their strong belief in specific values and ideologies together with the skills they want taught, as reasons why they have removed their children from the public schools (Van Galen, 1988). Van Galen (1988) states that these parents want their children to learn fundamentalist religious tenets and have a conservative political and

social viewpoint that places family at the center of society and strongly emphasizes individual freedoms.

Philosophical Approaches to Homeschooling

Whether parents homeschool for ideological or pedagogical reasons, they possess a philosophical framework from which they develop the components of their homeschool. Having a philosophical perspective from which to answer such questions as “What is the meaning and purpose of education?” “Why, and how, do teachers educate people?” “What difference does education make for individuals and for society?” becomes necessary for every individual who intends to impart knowledge to or direct the education of another individual. Over the centuries many educational philosophies have emerged to explain how teachers establish what they believe is true or false, good or evil, right or wrong, beautiful or ugly. Four educational philosophies closely reflect the four major homeschooling styles of the 21st Century.

Essentialism. According to Gutek (2004), “Essentialism asserts that certain basic ideas, skills, and bodies of knowledge are essential to human culture and civilization... Essentialists are convinced that these basics are indispensable, necessary to, and fundamental in education...” (p. 263). These ideas are closely linked to the traditional approach to education supported by certain groups of homeschoolers today. Parents choosing this educational philosophy are grounded in a conservative philosophy that accepts the social, political, and economic makeup of American culture.

Traditionalists tend to build or purchase a foundational curriculum that includes the common disciplines of math, natural science, history, foreign language, and literature. In general students are required to master a body of information and basic techniques, gradually moving

from the less to more complex skills and detailed knowledge as they progress in school (Shaw, 1995). The intended goals for students of an essentialists (traditional) education include possessing not only basic skills and an extensive body of knowledge, but also disciplined, practical minds, capable of applying schoolhouse lessons in the real world (Shaw, 1995).

Perennialism. Gutek (2004) describes perennialism “as an educational theory that proclaims that people possess and share a common nature that defines them as human beings... which is grounded in rationality and is the same at all times and in all places” (p. 279). Furthermore, the possession of a common shared rationality allows individuals to search for and find universal truth and live their lives based on those truths (Gutek, 2004). Perennialists are similar to essentialists in that they both aim to rigorously develop a student’s intellectual powers and the classroom is centered on the teacher’s goals with little room for flexibility in the curriculum. However, they differ greatly in their ideas of what students should learn and how they should learn it.

Perennialists look for ways to assist students in discovering those ideas that are most insightful and timeless in understanding the human condition (Shaw, 1995). Those supporting a perennialist philosophy of education decry reliance on textbooks and lecturing, and prefer to rely on reading directly from great works of literature while employing Socratic dialogue and mutual inquiry sessions to impart knowledge. In addition, Perennialists do not emphasize discrete factual information as traditionalists do, but stress the importance of teaching concepts and explaining how these concepts might be helpful to students (Shaw, 1995).

There are two main branches of perennialism: those that advocate the religious approach to education professed by St. Thomas Aquinas, and those who follow the secular approach

expressed in the twentieth century by such philosophers as Robert Hutchins and Mortimer Adler (Shaw, 1995). These two sects align closely with the classicalist approach to homeschooling. While some have a religious overtone and others a more secular one, both profess similar views as those within the educational philosophy of perennialism. Both branches aim to immerse students in the study of ideas that are both profound and enduring. In doing this, Perennialists believe that student will appreciate learning for its own sake and become a true intellectual (Shaw, 1995).

Progressivism. The educational philosophy known as progressivism, suggests that people learn best from what they consider most relevant to their lives and center the curriculum around the experiences, interests, and capabilities of their students. “Progressivists believe that education should be a perpetually enriching process of ongoing growth, not merely a preparation for adult lives” (Shaw, 1995). Furthermore, the progressive philosophy advocates allowing children to express themselves freely and creatively by using informal, less structured, and open methods of instruction. The progressive curriculum includes a vast variety of items that arouse curiosity and help the student attain a higher level of knowledge. The ideal learning environment within the progressive philosophy blends the use of the home, the workplace, and the schoolhouse together to generate a continuous, fulfilling learning experience in life (Shaw, 1995). According to Gutek (2004), “Progressive educators generally favor education that is multifunctional and geared to the whole child – emotionally, physically, socially, and intellectually – rather than exclusively academic” (p. 300).

In the world of homeschooling, the progressive educator closely resembles a homeschool style known as Eclecticism. Over the last couple of decades, the homeschool movement has seen

an increase in eclectic homeschooling that uses variety rather than uniformity in which parents have done away with formal types of instruction and replaced it with spontaneity. In addition, these types of homeschoolers diverge from the prescribed curriculum that emphasizes subject matter to one that places emphasis on children's interests and needs. The curriculum is usually experience-referenced and features activities such as field trips, process learning, inquiry, and problem solving (Gutek, 2004).

Existentialism. Gutek (2004) explains that, "for existentialists, the purpose of education is to cultivate in students an awareness that they are free agents, responsible for creating their own selves and purposes" (p. 92). Existentialists share one basic ideal, which is respect for individualism. In the existentialist learning environment priority is given to helping students understand and appreciate themselves as unique individuals who accept complete responsibility for their thoughts, feelings, and actions (Shaw, 1995). Gutek explains that within the existentialist philosophy learning is an engagement by students in their own self-construction as individuals. "The learner, like all individuals, is an unfinished project and, if she or he chooses to do so, can consciously engage in the action of creating her or his own essence – the self-definition that gives personal meaning to life" (Gutek, 2004, p. 95). Furthermore, learning in the existentialist classroom, according to Shaw, is self-paced and self-directed.

Among homeschoolers, there is a group of parents known as unschoolers and their ideas seem to reflect those within the existentialist philosophy. These parents afford their students great latitude in their choice of subject matter. For these parents, education is regarded more as a means of teaching their children about themselves and their potential than of earning an income in the future. As the teacher, homeschooling parents are there to help their children demarcate

their own essence by exposing them to diverse paths they may take in life and creating an atmosphere in which they may freely choose their own preferred way (Shaw, 1995).

Homeschooling Parents as Teachers

Homeschooling parents come to the teaching table with a certain set of schema regarding the role of a teacher from their personal experiences. Homeschooling parents have few opportunities to view other teachers and increase their experience base, thus the resulting effect on their instructional practices, according to Knowles (1988), is that they tend to stick with what they know best. The only experimentation with instructional techniques that Knowles recorded were with subject areas that parents were extremely knowledgeable about, or when parents themselves were highly educated.

Knowles (1988) suggests that understanding the personal biographies of homeschooling parents can provide insight into their instructional practices in the homeschool setting. His naturalistic inquiry study of 12 homeschooling families showed that parents come to the teaching table with a preconceived idea of their role as the teacher, collected from their schema of educational experiences, and that role is important because it has a profound and direct impact on their instructional practices (Knowles, 1988). Knowles found that homeschooling parents “tend to use teaching methods that allow them to cope with situations, rather than seeking practices that will achieve certain sought after and explicit instructional goals” (Knowles, 1988, p. 81).

Furthermore, Knowles (1988) established that a homeschooling parent’s instructional practices were openly related to their achievement in a particular subject matter. In other words, the more a parent knew about a subject, the more flexible the instructional practices. Finally,

Knowles maintains that most homeschooling parents do not evolve in their instructional practices, but adhere closely to those used to teach them when they were students.

On the other hand, Mary K. Hood's (1990) dissertation suggests the instructional preferences of homeschooling parents are motivated more by their philosophy of learning than their actual educational encounters. Such philosophies as essentialism or perennialism usually dictate an instructional preference that is lesson-based and rely heavily on fact transmission; whereas, progressivism and existentialism encourage learning-based alternatives that target measures of aptitude or wisdom useful for integrated social living (Hood, 1990).

Instructional Approaches

A parent's choice of homeschool style or curriculum may signify the type of philosophy a parent subscribes to and thus the instructional practices they engage in. The more popular methods of homeschooling include unschooling, classical, traditional, and eclectic.

Teaching Styles in the Homeschool

Formal/Authoritative. Using the definition for the formal/authoritative instructional style from chapter one, an argument can be made that supports a link between parents who define themselves as traditional homeschoolers and this style of teaching. Traditionalists believe that there is an essential body of knowledge, which must be transmitted to the next generation, while someone who uses the formal/authoritative form of teaching believes that students should learn from a very specific set of goals and objectives, which must be taught to the student. These types of homeschooling parents most probably direct the education of their children from an Essentialist philosophy. When it comes to teaching reading, more than likely, these parents use

methods that are skills based or curricula that have clearly defined approaches to teaching reading.

However, one may also conclude that classical homeschooling parents might also use the formal/authoritative form of teaching to direct the education of their students in some aspects. Classical homeschooling parents, while usually directing the education of their students from Perennialist's point of view, have very similar goals and ideas as Essentialists. Both endeavor to develop a student's intellectual powers first and moral qualities second. Both advocate classrooms centered around the teacher in order to accomplish their goals, and allow relatively little room for the student's interest or experiences to dictate how they teach. In short, both believe in a universal curriculum that must be transmitted to the next generation. Again, these teachers probably look for a reading curriculum that has a well-defined method for teaching reading such as the skills based approach or the linguistic approach.

Demonstrative. The demonstrative teaching style is a bit more difficult to place in any one type of homeschooling style or educational philosophy. Teachers who use this style of teaching use examples from their own personal experiences to illustrate points about the material being taught. However, these types of teachers tend to still center the classroom around their ideas and beliefs, but they do not necessarily lecture to transmit their material; they demonstrate through action and verbal prompting. In the end though, most teachers with this style of teaching believe students should end up thinking like the teacher, which would tend to align it with the traditional or classical homeschooling styles. Nonetheless, there is room for the demonstrative approach to teaching in the eclectic and unschooling venues of homeschooling. While in limited fashion, it is possible to use this style of teaching by example and demonstrating how to use

various principles and concepts in both the eclectic and unschooling homeschools, which tend to support the Progressivists and the Existentialists philosophies. With regard to teaching reading skills, these types of teachers may use a variety of methods to teach reading, but most likely, they use the method that reflects their own experience in learning to read.

Delegative. The delegative style of teaching places most of the responsibility of learning on the student's shoulders. Delegative teachers tend to hand over educational tasks to the students and allow them to take control of the learning process and complete it at their own pace. This style of teaching tends to reflect the unschooling philosophy of education. Unschooling parents see subject matter as taking second place to helping students understand and appreciate themselves as unique individuals who accept complete responsibility for their thoughts, actions, and feelings. These ideas stem from the Existentialist philosophy of education where learning is self-paced and self-directed (Shaw, 1995).

The teaching of reading, therefore, using this instructional practice may be more difficult to pinpoint. Students may again find that they themselves use a variety of methods to learn to read, especially if left to discover reading at their own pace. However, it may be speculated that these children learn to read in very non-traditional ways and many may use their own language experiences to develop the skill of reading. Moreover, it may be speculated that many parents do not use this type of instructional style when it comes to teaching reading even if they classify themselves as unschoolers. Nonetheless, those who are strict unschoolers would suggest that their children were never given direct instruction in initial reading skills, yet many report that their children learned to read out of self motivation.

Facilitative. The facilitative style of teaching is a more relaxed style of teaching that encourages students to ask questions, explore their options, and makes suggestions about alternative ways to do things. These kinds of teachers use learning activities to encourage students to take initiative and responsibility for their learning. Students are encouraged to make their own choices among various activities in order to complete their learning goals. This style of teaching tends to reflect the Progressivism philosophy of education. These parents tend to choose the eclectic style of homeschooling. While students are not left entirely on their own to direct their own education as in the delegative style of teaching or as in unschooling, the curriculum is centered around the experiences, interests, and abilities of the student, which reflects the Progressivists idea of education. Facilitative teachers provide a lot of support and encouragement for their students via materials that take into account the needs of the individual learner, which also reflects the foundational tenets of the eclectic homeschool.

The teaching of reading using this style of instruction would dictate that a parent uses the method that best fits the needs, interests, and abilities of the individual child. Progressivism suggests that a parent tailors the curriculum to meet the needs and learning style of the individual child and thus chooses a reading curriculum that is most beneficial to each child in the homeschool.

What the Literature Says

Researcher Richard Medlin (1994) questioned 27 families about their instructional practices and found that 61% of the parents indicated that they use the traditional method of schooling often found in public schools. Another 19% of these families characterized their instructional methods as relaxed allowing the exploration of the child's creative individuality.

They respected their children and made enormous attempts to involve them in “real life” situations (Medlin, 1994). Medlin further found that while most parents reported that they took a structured approach (82%) to the organization of their homeschool, the data suggested that the less intensive homeschool programs seemed to be related to higher achievement and more self-motivation by the students. The more time in direct instruction, the greater the months per year of schooling, the giving of grades, and the frequent use of rewards, were all negatively correlated with achievement levels (Medlin, 1994).

Davenport’s (2001) research on the educational practices of homeschooling families in New Jersey, using focus groups, showed that in all cases direct tutorial instruction or individual work activities were the preferred methods of instruction employed by homeschooling parents. Furthermore, most parents stated that they used the method of instruction that they were exposed to during their own educational experiences. However, those who had the unschooling philosophy of education reported that they were peripheral and innovative in their instructional practices (Davenport, 2001). These parents reported their instructional practices as diversified to meet the exploratory nature of the child (Davenport, 2001).

Three case studies done by Andrea Clements (2002) on the variety of teaching methodologies used by homeschooling families, reveals that homeschooling parents tend to choose their instructional techniques based on the amount of time they plan to spend on direct instruction. Clements reports that this amount lies on a continuum from complete direct instruction to complete self-study. The parents in these case studies conveyed that they all used direct instruction at one point or another in their homeschools, but that it varied depending on the

needs of the individual child, the intended educational goals for each child, and the age of the child (Clements, 2002).

More recently, Huber (2003) reported that homeschool instructional practices have been placed on a continuum with one end housing the teacher structured or “school-at-home” approach to teaching, which mandates an authoritative parent who imparts knowledge and the child learns and abides by. At the opposite end of the continuum are those homeschools that are solely learner structured, where parents value their children as interest-driven learners and allow them to develop their own learning experiences (Huber, 2003). However, there are many transitional points along the continuum, which encompass parents who believe in “shaping-the-environment” by initially regulating behaviors, roles, and relationships of the homeschool experience, but who settle down into an evolving educational experience (Huber, 2003).

Instructional approaches to specific subjects. While the research relating to specific subjects and the instructional practices of homeschooling is nominal, these few studies give researchers and educators alike insight into subject oriented instructional practices in the homeschool setting. Knafle and Westcott (1994) surveyed 64 parents of 127 children in the Seattle area regarding their reading instructional practices. This was a descriptive study that identified who taught reading in the home, how much time was spent on reading instruction, and the types of reading activities in which the students were engaged. It further identified the types of reading programs homeschooling parents utilized and their associated rationales.

Again, in 1996 Knafle and Westcott examined in detail the home school literacy practices of three families (7 students) from the view of the mother and described the wide variation in instructional practices used to meet the individual needs of each child. Later in 1998, Knafle and

Westcott surveyed 23 mothers concerning their children's (N=56) cross-age tutoring skills and collaboration activities with regard to literacy.

Gilmore (2003) employed an ethno-methodological approach to studying oral reading in two homeschooling families living in rural America. Using a constant comparative method, Gilmore tried to understand the connections between dialogues and reading instruction that took place in homeschools to develop a formal grounded theory (Gilmore, 2003). Gilmore concluded "Classrooms that exist in nurturing homeschools provide a positive atmosphere where there is intellectual and social collaboration between the parents and the children" (p. 18). Various researchers believe that a positive environment affects attitudes toward reading, thus the homeschool classroom may be an optimal environment for developing literacy skills.

Hafer (as cited in Huber, 2003), Hetzel (1997) Huber (2003), and Treat (1990) are researchers who looked specifically at the instructional practices of homeschooling parents regarding writing instruction. Hetzel (1997) used a large number of homeschoolers (272), however she reported only on the amount of instructional time devoted to writing instruction in the homeschool. The other studies look at smaller numbers of homeschoolers from 1 to 28 families. Huber's (2003) study addresses various instructional practices that 28 homeschooling families in Pennsylvania used to teach writing. These techniques included instruction-based skills, traditional classroom instruction, classical education writing instruction, learner-structured instruction, unschooling methodology, Living Book techniques designed by Charlotte Mason, unit studies, and parent/learner structured writing instruction. It further identified several other support systems used by homeschooling parents to teach writing such as family-based writer's

groups, support group writing classes, online writing services, umbrella school services, and college writing classes (Huber, 2003).

Finally, Knafle and Westcott (2005) conducted another study, researching high school graduates and how their perception, of their literacy instruction and skills, differed from those of their mothers. This study included individual interviews of 13 graduates and their mothers from the Seattle area. It provided a longitudinal look at homeschool literacy instruction, and concluded that phonics instruction was the number one method preferred by homeschooling mothers to teach reading; however, most of these mothers did not spend nearly enough time on reading comprehension. They assumed comprehension would simply follow as the children read more.

Homeschooling Environment

While the concept of the public school was once to educate a new American citizenry and most scholars would recognize that an educated society is a strong society, the current status of our society does not reflect an educated populous. America leads the world in incarceration rates; gangs have become the new family for many inner city children; the NYC school system spends over \$75 million dollars on social security benefits while schools remain in serious disrepair and class sizes are increasing at enormous rates; one in four children in America is poor with those under 5 representing the greatest level of poverty; 1.9 million children do not live with either parent; suicide is the third leading cause of death among teenagers today; and 48 % of students surveyed in Houston, TX strongly disagree that schools are “safe” places to learn (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). With these statistics as evidence of the declining “social” capacities of various schools in America, it is no wonder that even if teachers come to the classroom as gifted educators with extensive training in the areas of teaching and learning, they are unable to

effectively make an impact and help students rise above the deteriorating social ills of public schools as well as the drowning rules and regulations of bureaucracy.

The homeschool environment resembles more of a one-on-one tutoring session with very low student to teacher ratios. Bloom articulates the concept of tutoring best when he wrote, ““under tutoring, the average student performs better than 98% of students taught by conventional instructional conditions”” (as cited in Witt, 2005). Additionally, the teacher/parent who instructs the homeschooled student has matching experiences and appreciates the child’s culture and home life. Students in a public school classroom must first compete with 25 to 30 other students for the attention of the teacher, and there is no guarantee that the teacher will be able to identify with the cultural identity of the student, let alone his or her experiences. These differences alone influence the instructional practices of classroom teachers and homeschooling parents.

From the current literature, it is apparent that many homeschooling parents use the traditional “school-at-home” method of instruction, at least at first. Furthermore, most parents report utilizing direct one-on-one instructional practices between the parent and the child, or in the case of a music lesson, a hired tutor. Teachers rarely utilize this method of instruction in the public school classroom, not because a he or she may not feel strongly about the power of one-on-one instruction, but because of the impractical application of such a method in a 30 to 1 ratio classroom.

Teachers in the public schools are constrained in their instructional practices not simply because of classroom size, but by State-designed curricula, federal and state laws, and bureaucratic regulations (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). “The teacher-student relationship is easily

lost in a confusing web of rules, limits, and required objectives” (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994, p. 33). On the other hand, homeschooling parents have very little to interfere with the teacher-student relationship and they are rarely confined in their instructional practices by outside sources. To the contrary, with the increasing popularity of homeschooling and the growing cottage industry associated with this phenomenon, outside sources are only increasing the choices of instructional practices between which homeschooling parents have to choose. Today, more than ever, homeschooling parents can completely individualize the learning experience of each child in the home, as well as employ various instructional practices in order to give the student the best possible education, be it academic, social, moral, religious, or vocational.

Homeschool Family Culture

The cultural heritage of the parent may very well affect the type of instructional practices employed in the homeschool. While the majority of homeschooling parents are middle class, White Americans and their style of teaching may reflect the current dominant instructional techniques in America. According to Ray (2002), there is an increasing diversity among homeschoolers, and with that increase, comes an increase in the variety of instructional practices used within the home. Yates and Ortiz (1995) suggest that teachers must incorporate the student’s culture and language into the learning process. Furthermore, they conclude that each culture has its own unique blend of values and beliefs that must be valued and interwoven into the teaching-learning process. Those beliefs include how language and subsequently reading skills are acquired, and thus used within that family’s home. Some cultures are pictorial societies, while others are auditory cultures with education being passed along verbal lines. “Often, behavior appropriate to an individual’s reference group is interpreted as deviant because

it does not conform to the desired or expected behavior of members of the Anglo-American society” (Yates & Ortiz, 1995, p. 138). Thus, the homeschool parent and child benefit from the mutual cultural connection established at birth. However, teachers in the public school system cannot possibly incorporate all cultural instructional practices into a single setting. Although some are certainly trying, it seems as though this is not based on the cultural instructional behaviors of the teachers themselves and the connection they have with their students.

Ultimately the connection between teachers and their students can affect many areas of the learning process. The most vital area of learning, the acquisition of literacy skills or teaching reading, might be affected by the lack of cultural connectedness between a teacher and his/her students, thus hindering a student’s ability to learn to read.

Defining Culture and Literacy

Literacy and its defining cultural context are important issues facing educators today. With the increasing diversity among the students in the public schools and what many consider an increasing population of poor readers, an understanding of literacy and its connections to the culture of its users is essential for the American public school teacher.

Culture. In the abstract defining culture is a relatively simple task. Most dictionaries include something about society, human behavior, and products of human work or thought. Merriam-Webster’s Medical Desk Dictionary (2002) defines it eloquently as “the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thought, speech, action, and artifacts and depends upon human capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations.” However, in reality defining culture is not as easy as putting a label on it. Culture is a unique blend of the people that exists within a community in a certain place and time, but which takes into account

the past and future existence of those individuals. Today's America has a variety of cultures interwoven into its society as well as distinct "family cultures" that connect the collective life experiences of an individual family member with the life goals of the family (Gadsden, 1998). These family cultures are built around several factors: accepted ethnic traditions, cultural rituals, sociopolitical histories, religious practices and beliefs, and negotiated family roles (Gadsden, 1998; Tett & Crowther, 1998). Culture is what defines a society at a certain time and place.

Literacy. The terms literacy and literate are more difficult to define. David Barton (1994) investigated four connected terms: literate, illiterate, literacy, and illiteracy to determine their actual date of introduction into the English language. Barton's examination of various dictionaries indicates the first mention of the term 'literate' is in the 1432 full length Oxford English Dictionary, referring to educated, but it cannot be found in another dictionary until 1883, referring to the opposite of being illiterate. However, the term literacy does not appear in an English dictionary until 1924 and it includes a new definition of the term literate, meaning 'being able to read and write' (Barton, 1994). The terms illiterate and illiteracy actually arrive on the scene in 1556 and 1660 respectively (Barton, 1994).

Literacy as a focus of study arrived on the world stage in the 1980s and the field as been evolving at an unprecedented rate. Today literacy encompasses a great deal more than simply being able to read and write. The new view of literacy encompasses situating reading and writing in its social context (Barton, 1994). Three academic studies are pivotal in the transition of literacy from autonomous to ideological. All three of these studies examined different cultural groups and how they view literacy.

Scribner and Cole (as cited in Barton, 1994) worked with the Via of northwest Liberia, and detailed how this group of people utilized various forms of literacy including those that are learned unceremoniously and that subsist outside the educational system. Their book details their shifting point of view from literacy as a set of skills with identifiable consequences towards one that suggests that “literacy can only be understood in the context of the social practices in which it is acquired and used” (Barton, 1994, p. 24).

Street (1984), an anthropologist, conducted ethnographic fieldwork with a group of Islamic villagers in Iran. Street conveys his work as an ideological approach to literacy. An ideological approach to literacy is one that accepts that literacy varies from circumstance to circumstance and is reliant on principles (Barton, 1994; Street, 1984). Street, like Scribner and Cole, relates his work as addressing the ‘literacy practices’ of a culture to determine how they view literacy. Street illustrates how “the meaning of literacy depends on the social institutions in which it is embedded...the particular practices of reading and writing that are taught in any context depend upon such aspects of social structure as stratification...and the role of the educational institutions” (p.8).

The final study that has facilitated the shifting view of literacy from a set of defined skills void of social context is Heath’s (1980) efforts to document the literacy practices of three Appalachian communities over a seven-year period. Heath asserts the notion of literacy covers an assortment of meanings, and definitions of literacy carry embedded but generally unrecognized views of its functions and its uses. Heath’s views of literacy and her defining of ‘literacy events’ as the day-to-day instances in which people use their reading and writing skills has had a profound influence in the classroom (Barton, 1994).

The research on literacy continues to expand with an ever-increasing trend towards literacy education and how to address the socio-cultural component in the American classroom. Various studies (Heath, 1983; Leichter, 1984; Street, 1984; Taylor & Dorsey-Ganies, 1988) recommend that literacy education must first begin with a focus on the multiplicity and fullness of families and communities as frameworks for literacy learning (Gadsden, 1998).

Further research suggests that parents and families across socio-economic status and cultural and ethnic groups engage their children in a variety of vital literacy encounters and inquire about provisions to reinforce that engagement (Gadsden, 1998). However, they do not always seek the same time honored supports as the mainstream culture such as tutors, providing classical pieces of literature in the home, or parent education (Gadsden, 1998).

Cultural Component

Every child experiences a culturally structured “developmental niche” at home, which defines how the child is nurtured in the appropriate developmental milestones within their social, emotional, and educational endeavors (Serpell, Baker, Sonnenschein, & Ganapathy, 2002). Since literacy skills are part of the educational milestones of a child’s upbringing, researchers have identified several dimensions of the family’s culture as having potentially important influences on reading development (Serpell, et al., 2002). These include specific literacy-related activities, such as joint storybook reading with parents, visits to libraries, language games, informal opportunities to engage in social conversations, and the opportunity to view various types of written texts (Serpell, et al., 2002). Various researchers support the idea that the cultural practices of a family influence the literacy achievement of their children. Literacy is a complex

cultural practice that is part of a child's identity and everyday life (Whitmore, Martens, Goodman, & Owocki, 2004).

