HOME-SCHOOLING: AN EXAMINATION OF PARENTAL CHOICE AGAINST SOCIETAL NORMS

Peter Werner Wilhelm Schroeder
B.A., University California, Santa Barbara, 1993

THESIS

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

EDUCATION
(Curriculum and Instruction)

at

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

SPRING 2009
HOME-SCHOOLING: AN EXAMINATION OF PARENTAL CHOICE AGAINST SOCIETAL NORMS

A Thesis

by

Peter Werner Wilhelm Schroeder

Approved by:

Dr. Rita Johnson, Committee Chair

Dr. Daniel Orea, Second Reader

Date

4-20-05
Student: Peter Werner Wilhelm Schroeder

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and that this thesis is suitable for shelving in the Library and credit is to be awarded for the thesis.

Dr. Robert H. Pitchard, Department Chair

Department of Teacher Education
Abstract

HOME-SCHOOLING: AN EXAMINATION OF PARENTAL CHOICE AGAINST SOCIETAL NORMS

by

Peter Werner Wilhelm Schroeder

Statement of the Problem

Home-schooling has become an acceptable and more widespread educational choice among parents. While home-schooling has a long history in America, the societal and individual reasons for making the choice to home-school have changed over time. The choice to home-school can shed light on current perceptions of the educational system and on our educational values and standards.

In order to understand these current choices, research needs to be conducted to examine the choices and motivational factors that influence parents to make the choice to home-school. This research categorizes the motivational factors and researches parental motivation to validate or invalidate them.

Sources of Data

Data for this thesis was first collected through a review of the current literature on the issue. Milton Gaither (2008), in “Why Homeschooling Happened,” examines

A survey was also conducted of home-school families in Sacramento to explore their motivational factors for choosing to home-school. Over 150 surveys were collected and analyzed.

Conclusions Reached

The survey results validated much of the existing research on the motivational factors behind the parental decision to home-school. Identified factors such as ideological and pedagogical factors were clearly identified by survey participants as strong motivational factors for them to home-school their children. Religious reasons, academic challenges, and protection of their children from negative influences emerged as leading reasons.

The survey also validated advantages and disadvantages of home-schooling identified by the research. Advantages included: individualization of curriculum, challenging students academically, ability to teach religious or moral values, and
ability to spend more time with their children. Disadvantages included: extra work for parents, and lack of access to specialized school equipment and activities.
DEDICATION

For my parents, Helmut and Doris Schroeder, whose continued chant of “Just Do It!” pushed me onward during this laborious journey. Mom and Dad, I finally did it.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my wife Kim and my sons Ben and Colin for their love and support during the writing of this thesis.

I would also like to thank my friends Gary and Keith, who encouraged and assisted me throughout this process.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of the Remainder of the Thesis</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Home Schooling</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-emergence of Home Schooling in the 20th Century</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home School in the 21st Century</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for Home Schooling</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantages</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Family Information and Education Level</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Mother’s Education Level Versus Father’s Education Level</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Advantages and Disadvantages of Home-school</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Home-school Students Enrolling in Public School</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Home-schooling over the past half-century has become a popular and near-mainstream choice for the education of many of the nation’s children. The rise of the movement to home-schooling has its roots in several factors that are influenced by the diversity of American culture and experiences, and also by the rapid advances in the accessibility of both information about home-schooling through the media and the more widespread availability of materials and resources to assist parents in becoming home-school instructors.

Many parents who home-school are motivated by ideological reasons. Some want to provide their children with religious and moral education and values that they do not feel are presented in the traditional school setting while others want to teach their children on the opposite end of the ideological spectrum, and instill in them more liberal values than are available in the traditional setting.

Still others are motivated by dissatisfaction with the quality of education they feel their child will receive at traditional schools. These parents want to provide a customized learning environment tailored to their child’s needs that they feel will help them grow and excel academically at their own pace, with individualized instruction. They also may feel that their child would be exposed to too many negative influences in the traditional school setting and that they can provide a more structured and controlled environment at home.
The idea of home-schooling is enhanced by the popular image of home-schooled children as being advanced beyond their peers academically, as evidenced by televised spelling bee champions and features in popular programs. It is further supported by the now widespread availability of resources for parents who home-school, including curriculum, support groups, and the ability to network with other home-school parents via the internet.

Purpose of the Study

This thesis investigates the relevant research and history of home-schooling. It examines the reasons why parents decide to choose home-schooling as an alternative to public education. The investigation of these issues considers both the motivational and accessibility factors that are relevant in making the decision to home-school. Motivational factors are subcategorized into ideological and pedagogical factors. Accessibility factors are sub-categorized into media and resource availability factors.

Methodology

This thesis attempts to contribute to this research by developing a detailed survey that was distributed and completed by over 150 home-schooling parents. A survey was selected as the thesis research tool because it was necessary to ascertain parental motivation in a detailed manner to either substantiate or unsubstantiated the research findings from previous work.
Limitations

The opinions expressed in these surveys are from a sampling of home-schooling parents in the Sacramento region. Therefore, the information should not be generalized as a representation of all home-schooling families.

Definition of Terms

*Home-schooling*: This term can be broadly defined as providing an education for your child in the setting of the home that is parent taught as opposed to teacher led in a brick and mortar building.

*Ideologues*: As related to home-schooling, these people do not agree with what is being taught in public education, although they typically attempt to replicate a public school’s structure. Their argument is often religiously based and they feel that strengthening their relationship with their children is the most important objective in education.

*Individualization*: The idea of customizing curriculum to meet a particular child’s interests and needs.

*Pedagogues*: As related to home-schooling, these people teach their children at home because they feel that the public school system cannot possibly meet the educational and intellectual demands of their own child. They feel they can provide a better education than public schools. They believe in more of a real world education.

*Socialization*: The idea of how well a child interacts with others in any given situation.
Organization of the Remainder of the Thesis

The research and the survey discussed in this thesis is organized in the following manner. Chapter 2 provides a historical account that details the history of home-schooling in the United States, along with the societal and cultural factors that gave rise to the home-school movement and its acceptance and popularity as an alternative educational choice. It also reviews the literature and closely examines the research that identifies the factors that have been developed categorically to classify the motivational and accessibility factors in making the decision to home-school. This sets the stage for Chapter 3, which details the methodology of the survey and reinforces key points discussed in the review of the literature. Chapter 3 also bridges the gap between Chapters 2 and 4 by linking the review of the literature with the analysis of the research detailed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 thoroughly examines the research and the findings that can be gleaned from the responses. Finally, Chapter 5 provides a conclusion and ties together the full scope of the research and survey results. This is followed by the list of references used in this study. The Appendix contains the survey and other statistical data not included in the body of this study.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The first chapter has given an overview of the purpose of the study, its methodology, and the organization of the remainder of the thesis. This chapter will focus in on a review of the extensive current literature on many aspects of home schooling. Included in this will be an overview of the history of the home-schooling movement, from its prevalence in early America, its decline with the rise of more formal education, and its reestablishment as a social movement in the 1970s.

Next is a discussion of the two identified categories of home-schooled children; those whose parents are ideologues, i.e. they do not believe in all or part of the content of the curriculum in public schools, and pedagogues, or those who feel they can do a better job educating their children than the public schools. This is followed by an overview of the role the media has played in the renewal of home-schooling. The last topic of discussion is the accessibility of home-schooling resources for parents.

Chapter 2 will also discuss the advantages and disadvantages of home schooling. The content categories of the advantages section will include religious reasons, individualization, the desire for high achievement, the protection from negative social influences, and extra-curricular activities. The content categories of the disadvantages section will include socialization among peers, customization of curriculum, increasing complexity of curriculum, and accountability. This chapter will
conclude with an overview of the goals that were identified and the research that was conducted for this thesis.

History of Home Schooling

Home-schooling has a history that extends back to the beginning of this country and the emphasis that has been placed on the education of children as a nation. Due to this agrarian society during the early years of the nation, home-schooling was a matter of practicality, rather than an expression of dissatisfaction with a public school system for either its academic rigor or the content of the curriculum being taught. The lack of available public schools due to the rural character of this society, along with the need for children as labor to help support the agrarian economy, strongly contributed to home-schooling as a common option for educating children. Many notable Americans were home-schooled including presidents John Quincy Adams, Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin D. Roosevelt; authors Agatha Christie and Pearl Buck; and inventor Thomas Edison (Knowles, Marlow, & Muchmore, 1992).

In the 17th and 18th centuries there were some schools, but a majority of the learning took place in the home. The schools were unsystematic, unregulated, and discontinuous. They were not meant to replace parental “home-schooling,” but rather to serve as a supplement to it (Carper, 2000). As time passed, schools became more predominant. Schools began complementing churches and reinforcing religious beliefs. Despite prominent men of the time like Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Rush attempting to push for more systematic and state-influenced schooling, the colonial or
religiously based mode of public/private schooling suited parents well into the 19th century (Carper, 2000).

The use of home schooling changed by the end of the 19th century. By 1890 about 97% of children aged 5 to 14 were either enrolled in a public or private school (Wattenberg, 1976). Why did parents decide to give up some of their educational responsibilities for their children and hand them over to the government? (Carper, 2000) believed this happened for four reasons: (a) parents believed that schooling offered an opportunity for economic advancement, (b) parents supported Christian teachings, (c) public education at the time was convenient and available, particularly in rural areas, where parents looked at school as an extension of the family, and (d) parents were most likely pleased that school relieved them of some of their child rearing responsibilities.

For purpose of this thesis, the history is not central to its research or conclusions. Rather, this thesis will focus on the development of both laws and social mores that gave rise to a robust mandatory public education, and the subsequent rejection of this system by parents who had either ideological or pedagogical objections to it.

Re-emergence of Home Schooling in the 20th Century

This trend of support for public schooling continued until the 1960s, when the seeds of a public school backlash began to germinate in two ideologically polarized movements: the religious/social conservative movement and the liberal/counterculture movement.
This religious/social conservative movement had as one of its early touchstones the Supreme Court rulings of 1962 and 1963 outlawing organized school prayer and Bible teachings. This shocked many conservatives at that time (Carper 2000; Gaither, 2008). This was an especially difficult pill to swallow for many conservative Protestants, because this followed the Court’s decision to desegregate schools (Gaither, 2008). At that time, Alabama Representative George Andrews spoke for many southern conservatives when he said that the Supreme Court had “put the Negroes in the schools – now they put God out of the schools” (as cited in Nickerson, 2004 p. 57). This sentiment led many supporters of this ideology to begin to consider education alternatives to the public school system.

Second was the liberal/counterculture movement that developed in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. This movement rejected the mainstream cultural norms being presented in public educational institutions and created alternative settings in which to teach counterculture values (Gaither, 2008). Many chose alternative living arrangements, such as communes and, even when these arrangements became less common in the 1980s, these individuals sought to continue this value system as it applied to public schooling (Gaither, 2008).