Parental Involvement. Literacy instruction involves various components, but researchers have concluded parental support and interest in reading are strong indicators of flourishing readers (Greaney & Hegarty, 1987; Neuman, 1986; Rowe, 1991; Shapiro & Whitney, 1997). Baker (2003) lists several factors incorporated as part of those parental supports: the availability of reading materials in the home, parental reading behaviors, and the frequency of reading to the child. Baker further suggests that students from supportive environments also have a positive outlook toward reading, and enthusiastically endorse the view that they read for enjoyment.

Additionally, Rowe's (1991) research, conducted in Australia, suggests a strong correlation between children's reading attitudes, parental attitudes, and associated reading activities, which grow stronger with increasing age. Parental perspectives and beliefs about literacy are also strong predictors of literacy motivation and achievement for reading in children (Baker, 2003).

Another aspect of literacy instruction, positively linked to the parents, is the affective quality of the home literacy interactions (Baker, 2003). Baker suggests, "children who experienced reading in a comfortable and supportive social context at age 5 were more likely to recognize the value of reading, report enjoyment of reading, and have positive concepts of themselves as readers in subsequent years" (p. 92). A home is a child's cultural representation of what he/she believes.

Gadsden's (1998) work with low-income African American and Puerto Rican parents, further strengthens the notion that parental views about literacy, their definitions of literacy, their

literacy practices, and the actual value they place on literacy are critical indicators of how they interact with and support the development of literacy in their preschool and school aged children. Gadsden's interviews of parents in both the urban and rural south and the urban north assisted her in identifying four categories of assumptions that parents make about literacy.

First, while many parents found that being literate had power, they believed it was limited by an individual's race (Gadsden, 1998). Second, most of the parents believed that literacy was, in general, the responsibility of the schools, although some realized that there must be a home-school connection to encourage learning (Gadsden, 1998). Third, a majority of these parents recognized that they held some responsibility, as well as acknowledging their own strengths and weaknesses, in supporting their child's literacy development (Gadsden, 1998). Finally, Gadsden established that the family and the community in which the child lives are what impart literacy. Gadsden believes that "family culture often influences, if not dictate in many instances, the ways individual family members think about, use, and pursue literacy and how they persist in educational programs" (p. 40).

Achievement gap in literacy education. Another area with an abundance of research is the achievement gap in literacy achievement that still remains between European-Americans and various racial and ethnic groups in the United States despite program after program created to decrease the gap (Holt & Smith, 2005). According to Holt and Smith this gap in literacy proficiencies between European-Americans and minorities is rooted in an intricate milieu of cultural, economic, and historical factors. They report that observed ethnic and racial differences in parental communication styles regarding literacy, influence literacy acquisition as well as academic achievement (Holt & Smith, 2005). Other equally important factors identified by Holt

and Smith, include poverty level, race, family and community life, and resources available in the community.

Holt and Smith (2005) further relate that there is a large body of ethnographic research signifying the level of literacy among minorities may be indirectly affected by the nature of the minority group. The research suggests that there are two types of minority groups: voluntary and involuntary. Involuntary groups are those minority groups that have a history of suppression and discrimination, whereas voluntary minorities are those that willingly immigrated to the United States (Ogbu, 1995). Involuntary minorities (e.g. African-Americans) appear to be less likely to support the majority group's cultural practices and values regarding literacy and education. However, voluntary minorities (e.g. Asian-Americans) are more likely to adopt the cultural values of the mainstream group particularly when it comes to education and literacy (Holt & Smith, 2005).

Researcher Ogbu (1995) theorizes that involuntary minorities use alternative methods of attaining and utilizing cultural information such as oral communication through widespread social interactions rather than relying on printed material. He also puts forth the notion that while most adults of minority standing recognize the importance of literacy in today's world, many involuntary minorities do not have the same expectations for social, economic, and political success as European-Americans, therefore they are resistant to acquiring the same middle-class values as those in the oppressive society (Holt & Smith, 2005).

Holt and Smith (2005) offer their own research regarding racial group differences in literacy as support for the importance of literacy in minority groups. They explored how different reading practices among racial groups interplay with socioeconomic factors. They used a two-

phase structure. The first phase controlled for a number of economic and demographic variables including income levels, and the second phase did not control for income levels so as to determine if income was an important correlate of reading practices (Holt & Smith, 2005). The results of their study illustrated that when controlling for family and community income levels, the reading practices of minority groups may actually be significantly better than that of European-Americans (Holt & Smith, 2005). Their work further indicated that racial and ethnic groups were diverse in their utilization of sources from which to acquire information, and the types of literacy practices they undertake (Holt & Smith, 2005).

The work of Holt and Smith in conjunction with other research indicates that minority groups value literacy and engage in a multiplicity of literacy practices (Holt & Smith, 2005; Tett & Crowther, 1998; Weber & Longhi-Chirlin, 2001). Moreover, the literacy gap, as denoted by standardized assessments in schools, may only suggest that the literacy practices of minority groups differ from those presented on the traditional European-America style assessments of today's educational system (Holt & Smith, 2005; Ogbu, 1995). Furthermore, the research indicates that there are linguistic biases inherent in any language-based test and not all test-takers come equally exposed to the language of the test (Holt & Smith, 2005).

Gender Issues. Other studies have looked at the role gender plays in literacy (Barton, 1994; Rockhill, 1994). David Barton (1994) denotes that literacy has a strong link to gender. However, that link varies depending on the cultural implications of literacy in a society. In colonial America women learned to read so that they could study the Bible, however, men were often the more 'educated' individuals (Spring, 2005). From the first book a child gets, he or she is drawn into the world of gender. Books come in different colors for boys and girls with

different themes and illustrations that depict very gender based roles. In America today, parents read to girls more often than they do boys, and in general, girls have fewer reading problems than boys do (Barton, 1994). More girls enter school already knowing how to read than boys do, and as years of school increase, girls perform better in subjects that revolve around writing and reading than boys do (Barton, 1994). The fictional choices of reading material are very different among adult males and females, and women hold most jobs in White Anglo-Saxon countries that involve scribing. However, this is not a universal reality. Many Middle Eastern countries reserve the right of a scribe to men.

Cultural gendering of literacy practices is still alive in most societies today, and it is very much accepted as part of the way things are (Barton, 1994). Take for example Anita Puckett's (1992) work with communities in a rural Appalachian area of Kentucky. Puckett found that while the men earned the living, the women did the majority of the reading and writing for the entire family. In this culture of Ash Creek, literacy practices, such as reading the scriptures and filling out money orders are entrusted to the women. The jobs of this community involve farming and logging for the men and the women either garden or have simple home-based businesses. In this cultural community, the literacy practices do not reflect what the educated people around them want, but they do represent the shared social and cultural identity of this community.

“Residents see themselves as different, and they ‘do’ literacy differently” (Puckett, 1992, p. 149).

Transactional Perspective on Early Literacy Research

Oft-quoted reading researchers Whitmore, Martens, Goodman, and Owocki (2004) have made critical observations over the years by monitoring the research regarding early literacy.

They have combined their shared knowledge base, and aptly named it a ‘transactional

perspective on early literacy development'. The following is a summary of those critical observations and their implications for the parent and teacher.

Whitmore et al. (2004) have concluded that literacy learning is an individual ongoing life process, and claim children actively construct knowledge about literacy from birth. They further maintain that children simultaneously develop as readers, writers, and develop linguistic meanings from birth. Additionally, they posit that children personally invent written language and they refine their use of written language through lived experiences.

While the preceding involves the individual child, Whitmore et al. (2004) also deduce that literacy learning comes from the community in which children associate, and that children construct meaning from community members. A critical component of the influence of the community on literacy learning is the actual control children have regarding their writing and reading choices. As children are given the freedom and opportunity to interact with and make use of community resources, their literacy knowledge tends to be higher and more variable in composition (Whitmore et al., 2004).

Whitmore et al. (2004) especially emphasize the importance of play as relevant to a young child's literacy development. The use of play creates for children a context in which they can express and construct knowledge according to their hypotheses about literacy mediums. When children play with familiar literacy objects that are reflective of their lives and cultures, they tend to develop literacy knowledge more readily (Whitmore, et al., 2004). Play and literacy development appear to go hand-in-hand.

Conclusion

The research appears to indicate that while literacy acquisition is an individual process, it is highly influenced by the culture of the home environment, the social connections that children make, and the parental commitment to literacy achievement. Literacy education needs to value the socio-cultural identity of its students in order to give legitimacy to the uniqueness of the individual and the community in which they reside. This will in turn give students a reason to value literacy and its benefits within their community. Teachers must transcend the here and now and include the historical perspectives of the development of literacy, its cultural implications, and recognize that all children come to the literacy table with a different set of literacy experiences. Teachers cannot put value-laden labels on these experiences, but they must use them to build upon from the very beginning of formal education.

Various researchers support the idea that the cultural practices of a family influence the literacy achievement of their children. Literacy is a complex cultural practice that is part of a child's identity and everyday life (Whitmore et al., 2004). Homeschooling parents are at a great advantage when it comes to the environment in which they teach literacy skills and to understanding the family culture of their students. They are able to provide one-on-one instruction while working within the cultural framework of their students, thus they are able to meet the cultural component of literacy education. Therefore, the lack of research detailing the reading practices and outcomes of those practices by homeschoolers leaves open the questions of how gender, ethnicity, and economics influence reading attainment by homeschoolers. Furthermore, it leaves unanswered the question, does a homeschooling family's culture, which includes their language of instruction, their ethnicity, their religious and philosophical beliefs,

and the geographic location of their home, influence how reading is taught in the homeschool? Moreover, do these cultural characteristics of the homeschooling family affect how curricula and instructional practices are chosen? The homeschool lends itself to the complex issues related to reading literacy, which, if researched in depth, may be utilized by the traditional education system of today.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The growth of the homeschool movement has spurred an increase in the research associated with this type of alternative education. While various studies address several components of this movement, few look at the actual instructional practices utilized by homeschooling parents to teach various subjects. The most vital subject of literacy is virtually unexplored within the research pertaining to the homeschooling movement. Furthermore, how and why parents choose curriculum is also underrepresented in the research.

This mixed methods nested analysis study looked at homeschooling styles, teaching styles, and reading method choices of homeschooling parents in order to answer the question of what family characteristics influence these practices and choices. The online survey method was chosen for the quantitative component of this mixed methods study for several reasons. There are significant advantages to using the survey method. These advantages include being able to take a large sampling of the population of homeschoolers with minimal financial impact to the researcher. Second, there can be rapid turn around in data analysis. Third, survey research also allows for the exploration of relationships between two or more variables (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Additionally, the online survey method was chosen because of its distinct advantages for making inferences about certain attributes of a large population from a small group of individuals (Creswell, 2003). The survey was intended to be a cross-section of homeschoolers nationwide.

The qualitative component of this study involved follow-up structured interviews with 21 families who were identified by analysis of the online surveys. Interviewing is useful when participants cannot be observed directly since it allows respondents to give explanatory information for the responses they gave on the initial survey (Creswell, 2003). Structured interviews allow the researcher control of the line of questioning while still giving the participants freedom to expand on items they feel need more explanation than given on the survey (Creswell, 2003).

Why Mixed Methods

Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) suggest that there has been an evolution within the educational research arena from the utilization of monomethods to the deployment of mixed methodologies. Both quantitative and qualitative paradigms have inherent strengths and weaknesses. Researchers have suggested that the various dichotomies within these paradigms should be placed on a continuum, diverting the focus of research to the strategies employed by the researcher and removing the focus from paradigmatic issues (Creswell, 2003; Onwuegbuzie, 2002).

Creswell (2003) maintains that particular types of social research dilemmas call for explicit approaches. However, it is clear that the process of choosing a research design is no longer quantitative versus qualitative; rather it has become more commonplace to decide where a particular study falls on the research continuum. The utilization of multiple methods signals an endeavor to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2004). Furthermore, Creswell argues that the mixed methods design is valuable for obtaining the best of both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Research in the field of homeschooling does not always fit neatly into either a quantitative or qualitative methodological approach. The selected methodology depends upon on the questions to be researched. Creswell (2003) suggests that when researchers want to both generalize their findings and develop a detailed view of the meaning of a phenomenon or concept for individuals, then the mixed methods approach is useful. Furthermore, Newman, Ridenour, Newman, & DeMarco Jr. (2003) suggest that mixed methods can be used when one wants to add to the knowledge base of the current research, when the research has a personal, social, institutional, and/or organizational impact, or when one wants to understand a complex phenomenon.

Greene, Caracelli, & Graham summarize five points for employing mixed method studies:

(a) *triangulation*, or seeking convergence of results; (b) *complementarity*, or examining overlapping and different facets of a phenomenon; (c) *initiation*, or discovering paradoxes, contradiction, fresh perspectives; (d) *development*, or using the methods sequentially, such that results from the first method inform the use of the second method; and (e) *expansion*, or mixed methods adding breadth and scope to a project. (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 43)

This project engaged a mixed methodology to determine whether certain family characteristics influence homeschooling styles, teaching styles, and read method choices by homeschooling parents. More specifically, that choice entailed a modified version of the nested design described by Evan S. Lieberman of Princeton University in *American Political Science Review*. According to Lieberman (2005), the nested design “combines the statistical analysis of a large sample of cases with the in-depth investigation of one or more of the cases contained in the large sample” (p. 436). Furthermore, Lieberman posits that the in-depth module of the nested

research design involves the presentation of cases that should “elaborate” the findings from the statistical analysis.

Research Design

Methods

Statement of the Research Objectives

The purpose of this research was to determine what influences parental choice of homeschooling style, reading methods, and teaching styles in the homeschool. The secondary component of this mixed-methods study, the follow-up interviews, relied on questions pertaining to how and why those specific family characteristics influence these choices.

Guiding Hypotheses

The guiding hypotheses of this research study are summarized as follows:

1. Hypothesis H₀1 (null): A family’s homeschooling style is independent of certain family characteristics.
 - 1a. Hypothesis H₀1a- a family’s homeschooling style is independent of their ethnic identity.
 - 1b. Hypothesis H₀1b- a family’s homeschooling style is independent of their religious beliefs.
 - 1c. Hypothesis H₀1c- a family’s homeschooling style is independent of their geographical location within the United States.

Alternate Hypothesis Ha1: A family’s homeschooling style is dependent on certain family characteristics.

2. Hypothesis H₀2 (null): A homeschooling family's choices of instructional practices are independent of certain family characteristics.

2a. Hypothesis H₀2a- a homeschooling family's choices of instructional practices are independent of their ethnic identity.

2b. Hypothesis H₀2b- a homeschooling family's choices of instructional practices are independent of their religious beliefs.

2c. Hypothesis H₀2c- a homeschooling family's choices of instructional practices are independent of their geographical location within the United States.

Alternative Hypothesis H_a2: A homeschooling family's choices of instructional practices are dependent on certain family characteristics.

3. Hypothesis H₀3 (null): A homeschooling family's choices of reading curricula are independent of certain family characteristics.

3a. Hypothesis H₀3a- a homeschooling family's choices of reading curricula are independent of their ethnic identity.

3b. Hypothesis H₀3b- a homeschooling family's choices of reading curricula are independent of their religious beliefs.

3c. Hypothesis H₀3c- a homeschooling family's choices of reading curricula are independent of their geographic location within the United States.

Alternative Hypothesis H_a3: a homeschooling family's choices of reading curricula are dependent on certain family characteristics.

4. Hypothesis H₀4 (null): A parent's choices of teaching style and/or reading curriculum are independent of his/her homeschooling style.

Alternative Hypothesis Ha4: A parent's choices of teaching style and/or reading curriculum are dependent on his/her homeschooling style.

Subjects for Research

In this section, the research units for analysis and the sampling methods to be utilized are identified.

The Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this research study was the primary or secondary homeschool parent or other knowledgeable adult involved in the homeschool.

Sample Selection Method

Nonrandom purposive sampling, snowballing, and typical-case sampling were used to gather participants. Kemper, Stringfield, and Teddlie (2003) suggest that the researcher should take into account seven guidelines when selecting a sample method:

[a] The sampling strategy should stem logically from the conceptual framework as well as from the research question being addressed by the study . . . [b] The sample should be able to generate a thorough database on the type of phenomena under study . . . [c] The sample should at least allow the possibility of drawing clear inferences from the data; the sample should allow for credible explanations . . . [d] The sampling strategy must be ethical . . . [e] The sampling plan should be feasible . . . [f] The sampling plan should allow the research team to transfer/generalize the conclusions of the study to other settings or populations . . . and [g] The sampling scheme should be as efficient as practical. (pp. 275-276)

Mixed, multistage purposeful sampling methods were used in this study. As it is impossible to identify every homeschooling family within the United States, a purely random sample was not possible. Therefore, the first sampling method used in this research study was a nonrandom purposive sampling. The target population for this study was homeschoolers nationwide who were on identified homeschooling e-mail servers affiliated with Home

Educators Magazine (HEM), The Homeschool Support Network, Eclectic Homeschool Online, and Learning is for Everyone (LIFE). The survey was also made available through direct e-mails to homeschooling groups nationwide. Selection of participants was on a voluntary basis and was limited to those who had access to the Internet; therefore, certain biases must be taken into consideration. However, according to Internet World Stats (June, 2006), 205.49 million individuals within the United States are now online, which accounts for nearly 70% of the population. These homeschooling families were included in the large number sampling (LNS) used for initial large number analysis (LNA). The LNS is the initial group of homeschoolers who were included in the online survey. The numbers contained in the LNS were used in the quantitative analysis of the survey to build the initial model for testing in the small number analysis (SNA).

In addition to the homeschooling parents who are members of or subscribe to the aforementioned homeschooling groups, the participants were asked to make a referral of another family that may be interested in filling out the online survey, thus making use of snowball sampling to be included in the LNS. According to Johnson and Christensen (2004) snowball sampling “can be especially useful when you need to locate members of hard-to-find populations” (p. 216). Certain types of homeschooling parents can be more difficult to locate, as they tend to stay out of the governmental spotlight. The participants identified through snowball sampling were added to the LNS increasing the sample size.

Johnson and Christensen suggest that if the sample population is divided into subpopulations, a large sample size is necessary. Homeschoolers can be divided into several subpopulations and, therefore, a larger sample is better. Since the homeschooling population is

estimated to be between 1.5 to 2 million students, Johnson and Christensen (2004) suggest a sample size of 384 to 400 participants for this size population.

During the second stage, the study involved stratification of the initial LNS by region (see table 1) before selecting the sample population and size for the SNS (small number sample). Fearon and Laitin (2005) suggest stratifying by region to ensure an even distribution across a factor that is correlated with common experiences, community, and economic development. The researcher was concerned that if this was not done in such a small random sample of only 10-20 case studies, then there would be too great of a chance that all the cases would either over- or under represent a particular region within the United States. Once the LNA was performed, the participants who indicated that they wanted to participate in the follow-up interviews were sent a secondary letter with the attached interview questions via e-mail. James and Busher (2006) identify the positive contributions of using web-based approaches for conducting interviews by allowing researchers to hold asynchronous conversations with participants who are distant from the researcher. Furthermore, they suggest this type of interviewing medium allows the respondents to generate reflective and descriptive data not possible with phone interviewing.

These interview results were stratified by region, and a proportional number of cases were randomly selected from each region. These 21 families were further asked to participate in an online chat session with the researcher to clarify any issues from the interview questions (Appendix F). The researcher gave each interviewed parent two dates and times to choose from and allowed them to decide which time would be good for them, or they were given the opportunity to decline the instant messaging session.

Table 1. U.S. Regions Broken Down by State

Region	States included
Northwestern	Alaska, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Wyoming
Northeastern	Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia, Washington, D.C., West Virginia
Southwestern	Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, Utah, Hawaii
Southeastern	Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina
Central	Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Wisconsin

Instrumentation

This study used an initial online Internet survey created for this study by the researcher. Secondly, structured interviews were used to gather data from the SNS. Finally, respondents were invited to a private, live chat session with the researcher.

Reliability and Validity

Content validity is the degree to which the instrument being used actually measures an intended content area (Gay, 1987; Hunter & Brewer, 2003). Content validity is a subset of logical validity and is so named because it is determined primarily through judgment (Gay, 1987). “Content validity is determined by expert judgment” (Gay, 1987, p.157). Experts in the content covered are used to carefully review the process used in developing the instrument as well as the instrument itself and make judgments concerning how well items represent the intended content area (Gay, 1987). In this research project, content validity was measured through the use of pre-instrument assessments of statements reflecting the categorization of

homeschooling styles (Appendix A), teaching styles (Appendix B), and reading curriculum (Appendix C) by experts in the field of homeschooling, teaching, and reading curriculum development to evaluate the accuracy of the statements from a content perspective. The experts were asked to evaluate these statements based on specific criteria and summarize their findings in order to provide reassurance of validity. Additionally, a pilot study was conducted using a set of homeschooling colleagues and peers who were asked to focus on clarity and contextual interpretation in order to address the issue of face validity.

Hunter and Brewer (2003) report that reliability is the degree to which a study can be replicated. Reliability will be addressed using Cronbach's Alpha in SPSS from the data collected during the pilot study. Cronbach's alpha measures how well a set of items (or variables) measures a single one-dimensional latent construct. When data have a multidimensional structure, Cronbach's alpha will usually be low. Cronbach's alpha is not a statistical test - it is a coefficient of reliability (or consistency) [Adapted from *SAS Class Notes*, with permission from UCLA Academic Technology Services]. Since this survey is measuring three different constructs, three separate Cronbach's alphas will be calculated for consistency in homeschooling styles, instructional practices, and reading methods.

Variables

The explanation of variables and their definitions are outlined in Table 2. Each variable has been documented and its location in the survey identified.

Table 2. Listing and Definitions of Variables

<i>Variables and their Placement in survey</i>	<i>Definitions</i>
<i>Background Information</i>	
1. Identity of study respondent. (Section I: A1)	The position of the respondent within the homeschooling family (i.e. mother, father, or other adult).
2. Identification of the primary homeschooling instructor. (Section I: A2)	Respondent's perceptions regarding the primary assumption of homeschooling responsibilities (i.e. the primary instructor is the mother, the father, adults share responsibilities equally, or other).
3. Number of children currently homeschooled in the family. (Section I: A3)	The number of children homeschooled by the primary instructor, not the total children in the family.
4. Ages of children being homeschooled. (Section I: A4).	The ages of the children being homeschooled by the primary instructor.
5. The reasons the respondent's family chose to homeschool their children. (Section I: A5)	Based on data from the literature, study respondents were asked to choose all that applied as their reasons for homeschooling.
6. The family's identified religious affiliation. (Section I: A6)	The respondent is asked to identify their religious affiliation if any at all.
7. The number of years the family has engaged in homeschooling. (Section I: A1).	The respondent is asked how long the family has been homeschooling.
8. The family's identified ethnicity/ identity. (Section I: A8).	The respondent is asked to indicate which ethnicity identity the family most closely identifies with, or they can choose "prefer not to answer").
9. The respondent's location of the homeschool within the USA. (Section I: A9).	The respondent is asked to tell which state they reside in.
<i>Homeschooling styles</i>	
10. Classical homeschooler (Section II: B1-5)	This style is defined as a teaching model that seeks to tailor the subject matter to a child's cognitive development.
11. Unschooler (Section II: B1-5)	This style is defined as one that focuses upon the choices made by the individual learner.
12. Traditional homeschooler (Section II: B1-5)	This style is defined as the traditional, pre-packaged curriculum shipped ready for use.

Table 2. Listing and Definitions of Variables, *continued*

<i>Variables and their Placement in survey</i>	<i>Definitions</i>
13. Eclectic homeschooler (Section II: B1-5)	This style is more relaxed or laid back type of homeschool. Parents use a mixed combination of boxed curriculum, homemade curriculum, and/or individualized curriculum.
<i>Instructional Styles</i>	
14. Delegator (Section III: C1-5)	Learning springs from the learner; the teacher is merely a resource for the learner.
15. Facilitator (Section III: C1-5)	There is a great deal of responsibility placed on the student to take the initiative for meeting the demands of various learning tasks.
16. Demonstrator (Section III: C1-5)	The teacher acts as role model by demonstrating skills and process, and then as a coach helps students develop and apply these skills and knowledge.
17. Formal Authoritative (Section III: C1-5)	A teacher-centered approach with the teacher feeling that he/she is responsible for providing and controlling the flow of the content and the student is expected to receive the content.
<i>Reading Curriculum</i>	
18. Skills Based Approach (Section IV: D1-5)	A system in that teaches reading by stressing phonics skills taught in isolation with the expectation that once sound-letter relationships are learned, meaning will follow.
19. Language Experience Approach (Section IV: D1-5)	A system that teaches reading instruction based on activities and stories developed from the personal experiences of the learner.
20. Balanced Literacy Approach (Section IV: D1-5)	A system that teaches reading using an explicit systematic instruction in phonics and exposure to rich literature.
21. Linguistic Approach (Section IV: D1-5)	A system referred to as decoding skills, which emphasizes the use of word families.

Overview of the Nested Analysis Design

The nested analysis approach to research starts with a preliminary Large-Number Analysis (LNA), which in the case of this research stems from a statistical analysis of the

LNS obtained from the original survey made available to homeschoolers nationwide via e-mails, advertisements, and personal invitations. This study used descriptive statistics to analyze the scores of the dependent variables. According to Lieberman (2005), the preliminary LNA should ultimately complement the findings of the Small-Number Analysis (SNA).

The SNA is a qualitative analysis of the follow-up structured interviews, which were performed after the LNA. If the assessment of the SNA fits the original model as established by the LNA then the analysis is ended. However, if the sample cases used in the SNA are a poor fit into the original model, then further assessment is needed to identify the cause of the misfit whether it be for idiosyncratic reasons or flawed theoretical reasons. Figure 1 illustrates the cycle of the nested analysis design.