The third major modern trend has been dissatisfaction on the part of some parents with the quality of public education in general, and public school educators in particular. These parents believe that their own abilities and knowledge of their child will lead to greater academic success than their child could achieve utilizing the public schools available to them (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007)
According to Knowles et al. (1992), the ideological home-schooling movement that began in the 1970s could be described in terms of five phases: (a) contention, (b) confrontation, (c) cooperation, (d) consolidation, and (d) compartmentalization. The first phase, contention, was brought on by specific groups of educational reformers who disagreed with and were dissatisfied by public schooling. The second phase of confrontation was characterized by conflicts between home-school parents and public school administrators. The third phase of cooperation began happening in the early 1980s when public schools began working with the home-school community and allowing home-school students access to public school facilities and programs. Consolidation, the fourth phase, was when the home-school community began to grow in popularity and public acceptance by means of networking and legislative lobbying. The final phase, compartmentalization, is now coming into its own. It is based upon the idea that there are different home-school factions, all of whom share a common goal (Knowles et al., 1992).

**Home Schooling in the 21st Century**

By the 21st century, home-schooling had become a fast growing phenomenon in this country. “The number of home-schooled children is over 1 million, more than 2% of the total number of school children and roughly equal to the total in charter schools and voucher schools combined” (Isenberg, 2007, p. 387). The number of home-schooled students is growing at a rate of 7% to 10% per year according to the National Home Research Institute (Isenberg).
Gaither (2008) summarized the historical reasons students are home-schooled. The first was due to countercultural sensibility becoming a mainstream American sentiment. It was commonplace, in the 1960s and 1970s to question authority and reject the mainstream. With the federal government telling parents they had to send their children to government operated schools, parents often home-schooled students simply because the federal government told them they could not. Suburbanization was the second reason for home-schooling. Neighborhoods and suburbs gave Americans their privacy and automatically segregated them by race, income level, age, number of children, and cultural style.

According to Gaither (2008), the third reason for home-schooling was because of the American cult of the child that had developed over the past couple of decades. This historical development focused on the trend of the general public wanting what was best for their children and focusing on their development and education to an extent that exceeded that of previous generations.

Lastly, Gaither (2008) stated home-schooling happened because of certain changes in public schooling as well as in families during the second half of the 20th century. As one home-school parent explained, “People who do not home-school tend to assume it is done in reaction against institutional schooling...(but) to me, home-schooling was a positive choice rather than a reaction against the school system” (as cited in Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007, p. 278). Whatever the reasons, home-schooling has become a legitimate and popular phenomenon.
Reasons for Home-Schooling

The reasons identified for home schooling can generally be placed into four categories: (a) ideological reasons, (b) pedagogical reasons, (c) influence of media, and (d) availability of resources (Neal, 2006; Pearson, 2002; Rivero, 2002; Stevens, 2001). The first two, ideological and pedagogical, are what can be termed the motivational reasons for a parent choosing to home-school. The other two, media influence and availability of resources, may be termed the accessibility reasons for choosing to home-school.

Ideological

Van Galen (1988) placed the parents of home-schooled children into two distinct categories: ideologues and pedagogues. Ideologues do not agree with what they believe is being taught in public and private schools, and their main objective in education is to strengthen their relationships with their children. Ideologues attempt to replicate a public school's structure and schedule. The ideologues' argument is also religiously based and criticizes beliefs that are taught in public schools (Romanowski, 2006; Stevens, 2001). “These parents view the public schools as grounded in secular humanist philosophy that does not include strong Christian values” (Marchant & MacDonald, 1994, p. 66). These parents see the home as a formal learning environment with predetermined curriculum, extensive use of textbooks, and rigid schedules (Knowles et al., 1992).

Conservative and religious based ideologues would appear to have an outlet for their potential objections to what is being taught in the public school system by
utilizing the well developed system of religious-based schooling across America. However, the “cult of the child,” described by Gaither (2008), theorizes that homeschool Christian parents have a stronger belief in the positive sense of the child as a gift from God, full of potential, rather than “vipers,” who are tainted by original sin. This belief in the child encourages parents to make up for the perceived deficiencies in both the public and private religious schools by providing their own instruction at home.

As noted above, the range of parents who home-school across the ideological spectrum is broad. Conservatives share distaste for what is being presented in public school curriculums with liberal counter-culturists, but on diametrically different topics. Where a conservative may object to a book with “objectionable” content, from their perspective, the liberal counter-culturist may object to the unavailability of the same book in the interest of exposing their child to a broader range of viewpoints and literature.

Pedagogical

Pedagogues teach their children at home for educational reasons. They feel they can do a better job at instructing their children than a public school. These homeschooling parents share a respect for their children’s intellect and creativity and a belief that children learn best when pedagogy [instruction] taps into the child’s innate desire to learn (Van Galen, 1988). Pedagogues stand against the bureaucratization and professionalization of public schools and seek personalization and decentralization.
under family control (Collom, 2005). Pedagogues are inclusive or earth based (Stevens, 2001).

These parents believe in more of a real world education, where personal learning experiences are important and vital. This is an idea where the learner is responsible for their own education and the learning is less structured and more experiential (Knowles et al. 1992). In their view, who knows their child’s ability to learn best? It is certainly not a public school teacher, so why give a complete stranger the power to influence their own child’s education during a critical learning time.

Influence of Media

The media has played a large part in the increase of home-schooling, with the majority of the popular media offering a positive portrayal (Romanowski, 2006). Home-schooled students can be seen on television winning various academic competitions. The winner of the Spelling Bee, for the fourth time since 1997, was a home-schooled student (Greene & Greene, 2007). The public often sees the results of studies on home-schoolers’ academic achievements compared to their public schooled counterparts (Romanowski, 2006).

Numerous celebrities have received positive media attention for home-schooling their children. For example, actors Will Smith and Jada Pinkett-Smith have received media attention for home-schooling their two children due to the flexibility it provides in their busy schedules (Gaither, 2009). Additionally, ABC has a “reality” show entitled “Wife Swap,” which has featured mothers who home-school temporarily swapping places with mothers who sent their children to public school. In the show,
the mothers who sent their children to a formal school were portrayed negatively in terms of the educational development of their children, as opposed to the home-school mother who was portrayed as having children with high academic achievement.