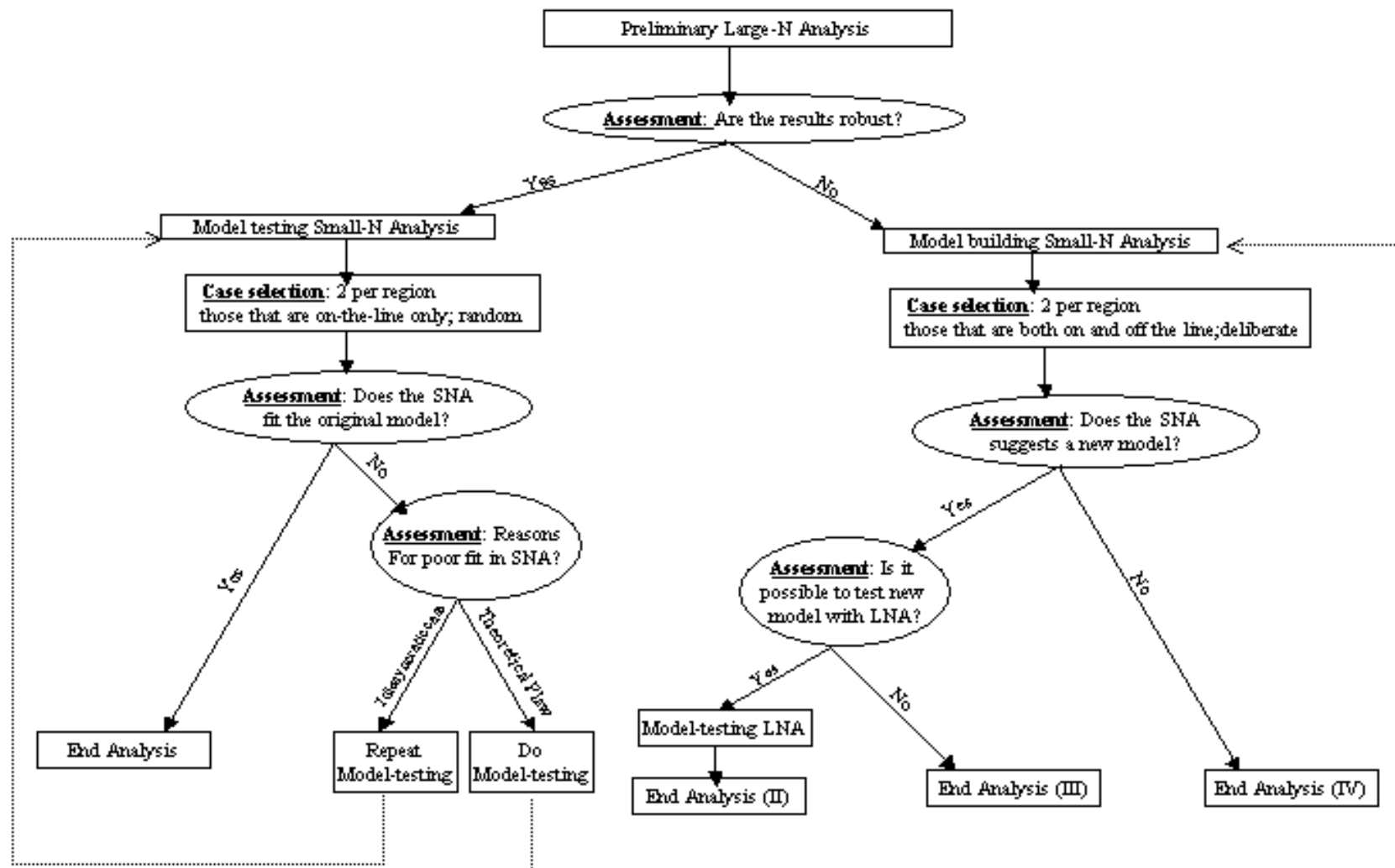


Figure 1. Overview of the Nested Analysis, which show the progression of the LNA through the SNA to determine if the theoretical foundations of the study are accurate if the theoretical foundations of the study are accurate.¹

¹ Adapted from “Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research,” by Evan S. Lieberman, 2005, *American Political Science Review*, 99 (3), p. 437.

Data Collection Methods

In this section, the following elements of this research project are examined, defined, and discussed: (a) the manner in which the survey was administered and related issues of anonymity and confidentiality, (b) details of the actual survey form and its composition, and (c) the number of participants in the survey.

Administration of the Survey

This cross-sectional survey was available to all individuals nationwide who homeschool in the United States either by invitation from an identified e-mail list server, advertisement in a homeschooling publication, or by way of snowballing. The survey was voluntary, but it asked for a referral of other homeschooling families that may be interested in taking the survey.

Formsite.com hosted the survey and the respondents may request to be informed of the results of the study via the e-mail address provided on their completed survey. No other incentives were given to the participants of this study, other than their knowledge that they were contributing to the field of homeschool research.

Anonymity. The survey was taken voluntarily online without the researcher having any indication of whom the respondents were that filled out the survey. Other than the background information that may indicate what region of the United States the respondents were from and that the respondents were homeschoolers, no other identifying marks appeared on the survey to link the survey to the respondents. However, the respondents were asked if they would agree to participate in a future interview via e-mail regarding their homeschooling styles, instructional practices, and reading curriculum choices in the home. E-mail was the only form of contact that the respondents were asked to disclose, therefore the researcher conveyed to the participants that their anonymity was assured.

Confidentiality. Other than the respondents e-mail address, no other identifying information was requested from the respondents. No e-mail addresses provided by respondents were sold or given out to any other organization or used for any other purposes than the intended use of this study. Furthermore, since the survey was completely online and routed through a third party (Formsite.com), confidentiality of the respondents was assured.

The Survey (LNS)

Details of the survey. Once the survey was published, it remained open to homeschoolers for one month. If a participant made a referral of another homeschooling family that might be interested in taking the survey via an e-mail address (snowballing), the researcher followed up that referral with an e-mail letter (Appendix D) addressing the family and introducing the study to them. The letter contained a link to the survey and the family was encouraged to participate. The family was asked to participate only once and no additional contact was made unless the family was chosen to participate in the qualitative stage of follow-up interviews.

The survey was made up of 28 questions broken down into four sections (Appendix E) identified as biographical information, homeschool style, homeschool curriculum choices, and reading instructional practices. Section I (background information) included eight short answer responses relating to the individual family's demographics including locality of the homeschool, ethnicity, and religious preference. Sections II (homeschool styles), III (teaching styles), and IV (reading methods) used selection questions.

Pilot study. Since the researcher developed the survey utilized in this study and no previous instrument exists that generated the type of information that this study was seeking, it was necessary to gather input concerning both the survey format itself and the questions/statements utilized. Initially, the researcher elicited assistance from 4 to 6 specialist

(homeschoolers, teachers, and curriculum developers) to determine the accuracy of the compiled questions in sections II (homeschooling styles), III (teaching styles), and IV (reading methods), to ensure that the questions validate the nature of the categories identified in the study. After feedback was acquired and reflected upon, and corrections made to the appropriate survey items, a pilot study was used to further address the issues of content validity and reliability.

According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) content validity is the extent to which the survey in question gathers information on what it is intended to study. While, reliability refers to the extent to which the elements of the survey can be repeated over time (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). In other words, it is the degree to which the responses of the homeschooling parents will be consistent and dependable from one parent to another.

The pilot survey was distributed to a panel of homeschooling experts in order to develop a final form of the survey that reflects the nature of the study. The 10 members of the panel included homeschooling parents/teachers, homeschool researchers, and identified homeschooling experts. The panel was given one week to return their comments. They were asked to comment on the cover letter and the content of the survey itself. Pilot study results were utilized to make any adaptations of the questionnaire as needed.

Composition of the survey. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003), surveys should come with explicit yet concise instructions of what is expected of the participants. An introductory letter was included with the initial e-mail inviting participants to take part in the survey. The survey was made up of four sections. The first section addressed the biographical information of the family such as what region of the United States the family is located in, their ethnic identification, number of students homeschooled, ages of students homeschooled, and religion practiced. The biographical information was used to determine the sample of

homeschooling parents that participated in the study. Section II focused on the style of homeschool that each respondent identifies with. Section III focused on instructional practices engaged in by the respondents. Finally, section IV focused on the type of reading methods and curriculum that the respondents utilize within his/her homeschool.

Numbers of Subjects

As the study was intended to sample a population size of nearly 2 million homeschooled students nationwide, Johnson and Christensen (2004) suggest a minimum of 384 participants be gathered. However, because homeschoolers are so diverse and the sampling measures (purposive and snowballing) are not as efficient as other sampling measures, the researcher put a limit of 1000 responses.

Post-Survey Interview (SNS)

The qualitative phase of the study consisted of structured interviews from 21 families across the United States (two from each identified region) and an Instant Messaging (IM) session with the respondent, if the respondents wished to engage in such an event.

Details of the interview. The interviews included a list of 10 open-end questions developed from the original data collected during the LNA. Parents were sent the interview questions via e-mail along with a detailed letter explaining exactly how the researcher will use the information (Appendix F). The primary homeschooling parent was asked to answer the questions as completely as possible and to reflect the truest nature of the homeschool. Once the questions were answered by the respondent, he or she was asked to return them to the researcher via e-mail.

Finally, the researcher invited the respondents to participate in an IM session with the interviewer on a specified date. During this time, the respondent and the interviewer were able to

communicate openly about the survey and the interview questions in order to follow up on any areas of the interview response that may need clarification or to ask follow-up questions.

Composition of the interviews. The structured interview questions were made up of various questions rising directly from topics in the surveys that needed more clarification or further investigation. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) state, “The socially situated researcher creates, through interaction and material practices, those realities and representations that are the subject matter of inquiry” (p. 641). Once the data was collected and analyzed from the LNS, the researcher developed 10 open-ended questions that reflected the nature of the study. This process was itself iterative and emerged out of the LNA. As Lieberman (2005) suggests, “the goal of the preliminary LNA is to explore as many appropriate, testable hypotheses as is possible with available theory and data” (p. 438), while the “SNA should be used to answer those questions left open by the LNA – either because of insufficient data to assess statistical relationships or because of the nature of causal order could not be confidently inferred” (p. 440).

The first question asked the respondents to identify where they lived in the United States, so that the researcher could classify them by region and make sure there was a stratified sample from the five regions within the United States. The second question asked the respondents to give their reasons for homeschooling. This question was included to look specifically for reasons that may indicate if geographic location, religion, or ethnicity were among a parents reasons for homeschooling and how that might influence the type of homeschool they ran, the type of teacher they were, and/or the type of reading methods they used to teach reading. Question 3 addressed the actual homeschool environment and how parents structure the learning environment. The researcher wanted to give parents a chance to explain not only how they structure their homeschool, but also why they structure it the way they do.

The fourth question addressed how parents decided what types of materials to use or not use in their homeschool. Again, this question was intended to probe more deeply into “why” parents pick certain curricula or why they do not use a curriculum at all. Question #5 asked parents to describe the relationship between themselves and their children. Instead of simply labeling a parent as a certain type of teacher, this question gave the researcher insight into why a parent might be one type of teacher over another.

The sixth question allowed parents to tell their stories of how their child or children learned to read. This question got to the heart of each child’s experience of learning to read. This question offered insight into the type of methods used to teach reading and how parents addressed their struggles and successes in teaching their children to read. The initial online survey asked parents to think about their most recent reader, but here parents could address how each one of their children learned to read and offer insight into how they dealt with individual learning styles and personal strengths and weaknesses.

Questions 7, 8, and 9 addressed specifically the three family characteristics that this study proposed to look at in regards to their impact on teaching reading in the homeschool. It allowed parents to explain how they felt their community (geographically), their religion, and their ethnicity may have influenced how their child or children learned to read. Finally, question # 10 offered an open forum for parents to share anything else that they felt was helpful or important to the actual reading process of their children.

Problematic areas of the interviews. Since the interview questions were designed after the initial pilot study and in response to answers given on the initial survey, the researcher was not able to run a pilot study. Furthermore, since the questions were open-ended and varied in

responses, the researcher had to use her personal judgment in coding these responses. This may have lead to researcher bias in some instances.

Another problematic area lies in the fact that these interviews were via e-mail communications, and while that type of communication is becoming increasingly acceptable in today's world, e-mail still lacks the emotive component that makes qualitative studies rich and authentic. The researcher had to make assumptions about what the writer of the e-mail was trying to convey in his or her words, and at times the intended meaning may not have been interpreted correctly.

Data Analysis Procedure

The quantitative data were analyzed using the *Statistical Packages for the Social Science 15.0* computer program, and the results of this analysis are presented, examined, and discussed in detail in Chapter IV (Survey and Interview Results). The initial analysis was conducted from the results of the online survey. This analysis included (a) simple statistics used to describe the sample population, (b) the frequencies and percentages for responses to these same sections, (c) a test for internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) for the primary research variables, and (d) Chi-square tests of independence.

From the results of the statistical analysis, 21 cases were selected based on where the family was located within the United States to give the follow-up interview questions. The results of this qualitative component of the study were coded and analyzed using Microsoft Word either in order to substantiate the theoretical framework of the LNA or to create a new model from which to reanalyze the LNA. LaPella (2004) provides a detailed process for coding and retrieval of qualitative data using Microsoft word. It includes the following seven steps:

1. Format the data into data tables including participant ID information and utterance sequence numbers.
 2. Develop a theme codebook in tabular format to define linkages between numeric codes and theme categories. Logically organize the codebook based on your framework or report outline.
 3. Determine face-sheet data categories on which retrieval will be done and add columns to the data tables to accommodate coding for these.
 4. Do the thematic coding in the theme code column, modifying the table as needed to handle text that should be coded with multiple themes.
1. Sort the data by desired face-sheet data and theme code categories to look for patterns.
 2. Validate the coding within a data table, correct, and re-sort.
 3. Merge appropriate data tables and validate coding across data tables (optional) (p.87).

Calculations of the Quantitative Data

Part 1. The first eight questions of the survey were used to gather background information from the respondents. The questions posed elicited the ethnic identity of the respondents, the reasons they choose to homeschool, the location of their home within the United States, how many students are currently being homeschooled, and religious affiliation.

Part 2. There were six questions in part two of the survey. Answering these questions identified a parent's homeschooling style as being Classical (coded as 1), Eclectic (coded as 2), Traditional (coded as 3), or Unschooling (coded as 4). Question one asked parents to classify their homeschooling style. Questions 2-6 asked the parents to pick the answer that best completed the statement according to how they run their homeschool. The homeschooling style was determined based on the majority of answers chosen for each category. An example of this

is: if a parent categorized himself or herself as an unschooling parent and then picked answers three or more times within that same category, then the homeschooling style was considered to be identified. However, if the parent labeled themselves as one type of homeschooler, but chose answers three or more times within another category, then the researcher used the category identified by the answers to the multiple choice questions to classify the respondent. If however, a parent categorized him or herself as a particular type of homeschooler and chose answers in various styles with no majority falling in one category, then the survey was considered inadmissible because the homeschooling style was undeterminable.

Part 3. There were six questions in part three of the survey. Answering these questions identified a parent's teaching style as being Authoritative/Formal (coded as 1), Delegative (coded as 2), Demonstrative (coded as 3), or Facilitative (coded as 4). Question 1 asked parents to classify themselves into one of the four teaching styles. Questions 2-6 asked the parents to pick the answer that best completed the statement according to how they teach within their homeschool. The teaching style were determined based on the majority of answers chosen for each category. For example, if a parent categorized him or herself as a facilitator and then picked answers three or more times within that same category, then the teaching style was considered to be identified. However, if the parent labeled himself/herself as one type of teacher, but chose answers three or more times within another category, then the researcher used the category identified by the answers to the multiple choice questions to classify the respondent. If however, a parent categorized him or herself as a particular type of teacher and chose answers in various styles with no majority falling in one category, then the survey was considered inadmissible because the teaching style was undeterminable.

Part 4. There were seven questions in part four of the survey. Answering these questions identified the reading curriculum used in the homeschool to teach initial reading skills as Language based approach (coded as 1), Linguistic approach (coded as 2), Balanced literacy approach (coded as 3), or Skills based approach (coded as 4). Question 1 asked parents to reflect on the last reading curriculum used within the homeschool to teach reading and classify it as one of four types of curricula. Questions 2-6 asked the parents to pick the answer that best completed the statement according to the last reading curriculum they used to teach reading. The reading curriculum was determined based on the majority of answers chosen for each category. For example, if a parent categorized the curriculum as skills based and then picked answers three or more times within that same category, then the reading curriculum was considered to be identified. However, if the parent labeled the curriculum as skills based, but chose answers three or more times within another category, then the researcher used the category identified by the answers to the multiple choice questions to classify the respondent's reading method. If however, a parent categorized the reading curriculum as a particular type and chose answers in various curricula with no majority falling in one category, then the survey was considered inadmissible because the reading curriculum was undeterminable. The seventh question asked if parents always used the same type of reading curriculum for all the students they have taught to read or if they have used various curricula.

CHAPTER 4: QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS (LNA)

Introduction

The present study was intended to answer the general question: “Do certain family characteristics influence the type of homeschool a parent engages in, the style of teaching they employ in that homeschool, and the type of program or method used to teach initial reading skills to their students?” The actual collection of data for the quantitative component of the study took one month and came from an online survey hosted by Formsite.com. The study specifically addressed the following questions:

1. To what extent is the style of homeschool operated by a parent influenced by ethnicity, religion, and/or geographic location.
2. To what extent are the instructional practices employed in the homeschool influenced by ethnicity, religion, and/or geographic location.
3. To what extent is the choice of a reading method or curriculum used to teach literacy in the homeschool influenced by ethnicity, religion, and/or geographic location.
4. To what extent is the teaching style of a parent and/or the reading curriculum chosen by a parent influenced by a parent’s homeschooling style?

The quantitative data were analyzed using the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 15.0* (2006) computer program. Simple statistics were obtained to describe the sample. Internal reliability of the statements that made up each set of variables was analyzed using *SPSS 15.0* to find Cronbach’s Alpha. The statements used to determine a parent’s homeschooling style, were

found to have a coefficient of 0.646, which by some standards might be considered low. However, Shoukri and Edge (1996) have stated as a general rule of thumb that coefficients that are 0.75 or higher are considered excellent, whereas a coefficient of 0.40 to 0.75 are good and anything 0.40 or less is considered poor. With this criterion, a coefficient of 0.646 indicates good internal reliability among the statements. The statements used to determine a parent's teaching style and the types of reading program were found to have respective coefficients of 0.761 and 0.774, which are at good and approaching excellent levels. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) a coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered acceptable in most social science research situations.

The remainder of this chapter will look at the quantitative analysis of the LNS (large number sample). Chapter 5 will address the qualitative analysis of the SNS (small number sample), which involved analysis of 21 structured interviews conducted via e-mail by the researcher and instant messaging chat sessions conducted using Gabbly.com with eleven of the interviewees.

Sample of Participants and Population

The initial quantitative data were collected using an online survey from homeschooling families in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. Table 3 shows the number of respondents per state. Nine hundred and ninety seven (N=997) individuals signed on to take the survey with a completion rate of 70.9%. This left 290 respondents who either did not fill out any of the survey after signing on (14.9%) or who answered some of the questions but did not complete the survey (14.1%). Most of these individuals who stopped taking the survey do not pass Section III, question #2. This question is the second one addressing teaching styles and some of those who stopped indicated that they felt they were being too "classified" and could not

pick just one. These respondents were not used in further analyses of this study. Another 25 respondents lived outside the USA and were not used in this study. This left a total number of N=682 respondents.

Respondents included the homeschooling mother (97.5%), the homeschooling father (1.8%), or another adult (0.7%) who shared in the homeschooling experience. The majority of the respondents indicated they were the primary homeschooling adult (93.1%), while others (6.9%) were divided among those who either shared in the responsibility of the homeschooling (5.9%) or supported the efforts of the primary homeschooling adult (1.0%).

Table 3. State Distribution of Homeschooling Families

State	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
AL	6	.9	.9	.9
AK	1	.1	.1	1.0
AZ	15	2.2	2.2	3.2
AR	2	.3	.3	3.5
CA	47	6.9	6.9	10.4
CO	2	.3	.3	10.7
CT	7	1.0	1.0	11.7
FL	31	4.5	4.5	16.3
GA	8	1.2	1.2	17.4
HI	24	3.5	3.5	21.0
ID	1	.1	.1	21.1
IL	27	4.0	4.0	25.1
IN	8	1.2	1.2	26.2
IA	5	.7	.7	27.0
KS	9	1.3	1.3	28.3
KY	9	1.3	1.3	29.6
LA	5	.7	.7	30.4
ME	63	9.2	9.2	39.6
MD	4	.6	.6	40.2
MA	51	7.5	7.5	47.7
MI	5	.7	.7	48.4
MN	27	4.0	4.0	52.3
MS	10	1.5	1.5	53.8
MO	10	1.5	1.5	55.3
MT	1	.1	.1	55.4
NE	7	1.0	1.0	56.5
NV	13	1.9	1.9	58.4
NH	2	.3	.3	58.7
NJ	5	.7	.7	59.4
NM	2	.3	.3	59.7
NY	12	1.8	1.8	61.4

Table 3. State Distribution of Homeschooling Families, *continued*

State	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
NC	21	3.1	3.1	64.5
ND	3	.4	.4	65.0
OH	19	2.8	2.8	67.7
OK	8	1.2	1.2	68.9
OR	7	1.0	1.0	69.9
PA	31	4.5	4.5	74.5
RI	4	.6	.6	75.1
SC	6	.9	.9	76.0
SD	1	.1	.1	76.1
TN	31	4.5	4.5	80.6
TX	46	6.7	6.7	87.4
UT	2	.3	.3	87.7
VT	3	.4	.4	88.1
VA	43	6.3	6.3	94.4
WA	2	.3	.3	94.7
WV	15	2.2	2.2	96.9
WI	8	1.2	1.2	98.1
WY	1	.1	.1	98.2
DC	12	1.8	1.8	100.0
Total	682	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 details the frequencies and percentages for the overall classification of identified types of homeschools by the online survey. In general, the majority of homeschoolers (69.5%) were identified as being eclectic homeschoolers.

Table 4. Type of Homeschool

Survey	Type of homeschool									
	Classical		Eclectic		Traditional		Unschooler		Undetermined	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Overall classification	37	5.4	477	69.5	44	6.4	50	7.3	78	11.4

Table 5 details the frequencies and percentages of the overall classifications of teaching styles as identified by the online survey. The teaching style that was chosen most often (mode) was the facilitative style (41.4%).

Table 5. Type of Teaching Style

Survey	Type of Teaching Style									
	Authoritative		Delegative		Demonstrative		Facilitative		Undetermined	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Overall classification	76	11.1	137	20.0	8	1.2	284	41.4	181	26.4

Table 6 details the frequencies and percentages for the overall classification of reading methods identified by the online survey. The method for teaching reading that was chosen most often (mode) was the balanced approach (41.7%).

Table 6. Type of Reading Method

Survey	Type of Reading Method									
	Phonics		Balanced		Linguistic		Language		Undetermined	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Overall classification	188	27.4	286	41.7	13	1.9	43	6.3	156	22.7

The Pilot Survey

The pilot survey was distributed to a panel of homeschooling experts and parents. The 10 members of the panel included homeschooling parents/teachers, homeschool researchers, and identified homeschooling experts. The panel members took one week to return their comments. The researcher asked the members of the panel to comment on the cover letter and the content of the survey itself. The recommendations of the members of the pilot study did not result in any adaptations to the questionnaire.

The Survey

Demographic Summary

Religion. Since this study looked at the influence of religion (Section I: A6) on homeschool styles, teaching styles, and reading methods, the survey asked the respondents to identify their religious preference. However, respondents were given the option not to answer

this question if they did not want to. The largest group of respondents was classified as belonging to the Protestant religion (44.4%), which included various Protestant denominations. The other categories included Catholics (12.9%), other religions (16.1%) (see Table 7 for specific percentages of other religions), no religion (2.2%), which included identified agnostics and atheists, and those who did not indicate any religion, families with multiple religions (1.8%), and those who decided not to reveal their religious preference (22.4%).

For the purposes of the quantitative analysis, those families classified as having multiple religions in the home were incorporated into the “other” religion category. The researcher did this because there were only a few, and without combining categories some of the expected frequencies for a chi-square test concerning independence would be too low, as confirmed by Gene Sprechini, a seasoned statistician at Lycoming College (personal communication February 11, 2007). In addition, since more than one religion was present in the home these respondents did not fit into the Protestant or Catholic religions. In depth analysis of these 15 cases indicated that at least one of the multiple religions was an “other” religion in all cases. Respondents who did not answer the religion question or decided not to reveal their religious preference were not included in the quantitative analysis for this section. Furthermore, those identified as having no religion were eliminated from the quantitative analysis. This helped to prevent expected frequencies from being too low for a chi-square test concerning independence, thus leaving $n=516$ respondents who were used in the analysis of the religion question.

Table 7. Respondent's Identified Religion of Family

	Religion	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Protestant	303	44.4	44.5
	Catholic	88	12.9	12.9
	Jewish**	12	1.8	1.8
	Islam**	1	0.1	0.1
	Quaker**	4	0.6	0.6
	Hindu**	1	0.1	0.1
	Pagan**	13	1.9	1.9
	Atheist	4	0.6	0.6
	Mormon**	16	2.3	2.3
	Unitarian Universalist**	44	6.5	6.5
	Agnostic	3	0.4	0.4
	Multiple**	12	1.8	1.8
	Other*	9	1.3	1.3
	N/A	154	22.4	22.5
	Seventh Day Adventist**	4	0.6	0.6
	None	8	1.2	1.2
	Buddhist**	2	0.3	0.3
	Jehovah's Witness**	4	0.6	0.6
Total		682	100.0	

* Other religions included: Golden Rule, Sacred Name, Sabbath Keepers, Companion, and Conservative Congregational ** These religions were combined together in the other religion category for over all analysis

Ethnicity. This study also looked at the influence of ethnicity (Section I: A8) on homeschool styles, teaching styles, and reading methods, therefore, the survey asked the respondents to identify their ethnicity. Again, respondents were given the option to not answer this question if they did not want to. A majority of 76.6% of the respondents identified themselves as European Americans while 5.1% of the respondents identified themselves as one of various minorities (see Table 8 for details on the percentages of specific minorities who responded). There were 11.8% of the respondents who indicated that they came from multicultural homes. The remaining 6.2% of the respondents identified themselves as “other”. In order to assess correctly if the individual lived within the USA when choosing the “other” category, the researcher went back to the original survey responses for each of these respondents

and confirmed if they lived within the United States. Those who chose “other” and lived within the United States often wrote that the “Caucasian/White” choice was missing from the ethnicity question or they were of another nationality but lived in the United States. The survey had the choice of European American instead of Caucasian/White. Those who gave no response and those who did not list their ethnicity were eliminated from the analysis in this section. Thus leaving $n=645$ for the analysis of ethnicity.

Table 8. Respondent’s Identified Ethnicity

	Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent
Valid	African	5	0.8
	Asian	12	1.9
	European	494	76.6
	Hispanic	10	1.6
	Latin	2	0.3
	Native	6	0.9
	Multicultural	76	11.8
	Other*	40	6.2
	Total	645	100.0

* Others referred to those living in the USA, but did not see the Caucasian/White category

Number and ages of children. The survey asked the respondents to identify the number of children they homeschooled and their ages (Section I: A3, 4). There were 1439 students being homeschooled by the respondents of this survey with age ranges from 2-18 years (those under 2 years were not included and neither were those over 18 years of age). Figure 2 shows how many children were in the home, with a median of 2.00, and a mean of 2.12 (SD 1.16). The researcher divided the students into 4 categories: Preschool (2-4yrs.), Primary school (5-10yrs.), Middle school (11-13yrs.), and High school (14-18yrs.). The results showed that 10.3% of the students were preschoolers, 58.7% were in the primary school years, 17.3% were in middle school, and 13.7% were in high school.

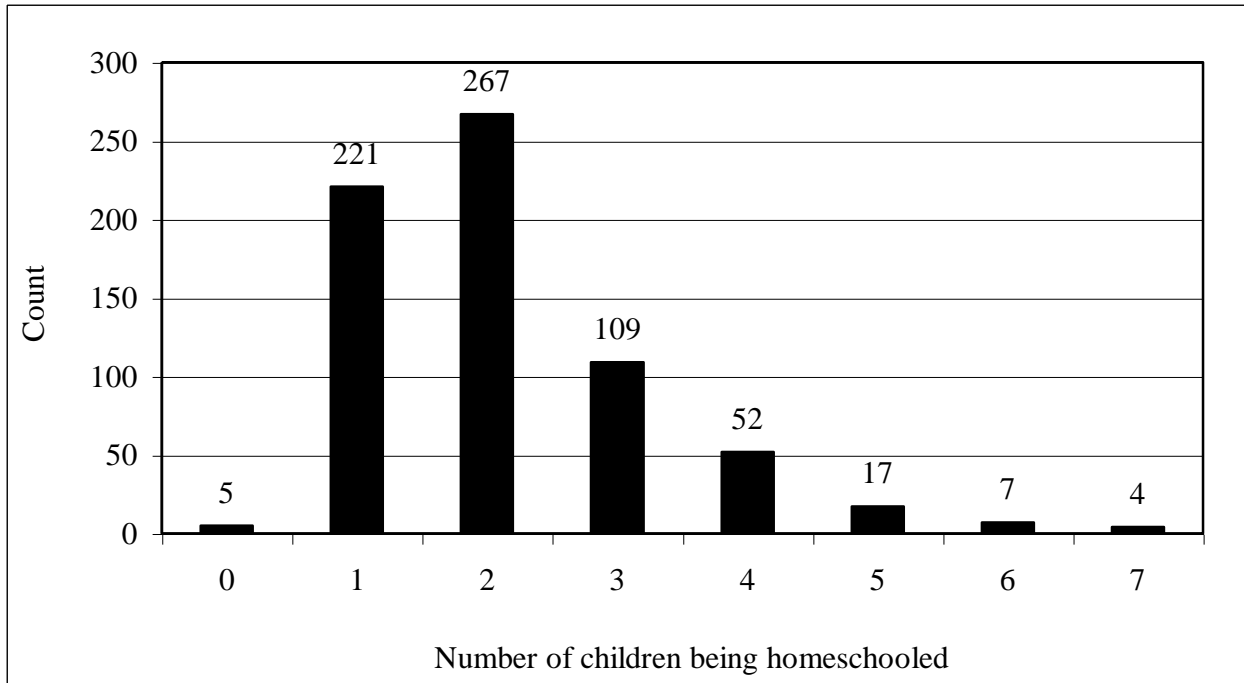


Figure 2. Number of children being homeschooled per household

Reasons for homeschooling. Section I: A5 asked each respondent to indicate his or her reasons for homeschooling. The respondents indicated that the majority of them homeschooled for academic reasons (69.7%) with efficacy stated as the second most common reason to homeschool (46.9%). Religious reasons (40.7%) and better socialization (38.4%) rounded out the top four reasons why each respondent homeschooled. Figure 3 depicts the break down of the reasons why these parents homeschool their children. The “other” reasons hand listed by parents on the survey included: raising the next generation, gifted children who are naturally auto didactic, more family time together, it fits their lifestyle of frequent travel, and they wanted to give their children a world-view and truth about history.

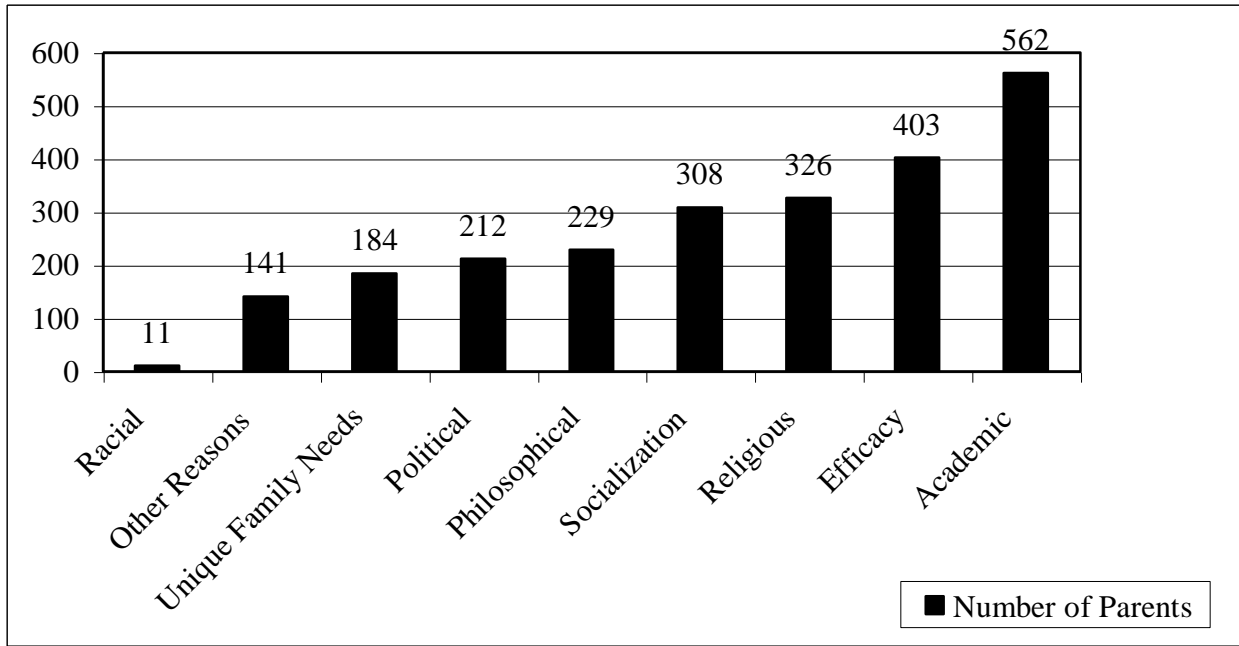


Figure 3. Reasons why parents choose to homeschool their children

Number of years homeschooling. Section I: A7 asked respondents to indicate how many years they had been homeschooling. The number of years homeschooling ranged from <1 year (indicated by those who had just begun) to 24 years. Figure 4 shows the breakdown of how many years the respondents have been homeschooling. The mean number of years for homeschooling was 5.415 (S.D. 4.63).

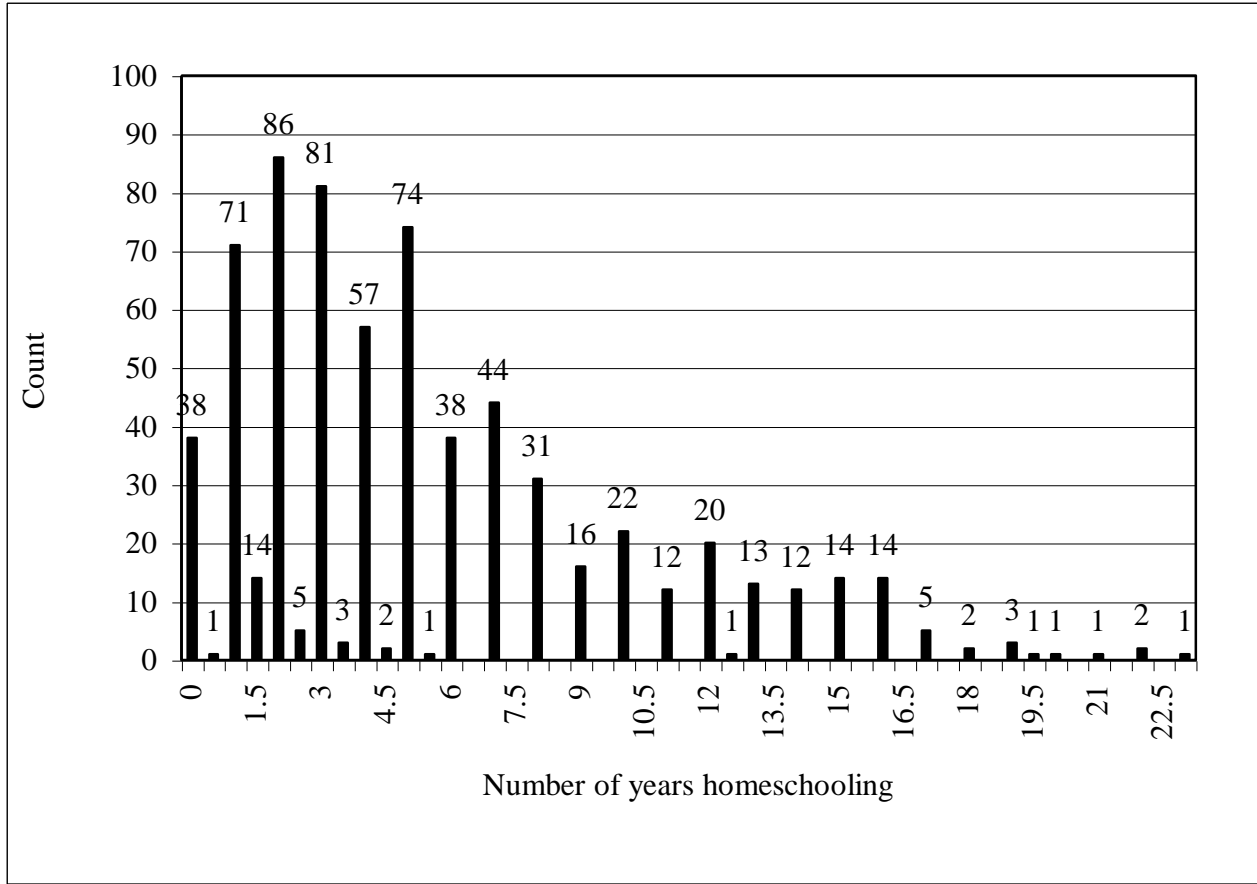


Figure 4. Number of years a parent has been homeschooling

Research Hypotheses

Quantitative Analysis (LNA)

Online Survey

Three aspects of the respondents' homeschools were examined in this study: the type of homeschool they engaged in, the type of teacher the parent was, and the type of reading method used to teach initial reading skills. Evidence of a possible relationship between each of these aspects and each of the variables, religion, ethnicity, and geographical location, was explored using a Pearson chi-square (χ^2) test concerning independence. In order to determine a

respondent's homeschooling style, teaching style, and reading method used in the homeschool, the respondents were given five statements per topic and asked to pick the statement that best described them and/or their homeschool. Each statement had been previously identified by the researcher as fitting under a particular style of homeschooling, teaching, or reading method. A majority of three responses falling under the same style was needed to classify a respondent as a particular type of homeschooler and teacher, and to identify the type of reading method used in the homeschool. If a respondent did not have a majority of three responses in any of the attributes (homeschooling style, teaching style, and reading method), then they were categorized as undeterminable.

Type of homeschool. Hypothesis H₀1b states: a family's homeschooling style is independent of their religious beliefs. In this study it was found that a parent's religion had a significant impact on the type of homeschooling style a parent engaged in, $\chi^2(8, n=513)=49.85$, $p < .001$. However, neither ethnicity nor geographical location of the homeschool was found to have a significant impact on style of homeschooling.

Figure 5 displays the relationship between the style of homeschooling parents choose and their religion. It appears that Protestants (8.6%) and Catholics (11.4%) more frequently use the traditional homeschooling style than those who are included in the "other" religion category (2.5%). Those in the "other" religion category were more likely to be unschoolers (16.4%) while Catholics (3.4%) and Protestants (17%) were less inclined to use the unschooling style. When looking at the classical approach to homeschooling, Protestants (7.3%) and Catholics (8.0%) were more likely to use this style than those in the "other" religion category (1.6%). Of all the homeschooling families that responded to this survey, only 11.9% were unable to be classified as preferring one type of homeschool to another based on their

religious preference. However, the overall homeschooling method preferred by all religions was determined to be the eclectic style of homeschooling with Protestants at 70.6%, “other” religions at 70.5% and Catholics at 61.4% in this study.

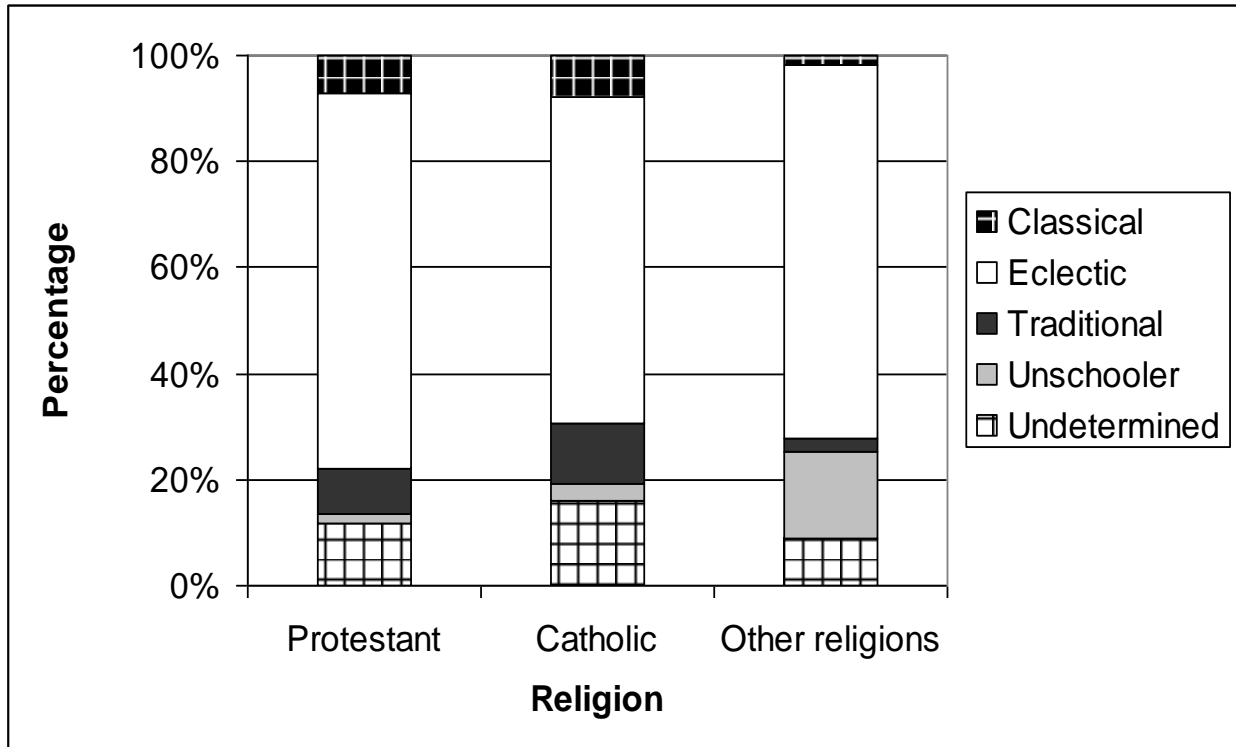


Figure 5. Relationship of a parent’s religion to his/her homeschooling style

Hypothesis H₀₄ states: A parent’s choices of teaching style and/or reading curriculum are independent of his/her homeschooling style. In this study, it was found that a parent’s homeschooling style had a significant impact on the type of teaching style he/she engaged in, $\chi^2(16, N=682) = 126.570, p < .000$. The same was found to be true of a parent’s choice in a reading curriculum, $\chi^2(16, N=682) = 101.82, p < .000$.

Figure 6 displays the relationship between homeschooling style and teaching style. According to the quantitative analysis, 87.8% of unschooling parents engaged in a facilitative

type teaching styles, while only 9.1% of traditional homeschoolers engaged in a facilitative type teaching style. In contrast, traditional homeschoolers engaged in authoritative type teaching styles (40.9%) as well as delegative type teaching styles (22.7%), whereas no unschoolers used the authoritative teaching style and only 4.1% of the used the delegative teaching style. Classical homeschoolers used the delegative type teaching style the most (30.6%), followed by the authoritative teaching style (25%) and then the facilitative teaching style (19.4%). Eclectic homeschoolers were also more likely to use the facilitative type teaching style (44%) more than any of the other teaching styles. The least likely teaching style to be used by any homeschooler was the demonstrative teaching style, however, classical homeschoolers used it more frequently than any other type of homeschooler (2.8%).

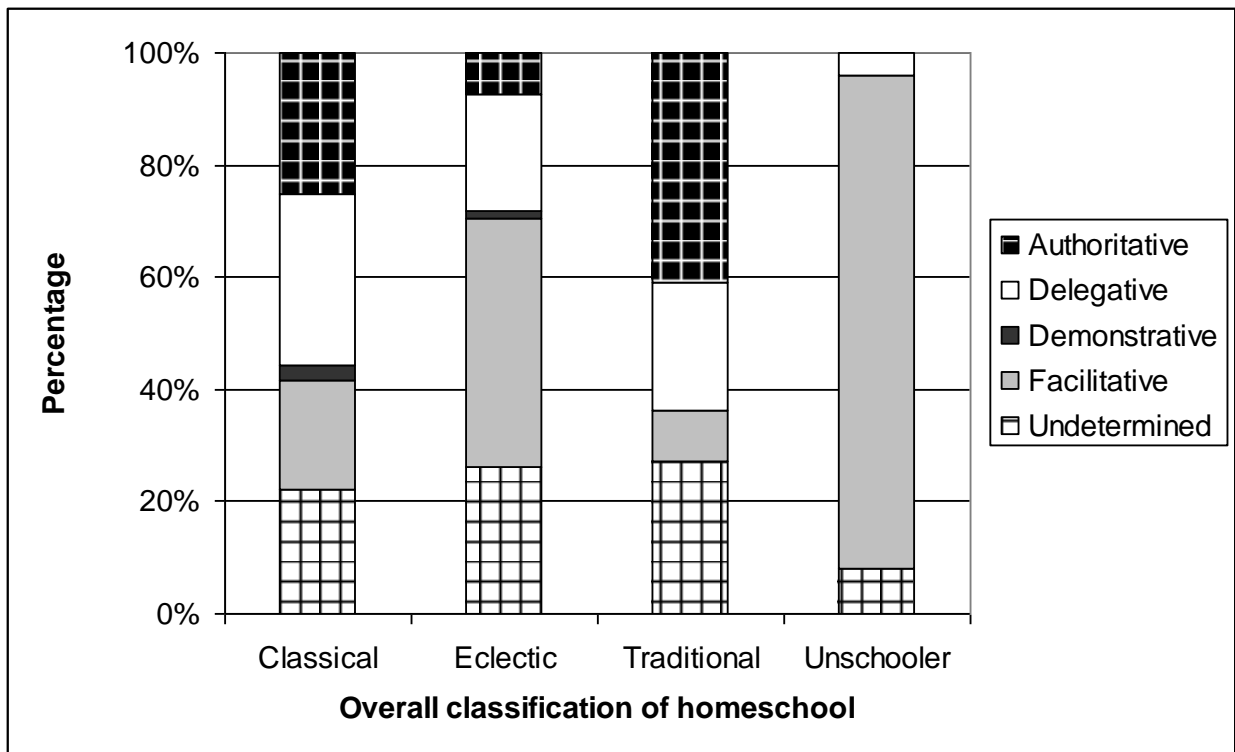


Figure 6. Relationship between a parent’s homeschooling style and his/her teaching style

Figure 7 displays the relationship between homeschooling styles and reading curriculum choices. Concerning the type of reading curriculum chosen by certain types of homeschoolers, the analysis determined that the largest number of the homeschoolers ($n=285$) in this study used a balanced approach to teaching reading. However, traditional homeschoolers (56.8%) tended to use a phonics curriculum more often than any other type of homeschooler, whereas only 2% of unschoolers used a phonics curriculum to teach reading. However, unschoolers (32.7%) were more likely than any other type of homeschooler to use the language approach to teaching reading. Classical homeschoolers used the phonics (44.4%) approach to teaching reading more than any other type of reading program followed closely by a balanced approach (33.3%). Eclectic homeschoolers (45.7%) in this study were the ones to use a balanced approach to literacy more than any of the other types of homeschoolers. The percentage of respondents who were undeterminable was 22.6%.

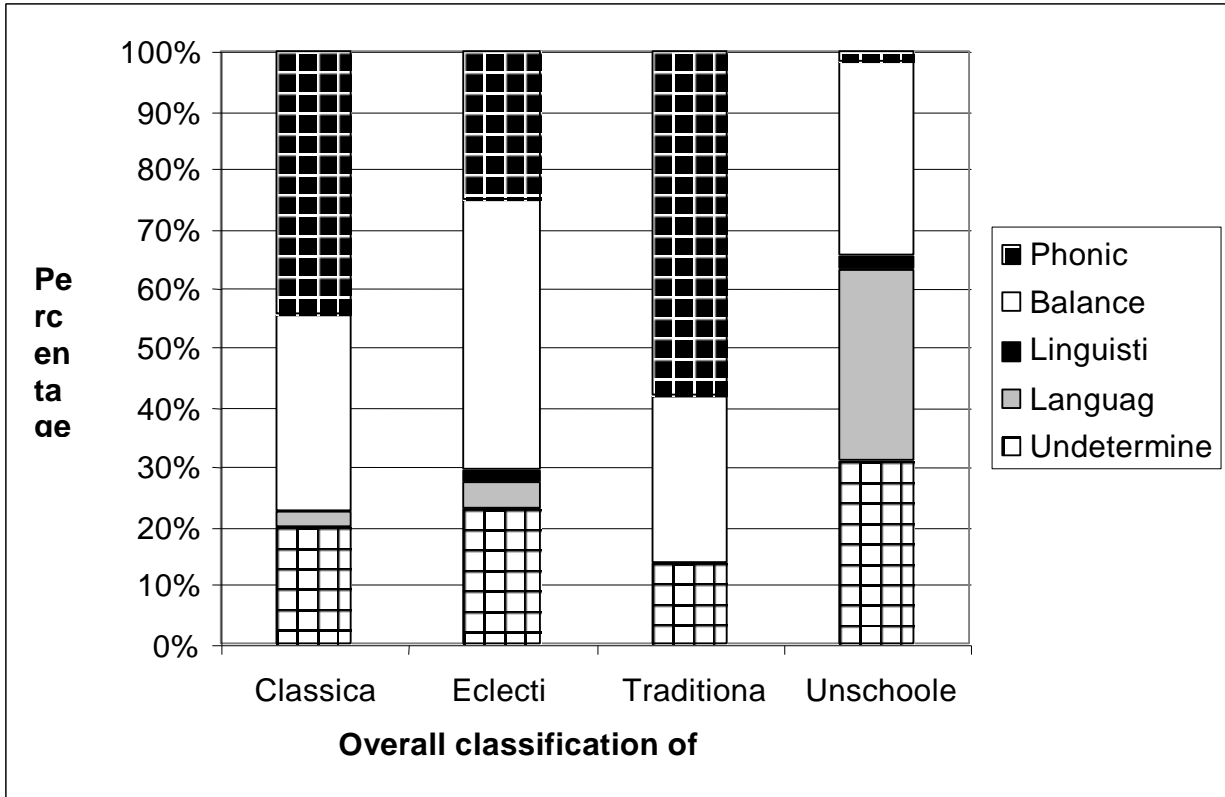


Figure 7. Relationship between a parent's homeschooling style and the type of reading curriculum used in the homeschool

Type of teaching styles. Hypothesis H₀2b states: a homeschooling family's choices of instructional practices are independent of their religious beliefs. This study found that a parent's religion had a significant impact on the type of teacher he or she was, $\chi^2(8, n=516) = 54.94, p < .000$. However, neither ethnicity nor geographical location of the homeschool was found to have a significant impact.

Figure 8 displays the relationship between the style of teaching and religion. Those parents professing to be Catholic or Protestant engaged in either authoritative type teaching styles (13.5% of Catholics, 14.8% of Protestants) or delegative styles (24.7% of Catholics, 26.6% of Protestants) more frequently than those categorized as "other" religions (8.9% for

Authoritative, 7.9% for Delegative). Furthermore, those classified into the “other” religion category were twice as likely to engage in a facilitative teaching style (61%) than those in either the Protestant (26.6%) or Catholic (25.8%) religions. The demonstrative teaching style was the least likely to be engaged in by any religion; however, Catholics (2.2%) were the ones most likely to engage in this style of teaching followed by Protestants (1.3%). This study found that only one of the respondents categorized as “other” religions engaged in this style of teaching within the homeschool. Those who were not classifiable made up 29.3% of the respondents. There was generally no one preferred method of teaching for all three religious categories, unlike the type of homeschooling parents engage in.