Availability of Resources

Over the past 25 years, the availability of resources for parents who home-school has proliferated. This has made it easier for parents to choose this option, as the availability of these resources makes what can be a challenging undertaking easier with the ability to find support materials, particularly in subjects that may not be completely within the home-school parent's area of knowledge (Lips & Feinberg, 2008).

As Lips and Feinberg (2008) note, performing an internet search on Google for home-schooling produces more than 13 million “hits”. These hits include resources such as curriculums for purchase, home-schooling networks that share resources, and companies such as Kumon and Sylvan Learning Centers who have developed “niche” parts of their businesses designed to support the parent who home-schools. All these additional resources encourage those considering home-schooling to feel more confident about their choice. The internet in particular has proven to help revolutionize home-schooling as it has in so many other areas of society.

Advantages

Burns (1999) and Grubb (1998) cited five main reasons for home schooling:
(a) religious reasons, (b) individualization of curriculum, (c) desire for high
achievement, (d) protection against outside negative influences, and (e) extracurricular activities.

Religious Reasons

Many parents choose to home school their children due to conservative religious reasons (Grubb, 1998; Pearson, 2002). Reporting on the results of a 2003 study, Isenberg (2007) stated that providing religious or moral instruction was given as one of the top three reasons for home-schooling. In addition, 72% of respondents answered affirmatively to “Do you home-school in order to provide religious or moral instruction?” “The academic outcomes are often secondary to the belief that home-schooling will produce children who adhere to the family’s religious and ethical values” (Grubb, p. 7).

Religious home-schooling families believe that local schools teach a curriculum objectionable to their fundamentalist religion (Isenberg, 2007). Combining religion and academics allows parents to incorporate their own religious beliefs into their child’s curriculum. Most parents understand that religion cannot be the main focus of curriculum, but they feel that schools need to be infused with religious practices and teachings (Grubb, 1998). Parents find that combining their own religious practices with their child’s curriculum is not only appealing, but convenient as well. They are able to accomplish two learning goals in one setting.

Grubb (1998) reported on the results from a 1998 study of Kentucky home schooling parents. Four hundred members of the Kentucky Home-Schooling Association (KHEA) were sent surveys consisting of eight multiple choice and five
open-ended questions. Sixty-nine surveys were returned. Seventy-five percent of parents surveyed agreed that their desire to home school their children stemmed from wanting to include religious teachings. Ninety-eight percent believed that higher academic achievement levels could be obtained from home schooling. These Kentucky parents felt that their children could learn at their own pace better at home than at school. They also felt that home schooling brought families closer together and allowed for flexible schedules.

The final question asked what public schools needed to change in order to re-attract families who have decided to home-school their children. This generated the greatest consensus of response. Parents were not necessarily requesting a class on religion, but that all facets of the school operations should be based on religious principles. According to Collum (2005), religion dominated the basis for home-schooling in the 1980s until the early 1990s, and that basis may not have subsided.

**Individualization**

According to Ray (2002), another reason some parents choose to home-school is customization of curriculum, also known as individualization or differentiated instruction. It is the idea that the curriculum can be tailored to meet the individual student’s needs. A child’s learning style, along with his/her strengths and weaknesses, can be isolated (Rivero, 2002). This can positively influence a student’s academic performance and social development.

Along with individualization comes the appealing student-to-teacher ratio at one-to-one (Pearson, 2002). “In a home-school, the teacher-student ratio for any given
lesson is 1:1 or 1:2. Not even an elite private school, where class size is capped at 16 or 18 can rival that” (Neal, 2006, p.55). Parents are able to focus their entire attention on one student. “It’s just a different style of teaching...a style that’s adapted to the child, instead of the child having to adapt to the classroom and the school’s schedule” (Rivero, 2002, p. 240). Parents are even able to arrange special field trips and other opportunities not available to classroom students. Apprenticeships and internships that really cater to the home school student’s interest can be set up, as well (Ray, 2002).

Parents really appreciate the flexibility of home-school, from the schedule to the subjects taught. According to Neal (2006), parents can quickly identify their child’s areas of strength and weakness, and offer extension activities and enrichment for the former and focused re-teaching strategies for the latter. Even with public schools focusing heavily on differentiated instruction in order to meet all students’ learning needs, it seems impossible that these schools could match what homeschooling parents can accomplish on a 1:1 learning ratio. Parents always have resources, too, especially if the curriculum becomes too advanced or complex to teach. “Home-school families contract with experts to teach their children more advanced subjects, sometimes pooling resources to create small classrooms not too different from a traditional school” (Neal, 2006, p. 55). Individualizing a student’s curriculum through home schooling is one way to meet all of their educational needs.

There is a mistaken and outdated stereotype that home-schooled children wake up and hit the books from 9:00 until 4:00, locked away in their homes with little interaction with the outside world (Romanowski, 2006). According to Ray (1997), the
average home-schooled students are involved in 5.2 activities outside the home, with 985 engaged in two or more. Activities include scouting, dance classes, group sports, 4-H, and volunteer work (Romanowski, 2006). Some experts say that home schooled children are actually exposed to a wider variety of people and situations making them better-rounded than a public schooled student who is only exposed to the other students in his or her classroom (Nelsen, 1998).

Desire for High Achievement

Customizing a child's education allows them to accelerate beyond the average classroom learner. According to Isenberg (2007), one of the top three reasons given in a 2003 study for home-schooling students was the dissatisfaction with the academic instruction at schools. Critics of public schools noted “kids are learning passively when they should be learning actively” (Conlin, 2006, p. 80). Parents become frustrated that their gifted child's needs are not being met. This results in the student becoming frustrated when they are unable to reach their potential. According to Pearson (2002), the gifted and talented make up a significant number of the public school drop-outs. Critics of public schools say that schools “are like assembly lines, churning out conformists who could function well in rote factory jobs or rigid corporate hierarchies but not in New Economy professions that demand innovation and independent thinking” (Conlin, 2006, p. 81). Parents want curriculum to challenge their children, not hold them back and cause disillusion and dissention.

Many home-school students score above average in standardized tests (Pearson, 2002). The Iowa Test of Basic Skills and the Tests of Achievement and
Proficiency found that home-schooled students had a median score typically between the 70th and 80th percentiles (Rudner, 1999). In addition, Grubb (1998) noted that more than 70 home-schooled students were semifinalists in the 1998 National Merit Scholarship Competition.

A sampling of Washington home-schooled students done by Wartes (1989) produced SAT median scores in the respectable 65-66-percentile range. The highest scores were in the area of science (70th percentile) and in the verbal areas of listening (74th percentile), vocabulary (79th percentile), and word reading (76th percentile). The lowest scores were in spelling (52nd percentile) and math computation (42nd percentile). An interesting contrast to the math computation score was a relatively strong showing in math applications (65th percentile). Some home-schooled students are able to complete graduation requirements by age 16, because of the structure and flexibility of their instruction (Neal, 2006). “As a result, some go to college early; many enroll in local community colleges until their parents deem them ready to live on a campus with older students” (Neal, 2006, p. 55).

Protection from Negative Social Influences

Home-schooling has become another way to keep children safe from outside, negative influences. “The popular perception is that people home-school for religious reasons, but the number one motivation, research shows, is concern about school environments, including negative peer pressure, safety, and drugs” (Conlin, 2006, p. 80). In a 2003 study, one of the top three reasons given for homeschooling was
“concern about environment of other schools” (Isenberg, 2007, p. 399). Isenberg noted that the term “environment”, no doubt referred to peer-pressure, drugs, and safety.

According to Ray (2002), home-schooling parents want to protect their children from violence, drugs and alcohol, psychological abuse, and ill-timed sexuality. The recent rise in school shootings during the last 10 years has certainly caused concern about safety on school campuses. Based on the opinion of the parents surveyed in the Grubb study, home-schooling brought families closer together and allowed for family morals and values to be instilled (Grubb, 1998; Pearson, 2002).

Time is not wasted in home school. According to Hardy (2001), one home-school mom is quoted as saying, “We accomplish the curriculum in two hours a day because we’re not lining up, and we’re not dealing with troublemakers in the classroom” (p. 18). If behavior issues do arise, parents are also able to choose the appropriate type of discipline for their child (Pearson, 2002). There are no other classmates for the children to seek attention from and distract. Inappropriate behavior is dealt with and instruction continues. There are no trips to the principal’s office or detention paperwork to fill out. Home-schooling provides a safe and controlled learning environment where behavior does not necessarily become a distraction during teaching time.

Extra-curricular Activities

Contrary to public perception, a wide variety of extra-curricular activities are open to home-school children and parents. They can work with public school children on many activities, as well as participating in a variety of experiences that their parents
provide (Pearson, 2002). Parents are able to pick and choose whom their child socializes with. According to Hardy (2001), home-schooled children have lots of opportunities for socialization, which include church groups, scouting, 4-H, and community organizations. These kinds of groups allow parents to better monitor their children’s friends and whom they decide to socialize and associate with (Hardy). Home-schooled students have an opportunity to travel and experience extra-curricular activities not available to a public-schooled student. “The biggest misnomer is the word ‘home’ since families travel all over, from the Smithsonian Institution in Washington to Chicago’s Museum of Science & Industry to the world’s most active volcano in Hawaii” (Conlin, 2006, p. 81). Their adventures can be limitless.

Disadvantages

Research by Hardy (2001) has identified four main disadvantages to home schooling: (a) socialization, (b) customization of curriculum, (c) increasing complexity of curriculum, and (d) accountability.

Socialization Among Peers

What is socialization? There are several different definitions and the meaning can vary from expert to expert. Socialization can simply mean how well a child interacts with others in any given situation. Romanowski (2006) offers a definition of socialization: children learning to conform to cultural norms or “introducing children to the culture and values of different groups of people [social exposure]” (p. 126). Socialization can also be defined as the “process whereby people acquire the rules of
behavior and systems of beliefs and attitudes that equip a person to function effectively as a member of a particular society” (Durkin, 1995, p. 614).

A common perception about home-schoolers is that they are isolated and separated from the outside world, rendering them socially and educationally handicapped (Romanowski, 2006). A study by Mayberry, Knowles, Ray, and Marlow (1995) found that 92% of public school superintendents surveyed believed that homeschooled children did not receive adequate socialization experiences. This does not prepare them for the real world, and according to some critics of home-schooling, “unless children are exposed to the social life found in public schools on a daily basis, they will lack the skills needed to successfully adapt to real-life situations when they are older” (Romanowski, 2006, p. 125).

Survey results by home-schooling parents indicate that one primary disadvantage of home-schooling has been the lack of peer socialization (Grubb, 1998). According to Hardy (2001), school can introduce children to something beyond even what their parents’ experience can bring, and that can be a good thing. The NEA strongly feels that home-schooling does not prepare students for the real world. Public education is a slice of reality, and school prepares students for life in the real world as a citizen and adult (Hardy, 2001).