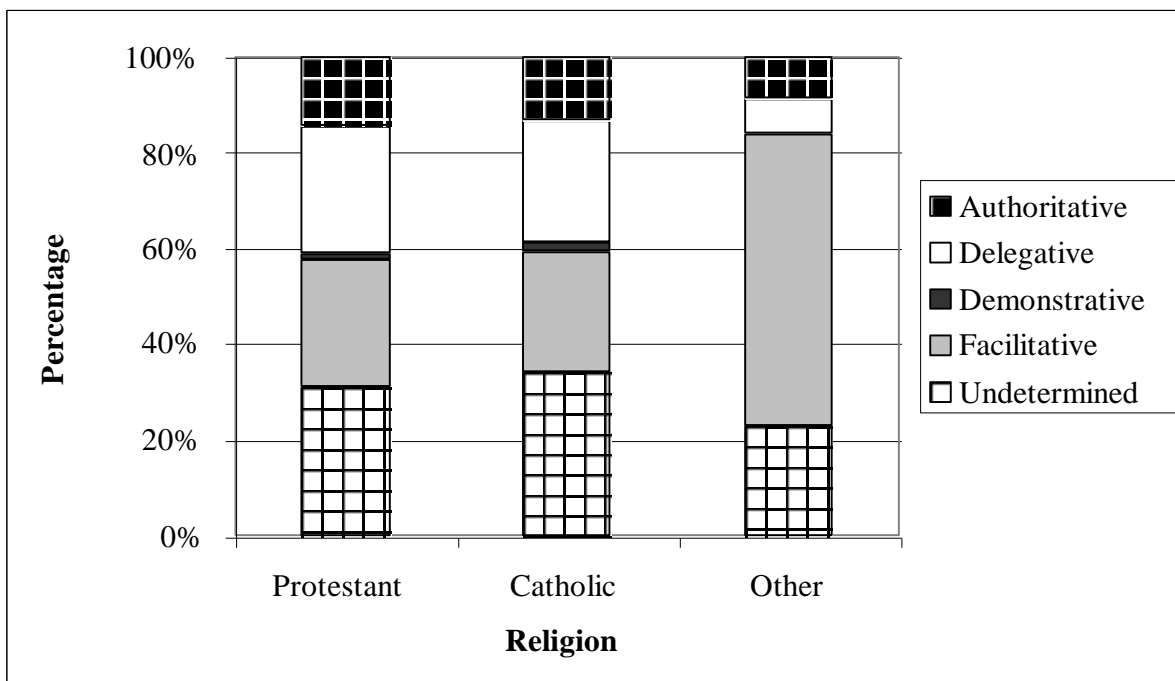


Figure 8. Relationship between a parent’s religion and his/her teaching style

Type of reading method used. Hypothesis H₀3b states: a homeschooling family’s choices of reading curricula are independent of their religious beliefs. This study found that a parent’s religion had a significant impact on the type of curriculum that he/she used to teach initial

reading skills, $\chi^2(8, n=516)= 26.78, p= .001$. However, neither ethnicity nor geographical location of the homeschool was found to have a significant impact.

Figure 9 displays the relationship between the type of reading method used and religion. Protestants (35.2%) and Catholics (36%) chose phonics programs more frequently than those in the “other” religion category (17.9%) did. Furthermore, Catholics (6.7%) and “other” religions (7.3%) tended to use the language approach to teaching reading more frequently than Protestants (1.3%) do. However, the overall preferred method for teaching reading in all three religious categories was the balanced literacy approach with “other” religions at 45.5%, Protestants at 42.2% and Catholics at 33.7%. The linguistic approach to teaching reading was the least employed method by the respondents. However, those in the “other” religion category (3.3%) were three times more likely to use this method than Protestants (1.0%) and Catholics (1.1%).

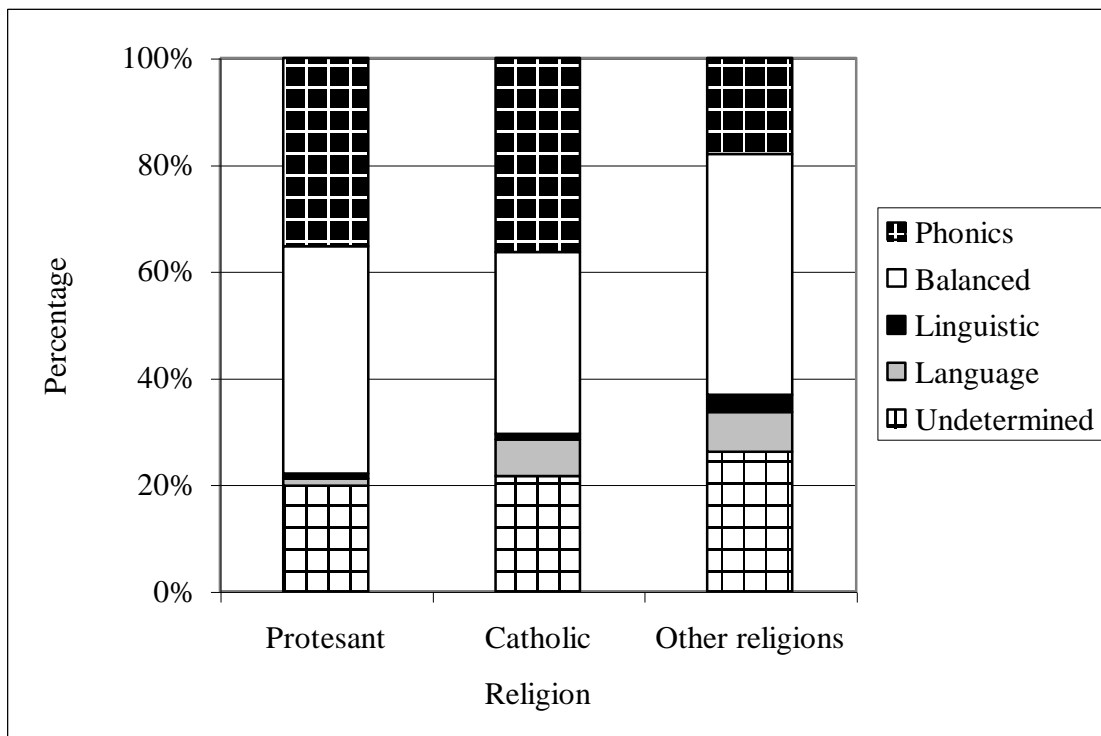


Figure 9. Relationship between a parent’s religion and the type of reading method used

Conclusion

The results of the large number analysis (LNA) suggest that the only family characteristic, among the three addressed in this study (religion, ethnicity, and geographical location), which impacts homeschooling style, teaching style, and reading method used to teach initial reading skills is a family's religion. It was then necessary to perform the small number analysis (SNA) to determine if the 21 cases selected either supported this finding or if they were a poor fit in light of the LNA. If the assessment of the SNA fits the original model as established by the LNA then the analysis will end. However, if the sample cases used in the SNA are a poor fit into the original model, then further assessment will be needed to identify the cause of the misfit whether it was for idiosyncratic reasons or flawed theoretical reasons.

CHAPTER 5: QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS (SNA) AND DISCUSSION

Research Questions

Interviews

The qualitative analysis (SNA) began by using Microsoft Word. According to La Pella (2004) Microsoft Word, if used creatively, can perform several of the same functions as many qualitative data analysis (QDA) software packages. Many qualitative research projects do not need a detailed QDA, but most of the necessary analysis can be performed by using the Table feature of Word as well as Table Sort, Insert File, Find/Replace, and Insert Comment functions (La Pella, 2004). The 21 interviews returned to the researcher via e-mail were formatted into data tables by the questions in the interviews. The researcher labeled them by participant ID and sequence numbers. After reading the interviews, the researcher developed a theme codebook in tabular form to define linkages between numeric codes and theme categories (Appendix H). The theme codebook was organized by the corresponding questions on the interviews. For example, question #1 was given the numeric code 1.0 and subcategories of that question included 1.05, 1.10, etc.

Once all the responses from all interviewees were input under the appropriate headings, the researcher then broke down each answer for each question and coded the responses in the theme code column. The researcher modified the table to handle text that needed to be coded with multiple themes. If the text seemed to fit into more than one theme, the researcher simply copied the text and gave a second code, but indicated a repetition by highlighting the text in red

italics. The researcher then sorted the data by desired face-sheet data and theme code categories to look for patterns.

Furthermore, the researcher also used several techniques for identifying themes as proposed by Ryan and Bernard (2003). Ryan and Bernard (2003) suggest eight different ways to help a qualitative researcher identify themes within his/her research. They include topics that occur and reoccur (repetitions), indigenous typologies or categories, metaphors and analogies, transitions, similarities and differences, linguistic connectors, missing data, and theory related material. This researcher specifically used repetitions, transitions, linguistic connectors, and missing data to help her create and recognize developing themes and sub-themes within this study.

Chat Sessions

Once all interview questions were coded, then each individual interviewee was invited to a private, instant messaging (IM) session. These chat sessions were used to clarify questions that arose out of the interviewees' written responses or expand on comments that were made by the interviewees. Furthermore, these sessions were used to either strengthen the theory of the LNA or support a new theory proposed by the SNA. Eleven of the 21 interviewees attend the private IM sessions with the researcher. Elements of those responses are used as supporting data throughout the SNA.

Question 1. Respondents were asked to indicate which state they lived in. This was done to assure a stratified sample among the five identified regions (Table 1). As indicated earlier, Fearon and Laitin (2005) suggest stratifying by region to ensure an even distribution across a factor that is correlated with common experiences, community, and economic development.

The results of the returned online surveys revealed a distribution of individuals from the North Eastern (NE) USA of 40% of the respondents; from the North West (NW) of 3%; from the Central (C) USA of 17%; from the South East (SE) of 23%; and from the South West (SW) of 17%. When those percentages were divided among 21 interviews, the following numbers of interviews were conducted from each region. In the NE, eight homeschooling families were picked to participate in the interview process. In the SE, four families were interviewed. In the Central USA, three families were interviewed. In the NW, two families were interviewed. Finally, in the SW, four families were interviewed for a total of 21 interviews. The researcher picked every fifth person on the list until the total number of needed respondents returned their surveys.

Question 2. In this question, parents were asked to describe in their own words why they decided to homeschool their child (ren). The results of the LNA revealed that most of the parents homeschooled for academic reasons (69.7%) followed by efficacy (46.9%) and religious (40.7%) reasons. The SNA supported these findings with academic reasons listed most frequently. Analysis of the interviews revealed that 15 out of the 21 interviewees (71.4%) indicated that they homeschooled for academic reasons. A few of the respondents' comments regarding how they described their academic reasons for homeschooling are listed below:

Participant 1 wrote, "To be academically challenged."

Participant 4 wrote, "We think we can do a better job."

Participant 12 wrote, "My husband and I decided to educate our children at home because of the squalid state of our public schools. We tried private school for a short time but the expense led us to keep them at home."

This was followed by efficacy with 10 out of 21 parents (47.6%) reporting some need to individualize the learning environment to meet their children's needs. Some of the respondents' answers are listed below to give an insight into how they viewed the need to individualize the learning environment:

Participant 1 wrote, "To be allowed to learn at their own pace, and to have free time to develop their creativity."

Participant 10 wrote, "The teachers no allowing her to work ahead and making her stay at the same pace as the rest of the class."

Participant 21 wrote, "Now we have additional reasons such as flexibility and individual pacing."

The third most popular reason for homeschooling listed by 8 out of 21 parents (38.1%) was the ability to impart their belief system to their children in a manner that they felt was appropriate. The passion of these respondents' can be seen in the following comments written by participants 14 and 20.

Participant 14 wrote:

My husband I decided to homeschool our children for several reasons. First, we are born-again Christians, and by homeschooling, we can help our children develop a strong spiritual foundation by teaching them about Jesus and God's Word all day long, in all that we do.

Participant 20 wrote, "We decided to homeschool in order to foster a hunger for a living relationship with Christ and the tools of perseverance, obedience and discipline to realize that relationship."

These responses and order of importance mimic those shared by the majority of the 682 individuals surveyed for the LNA. Thus, the reasons for homeschooling expressed in the SNA

seem to support those of the LNA. Other reasons that were shared by the interviewees included social, political, philosophical, unique family needs, and some that were coded as “other” reasons. The “other” reasons included local school closed due to the No Child Left Behind Act, children having to ride a bus too long, spending more time with their children, and a parental history of difficulty in public school.

The least reported reason for homeschooling in both the LNA and the SNA were racial issues. Only 11 out of 682 respondents of the LNA reported this as a reason they homeschooled. No respondents reported this as a reason for homeschooling in the SNA.

Question 3. Respondents were asked to describe how their homeschool (learning environment) has developed. The nature of this question was to look at the type of homeschool parents engaged in and if they were influenced by their religious or spiritual beliefs. As religion was the only variable found in the LNA that had a noticeable relationship with the type of homeschool a parent engaged in, the researcher wanted to investigate this relationship further. Lieberman (2005) suggests that the SNA be used more to fully explain the relationships found in the LNA.

In the SNA, there were eight families who listed religious reasons for homeschooling. Six out of these eight families (75%) were coded as using the traditional method of homeschooling, at least in the early years of homeschooling. All eight of these families listed either Protestant or Catholic as their religious preference on the initial online survey. The LNA revealed a strong preference of Catholics and Protestants to use the traditional method of homeschooling over those of other religions. Of the eight out of the 21 families involved in the SNA who were either Protestant or Catholic and listed religion as one of their reasons for homeschooling, one family classified themselves as unschoolers while another was coded as an eclectic homeschooler.

Most parents who practiced either the Protestant or Catholic religions described their homeschools as being traditional in nature. Participant 14 described how she structured her homeschooling environment and her description reflected how the other six Christian participants described their homeschools.

We have set aside an area in our basement that is our “school” area. My 5-year-old daughter has her own desk at which she can work and in which she can keep her materials and supplies. My 2-year-old daughter has a small table, which serves as her workspace, where she colors, works on puzzles, etc. We have alphabet flashcards hanging in a pocket chart on the wall, an American flag hanging up so we can do the Pledge of Allegiance each morning, five bookshelves which hold the many books we collect, and a globe within easy access on top of one of the bookshelves. A desk with a bookrack on it displays the books we will use for the particular topic we are studying, because literature is a very important part of our learning. Most of our learning occurs in this area, but for read-aloud time, we snuggle up on the couch together, and for arts and crafts, we go to the kitchen table. We dance to music and play rhythm instruments as we march around the coffee table in front of the couch. I love our learning environment, and I am very pleased with how it has developed. I think my daughters enjoy it, too.

Among the interviewees, five out of 21 were classified as belonging to the “other” religion category. Three of these families were coded as having an eclectic style homeschool and one was identified as an unschooler. Again, the LNA revealed that the majority of those in the “other” religion category either preferred the eclectic or unschooling method of homeschooling. The final respondent was coded as a traditionalist. However, none of these families listed religion as a reason why they homeschooled their children.

The remaining eight families were classified in various ways. However, none of them listed religion as a reason for homeschooling. Two families did not disclose their religious preference; one was coded as a classicalist the other as an eclectic homeschooler. The other six families were classified as either eclectic or traditional and all were classified as either Protestants or Catholics, but none of them indicated that religion was a reason why they homeschooled their children.

The responses of the interviewees seems to support the idea that, at least in this study, that both Catholics and Protestants tend to use the traditional method of homeschooling more than those in the “other” religion category do when religion is one of the motivating factors for homeschooling. While those in the “other” religion category preferred the eclectic or unschooling approach to homeschooling. The interview responses indicated that when religion was cited as one of the reasons why a family homeschooled these families tended to follow a more traditional approach to educating their children.

Question 4. This question asked parents to indicate what influenced their choices in curriculum or their decision not to follow a curriculum. While the interviewees indicated several things that influenced their choices, the one element that 62% of the parents cited was the desires and needs of their children. In addition, the use of linguistic connectors and the repetition of phrases, as suggested by Ryan and Bernard (2003), the theme of choosing a curriculum based on a child’s learning style and needs was very strong. However, this was not one of the variables addressed in the LNA. Several of the participants directly addressed this issue in their comments made in the SNS. Some of their responses are below:

Participant 6 wrote, “My curriculum choices are made entirely based on the way my child learns.”

Participant 7 wrote, “Each child has a different learning style. Those styles are what influence our choices.”

Participant 9 wrote,

I strive to do what is best for each of my children in consideration of my time, energy level and the number of children home at any one time. The only thing we have not done is a strict, little school desks at home sort of schooling... that would not work for me or any of the kids. Past that all resources are considered fair game.

One respondent not only commented that the learning styles of her children influenced what curriculum she purchased, but she also indicated that she took into consideration her own teaching style when choosing a curriculum. Participant 20 wrote, “In choosing one book over another, learning style of the child and teaching style of the mom is the first consideration.”

The only variable looked at in the LNA that was coded among the themes in the SNA was religion. Six out the 21 interviewees indicated that their religion played a role in the type of curricula they used. Again all the respondents were either of the Catholic or Protestant faith. Since religion is one of the main indicators of why and how a family homeschools, several of the respondents’ answers are listed below to show the passion of these families for their faith and how it is wholly encompassing.

Participant 14 wrote, “ Any curriculum I choose must be Biblically-based, incorporate children’s literature a great deal, and provide many opportunities for hands-on activities.”

Participant 7 wrote, “One thing that we scour our choices for is a Christian influence or worldview. We feel strongly that our beliefs are at the very core of our existence and happiness.”

Participant 10 wrote, “It is Christian based, that being the main factor. It covers what I want them to learn and teaches from a Biblical point of view.”

Participant 12 wrote:

A protestant Christian inspired perspective is very important to us. We do not do a "Bible study" but it is a blessing to us that we are free to speak of God whenever we want and use His plan for us in our journey.

Many of the reasons for picking a certain type of curriculum were shared among the religions, but among those from the “other” religion category, none indicated that religion influenced their choices in curricula.

In the SNA, when looking for negative linguistic connectors, as suggested by Ryan and Berger (2003), a resounding theme that arose from a variety of parents was that parents liked the freedom of not using a curriculum because it magnified the benefits of the homeschool and allowed for variety among children. Participant 18 summed up how several of the parents felt regarding curriculum.

When I read a “Thomas Jefferson Approach to Education” it resonated with my maternal deep way of knowing and we began the transition. Not following a curriculum magnifies the benefits of homeschooling, by allowing the children to pull up areas they are weak in by focusing on their strengths. Our middle child has spent hours this year reading websites about expensive sports cars. In the process, his non-fiction reading has improved. He has learned about gears, torque, turbo charges. He retains what he learns and has ownership of it.

In the SNA, other elements listed by the interviewees that influenced the type of curriculum a parent chose were individuals outside the family such as another homeschooling parent or church members, price of the curriculum, state regulations, parental preference, and a reputation for strong academic programs.

While geographic location was not seen as influencing a family’s choice of curriculum in the LNA, it does appear that for some, region might play a role in why a parent may pick a certain type of curriculum. Take for instance Participant 2 who wrote, “I have individualized the curriculum for each child. I specifically follow the NY specifications for particular grades and then see what work the child needs to accomplish during that year.” The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) considers New York to be one of the most highly regulated states in the United States of America (Somerville, 2003).

In this case, because a parent lived in a state with very strict guidelines on homeschooling, it appeared as though she allowed that to be one of the guiding influences as to why she picked certain curriculum for her children. While this did not appear to be the norm for

most parents, it may play more of a role than initially thought. This is an example of how this case does not fit the theory of the LNA and further investigation was warranted. This anomaly was addressed in the IM session with the Participant 2 on February 28, 2007. When directly asked if living in a state with tough regulations influenced how she taught and what she taught, she said it did not. Her family includes five children: one who is classified as autistic, three who are considered gifted, and a two year old. She keeps things very structured because of the diverse and demanding needs of the five children. She explained that this was the reason she ran a very structured homeschool, and followed her state's regulations for what should be covered in each grade not because she lived in a highly regulated state.

However, when this issue was addressed with Participant 14, who also lives in a state with very strict guidelines, she had a different view. This topic was addressed with Participant 14 during an IM session conducted on February 25, 2007. During this session, the researcher asked Participant 14 if she thought that living in her state had an impact on how she taught in her homeschool. Participant 14 stated that her state had some of the more restrictive laws on homeschooling and that she did not think it provided her with any advantages. She pointed out that in her state if a parent only had a high school diploma then the state required a monitor to come into the home and report on the homeschool. While she specified that she did have a college degree, she knew others who did not, and indicated that this law affected that way they homeschooled in order to appease the homeschool monitor. Participant 14 also reported that in her state she was required by law to have 4 hours of school a day for 175 days out of the year. Her state also required certain subjects to be taught and standardized testing to be performed in grades 4, 6, 8, and 10. She suggested that this influenced what she taught. Participant 14 wrote,

“So, I will want to be sure I am teaching what the schools are teaching so she will do well on the tests. Although, I am not one to teach to the test” (IM Session, February 27, 2007).

This question was also posed to Participant 16 in another chat session held on February 27, 2007. This participant has lived in six different states and has homeschooled in all of them. He remarked that some states were more restrictive than others and some required more paperwork than others did. However, he did not feel that the differences in states’ laws changed the core of how he and his wife homeschooled. He indicated that there were small changes in either administrative tasks or required curriculum components, but nothing that caused a dramatic overhaul of their homeschool.

The remaining eight individuals who participated in the IM sessions were asked to think about the laws of their states and whether or not those laws influenced how they ran their homeschool, how they taught, or the curriculum they used. While some of the respondents had minor issues that caused them pause at different times during their homeschooling careers, most indicated that their state’s laws have not changed how they homeschool, how they teach, or the curriculum they use. However, one participant stated that because her state did not allow homeschoolers to participate in athletic programs at the public school, she would probably end up sending her boys to public school for their high school years because participation in sports was a very big part of her sons’ lives. She further stated that if she lived in a state that allowed participation in athletic programs at the public school, she would continue to homeschool them through their high school years. While her story may indicate a relationship between where she lives and how long she will homeschool, this does not appear to be the norm for the homeschoolers in this study.

At this point, the idea that where one lives dictates how one homeschools, what kind of teacher one is, or what curriculum a one uses was not supported after further investigation. Therefore, the initial hypothesis presented by the LNA, which states that geographic location of the respondents homeschool does not impact what kind of homeschool a parent engages in, or how and what a parent teaches, remains in tact and did not justify developing a new theory concerning the relationship between geographic location of the homeschool and choices of curriculum.

Question 5. The nature of this question was to look at how parent/teachers related to their children in the homeschool. The interview responses were coded to correspond to the four teaching styles (Authoritative, Delegative, Demonstrative, and Facilitative) that were introduced in the LNA. Among the interviewees, five parents indicated they were Authoritarian teachers. Two of the individuals were classified as Catholics and two were classified as Protestants. The other individual was of classified as an “other” religion. The religion link was harder to establish with teaching style. Only two of the interviewees who indicated that they homeschooled for religious reasons were coded as Authoritative/Formal homeschooling teachers. Participant 13 wrote, “I am the authoritarian and they are the pupils.” Participant 1 wrote, “I am the teacher and they follow my directions. School time is work time, playtime is reserved for all the hours afterwards. We take our work seriously, but they enjoy learning, especially me reading to them.”

In the SNA, the majority of the parents were coded as being facilitative teachers with 12 out of 21 (57%) without preference given to religion. This does correspond with the findings of the LNA in which more parents preferred the facilitative approach to homeschooling (41.3%) than any other teaching style, but it was not a majority of parents as indicated in the SNA. However, in the LNA there was no preferred teaching method across religions. The following

comments demonstrate the connection these homeschool parents had with their children.

Participant 5 wrote, “My children and I have a very good relationship where information is freely passed between each other.” Participant 18 wrote, “I have become more of a facilitator/mentor as opposed to a controlling teacher.” Participant 11 wrote:

My relationship between myself and my kids in the learning environment is wonderful just as our relationship as parent and child is. See home schooling is not something we do. It is something we are. It is more of a life style. Home schooling is not like a school day it doesn't stop at a certain time they are always learning even when we cook dinner. Going to the grocery store anything you can always make it a learning experience. One respondent was coded as being a demonstrative teacher.

This parent/teacher was classified as being of the Catholic faith, and the LNA concluded that twice as many Catholics as Protestants used the demonstrative teaching style, whereas none of those in the “other” religion category used this style of teaching.

Question 6. This question got to the heart of the type of reading curricula used to teach reading in the homeschool. Parents were able to share their personal stories about how their children learned to read. Every parent had a different story for every child that was homeschooled. Most indicated that this was the beauty of the homeschool environment, to give their children the individualized educational experiences they needed. Fifty-one children were being homeschooled among the 21 families interviewed. The researcher did code all responses given for this question to the best of her ability by identifying which families used actual programs such as Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons or an actual phonics program to teach initial reading skills. The researcher also identified families who indicated that they never used a curriculum to teach reading, but that their children just learned to read from exposure to printed materials and being read to. The coding also included families who indicated

that they took a balanced approach to teaching reading. However, the coding became very complex and many of the respondents' stories were lost in the numbers.

When coding this question, the researcher tried to capture the stories of these families to the best of her ability, but it became clear that the only way to truly capture these stories was to share them in their entirety. What follows is a brief description of each respondent, including their religion, their ethnicity, and which region of the United States they live. Then their full stories (responses) are included in order to share how each parent addressed teaching their children to read in the homeschool.

Participant 1 is a Roman Catholic, European-American with two children residing in N.E. United States. Here is her story:

My oldest child, now 8 was a very tough nut to crack in learning to read. We studied phonics, practiced reading, and used several programs to help him. This was a child who had been read to everyday since before he was even born! (yes, I admit that he was read *The Wizard of Oz* in the nursery) I was literally banging my head on the table in frustration over his inability to understand. It was a long slow process. It took until the fall of 2nd grade, with 2 years of intense phonics instruction under his belt to finally get to the "a-ha" moment. Quickly, he gained skill and now reads chapter books for pleasure.

On the other hand, my 2nd child learned to read in about 1/2 the time without any of the agonizing described above. She just sat down with a book and started reading aloud one day. This was after 1 year of phonics instruction. All children are different, boys and girls are different, and as I recall, the only thing that was consistent in their instruction was the program they used.

Participant 2 is a Jewish, European-American with 5 children residing in N.E. United States. Here is her story:

Have five kids - 12-yr-old is autistic (high functioning). Tried four schools for him (two gifted programs at public schools for a few weeks total, one fancy private school for one year, and one public (magnet) school) and he learned nothing except a few behaviors (had no concept of numbers/anything).