The NEA goes on to say that only certified teachers should teach children and that home-schooled students should not be allowed to participate in extracurricular activities, such as field trips, sports, and other funded activities provided by public schools. The NEA states this is unfair for full-time students, particularly if they are on
a waiting list. These activities should be available to students who attend public schools on a full-time basis. Home-schooled students should not be allowed to pick and choose what they would like to participate in, and no special privileges or benefits should be allowed to home-school students that are not enjoyed by regular students (Hardy, 2001).

Home-school children are not able to experience a true diverse classroom where different cultures, religions, and races mix. “In a diverse, democratic society, part of able citizenship is to come to respect the fact that other people will have beliefs and convictions, religious, and otherwise, that conflict with one’s own” (Reich, 2002 p. 3). The following quote, cited in Hardy (2001) sums up the diversity and societal change brought about by public schooling:

A parent (of a public-schooled student) recalls the time her kindergartener pointed out his best friend on the playground. ‘There he is in the red shirt,’ the boy said, but his mother did not see him. ‘Where?’ the woman asked, still wincing at the recollection. ‘There! There!’ The friend was a black boy in a red shirt. The mother had expected her son’s friend to be white. What about socialization? the woman asks. What about the boy in the red shirt? (p. 19)

The door to different cultures, races, and ethnicities is not opened up to a home-schooled child. What about recess, show-and-tell, and field trips? Memories, experiences, and lessons learned in school are not all related to academics.
Customization of Curriculum

Customizing education allows curriculum to be tailored to only what the parent wants their child to learn. This could leave out curriculum and subjects that parents deem unnecessary based on their child’s interest. One could naturally see this as a positive. A student is able to learn a special curriculum, similar to ordering a dinner special off of a restaurant menu. The curriculum then becomes matched with the student’s strengths and weaknesses, as well as likes and dislikes. “Total customization threatens to insulate students from exposure to diverse ideas and people and thereby to shield them from the vibrancy of a pluralistic democracy” (Reich, 2002, p. 1).

Customizing education through home-schooling puts total control into the parents’ hands. The educational environment has become “purchased” and there is no intermediary between parent and child (Reich, 2002). Home-schooled students are naturally sheltered and experience only what their parents want them to experience. “Home-schooled students are most likely to have a narrow horizon of experiences, which can curtail their freedom” (Reich, 2002, p. 3).

Increasing Complexity of Curriculum

As students become older and the material becomes more difficult, parents may have difficulty keeping up with the demands of the curriculum. Teaching themselves new and complex curriculum to the point of mastery can greatly affect the ability of the parent to teach his or her child advanced subjects. Finding accessible resources that can educate the lay person on advanced subjects can be a further challenge.
As home-schooled children get older and the subject matter becomes more complex, it becomes increasingly difficult for even well-educated parents to provide an education equal to what schools can provide (Isenberg, 2007). In California, the Community Home Education Program (CHEP) provide books for home-schooled students and can “help parents prepare lessons, design curriculum, and mark student work” (Cooper & Sureau, 2007, p. 127). However, these books may not provide enough guidance for parents to teach their children advanced topics like pre-calculus, physics, and chemistry adequately.

**Accountability**

A final disadvantage to the concept of homeschooling arises with the issue of accountability. Monitoring of home-school parents and the curriculums they have in place has become an important issue. The same is true for developing formal assessment methods such as grades and proficiency levels. Home-schooled students do not have transcripts or guidance counselors who can verify their grade level. Some parents say they do not keep GPA records, yet they assign their child a perfect 4.0 grade point average. As Talluto (2001) noted, is this fair when public school students must prove they meet minimum requirements?

There is also no consistency among U.S. states when it comes to home-school regulation. According to Talluto (2001), many states have regulations and laws that govern or monitor home-schooling, but others do not. Thirty-four states have regulations for home education, while the remaining 16 states “include home-schooling within a particular statute designed for church and religious and private
schools or permit home education under their more general statutory schemes governing public education” (Cooper & Sureau, 2007, p. 113). States like Texas and Oklahoma permit home schooling but do not regulate it (Talluto).

The state of Florida, on the other hand, has many regulations. According to Talluto (2001), Florida parents or guardians need to maintain a portfolio of all educational activities, writings, worksheets or other materials and this must be reviewed annually by the superintendent of schools. Parents may select a method of evaluation, but are required to provide annual reports. This type of accountability can help standardize and bring credibility to home schooling, but is the exception rather than the rule.

There are three general problems with state-level data on home-schooling: “haphazard data collection, alternate means by which children may be home-schooled, and underground home-schooling” (Isenberg, 2007, p. 390). There is no accountability when it comes to data collection. Reporting who is being homeschooled falls on the families rather than the school districts, because districts have little incentive to collect information due to the fact that they receive no reimbursement from home-schooled children (Isenberg, 2007). California, Florida, and Pennsylvania allow families to home-school by technically enrolling their child in a private school “Underground home-schooling” (renamed by home-schoolers as “home-schooling under your constitutional rights”) is legally a form of truancy, where the child is neither enrolled in a school nor legally home-schooled (Isenberg, p. 391).
Summary

This chapter has covered the history of home-schooling in the United States; the motivational reasons for home-schooling – both ideological and pedagogical; the accessibility reasons for home-schooling; media and resource availability, and the advantages and disadvantages of home-schooling. These issues were covered making reference to the leading research on home-schooling, putting this previous research together to set the framework for the work conducted for this thesis.

The history of home-schooling emanated from the start of the country, when home-schooling was a logistical necessity in this largely agrarian and rural society. Free, compulsory education became the norm in the early to mid-20th century and home-schooling declined. During the 1960s and 1970s, both a liberal and conservative movement against this educational system was established, with both groups believing in the need to provide their children with educational experiences and values that differed in their minds from that being provided in the public school system. At the close of the 20th century and into the 21st, mass media, internet and other resource availability factors led to home-schooling as a more accessible choice for parents motivated by a wide range of issues.