Started homeschooling the 12-yr-old in 2001, noted that that he had hyperlexia (lots of reading, no comprehension), no concept of numbers, including zero. He could not count on his fingers. Within four months, he was adding, subtracting, multiplying, reading time ... he was caught up and a bit ahead of his peers (he was put in a grade

earlier than I would have liked because of birth date cut-off). Now he is at age-grade level (grade 7) and is able to complete timed tasks (I spent a year focusing on timed tasks). He goes into the schools for his statewide exams, and next year, the Regents exams. Homeschooling for him has meant that he could work on academics and behaviors in ways that they never could in school. There are specialized schools, but none of them would have been effective. (Last year, he attended Julliard for eight hours on Saturdays, but that didn't work well for him, either.) The 8-, 9-, and 4- yr-old are each placed two years ahead in their schooling and take statewide exams for those grade levels in the public schools along side their older peers. (The 4-yr-old is in 1st grade and won't get his first test until grade 3.) They are doing well, and are a bit ahead of their assigned grades in certain areas. The 8- and 9-yr-olds briefly attended a gifted program at a public school, which did not address their needs at all. The 9-yr-old was not assigned math for three months (when I pulled him out) because he was about 4 years ahead and they said they had nothing for him. They were going to get him a tutor to teach him at his level (never happened).

Participant 3 is a European-American who chose not to disclose her religious affiliation with one child who resides in the N.E. United States. This is her story:

In the first year, I relied heavily on phonics. We would practice consonants and he'd do exercises such as coloring pictures of words that started with the "B" sound. We would discuss words that had a "B" sound, but not at the beginning of the word. We sounded out words. He practiced writing words he'd learned. He viewed reading as a chore and a deeply unpleasant one at that. He was interested in video games (often with a lot of text as part of the game), I began to encourage him to follow along as I read to him and pointing at the words on the screen, gradually asking him to read more of it himself...he was quite motivated to continue those efforts. He also liked a book series called Captain Underpants. I would read two or three chapters to him, then tell him he was on his own if he wanted to continue the story. He always did and began sounding out words himself and reading...by choice. I was concerned about the amount of deliberate spelling mistakes in that series and always made a big deal out of pointing out the words that were spelled incorrectly. My son liked to draw his own illustrations from that book and copy pertinent text. He learned quickly to spot the spelling mistakes himself. Once he could read and enjoyed reading for fun, I began to encourage him to read other things with more literary value. The method of choice was still fun, however. He liked Three Musketeers candy bars, I suggested he read an abridged version of the book of the same name. He liked science fiction, he read The War of the Worlds and was thrilled that he predicted the ending before reaching the ending as he read it. All literature is integrated with history, geography and anything else that can be connected to it. He reads for pleasure. This is the same kid who hated books and cried when asked to read in school.

Participant 4 is European-American who indicated no religious affiliation with one child living in the N.E. United States. Her answer is provided below:

The biggest help has been the K12 phonics program. We love how well it worked and all of a sudden, without us even realizing it, she was reading and spelling, and knows the grammatical rules.

Participant 5 is a Catholic, European-American with one school aged child residing in N.E. United States. This is her story:

With my first child we started with a phonics book along with Bob books. The phonics book was getting to boring and my daughter didn't really want to do the lessons so we switched to having her read to us at night before bed time. She picks out the books she wants to read some were hard, some were easy, but she has been learning a lot that way. She gets hung up on the Phonics and then the rules don't always apply when you are reading some words. I think we will start off with the Bob Books with our next child and skip the phonics curriculum all together.

Participant 6 is Christian who preferred not to identify her ethnic background with one child residing in N.E. United States. She wrote, "My child has been reading since kindergarten...we read to her a lot and exposed her to books from a very early age."

Participant 7 is Christian, European-American with one child residing in N.E. United States. Her story follows:

Our oldest learned VERY young to identify words and phrases. He knew his alphabet forward and backward when he was 18 months old. We played many games with him in learning to count and read. He was thirsty for knowledge, so this was natural. By 3 he was reading stacks of books that were supposed to be for readers in the 2nd and 3rd grade. At 1st grade admission, he was tested at 6th grade reading and comprehension, so they stopped the test knowing that this was simply admission to school (he had been homeschooled through Kindergarten).

Our 2nd child, oldest daughter, was much more creative and loved to imagine. Her dyslexia made it difficult for her to understand phonetics, so we used books and imagination to help her. Her spelling is still challenged, even as a high school graduate, but she loves to read and devours books. Her memory skills far exceeded her ability to sound something out, so we concentrated on sight words during the time of the day when things stayed on the paper and didn't float around. I learned the triggers that showed me that she couldn't see it for what it was, and we would use gross motor skills and oral games to continue to help her conquer her fears about reading. She learned to read on her own at about 7 and a half.

Our 3rd child needed more individual attention and training when learning to read. She could read at age 8, but had very little self-motivation to do it. She would much rather be read to. Reading daily was always a staple at our house. I always took time to read aloud to the children in a group and they would draw or play quietly while they were listening. My reading "with feeling" helped them to understand inflection and dramatic reading. Other books that were more on their level, I would have them sit beside me and we would take turns reading pages. They never had to "perform" their reading. We corrected words and sounded them out and broke them down into root words at times. The important emphasis here is that they felt safe and secure while reading. It took longer for my youngest to become excited about reading. It was a chore for a very long time, but we broke through when she began reading books in a series. She really wanted to know what came next. There was not immediate gratification, so she had to continue to satisfy her curiosity. Now she devours books like the other two do, but that didn't begin until she was 12.

Participant 8 is a Unitarian Universalist with a multicultural family who homeschools two children in the N.E. United States. This was her answer: "Lots of us reading to them and vice versa."

Participant 9 is a Unitarian Universalist, European-American who homeschools five children and resides in the S.E. United States. This is her story:

Four of my five children have learned to read so far (# 5 is just starting). I used Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons for most of them but added Phonic Pathways for my 8 year old who was having issues.

Participant 10 is religiously non-denominational, who did not indicate an ethnic identity with four children who resides in the S.E. United States. Her story follows:

Our oldest child (son) began reading when he was about 4 1/2 years old. We had lots of time to read together, and he taught himself to read. This was very exciting, and we were very proud, but after the other children learned to read phonetically, we found that this didn't really help him. He often had trouble reading new words. The other 3 children (2 sons and 1 daughter) learned to read with "How to Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons." For all of them, it was very helpful! They loved it and all read well! As a matter of fact, the 2 youngest children begged to begin reading when they were 5 and did well.

Participant 11 is a Southern Baptist who did not disclose her ethnic identity with two children who lives in the S.E. United States. This is her story:

My kids both learned to read when they was four year old. There is not much to tell. I started reading to them when I found out I was pregnant read to them all the time. When they was a newborn all the time. They just learned. From me reading to them. They can pick up anything and read it even college books. So to tell you the truth there is no secret of how I taught them they actual just learned from me reading to them all the time from the moment they was created.

Participant 12 is conservative Christian, European-American who lives in S.E. United States, and homeschools two children. Here is her story:

I'm not sure how my children learned to read. We always read to our children prolifically. When they began picking up words from memorization, we began simple phonics lessons with them (before they ever entered organized school prior to our withdrawing them to homeschool). Reading always seemed a natural progression for them. Both children were reading by 4 years of age.

Participant 13 is a Catholic, European-American who resides in the N.W. United States and homeschools two children. Her story follows:

I don't even remember, it was so long ago. I only remember that my oldest had lots of problems and finally had his "Aha!" moment in 5th grade; my youngest had a pretty easy time of it from the get go.

Participant 14 is a nondenominational evangelical Christian, European-American who homeschools her five year old and lives in the N.W. United States: This is her story:

My daughter is currently in the process of learning to read. We started with learning the sound that each letter makes. (We are learning just one sound for each letter, at this point). After about 9 lessons or so, with one letter sound per lesson, she was able to start putting the sounds together to make syllables and words. For example, with a word like "hot," she starts by saying the sound /h/ and then /o/ (short o). Then, she puts those two together to make /ho/. Finally, she adds the /t/ sound and makes the word "hot." Our curriculum is definitely more phonics-based than whole-word. However, since we have read to our kids a great deal since birth, and since we read aloud to them several times a day, each and every day, I'd like to think we are using a balanced approach. It's about more than the phonics. It is about the desire to read and the love of reading and the love of literature.

Participant 15 lives in the S.W. United States and homeschools her four children with no religious affiliation and listed her self under the other category for ethnicity, but did not disclose her ethnicity. Here is what she had to say about reading in her homeschool:

Our oldest daughter learned to read early on and with ease. It seemed to come naturally to her as well as comprehension. Our second daughter was read to early on, but something seemed to stall her out and the interest was not there. She struggled daily with her reading. Going over and over the basic rules of the English language, doing the Hooked On Phonics program, and having her read below grade level books until she caught on was part of her success. The other really important instrument, that I believe helped her quite successfully, was the use of the computer. She practices Mavis Beacon Typing, uses spell check, the dictionary, and instant messages her friend as well as her sister. The computer brought an amazing transformation in her reading skills. We also use the Robinson Curriculum, which has many stories she has been reading. The twins each have their own degree of reading skills. We used simple curriculum to teach them the reading basics, go through the rules of the English language on a regular basis, completed the Hooked On Phonics program, and use the Robinson Curriculum of many books they provide. One twin loves to read and will attempt to read above grade level while the other twin chooses not to read unless watched over.

Participant 16 is a father living in the S.W. United States who has eight children, but is only actively homeschooling three of them. He describes his faith as a non-denominational Christian and his family is multi-cultural. He wrote, "Each of my children are very different. For most of them, the reading process occurred through a phonics foundation and then repetition-mostly from home bible reading."

Participant 17 is a Southern Baptist, European-American living in the S.W. United States and homeschooling four children. This is her story:

Our oldest child (son) began reading when he was about 4 1/2 years old. We had lots of time to read together, and he taught himself to read. This was very exciting, and we were very proud, but after the other children learned to read phonetically, we found that this didn't really help him. He often had trouble reading new words. The other 3 children (2 sons and 1 daughter) learned to read with "How to Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons." For all of them, it was very helpful! They loved it and all read well! As a matter of fact, the 2 youngest children begged to begin reading when they were 5 and did well.

Participant 18 is a Protestant, European-American who homeschools three children and lives in the S.W. United States. This is how she described reading in her homeschool:

We spent two years doing Lindamood Bell Seeing Stars, Hooked on Phonics, and I continually read quality literature to them. We would read some together, but they really took off when they matured enough to realize that they could read. The leap happened much later than it did for most children. The oldest son was in 5th grade and by 6th grade he tested as a 12th grader in reading on the California State Tests STAR testing I think was the name. The middle son didn't really start reading until 6th grade, but as an 8th grader read parts of Plato's Republic and understood it and was able to dialogue about it. I quite worrying and hurrying them and they blossomed before my eyes. Our daughter just understood reading. I did some limited phonics, but not nearly as much as with the boys. One day when she was 6 or 7 she was reading and reading well. As an 11 year old she will pick up articles from the Economist and read and understand some of them! She reads a great deal. The oldest and youngest love to write!!!! I have done little if any formal instruction in writing. When I was ready to teach it, they were too young to learn, so we just kept reading good books.

Participant 19 is a Jehovah's Witness who is European-American living in the Central United States and is currently homeschooling one child. Here is her story:

My HS'ed son is a self-taught reader. We read to him from the day he was three days old. He was always surrounded by books. He also watched a lot of learning videos like Sesame Street, Between the Lions, etc. We did complete a formal phonics program just to cover any holes. At age 4 he tested at a reading level of late middle school.

Participant 20 is a Catholic, European-American who homeschools four children and lives in the Central United States. This is her story:

Each of my children have learned to read on my lap with a lot of encouragement and positive reinforcement. Some of the children's learning style dictated continuation of the reading lessons with hands-on games and activities. The youngest two, who are still in the process of learning to read, began the process on their own, accidentally. It was the end of the school year, and I felt pressured to finish our books before we ended for the summer. Hoping for some uninterrupted time with the older children, I plopped the younger two in front of the TV with a learning video every day for two weeks. At the conclusion of school and the start of summer break, I turned my attention to my 5 year old asking for his help cutting out letters to teach him the names and sounds of them. He patiently informed me that he already knew them. I knew I hadn't taught him and last month he didn't know them. He insisted he was right. To prove to him that he needed to let me teach him, I held up letter after letter out of

order. He knew 18 sounds out of 26 and some of the names. I tested the 3 year old and had a similar experience. After watching Leap Frog's Letter Factory, they had begun the process without me at ages 5 and 3. Now, at 6 and 4 they are both about half-way through the year to 2 year process of learning to read well, with the 4 year demanding to get his "reading time, too!"

Participant 21 is Protestant, European-American with one child who lives in the Central United States. This is her answer:

Learning to read the easy way, Part 1.

When [name deleted for anonymity] was 4, she asked me to teach her to read. I spent literally 20 minutes with her, sounding out words. She picked up a book and read it to me.

Learning to read the easy way, Part 2.

[Name deleted for anonymity] was 5 and we had borrowed Hooked On Phonics from the library. I was quite ill with a cold when she asked if we could look at it, so I told her to wait until the next day. She begged and said, "Can I just look at it?" So I set her up with a book and a tape in my bedroom, and 20 minutes later, she came out and read the list of words to me. Both girls progressed very quickly with minimal guidance, and tested between 3 and 6 years above their grade level in reading and language arts.

As can be seen from these 21 answers, learning to read is an individual process. Some of these children learned to read with little or no effort. Others needed some guidance, and still others needed a very involved program and a longer period of time was needed to learn to read. The key here is that none of these parents gave up and all of them were intimately involved in the education of their children. These themes are woven throughout the answers to this question. The other element that seems to run through all these responses is that reading is important to these families and the parents themselves value being able to read the written word. For these 21 families literacy involves being able to read written material. For some it is religious materials, for others it is just a love of reading books of all kinds, and for other it is a way to impart knowledge to the next generation. The following quotes give personal accounts of how these parents view literacy and how they believe literacy is passed from one generation to the next. Participant 12 wrote, "I would say our best tool for literacy is literature itself. We read, read,

read, read, and read some more. We are never intimidated by any book. We occasionally put one down and try it again later but we always strive for comprehension.”

Participant 1 wrote:

We have read to our children daily from the first moment of their lives. We show them that we value reading by filling our home and conversation with books. We spend time listening to the children read. We visit the library often, buy books for our children often and encourage them to learn through reading.

Participant 7 wrote:

Children mimic what they see. If we read and enjoy it, they will too unless they have a learning challenge that keeps them from doing it themselves. If we teach them to read in their learning style, and make them feel safe while learning to read, it is not difficult. Patience and understanding that each child is different is a key. Expectations that every child can and should be reading by a certain age or grade can quickly destroy self-esteem.

Question 7. This question asked respondents to look at their community (geographical location) and indicate if there were certain groups, organizations, or local resources that helped them in teaching their children to read. The LNA indicated that there was no link between where a person lives and how they teach reading in their homeschool. Of the 21 interviews conducted, a majority (52.4%) of the respondents indicated that their local community did not provide support in helping them to teach their children to read. Participant 12 summed up the comments of these interviewees when she wrote, “I can think of no instances of our community, support groups or otherwise that assisted or supported my children in learning to read.” The other 47.6% indicated that there was a person in the community, a community facility (i.e. library), or access to higher education that helped them in teaching their children to read. Some indicated that homeschool support groups helped, others indicated that another family member (i.e. grandparents) lent support for the teaching of reading, and still other indicated that they used professional resources like the Sylvan Learning Center. Participant 14 wrote:

Also, our local library has a summer reading program that starts at age 2, so it encourages parents to read aloud to young children and provides incentive to read. The United Way in our county participates in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, through which children from age birth through 5 receive a free book in the mail each month. That has helped provide books for my children. I am a graduate student, and I am currently working on a MS in Reading, so the coursework I have taken have made me even more knowledgeable about how kids learn to read. That has helped considerably, too.

The findings of the SNA support, for the majority of the respondents, the LNA's conclusion that geographical location of the homeschool does not influence how a parent teaches reading in the homeschool.

Question 8. This question asked parents to reflect on their ethnic/cultural identity and its influence, if at all, on how they teach reading in the homeschool. The results of the interviews showed that 9 out of 21 (42.8%) individuals did not see their ethnicity/cultural identity as having influenced how they taught reading. The results of the LNA also concluded that ethnicity did not have an impact on how they taught reading in the homeschool. However, eight parents believed that having a "family" culture of loving reading was important to the overall success of teaching reading in the homeschool. Participant 19 wrote, "I am sure that my being raised as an avid reader has had a tremendous effect on my girls desire to learn to read."

While the LNA and SNA indicate that ethnic identity does not play a role in how reading is taught among these homeschoolers, there is evidence that a "family" culture of loving to read and a home filled with rich and various reading materials is important in the acquisition of reading according to many of the parents interviewed. Literacy professionals have established the idea of a "family" culture of reading as a strong link to successful acquisition of reading skills in children (Serpell et al., 2002). Serpell et al. (2002) suggest that literacy skills are part of

the developmental milestones that a child experiences and a family that supports and encourages literacy acquisition in the home increase reading achievement in the child.

While this study may not show a direct link between ethnicity and reading, researchers have concluded parental support and interest in reading are strong indicators of flourishing readers (Greaney & Hegarty, 1987; Neuman, 1986; Rowe, 1991; Shapiro & Whitney, 1997). Furthermore, Baker (2003) suggests the availability of reading materials in the home, parental reading behaviors, and the frequency of reading to the child are all “cultural” components that influence reading behavior in children. Baker further suggests that students from supportive environments also have a positive outlook toward reading, and enthusiastically endorse the view that they read for enjoyment. Additionally, Rowe (1991) suggests a strong relationship between children’s reading attitudes, parental attitudes, and associated reading activities, which grow stronger with increasing age.

Another aspect of literacy instruction, positively linked to the parents, is the affective quality of the home literacy interactions (Baker, 2003). Baker suggests, “children who experienced reading in a comfortable and supportive social context at age 5 were more likely to recognize the value of reading, report enjoyment of reading, and have positive concepts of themselves as readers in subsequent years” (p. 92). A home is a child’s cultural representation of what he/she believes. It seems that many of the parents in this study display cultural activities that influence reading achievement in their children. Although these parents may be unaware that these activities are culturally linked, they are engaging in cultural activities that influenced how they taught reading in the homeschool.

A few respondents indicated that they were aware of the ethnic link between their ethnic identity and how or why teaching reading was important for their children. Since they were

aware of this link, they expressed how their ethnic identity influenced how they taught reading in the homeschool. Participants 12 and 20 did acknowledge that there may be an ethnic/cultural link when one considers how reading was addressed and supported when they were children.

Participant 20 wrote:

Both my husband and I are Caucasian of European decent. We both have a love of books and have many books available for the children, even as babies. All of our children were fascinated with books as toddlers, I believe, due to the amount of children's books they were given free access to.

Participant 12 wrote, "I suppose if I dug really deep, I could say that because we are Caucasian middle class, my ability to stay home with my children was supported by my community (although not always). Thus, I had lots of time to parent my children and nurture their natural curiosities."

Since there was a divide among the 21 interviewees about whether or not ethnicity played a role in their homeschools, this question was addressed again in the IM sessions. All eleven respondents who participated in the IM chat sessions were directly asked about their ethnic identity and how that identity impacted how they taught reading. However, this time the researcher asked the question using the catch phrase "family culture". The conversation with participant 14 was very revealing to both the researcher and the respondent herself. The respondent's words indicate that maybe she had never considered this component, but that when she stopped to seriously consider her ethnic identity and its role in her homeschool, she was surprised to think that it might play a role. Participant 14 wrote during her IM session:

Well, as I think about that...maybe it is a factor in our family because we have the advantages that some others don't. Access to books, computers, educational toys, etc. So, I guess ethnicity and culture would be a factor in that way...that we are the "advantaged" set, I guess. Does that make sense?

Furthermore, Participant 16 admitted that because he homeschooled in a multicultural home, that sometimes the cultural difference played a role in how reading was taught. Participant 13 also reflected after a moments pause and indicated that there might be a connection to how she homeschools and her ethnicity. In her IM session on March 4, 2007 she wrote the following:

I am a White American with Italian, French, German ancestry. I believe that my Italian heritage makes me more domestic, maternal, and has a lot to do with my religion as well and I have lots of Germanic qualities - strictness, rigidity, structure I see that as more nature/nurture than ethnicity.... Not unless ethnicity plays a part in personality type or parenting style? ... I would say that we cannot ever make any decision without our family background having something to do with it.... we are all a product of our upbringing and our genes.

Participant 10 again stated that she did not believe ethnicity/cultural heritage played a role in her homeschool. While she pointed out that heritage was important, she believed it played no part in her homeschool. Participant 15 stated that her ethnicity had a lot to do with why her family homeschooled. She remarked that her husband had a great deal of trouble growing up due to his ethnicity because he lived in Hawaii. According to Participant 15, the Caucasian/White American is discriminated against in the state of Hawaii, and her family currently resides there.

At this point, while some of the respondents' remarks seem to indicate that cultural background may influence who we are as individuals, and that in turn may manifest itself in our homeschools, it is a far more complicated question than simply asking if ethnicity plays a role in how or why an individual homeschools. The link does not simply seem to be ethnicity, but culture within the home, both present and past.

Finally, one respondent answered the question of ethnicity and its influence on how she teaches reading in the following manner. Participant 13 wrote,

I don't have a clue as what you are looking for here, I don't think culture or ethnicity play a part in education at all, besides what politically correct crap people assign to it. Does having Black skin make the words look different? Do Black people give the letters

different sounds? Or do people tell other ethnicities that they are inferior or oppressed and that makes them take on the victim role? It doesn't work with Asian cultures, they seem to become educated just fine. I think it has more to do with how hard someone works and if some cultures have a problem with working, then they would also have a problem with learning. Aside from that, if we are all really equal, then what does this question really mean?

This respondent appears to be making the case that all individuals are capable of learning no matter what their ethnic identity, but that maybe reading acquisition has more to do with how important working hard to obtain a good education is to that individual, that makes the difference. If this is the case, then a parent's attitude towards reading and its importance play more of a role in how they teach reading than the parent's ethnic or cultural identity. In light of this comment, the case could be made that different cultures place different values on reading and the acquisition of reading skills than others do. Reiterating what Gadsden (1998) said about family cultures illustrates the importance of family culture on learning to read. "Family culture often influences, if not dictate in many instances, the ways individual family members think about, use, and pursue literacy and how they persist in educational programs" (p. 40). Therefore, it may be said that ethnic identity does play a role on how reading is taught in the homeschool based on the value it is given by the parent in that home.

Question 9. This question asked respondents to consider the role their personal belief system (i.e. religion, philosophy of life) plays in supporting how their child (ren) learned to read. Seven of the 21 interviewees wrote that their religious beliefs in one way or another influenced how they supported their children in learning to read. The responses of some of the interviewees clearly demonstrate how a person's faith can be wholly encompassing to the point that it influences all aspects of an individual's life including homeschooling. Participants 10 and 11

both give very intimate pictures of how religiously motivated homeschoolers believe their faith permeates their homeschooling styles, teaching styles, and reading curriculum choices.

Participant 10 wrote:

We do everything in Christ. We always teach them that they “can do all things through Christ who strengthens them” (Phil. 3:14). If we hit a roadblock, we patiently work through it and know that they will eventually pick it up. Then with the boys, it's like a light bulb goes off and they can't put a book down. I make sure that they are reading books that contain moral lessons and don't give worldly views. Also, if they get stuck on a word, I encourage them to look it up in the dictionary the meaning and sometimes the pronunciation.

Participant 11 wrote:

Probably because both my husband and I feel that the moment a child is conceived they are a baby not just a fetus so we read to them. We are Christians. We do not believe in abortions and we instill that in our kids. Not sure if that has anything at all to do with them learning to read but the moment we knew we was going to have them we treated them as they was in our arms. We put headsets on my tummy and let them listen to music soft music. We would talk to them and sing to them even read the bible to them.

The IM session also confirmed that those with a strong Protestant or Catholic faith indicated that their religious beliefs were an important influence on how they taught reading.

Participant 20 revealed in both her interview and IM session that she did not like teaching reading at all. She stated that she loved reading and wanted her children to love it as well, but the actual act of teaching reading was a struggle for her. She stated that if it were not for her dependence on Christ at times she would have never been able to have the patience to teach her children to read.

Another eight respondents wrote that their philosophy of life has contributed to how they support their child (ren)'s efforts to learn to read. Several believed reading was a key component to success and thus made it a priority in the homeschool. Yet others who had a more child centered philosophy of learning indicated that while reading was important, it was more

important for them as parents to respect the desires of the child. Participant 5 wrote, “I am more laid back and choose the philosophy of child led learning. I let her decide at what rate and how hard of a book she wants to read. I am often surprised by her choices, but she reads everything she chooses easy or hard.”

The answers provided by these parents reaffirm the previous conclusion that a parent’s beliefs about the importance of learning to read or their religious convictions play a role in how they teach reading in the homeschool. It also demonstrates that there is a link between how they teach and their belief system. Take for example what Participant 9 writes about her spirituality and the link between how she runs her homeschool. She wrote, “We are Unitarian/ Buddhists and I think that might have let us be a *bit* more Zen about things.”

Question 10. The final question of the interviews was simply a “free for all.” Parents were asked to give the researcher any other information that they thought gave a clear and insightful look into their homeschools and how they teach reading to their children. Some chose to answer this question and other did not. Below are some of the answers that helped the researcher grasp the individuality of homeschooling and the dedication of these parents.

Participant 1 wrote:

We have read to our children daily from the first moment of their lives. We show them that we value reading by filling our home and conversation with books. We spend time listening to the children read. We visit the library often, buy books for our children often and encourage them to learn through reading.

Participant 14 wrote:

Reading is taught or acquired in our homeschool through a great deal of exposure to a large variety of children’s books and other reading materials. My husband loves comic books, and he has passed that love on to our daughter. She has her own little collection of comic books that she loves to look at. We subscribe to several different magazines for each member of our family. We buy books often and check them out of the library often. I read at least one children’s book to my daughters every morning during our school time,

and my husband and I read to them together before bed each night. It all starts with a love of reading. Reading is highly valued in our family. I think that is the important first step. After that, it is just a matter of the mechanics. So, with a well-developed love of reading partnered with a strong foundation in phonics and decoding skills, my daughter will learn to read on her own.