Current home-schooling choice factors can be broken down into two broad categories: motivational and accessibility. Motivational factors fall into either the ideological or the pedagogical sub-categories. Ideological parental home-schoolers choose to home-school because they want their children exposed to a different set of values than those they perceive to be provided by more traditional public or private
schools. These parents can fall into a variety of points on the ideological spectrum, from liberal to religious conservative. Pedagogical parental home-schoolers choose to home-school because they believe that they have the ability to provide their child with a better education than that provided by a traditional public or private school.

Accessibility factors for home schooling have two sub-categories as well: media and resource availability. The wide media coverage that has been given to home-schooling, mostly in a positive light, has helped contribute to an increased popularity for this educational choice. Also, the exponential increase in the amount of resources that are readily available, from the internet, to commercial learning centers, to stores that provide teaching materials, have made the choice of home-schooling an easier one to logistically accomplish and, therefore, allowed a greater number of parents to make this educational choice.

The advantages of home-schooling perceived by parents fell into five major categories: (a) religious reasons, (b) individualization of curriculum, (c) desire for high achievement, (d) protection against outside negative influences, and (e) extracurricular activities. The disadvantages centered around issues: (a) socialization, (b) customization of curriculum, (c) increasing complexity of curriculum, and (d) accountability. The key points from the perceived advantages and disadvantages became the basis for the survey used in this research. The researcher was interested in knowing how these factors played a role in the surveyed parents' decision to home-school their children.
Overview of Goals and Research

Chapters 3 and 4 will detail the research conducted to explore and describe specific reasons why parents choose home-school as an alternative to public and private education. These Chapters will also describe the methodology used to conduct the research and the findings that were extracted, along with the goals that were established at the start of the project.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

This thesis will explore and describe specific reasons why parents in the Sacramento area chose home-school as an alternative to public and private education.

The purpose of the home-school survey was to determine the following:

1. Who are the parents that decide to home-school?
2. What do these parents perceive as the advantages and disadvantages of home-school?
3. Do these parents intend to enroll their child in a public school at some point during their education?

Research Design and Methods

This thesis is a qualitative study of home-school. The methods used for gathering data included:

1. Review of related literature.
2. Survey questionnaire consisting of multiple choice questions aimed at home-schooling parents.

Participants

The participants in this study were 157 parents of home-schooled students in the Sacramento area. The parents were recruited through various Internet websites and home-school support groups.

There were six major resource avenues in which the researcher found these participants. The researcher was invited to a home-school group’s high school prom
and was allowed to set up a table with a sign displaying and explaining the research project and survey. Home-school students were dropped off at the dance and parents voluntarily filled out surveys. The researcher was also invited to a home-school boutique and craft fair where they were able to again set up a station with surveys and home-school parents could voluntarily agree to fill them out.

A few surveys were collected without the researcher being present. Surveys were displayed at A Brighter Child, an education and supply store with a sign explaining the project. Surveys were also displayed at the main offices of a school for independent study. Some surveys were filled out by members of a home-school meet-up group, collected by the mediator, and then given to the researcher. The mediator of the home-school meet-up group met the researcher on-line.

Finally, the most number of surveys came from parents who responded on the Internet. The researcher joined many online home-school support groups and was able to network and get in touch with over 50 parents who e-mailed their survey responses.

Data Collection

The researcher designed the multiple choice and open-ended survey questions (see Appendix). Questions focused on demographics and family information, reasons why parents chose to home-school their child, advantages and disadvantages to home-school, parents' feelings toward public school, whether home-school parents recommend home-schooling to all parents, and if these parents plan on educating their child in the home through 12th grade. There was also an open-ended question that allowed parents to make additional comments about home-school.
A majority of the surveys were e-mailed directly back to the researcher. The other surveys were collected by a third party and then handed over to the researcher. The researcher also attended two events and witnessed parents filling out the survey firsthand.

Survey

Questions 1-5 were fact-based questions. These questions asked the homeschooling parent how many children they had that were home-schooled, whether they were home-schooled themselves, and the educational level of both parents. Questions 1 and 2 were free response. For question 3, the participant could either answer Yes or No. The responses for question 3 were Likert scaled 1-2 with 1=Yes and 2=No. Questions 4 and 5 dealt with the parents' education level. These questions had multiple response choices that included Some High School, High School Graduate, Some College, Technical Training, College Degree, and Post Baccalaureate. The responses for questions 4 and 5 were Likert scaled 1-6 with 1=Some High School, 2=High School Graduate, 3=Some College, 4=Technical Training, 5=College Degree, and 6=Post Baccalaureate.

Questions 6-21 were opinion questions. These questions focused on the parents' reasoning behind choosing home-school over public schools. Did these parents choose home-school for religious reasons, to challenge them academically by individualizing the curriculum, to protect them from negative influences, or because they are dissatisfied by the public school system? All of these questions had multiple response choices that included: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree,
and No Opinion. The responses were Likert scaled 0-4 with 0=No Opinion, 
1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, and 4=Strongly Agree. Results were 
compiled and analyzed using SPSS. Chapter 4 will detail the specific findings.

Question 21 and 22 asked whether the parent would likely ever enroll their 
child in a public school. If they answered Strongly Agree or Agree, question 22 
 wanted them to specify at what grade level they would enroll their child in a public 
school: K-3, 4-6, 7-8, or 9-12. Questions 23 allowed parents to add any additional 
 comments about home-school and their experiences.