Participant 7 wrote:

Children mimic what they see. If we read and enjoy it, they will too unless they have a learning challenge that keeps them from doing it themselves. If we teach them to read in their learning style, and make them feel safe while learning to read, it is not difficult. Patience and understanding that each child is different is a key. Expectations that every child can and should be reading by a certain age or grade can quickly destroy self-esteem.

Finally, Participant 9 wrote:

Wow, I am sure that there is a lot that I could think of if we were just talking. But if I were to say anything, it would be that I never wanted the actual act of learning to read to be so painful that it killed their desire for books or knowledge. So if I even thought that might have been happening we backed off and let some time elapse and it was never a wrong choice.

Conclusion

This study was designed to look at the educational learning environment known as homeschooling and to determine if certain characteristics of these families impact what kind of homeschool a parent runs, how they teach in that homeschool, the type of reading curriculum used, and if certain styles of homeschools lean towards particular teaching styles and reading curriculum choices. It has been determined by the LNA that in this study the type of homeschool a parent implements, the type of teaching style he/she employs, and the method chosen to teach reading are all influenced by the parent's religion. This was not found to be the case with region or ethnicity. Furthermore, the style of homeschool a parent implements influences the type of teacher he/she is and how reading is taught in the homeschool.

The SNA supported the hypothesis that a family's religion impacts homeschool style, teaching style, and reading method used. When it came to location of the homeschool (region)

and ethnicity, the LNA found no relationship to a family's homeschooling style, a parent's teaching style, or reading method use to teach initial reading skills. Initially, it appears that the SNA when using the interviews only supports this hypothesis too. However, when parents were questioned during the instant messaging sessions and asked to elaborate on the issues of ethnicity and location of homeschool, their comments highlighted possible links that the LNA did not uncover. While the cases in the SNA were few in number, it may warrant further investigation. However, within the limits of this study it was not possible to investigate in greater depth possible relationships between the variables of region and ethnicity and what type of homeschool a parent engages in, how they teach in that homeschool, or what curriculum a parent chooses.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION, SUMMARY, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

Introduction

The marked increase of the alternative educational phenomenon known as homeschooling in the last two decades has caused the educational community pause and spurred the next generation of educators to explore and capture the essence of this phenomenon in their research. As more students are educated in the home, it is imperative to understand and explore the issues that influence parents' choices of homeschooling styles, teaching methods, and choices in methods to teach initial reading skills. The purpose of this mixed methods, nested analysis was to determine if certain family characteristics influenced the type of homeschool a parent engaged in, the style of teaching used in the homeschool, and the type of reading methods used to teach initial reading skills in the homeschool. The specific characteristics looked at in this study were family religion, ethnicity, and location of the homeschool within the United States of America.

This results of this study found that these homeschooling parents believe that institutionalized educational settings are not conducive to the type of learning they want for their children. As in previous studies, the parents of this study gave numerous reasons why they choose to homeschool. The reasons most cited by these homeschooling parents were the lack of academic preparedness in institutionalized settings, the lack of individualized learning in institutionalized settings, and the lack of spiritual development in institutionalized settings respectively. These reasons confirm earlier homeschooling studies that have reported on why

parents homeschool (Bashman, 2001; Cloud & Morse, 2001; Ray, 2002; Romanowski, 2001; Rudner, 1999; Somerville, 2003).

This study also confirmed Romanowski's (2001) conclusion that homeschooling is growing among various belief and value systems. This is indicated by the 42.7% of respondents who practiced alternative religions or no religion at all. However, the majority of homeschoolers (57.3%) are still European Americans with either Protestant or Catholic backgrounds as reported by Rudner (1999) and Bashman (2001). On the other hand, Cai et al. (2002) reported that 75% of homeschoolers were conservative Christians with only 25% from alternative lifestyles; this study did not confirm these figures. This study shows a smaller gap than previously seen in other studies. In addition, this study did confirm that mothers (97.5%) continue to be the overwhelming majority of the primary homeschooling parent.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Table 9 displays how the gathering of data encompassed both quantitative and qualitative methods to answer the hypotheses and thus the research questions. Tashakkori & Teddlie (1998) suggest the use of multiple methods for triangulation, complementarity, initiation, development, and expansion. This study used multiple methods for all these reasons.

Table 9. Matrix of Quantitative and Qualitative Data Integration

Data Gathered	Methodology Used	
	Quantitative: Online Survey	Qualitative: Interviews and Chats
Reasons	X	X
Region	X	X
Religion	X	X
Ethnicity	X	X
Number of children	X	
Years Homeschooling	X	
Homeschooling Parent	X	X
Level of Involvement	X	
Homeschool Style	X	X
Teaching Style	X	X
Reading Method	X	X
Impact of Region		X
Impact of Religion		X
Impact of Ethnicity		X
Choice of Curriculum		X

Ideologists and Pedagogists

Van Galen (1988) was the first researcher to separate homeschoolers into two groups: ideologists and pedagogists. For many years thereafter, homeschoolers have often been separated into these two categories. The ideologist homeschools for the following reasons: exposure of the children to multi-aged, positive social models; deep moral and ethical character development; protection from violence, drugs and alcohol, psychological abuse, and ill-timed exposure to sexuality. While pedagogists homeschool for the following reasons: the ability to design curriculum, instruction, and environment customized to a child's specific needs and the ability of children to accomplish academically more than they would in the public schools, in addition to producing effective democratic citizens. In this study, it was very difficult to separate the respondents into these two distinct categories. The primary reason for homeschooling reported by the respondents was for academic reasons (69.7%) followed closely by efficacy (46.9%) and religion (40.7%). Efficacy would fall under the pedagogist's reasons for homeschooling while religion would fall under the Ideologist's reasons for homeschooling. This study showed that for

these homeschooling parents there is no longer a clear divide between why parents choose to homeschool. It may be more of a holistic approach to education with ideological and pedagogical reasons converging to develop the entire child. As indicated earlier, Ron Miller (2000) would suggest that these parents are choosing a transformational approach to education that is rarely seen in institutionalized settings. Figure 10 illustrates how the ideological and pedagogical reasons are converging to form a transformational approach to homeschooling.

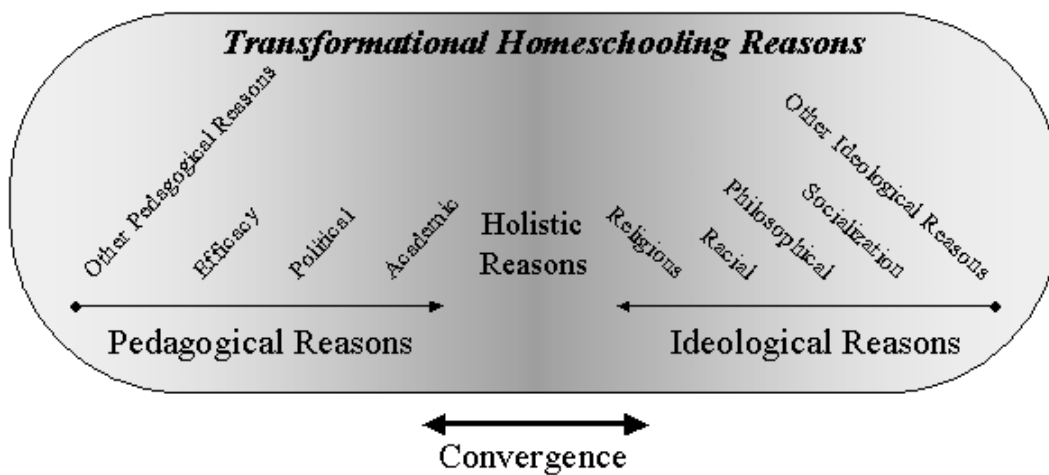


Figure 10. Transformational homeschool reasons that show the convergence of ideological and pedagogical reasons for homeschooling.

Homeschooling style. Unlike Medlin (1994), who reported that 61% of parents preferred the traditional style of homeschooling, this study showed that most parents preferred the eclectic style of homeschooling (69.5%) to any of the other three (unschooler, traditional, or classical). According to Gutek (2004), the eclectic style of homeschooling closely resembles the philosophical framework of the progressive educator. This type of homeschool is multifunctional and geared to the whole child – emotionally, physically, socially, and intellectually – rather than solely academically. The majority of parents in this study have noticeably indicated that

education should be customized to meet the needs of the complete child and thus be transformational in nature (See Figure 11).

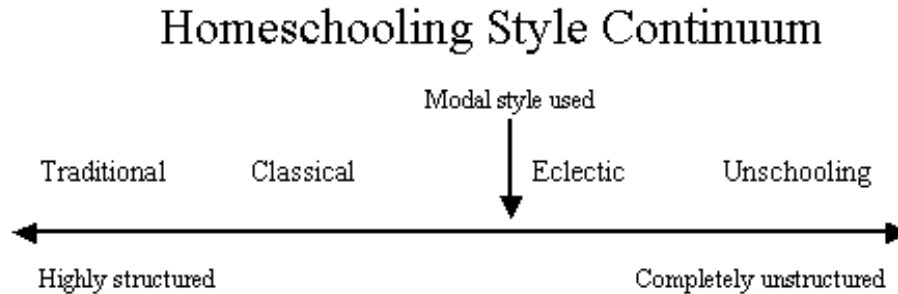


Figure 11. The homeschooling style continuum shows how the various styles fall on a spectrum and how as parents get closer to one style he or she departs from the other styles

Furthermore, unlike Knowles' (1988) findings that reported most homeschooling parents do not evolve in their homeschooling methods, this study found that parents do evolve in their homeschooling practices. Of the 21 families interviewed, seven out of the 12 who started out as traditional homeschoolers evolved into eclectic homeschoolers. This suggests that parents do not simply stick to what they know, but they are changing with the perceived needs of their children. However, this study was similar to Mary Hood's (1990) findings, which suggested that homeschooling parents are motivated more by their philosophy of learning than their actual educational encounters.

Even though the majority of respondents in this study preferred the eclectic approach to homeschooling, this study did find a link between a parent's homeschooling style and his/her religion. Therefore, it may be suggested that parents with a strong faith may use that faith in determining how they choose to set up their homeschool.

Teaching style. Similar to Huber's (2003) study, which placed instructional styles on a continuum, this study also found that teaching styles should be placed on a continuum. The

teaching styles used in this study were verified not only among parents but also within individual homeschools, which often depended on the perceived needs of the child and/or the age of the child being homeschooled. However, a family's religion was strongly related to the preferred teaching style of the parent. In addition, the type of homeschool a parent engaged in was strongly linked to the type of teacher a parent was. Again, this conclusion was similar to Hood's (1990) conclusion, which previously suggested that a parent's instructional style is motivated more by their philosophy of learning than by their actual educational encounters. Since this study found a strong link between a parent's teaching style and his/her religion, it may be suggested that for a parent with a strong faith, his/her philosophy of learning may stem from that faith and is wholly encompassing.

Additionally, it was previously suggested in this study that parents who engaged in traditional homeschools would tend to use the formal/authoritative teaching style. The actual results of this study showed that to be the case (40.9%). However, a portion of these parents (22.7%) also used the delegative teaching style as well. It may be suggested that the parents who use the traditional approach may do so more in the early or formative years of homeschooling, and then they switch to the delegative style as the student approaches the high school years as they are entering adulthood. Traditionally, parents want their adult children to take more control of their own lives and thus their education and these parents may begin to delegate learning to the student.

It had also been hypothesized that unschooling parents would tend to use the delegative style more frequently, but this did not prove to be the case in this study. Only 4.1% of unschoolers engaged in the delegative teaching style. Similar to Davenport's (2004) study, which reported that unschooling families tended to use diversified instructional practices to meet the

exploratory nature of their children, in this study, the majority of unschooling parents (87.8%) used the facilitative teaching style. This indicated that a parent did not merely leave the education of their child(ren) up to the child, as suggested by Shaw (1995) or Gutek (2004). These parents played an active role in their child's education by developing the homeschool around the experiences, interests, and abilities of the student, which reflects more of the Progressivists idea of education. Classical homeschoolers tended to use the delegative teaching style (30.6%) more than any of the other types of homeschools identified in this study followed by the authoritative teaching style (25%). Eclectic homeschoolers were also more likely to use the facilitative style (44%) of homeschooling than any of the other teaching styles.

Based on the results of this study, it appears that homeschooling families are using the facilitative teaching style more frequently than any other style of teaching (See Figure 12). This would suggest that parents' previous educational encounters, which if publically schooled were likely authoritative in nature, do not dictate how parents teach their own children in the homeschool. These findings are unlike those suggested by Knowles (1988) and Davenport (2001), which stated that parents used the method of instruction that they were exposed to during their own educational experiences.

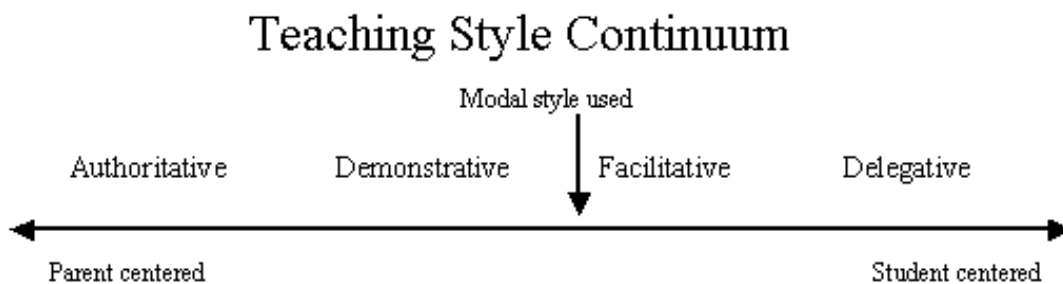


Figure 12. The homeschool teaching style continuum shows how the various teaching styles fall on a spectrum and how as parents get close to one style he or she departs from the other styles.

Reading methods. This study was similar to Knafle and Wescott's (1994) study in that it addressed the types of reading activities in which the students were engaged, the types of reading programs homeschooling parents utilized, and their associated rationales. However, this study went further and addressed some of the influences that may have caused parents to choose certain types of reading programs, the activities they engaged in, and what influenced those rationales.

Allington (2001) reported that the research suggests all methods of teaching reading have accumulated some data indicating they work. This study found that parents used a wide variety of methods to teach reading from very formal phonics based programs to exposure to books with out any direct instruction, with success. However, Allington further suggested that it was not necessarily which program was used to teach reading, but that a parent used a program that fit the needs of the child. The findings of this study showed that although parents used various programs, they often had to switch programs to find the one that best helped their child connect with the reading process. Most parents reported that they always used the program that met the needs of their child; even if it was different from the one another sibling used. Even those who indicated that they used the same method testified that it was often used with modifications for the individual learner. Religion was the one aspect of this study that continued to influence the decisions a parent made in the homeschool, even regarding method used to teach initial reading skills. While a large group of parents used the balanced approach (41.7%), others used a phonics approach, a linguistic approach, and/or language approach to teaching reading. These choices were strongly linked to their religion. A parent's homeschooling style also was strongly linked to their reading method.

Unlike previous homeschooling studies, which tend to be either descriptive or summative in nature, this study attempted to build theory using a nested analysis approach. According to Lieberman (2005), the nested approach allows for both the testing of deductively formed hypotheses and the provisional generation of theory. This study hypothesized that the family characteristic of religion may influence how parents go about making decisions regarding the structure and operation of their homeschool. Furthermore, this study hypothesized that the type of homeschool a parent engaged in might also influence how parents teach and the type of reading curriculum they use in the homeschool.

A parent's religion was found to be strongly linked to the style of homeschool a parent runs, the type of teacher he or she is, and the reading method used in the homeschool.

Homeschooling style was also found to be strongly linked to the type of teacher a parent is and the reading method used in the homeschool. These results have not been previously tested in the homeschool research to date and this study serves to provide empirical evidence for a strongly held belief. A provisional theory that might be concluded based on the results of this study to explain the relationship of religion to the homeschooling phenomenon is: Homeschooling parents with a strong faith seem to be holistically influenced by that faith with regards to their homeschooling practices.

Region. Where a parent lived in the United States was not linked to type of homeschool engaged in, teaching style employed, or reading method used. While parents indicated that certain states were more cumbersome to homeschool in than others were, it was not a deciding element in why or how they homeschooled. Furthermore, even if a state required certain elements to be taught in the homeschool or required standardized tests, the majority of parents stated that those requirements in no way influenced how they taught in the homeschool or what

curriculum they purchased. If a parent believed in standardized tests, they used them whether the state required them or not. If a parent did not, they found ways to comply that did not go against their philosophical values. Parents indicated that they did not teach to the test, but that they made themselves aware of what was being taught at the appropriate grade levels to ensure that their children had covered at least those elements.

Moreover, the parents of this study homeschooled with or without the assistance of their communities. Those who had strong community and family support reported that it made the decision to homeschool easier, but that they would have done it no matter what. Those who did not have actual homeschool support used what resources were available in their communities to enhance the homeschooling experience for their children. Additionally, there was not one preferred homeschooling style, teaching style, or reading method used depending on a family's location within the USA. These findings also confirm those of earlier studies that reported homeschooling parents are active participants in their local communities (Somerville, 2003).

Ethnicity. While the chi-square test of independence did not find a relationship between ethnicity and homeschool style, teaching style, or reading method, it became apparent to the researcher that perhaps the questions regarding ethnicity should have been worded differently. As the researcher chatted with 11 parents in the IM sessions, it became clear that many individuals were preoccupied with the term ethnicity. Many indicated that ethnicity had nothing to do with homeschooling, teaching, or reading. However, when the researcher posed the question of a family's cultural heritage, all of those individuals involved in the IM sessions began to think differently about how this related to their homeschooling.

The majority of the families in this study were classified as being of European American (76.6%) descent. One particular homeschooling parent suggested that most "White" Americans

do not believe they have an ethnicity. Therefore, she suggested that many European Americans did not associate their ethnicity with the way they were raised. Furthermore, she suggested that the way one was raised affects what one believes about the importance and value of an education.

Most interviewees believed they were “White” and that was it. Several of the mothers in the IM sessions stated, “I’m White, that is all.” However, when asked to think about what the term “White” meant in regards to their family culture and how that related to their homeschooling, these parents were able to define what that meant to their homeschool much more definitively. Many realized, especially when it came to the value and importance of learning to read, that their family culture had a great deal to do with the meaning of literacy and the value they placed on it.

Similar to Street’s (1984) assessment of literacy as dependent upon the social institutions in which it is embedded, these parents realized that the value their parents had placed on literacy and the subsequent activities that they engaged in as children and adults, all influenced how and why they taught reading to their children. Furthermore, corresponding to Whitmore, Martens, Goodman, and Owocki, (2004) and Serpell et al.’s (2002) works, that show researchers have identified several dimensions of the family’s culture as having influenced reading development, these parents reported that the type of literacy-related activities they engaged in influenced how reading was taught in the homeschool. These literacy activities included, but were not limited to, joint storybook reading with parents, visits to libraries, language games, informal opportunities to engage in social conversations, and the opportunity to view various types of written texts. This study supported what these researchers maintained: that the cultural practices of a family influence the literacy achievement of their children.

Additionally, the qualitative component of this study showed that the parents were involved in teaching their children to read, supportive of their children's methods of learning to read, and interested in reading themselves. Researchers Greaney and Hegarty (1987), Neuman (1986), Rowe (1991), and Shapiro and Whitney (1997) have concluded parental support and interest in reading are strong indicators of flourishing readers. The parents who reported having readers all indicated that their children were good readers, but that there was no "magical" age at which their children became readers.

Summary

Significance

The findings of this study, while not necessarily generalizable to all homeschooling families nationwide because of its purposive sample, do offer significant insights into the lives of homeschoolers in America. This study shows that the dynamics are changing from what they were even a decade ago. Previous studies indicated mostly conservative Christians engage in homeschooling. In this study, the data showed that conservative Christians made up 57.3% of the respondents, while those who practice alternative religions and those who practice no religion at all made up 42.7%, which is the smallest gap reported to date in any homeschooling study between the two groups. Furthermore, the respondents of this study appear to be using a transformational approach to education rather than a transmission approach to education, which had not been previously addressed in homeschooling studies. Moreover, this study indicates that parents do evolve in their homeschooling practices and that they do not necessarily teach in a manner that reflects how they were educated as previously purposed in various homeschooling studies.

The findings of this study were of further importance because of the methodology used to collect respondents and data. This mixed methods approach allowed for triangulation, exploration, expansion, and complementation of the data on a much broader scale than traditional methods would have allowed due to time and financial constraints of the researcher. The use of technological methods such as an online survey, e-mail, and instant chat sessions are relatively new and have not been previously used in the field of homeschooling research.

James and Busher (2006) found e-mail interviewing allowed them to interview individuals who were in various locations without spending the time and money to travel to those locations, and this type of interviewing more closely reflected the face-to-face interview rather than phone interviewing. In this study, the Internet proved to be a valuable tool that brought individuals from across that nation to the researcher, which would not have been possible using traditional research methods. Furthermore, using private e-mails from referrals and groups that support websites aimed at homeschoolers the researcher was able to identify various sub-populations of homeschoolers previously difficult to study because of their desire to stay out of the governmental spotlight.

This study also supported James and Busher's (2006) findings, which suggested e-mail interviewing allowed participants to move back and forth through their narratives, thinking about their answers, producing a form of enriched interview. James and Busher used e-mail to 'interview' participants individually. This study used e-mail and IM sessions to 'interview' the respondents in an individual manner, which is important because individuals respond differently to questions about their personal lives depending on their social and cultural experiences (James & Busher, 2006). This allowed the respondents to be less inhibited in their responses and be open and frank in their conversation with the researcher.

Additionally, this study confirmed the findings of previous research concerning the importance of the family's role in a child's socialization into the world of literacy (Compton-Lily, 2003; Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Taylor 1983, 1997; and Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). This study showed that homeschooling parents are intimately involved in the reading process and that they prefer a balanced approach to teaching reading. Even more important is the value and level of importance that homeschooling parents place on learning to read and literacy activities they involve their children in. This study further suggested that it is not necessarily that one program worked better than another, but that finding the program or method that meets the needs of the individual child is vitally important to the acquisition of reading skills. This has significant implications for public schools, which often try use a one-size-fits all approach to learning to read (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994).

Finally, this study was significant in that no other studies have explored what influences parent's choices in homeschooling styles, teaching methods, and how they taught reading. Other studies have looked at why parents homeschool (Ray 1990, 1994, 1997; Richman, Girten, & Snyder, 1990; Rudner, 1999), instructional styles of homeschooling parents (Danley, 1998; Davenport, 2001; Hetzel, 1997; Huber, 2003; Treat, 1990; & Willink, 2001), and reading instruction in the homeschool (Dail, 2004; Gilmore, 2001, 2003; Knafle & Wescott, 1994, 1996, 2005; & Witt, 2005). However, none have looked at what influences those choices or specifically addressed how religion, ethnicity, and/or region affect the type of homeschool a parent engages in, the style of teacher a parent is, or how a parent teaches reading in the homeschool.

The general implications of this study show that a person's religion may have a holistic influence over his/her life. However, it clearly shows that when it comes to homeschooling, if a parent indicates that one of the reasons he/she homeschools is religious, then that religion often

influences what type of homeschool is engaged in, what type of teacher he/she is, and the method chosen to teach initial reading skills. Furthermore, this study links the type of homeschool a parent runs with a teaching style and a preferred method of teaching reading.

Limitations

First, while this study was open to all homeschoolers nation wide, it was limited to those who had access to the Internet and who were exposed to one of the groups who advertised this study or had contact with an individual who took the survey. The self-selection process was also a limiting factor of this study. The survey was voluntary, and thus certain ethnic and religious minorities may have been underrepresented in this study, which limits the responses of individuals from these groups. No Arabic Americans took the study even though this is a growing population among homeschoolers. The researcher attempted to contact families in this category, but was unsuccessful, and thus the voices of this group were not heard in this study. However, while the initial LNA itself was voluntary, the selection of cases for the SNA was stratified by region to ensure an even distribution across a factor that is correlated with common experiences, community, and economic development in order to ensure a sample that was indicative of the homeschoolers in those communities (Fearon & Laitin, 2005).

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was an initial attempt to understand what influences a parent's choices regarding certain components of their homeschool and thus the intellectual, social, and emotional upbringing of their children. As this movement grows and encompasses more families in the United States and around the world, so too should the research into the very fabric of the homeschool environment, its culture, and its long-term ramifications. It is recommended that future research be done in the following areas:

1. A more in depth look at how a family's culture or heritage influences the homeschooling experience is warranted since the IM sessions indicated that the parents of this study were preoccupied with the term 'ethnicity' and indicated that the wording of 'family culture' spurred them to look more closely at the link between the heritage and teaching reading.
2. A more in depth look at minority homeschools is warranted as this study only sampled a small population of minority homeschools.
3. The long-term implication of homeschooling on students in college and beyond is warranted, as more students are being homeschooled.
4. A look at homeschooled student attitudes on how they are being homeschooled, the type of teachers their parents are, and the types of curriculum their parents used in the homeschool is warranted.
5. A look at homeschooled students' overall reading achievement levels is warranted to indicate if these students are reading below, at, or above grade level.
6. As gender issues are often culturally linked and the gender issue was not addressed in this study, and it be considered when looking at how parents teach children in the homeschool and possibly in general at what age reading skills are acquired for boys and girls in the homeschool.

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APPENDIX A. Definitions of Homeschooling Styles

	<u>Traditionalist</u>	<u>Classicalist</u>	<u>Unschooler</u>	<u>Eclecticism</u>
Statements				
1. I believe...	there is an essential body of knowledge which must be transmitted to the next generation.	learning is a life long process and I view youth as a preparatory stage.	everything in life is educational and the individual must determine for himself what is right and wrong.	in using the daily activities of my children for educational purposes and filling the gaps with direct instruction.
2. I believe...	that students should use a curriculum which is subject-centered and structured.	the main curriculum should stem from the use of the trivium methods using Great Great Books and should be age appropriate.	my student(s) should be free to discover and create their own learning experiences.	in using a variety of materials depending on what works for each child and not letting any particular philosophy dictate what that is.
3. I believe children learn best...	when they have a set schedule and assignments each day and their work is evaluated and graded.	when they are ready-they will be able to acquire new concepts only when they are developmentally ready.	by being part of the real world, free to explore what interests them.	when the educational environment takes into account the needs of the individual learners-likes, dislikes and learning styles

APPENDIX A. Definitions of Homeschooling Styles, *continued*

	<u>Traditionalist</u>	<u>Classicalist</u>	<u>Unschooler</u>	<u>Eclecticism</u>
Statements				
4. I believe...	in measuring academic achievement by formal assessments. Emphasis is placed on remembering factual information.	in using the three stages of the trivium, grammar dialectic, & rhetoric, to direct how my students are assessed.	students should be free of assessments all together.	using a variety of assessment techniques, borrowing from each school of thought depending on the needs individual needs of my students.
5. I believe...	that when students leave school they should possess not only basic skills and an extensive body of	greater emphasis should be placed on teacher-guided talks, where students and teachers engage	subject matter takes second place to helping students understand and appreciate them-	that education should be a perpetually enriching process of ongoing growth, not merely a preparation

APPENDIX A. Definitions of Homeschooling Styles, *continued*²

	<u>Traditionalist</u>	<u>Classicalist</u>	<u>Unschooler</u>	<u>Eclecticism</u>
Statements	knowledge, but also have disciplined, practical minds, capable of applying schoolhouse lessons in the real world.	in Socratic dialogue or mutual inquiry, to develop an enhanced understanding of history's most timeless concepts.	selves as unique individuals who accept complete responsibility for their thoughts, feelings, and actions.	for adult life where the home, workplace, and schoolhouse blend together to generate a continuous, fulfilling learning experience in life

² Note. The following resources were consulted to develop the statements for Appendix A: Brady, V. A. (1996). *The basic steps to successful homeschooling*. Lafayette, LA: Vital Issues Press; Dobson, L. (2002). *The homeschooling book of answers: The 101 most important questions answered by homeschooling's most respected voices* (Rev.). Roseville, CA: Three Rivers Press; Dorian, T. & Tyler, Z. P. (1996). *Anyone can homeschool: How to find what works for you*. Lafayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers; Griffith, M. (1997). *The homeschooling handbook: From preschool to high school. A parent's guide*. Rocklin, CA: Prima Publishing; Kochenderfer, R. & Kanna, E. (2002). *Homeschooling for success: How parents can create a superior education for their child*. New York: Warner Books; Larry, M. & Kaseman, S. D. (1990). *Taking charge through home schooling: Personal and political empowerment*. Stoughton, WI: Koshkonong Press; Linsenbach, S. (2003). *The everything homeschooling book: Taking charge of your child's education*. Avon, MA: Adams Media Corporation.

APPENDIX B. Definitions of Teaching Styles

	Authoritative	Delegative	Demonstrative	Facilitative
Statement				
1. I believe...	it is my responsibility to define what students must learn and how they learn it.	in developing the ability of my students to think and work independently. being taught.	in using examples from my personal experiences to illustrate points about the material alternative ways to do things.	in guiding student's work in material by asking questions, exploring options, and suggesting
2. I believe...	in providing very clear guidelines for how I want tasks completed when teaching.	in assigning work to my student(s) and believe it is their responsibility to learn the material.	in showing my student(s) how they can use various principles and concepts.	in using learning activities that encourage students to take initiative and responsibility for their learning.
3. I believe students should...	learn from a very specific set of goals and objectives that I believe should be accomplished.	be given learning goals and work at their own pace to complete them.	receive frequent verbal and/or written comments on the completion of the learning goals.	be solicited for advice about how they should learn and the goals they should accomplish.

APPENDIX B. Definitions of Teaching Styles, *continued*³

	Authoritative	Delegative	Demonstrative	Facilitative
Statement				
4. I believe my students should...	be given clear expectations for what should be learned in all subjects.	have tasks delegated to them and they should be responsible for completing the assigned learning tasks.	eventually begin to think like me in all subjects.	make their own choices among various activities in order to complete their learning goals.
5. I believe that...	my standards and expectations help my students develop the discipline they need to learn.	I should assign learning tasks to my students and be available to them if they need help in accomplishing those tasks.	I am a coach who works closely with my students to correct problems in how they think and behave.	I should give my students a lot of personal support and encouragement to do well in accomplishing their learning goals.

³ Note. The following resources were consulted to develop the statements for Appendix B: Shaw, L. J. (1995). *Teacher education 954: Five educational philosophies introduction*. Retrieved July 23, 2006 from San Diego State University Web site: <http://edweb.sdsu.edu/Lshaw/f95syll/philos/phintro.html>; Teaching styles quiz. (n.d.). Retrieved June 25, 2006 from, <http://members.shaw.ca/mdde615/tchstylsquiz7.htm>; Unschooling.com. (n.d.) Retrieved June 11, 2005, from <http://www.unschooling.com/library/faq/definitions.shtml>

APPENDIX C. Definitions of Reading Curriculums

	Phonics Based	Balanced Literacy	Linguistic	Language Experience
Statement				
1. The reading method I use...	teaches words by learning letter-sound symbol associations.	teaches reading using specific phonics instruction in combination with rich authentic literature.	teaches reading using reading using the “whole-word” approach.	teaches reading by using the child’s spoken language to develop Materials for reading.
2. The strategies I use to teach decoding and word recognition...	include teaching vowels, consonants, and blends in order to sound out new and unfamiliar words.	incorporate all reading approaches because it supports the idea that students need to use multiple strategies to become proficient readers.	indirectly teach the relationship between letters and sounds.	use each child’s personal experiences and oral language level to decide what to introduce next.
3. I teach the print features of language by...	teaching specific rules about how words are spelled and written.	teaching phonics within the context, of the student’s favorite stories, songs, and poems.	teaching reading via the use of word families (i.e.-at, mat, cat, sat).	emphasizing comprehension and reading appreciation.
4. The focus of instruction is on...	placing great emphasis on reading precision and accuracy.	emphasizing that as children learn to read they need to Learn how both spoken and written language relate to each other	teaching unfamiliar words that do not fall neatly into a word family such as sight words. family such as sight	allowing children to insert and substitute words as long as it makes sense.

APPENDIX C. Definitions of Reading Curriculum, *continued*⁴

	Phonics Based	Balanced Literacy	Linguistic	Language Experience
Statement				
5. The resources that I use...	stress the letter/sound connection being worked on by the student.	include modeled reading and writing, shared reading and writing, guided reading and writing, and/or independent reading and writing.	adhere to the words that previously had been taught and many times seem “nonsensical” (i.e. Pat sat on fat).	are created solely from the student’s experiences and are read and re-read to develop a connection to the written words.

⁴ Note. The following resources were consulted to develop the statements for Appendix C: Balanced literacy background knowledge. (n.d.). Retrieved June 26, 2006, from <http://www.earlyliterature.ecsd.net/balanced%20literacy.htm>; Learning to read. (n.d.). Retrieved June 26, 2006, from <http://www.toread.com/>; McCormick, T. W. (1988). *Theories of reading in dialogue: An interdisciplinary study*. New York: University Press of America

APPENDIX D. Referral Letter

Dear Fellow Homeschooler,

Greetings, my name is Carolyn McKeon and I am a 10-year homeschooling veteran mom of four boys. I am currently working on my PhD at Capella University and am doing a survey regarding homeschooling styles, teaching styles and methods used to teach reading in homeschool. You are receiving this e-mail because another homeschooler thought you might be interested in taking the survey too. Please know that this is the only contact you will receive from me and I thank you for your time up front.

As a homeschooling mom myself, I know that I have used unconventional methods to teach reading to my children and sometimes I have used a very structured approach. This style reflects the type of homeschool that I run. As homeschooling continues to grow in popularity and continues its great success in educating the next generation, I am hoping that the results of this survey will enlighten other educators and parents to look at the ways parents are instructing and supporting their students to help make a difference in other educational settings.

Please take a moment to share your thoughts by taking this survey. Please feel free to share this survey with as many homeschoolers as you wish. I would love to hear from all types of homeschoolers from across the country. Just click on the link below and take the survey. Please be assured that your responses to this survey are intended only for the use of my dissertation and will be kept completely confidential.

<http://fs19.formsite.com/cmckeon3/form533865736/index.html>

Sincerely and with much thanks,

Carolyn McKeon, M.S. Ed

APPENDIX E. Survey Instrument

First, let me take this opportunity to thank you for taking an interest in homeschool research. Your contribution will help other parents who are seeking information about homeschooling and its results. My name is Carolyn McKeon and I am a homeschooling mother of four school-age boys. I have been actively homeschooling for seven years.

The following survey is my dissertation project as a PhD student at Capella University in their K-12 Teaching and Learning program. This 28-question survey will focus on homeschooling styles, instructional styles, and methods used to teach reading in the homeschool.

Standardized assessments show that homeschoolers can read, but there is little discussion that tells how they learned to read. Is it by conventional methods or by those created uniquely in the homeschool? I am hoping that this study will shed some light on this topic and give parents in the U.S. information about how reading can be taught.

Section I: Background Information

1. Please indicate your role in the homeschooling family.

_____ mother

_____ father

_____ other (If *other* is chosen please indicate your relationship to the homeschooling family.)

2. Please indicate your level of responsibility in the homeschool.

_____ I am primarily responsible for all instruction in the homeschool.

_____ I support the primary homeschooling adult in the homeschool.

_____ I share responsibility equally with another adult in the homeschool.

3. How many children do you currently homeschool? _____

4. Please indicate the age(s) of the child(ren) currently being homeschooled.

5. Please indicate your reasons for homeschooling. (*Choose all that apply*)

_____ religious reasons

_____ political reasons (i.e. personal liberty)

_____ socialization

_____ unique family needs (i.e. medical, learning disability, occupation)

_____ academic reasons (provide better education)

_____ philosophical reasons (i.e. unschooling)

- racial issues
- efficacy (i.e. personalized curriculum)
- other (If *other* is chosen please indicate what that reason is under comments.)

Comments (unlimited):

6. If your family has a religion that they practice, please indicate which one it is. *(If you do not have a religious preference or prefer not to disclose your religion, please write N/A for your response).*

Comments (unlimited):

7. How many years have you been actively homeschooling? _____

Comments (unlimited):

8. Please indicate which ethnic group most closely represents your family.

- African American
- Arab American
- Asian American
- European American
- Hispanic American
- Latin American
- Native American
- Multicultural family
- other (If you choose *other*, please indicate which ethnic group your family represents).

I prefer not to answer this question.

9. Which state do you live in? *Please select one. (All states will be listed in a pull down menu).*

Section II: Homeschooling Style

The following questions will ask you about the type of homeschool that your family engages in. Please answer the questions reflecting on your beliefs about the way you run your homeschool.

1. What kind of homeschooler would you classify yourself as?

- Classical
 - Traditional
 - Eclectic
 - Unschooler
 - other (Please describe your style of homeschool)
-

The following five (5) questions ask you to finish a statement based on what you believe about how a homeschool should operate. Please choose the one response that most closely reflects those beliefs.

2. I believe...

- there is an essential body of knowledge that must be transmitted to the next generation.
- learning is a life long process and I view youth as a preparatory stage.
- everything in life is educational and the individual must determine for himself what is right and wrong.
- in using the daily activities of my children for educational purposes and filling in the gaps with direct instruction.

3. I believe...

- students should use a curriculum that is subject-centered and structured.
- the main curriculum should stem from the use of the trivium methods using Great Books and should be age appropriate.
- my student(s) should be free to discover and create their own learning experiences.
- in using a variety of materials depending on what works for each child and not letting any particular philosophy dictate what that is.

4. I believe children learn best...

_____ when they have a set schedule and assignments each day, and their work is evaluated and graded.

_____ when they are ready-children will be able to acquire new concepts only when they are developmentally ready.

_____ by being part of the real world, free to explore what interests them.

_____ when the educational environment takes into account the needs of the individual learner-likes, dislikes, and learning styles.

5. I believe...

_____ in measuring academic achievement by formal assessments. Emphasis is placed on remembering factual information.

_____ in using the three stages of the trivium- grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric, to direct how my students are assessed.

_____ students should be free of assessments all together.

_____ using a variety of assessment techniques is best- borrowing from each school of thought depending on the needs of the individual student.

6. I believe...

_____ that when students leave school they should possess not only basic skills and an extensive body of knowledge, but also have disciplined, practical minds capable of applying schoolhouse lessons in the real world.

_____ greater emphasis should be placed on teacher-guided talks, where students and the teachers engage in Socratic dialogue or mutual inquiry, to develop an enhanced understanding of history's most timeless concepts.

_____ subject matter takes second place to helping students understand and appreciate themselves as unique individuals who accept complete responsibility for their thoughts, feelings, and actions.

_____ that education should be a perpetually enriching process of ongoing growth, not merely a preparation for adult life where the home, workplace, and schoolhouse blend together to generate a continuous, fulfilling learning experience in life.

Section III: Teaching Style

In this section you will be asked a series of questions that center around how you actually instruct your child(ren) in the homeschool.

1. How would you define your teaching style within your homeschool?

- Authoritative/Formal (Parents are the authority and students learn from them.)
- Delegative (Parents hand over the learning to the student.)
- Demonstrative (Parents display learning by their actions and words.)
- Facilitative (Parents assist students in obtaining the student's learning goals.)
- other (If you choose *other* please define your teaching style in the comments section).

Comments (unlimited):

In each of the following five (5) questions please choose the one response that best represents what you believe about how you see your role as the teacher in the homeschool.

2. I believe...

- it is my responsibility to define what my students must learn and how they learn it.
- in developing the ability of my students to think and work independently.
- in using examples from my personal experiences to illustrate points about the material being taught.
- in guiding my student's work in material by asking questions, exploring options, and suggesting alternative ways to do things.

3. I believe...

- in providing very clear guidelines for how I want tasks completed when teaching.
- in assigning work to my students and believe it is their responsibility to learn the material.
- in showing my student(s) how they can use various principles and concepts.
- in using learning activities that encourage my student(s) to take initiative and responsibility for their learning.

4. I believe students should...

- learn from a very specific set of goals and objectives that I believe should be accomplished.
- be given learning goals and work at their own pace to complete them.
- receive frequent verbal and/or written comments on their learning goals.
- be solicited for advice about how they should learn and the goals they should accomplish.

5. I believe students should...

- be given clear expectations for what should be learned in all subjects.
- have tasks delegated to them and they should be responsible for completing the assigned learning tasks.
- eventually begin to think like me in all subjects.
- make their own choices among various activities in order to complete their learning goals.

6. I believe that...

- my standards and expectations help my students develop the discipline they need to learn.
- I should assign learning tasks to my students and be available to them if they need help accomplishing those tasks.
- I am a coach who works closely with my students to correct problems in how they think and behave.
- I should give my students a lot of personal support and encouragement to do well in accomplishing their learning goals.

Section IV: Reading Methods

In this section, you will be asked to reflect on a reading method you used to teach initial reading skills to your homeschooler. To answer these questions please use the most recent reading method that you used to teach your youngest student how to read.

1. How would you categorize the most recent reading method you used to teach reading to your youngest child?

Phonics Based approach

Balanced Literacy approach

Linguistic approach

Language Experience approach

other (If you choose *other*, please indicate how your youngest child learned to read in the comments section).

Comments (unlimited):

The following five (5) questions ask to finish a statement about the most recent method of reading instruction that you used to teach initial reading skills to your homeschooler. Please choose the one response in each question that most closely represents your method or reading curriculum.

2. The reading method I use...

teaches words by learning letter-sound symbol associations.

teaches reading using specific phonics instruction in combination with rich authentic literature.

teaches reading using the “whole-word” approach.

teaches reading by using the child’s spoken language to develop material for reading.

3. The strategies I use to teach decoding and word recognition...

include teaching vowels, consonants, and blends in order to sound out new and unfamiliar words.

_____ incorporates all reading approaches because it supports the idea that students need to use multiple strategies to become proficient readers.

_____ indirectly teach the relationship between letters and sounds.

_____ use each child's personal experiences and oral language level to decide what to introduce next.

4. I teach the print features of language by...

_____ teaching specific rules about how words are spelled and written.

_____ teaching phonics within the context of the students' favorite stories, songs, and poems.

_____ teaches reading via the use of word families (i.e. the "-at" family: mat, sat, cat)

_____ emphasizing comprehension and reading appreciation.

5. The focus of my reading instruction is on...

_____ placing great emphasis on reading precision and accuracy.

_____ emphasizing that as children learn to read they need to learn how both spoken and written language relate to each other.

_____ teaching unfamiliar words that do not fall neatly into a word family such as sight word.

_____ allowing children to insert and substitute words as long as it makes sense.

6. The resources I use...

_____ stress that the letter/sound connection be worked on by the student.

_____ include modeled reading and writing, shared reading and writing, guided reading and writing, and/or independent reading and writing.

_____ adhere to the words that have been taught previously and many time seem "nonsensical" (i.e. Pat sat on fat).

_____ are created solely from the student's experiences and are read and re-read to develop a connection to the written words.

7. If you have more than one child that you are homeschooling or have homeschooled in the past, did you use the same reading method for all of them?

_____ I always use the same method.

_____ I always use the method that suits the individual child best.

Again, please accept my sincere thanks for taking the time to complete this survey and contribute to the field of homeschooling. The final component of this study is follow-up interviews conducted via the Internet and requires no phone calls or face-to-face communication. If you would be interested in participating in a follow-up interview, please indicate your interest below.

_____ No, I am not interested in participating in a follow-up interview. Thank you any way.

_____ Yes, I am interested in participating in a follow-up interview regarding my reading methods. My e-mail address is _____.

As I am sure you are aware, homeschoolers have a great networking system. In order to hear from as many homeschoolers as possible I am asking those who feel comfortable to refer other homeschoolers who may be interested in taking this survey. Please be assured that the only contact made to those individuals that you refer to this study will be an initial e-mail asking them if they are interested in taking part in the online survey with a link to the survey. No further contact will be made and their e-mail addressed will not be used for any other purpose than this study.

E-mail addresses only, no names necessary!

Please list any other homeschooler e-mails here that you think may be interested in taking this survey:

If you would personally like to receive a short summary of the results of this study, please indicate your desire here.

_____ No, I am not interested in receiving the results of this study.

_____ Yes, I would like to receive a brief summary of the results of this study. My e-mail address is _____.

THANK YOU

If you have any concerns or questions regarding this survey, please feel free to contact the researcher either by phone at 570-998-2958 or e-mail at cmckeon3@yahoo.com. You may also

contact the Committee Chair, Dr. Kate Green (also a homeschooling mother), by calling 1-800-CAPELLA or via e-mail at katherine.green@faculty.capella.edu .

APPENDIX F. Interview Letter Invitation and Questions

Greetings, my name is Carolyn McKeon, and you are receiving this e-mail because you expressed an interest in participating in a follow-up interview when you took my online homeschool survey. Please accept my gratitude for your interest in contributing to this study. Below you will find 10 questions developed from the information that I accumulated from the 1000 surveys returned. Again, I want to assure you that the information you return to me will be kept confidential and will be used only for this study. I will assume that if you return the interview questions with responses that you agree to have your information used in this study. Take a moment to read the questions and then answer them as thoroughly as possible.

Once you have answered the interview questions, please return your responses to me at the following e-mail cmckeon3@yahoo.com. Please return the questions to me no later than February 12th, and feel free to e-mail me with any other questions or comments that you may have. You may also contact my research mentor Dr. Kate Green at Katherine.green@faculty.capella.edu.

Please return no later than February 12th, 2007
to be included in the study!

Please include the following information in your response:

- 1) Indicate which state you live in.
- 2) In your own words, describe why you decided to homeschool your child(ren).
- 3) Describe how your homeschool (learning environment) has developed.
- 4) What influences your choices in curriculum or your decision not to follow a curriculum?
- 5) How would you describe the relationship between you and your child(ren) in the learning environment?
- 6) In your own words, share your story of how your child(ren) learned to read.
- 7) In your own words, describe how you think members of your community, support groups you belong to, and/or other organizations have supported your efforts to help your child learn to read if at all.
- 8) In your own words, describe how you think your cultural or ethnic identity may have influenced your child(ren)'s acquisition of reading skills if at all.
- 9) In your own words, describe how you think your personal belief system (i.e. religion, spirituality, philosophy of life, etc.) influences how you support your child (ren)'s efforts to learn to read if at all.
- 10) Feel free to add any other information you feel is important to give the researcher an accurate picture of how reading is taught or acquired in your homeschool.

I would sincerely like to thank you for your time and effort. I am hoping that your willingness to share your experiences will help future homeschooling parents in their homeschooling pursuits.

Thank You,

Carolyn McKeon

APPENDIX G. Chat Letter Invitation

Dear Fellow Home Educator,

Greetings, this is Carolyn McKeon again, you are receiving this e-mail because you returned your follow-up interview questions and I would like to invite you to participate in an online instant messaging session scheduled.

If you choose to participate in this session, you should follow this link http://gabbly.com/private/homeschool_research/mckeon on the scheduled day and time. You must type in the topic as homeschool research with the password mckeon. During this session, you will be able to talk directly to me, the researcher. You may ask questions, have information elaborated on, or just talk to me regarding your teaching reading experiences. I too may have some follow-up questions for you.

I am providing you with two times to choose from in case one is not good for you. Your times are:

Please e-mail me at cmckeon3@yahoo.com as to which date you would like. I will wait 30 minutes for you to arrive in the chat session.

This is an innovative way to do research and I would like to encourage you to sign on and share. Again, I want to assure you that the information you return to me will be kept confidential and only used for this study. I will assume that if you sign into the chat session then you agree to have your information used in this study.

Please feel free to e-mail me at cmckeon3@yahoo.com with any other questions or comments that you may have. You may also contact Dr. Kate Green at Katherine.green@faculty.capella.edu. Again, I am so grateful for your willingness to share you thoughts and stories with me for the purposes of this research.

With warm regards,

Carolyn McKeon, M.S. Ed

APPENDIX H. Coding Cookbook

Question #	Level				Theme
	1	2	3	4	
1	1.00				Region
		1.05			NE
		1.10			SE
		1.15			NW
		1.20			SW
		1.25			Central
2	2.00				Reasons for homeschooling
		2.05			Religious
		2.10			Political
		2.15			Social
		2.20			unique family needs
		2.25			academic
		2.30			philosophical
		2.35			racial
		2.40			efficacy
		2.45			other
			2.4505		local school closed
			2.4510		having to ride the bus
			2.4515		spend more time with own children
			2.4520		
3	3.00				Evolution of the homeschool environment
		3.05			<i>start out traditional</i>
a=religious			3.0505		stay traditional
b=non-religious			3.0510		evolved to unschooling
			3.0515		evolved to eclectic
			3.0520		evolved to classical
			3.0525		experimented and returned to traditional
			3.0530		mostly traditional but supplement
		3.10			<i>start out unschooling</i>
			3.1005		stay unschooling
			3.1010		evolved to traditional
			3.1015		evolved to eclectic
			3.1020		evolved to classical
			3.1025		experimented and returned to unschooling
			3.1030		mostly unschooling but supplement
		3.15			<i>start out eclectic</i>
			3.1505		stay eclectic
			3.1510		evolved to unschooling
			3.1515		evolved to traditional
			3.1520		evolved to classical
			3.1525		experimented but returned to eclectic

APPENDIX H. Coding Cookbook, *continued*

			3.1530	mostly eclectic but supplement
		3.20		<i>start out classical</i>
			3.2005	stay classical
			3.2010	evolved to unschooling
			3.2015	evolved to traditional
			3.2020	evolved to eclectic
			3.2025	experimented but returned to classical
			3.2030	mostly classical but supplement
		3.25		not classifiable
			3.2505	content driven response
			3.2510	location driven response
4	4.00			What influences choice of curriculum
		4.05		others outside the family
		4.10		religion
		4.15		the children's needs and desires
		4.20		experimentation with various curriculum
		4.25		personal preference
		4.30		known by reputation to be academically strong
		4.35		others
			4.3505	price of the curriculum
5	5.00			Describe relationship with children
		5.05		<i>Authoritative</i>
			5.0505	with ease
			5.0510	with difficulty
		5.10		<i>Delegative</i>
			5.1005	with ease
			5.1010	with difficulty
		5.15		<i>Demonstrative</i>
			5.1505	with ease
			5.1510	with difficulty
		5.20		<i>Facilitative</i>
			5.2005	with ease
			5.2010	with difficulty
		5.25		<i>other</i>
6	6.00			Describe how children learned to read
		6.05		<i>Used a program to teach reading</i>
			6.0505	used phonics program
a=early reader			6.0510	used 100 Easy Lessons to teach reading
b=late reader				5 stayed with this method all the way through
m=male				10 changed method until found one that worked
f=female		6.10		<i>Did not use a program just immersed child in everyday reading</i>
A=same method			6.1005	child just picked up reading while being read to

APPENDIX H. Coding Cookbook, *continued*

B=different method			6.1010		parent taught things to child as they read stories together
				5	stayed with this method all the way through
				10	changed method until found one that worked
		6.15			<i>Balanced approach to teaching reading</i>
			6.1505		used more structured
			6.151		used less structure
				5	stayed with this method all the way through
				10	changed method until found one that worked
		6.20			Not sure how child learned to read
7	7.00				Community support for teaching reading
		7.05			<i>no support from community in teaching reading</i>
		7.10			<i>other people</i>
			7.1005		church members
			7.1010		homeschool groups
			7.1015		relatives
		7.15			<i>use of community facilities</i>
			7.1505		libraries
			7.1510		church groups
			7.1515		other groups
		7.20			other
8	8.00				Cultural influences in regards to teaching reading
		8.05			no influence
		8.10			home culture influence
			8.1005		history of readers
			8.1010		because parents are highly educated it is important
		8.15			Responder identified race in response
			8.1505		able to stay home
			8.1510		Historically identified with a culture that understands the value of written literature
			8.1515		mixed culture provides benefits and challenges
			8.1520		certain characteristics of various cultures
9	9.00				Influence of personal belief system
		9.05			Religion
			9.0505		huge influence; reason for learning to read
			9.0510		minimal; helps with life
			9.0515		no impact
		9.10			Philosophy of life
			9.1005		child lead
			9.1010		love of reading
			9.1015		parent see the importance and value of reading
			9.1020		be able to make a contribution to society
		9.15			Spirituality

APPENDIX H. Coding Cookbook, *continued*

			9.1505		overall spirituality
		9.20			no part at all
		9.25			no enjoyment but do it because it is important