Analysis

The researcher tallied the results of all the completed surveys. These results 
were recorded on a spreadsheet and subjected to statistical and contextual analysis. 
Through this, the researcher was able to examine the question of why parents in the 
Sacramento area chose home-school as an alternative to public and private education. 
The literature reviewed guided the researcher to examine the data collected and 
determine if it is consistent or inconsistent with previous findings. The previous 
research helped guide the development of the survey questions, in addition to 
providing context for the analysis of the data.
Chapter 4

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

This section discusses and examines the results from the survey. Below are tables that show the results from the data followed by analysis of the data.

Table 1

*Family Information and Education Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How many home-schooled children do you have?</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How many children do you have enrolled in a public school?</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Was either parent home-schooled?</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Highest education level of mother</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Highest education level of father</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, the responses for question 3 were Likert scaled 1-2 with 1=Yes and 2=No. The responses for questions 4 and 5 were Likert scaled 1-6 with 1=Some High School, 2=High School Graduate, 3=Some College, 4=Technical Training, 5=College Degree, and 6=Post Baccalaureate. According to the survey results in the table, the mean of the mothers’ education level was higher than the fathers’.
Table 2

*Mother’s Education Level Versus Father’s Education Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College Degrees</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Baccalaureate</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Percent</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the survey results in the table, more mothers of home-schooled children earned college degrees than fathers. However, the data also shows that there are a slightly higher percentage of fathers who continued with post baccalaureate work after receiving their college degree. Overall, mothers had a higher education level than fathers.
Table 3

Advantages and Disadvantages of Home-school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Choose to home-school for religious reasons</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Choose to home-school to challenge academically</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Satisfied with public education</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Protects my child from negative influences</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Teaching religious/moral values is an advantage</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Changing curriculum to meet child's interest is an advantage</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Want to spend more time with child</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Most children's social/academic needs are met in public schools</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Most children would benefit more from public schooling than from home-schooling</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Needs of some children would be met better through public schooling</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Socializing with other students is an advantage to public school</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Home-schooling is a lot of extra work for parents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. There are disadvantages to home-school</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Extracurricular activities is an advantage for public schools</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. An advantage to public schools is the availability of special equipment</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I would recommend home-schooling to parents</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Again, the responses were Likert scaled 0-4 with 0=No Opinion, 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, and 4=Strongly Agree. According to the Isenberg (2007) study, providing religious or moral instruction was given as one of the top three reasons for home-schooling. In addition, 72% of respondents answered affirmatively to “Do you home-school in order to provide religious or moral instruction”? In the Grubb (1998) study, 75% of parents surveyed agreed that their desire to home school their children stemmed from wanting to include religious teachings. Looking at question 6 from Table 3, which asked, “I choose to home-school my child/children for religious reasons,” this researcher calculated a mean response of 2.3 (2=Disagree, 3=Agree). Fifty-one percent of these parents agreed or strongly agreed with question 6. Looking at question 10 from Table 3, which asked, “Teaching religious or moral values is an advantage to home-schooling,” the mean response is 3.0. Eighty-four percent agreed or strongly agreed with question 10.

Parents offered interesting viewpoints when it came to home-schooling strengthening the moral values and the family unit. One parent commented, “It is a labor of love as well as a blessing. The time we spend together now will impact our children’s future.” Another parent goes on to say, “One of the huge benefits is how it strengthens our entire family, and as a result strengthens both kids and parents as individuals and as part of the family.”

The Grubb (1998) study goes on to report that 98% believed that higher academic achievement levels could be obtained from home schooling. In analyzing the data from Table 3, this researcher calculated a mean response of 3.2 for question 7,
which asked, “I choose to home-school my child/children in order to challenge them academically.” 87% agreed or strongly agreed with question 7.

In addition, Grubb reported that over 98% disliked the social influence of peer groups in public schools. Question 9, which asked, “I believe home-schooling protects my child from negative influences such as drugs, alcohol, etc…” reported a mean score of 3.1. 85% agreed or strongly agreed with question 9. One parent stated, “I appreciate that they are not bullied or coerced into anything they don’t want to do in order to fit into a group. They are free from the pressure and ridicule of their peers.”

The highest mean score reported from Table 3 was from question 11, which asked, “Changing the curriculum to meet my child’s interests and/or learning style is an advantage to home-schooling.” The calculated mean was 3.8. An overwhelming 98% of parents agreed or strongly agreed with question 11. In fact, no parents disagreed with this question. The remaining 2% fell into the no opinion response. It is clear that parents from the survey strongly agree that a major advantage to home-schooling is the ability to change or individualize the curriculum to meet their child’s academic needs and interests.

Several parents had opinions on this topic. “I love home-schooling because my children can focus on what they really love, while pacing out the things which come harder for them, rather than being forced to keep up with a group.” Another parent commented, “No one knows our children better than we do, and no one knows what each of their unique needs and talents are better than us.”
Conversely, the lowest mean score reported from Table 3 was from question 13, which asked, “Most children’s social and academic needs are met in public schools.” The calculated mean was 1.3. 81% of parents disagreed or strongly disagreed with question 13. Clearly, the parents in this survey do not feel confident in the public school system with the data showing that a majority of parents strongly disagree with question 13. This is also validated with a majority of the parents strongly disagreeing with question 8, which asked, “I am satisfied with public education in my local school district.” The mean score was 1.4. 71% disagreed or strongly disagreed with question 8.

In fact, parents disagreed or strongly disagreed with all questions relating to public school having any sort of advantage over home-schooling. Socialization (questions 13 and 16), extracurricular activities (question 19), and the availability of equipment (question 20) in public schools was not perceived by these parents as having any sort of an advantage over home-schooling. Parents felt strongly about public education and several had comments. “My now grown children’s mantra throughout their formal schooling had been ‘I refuse to let school get in the way of my education.’” Another parent stated, “My son would not be challenged by the system to get the better than average grades he receives now and would eventually end up in that 30% dropout rate with zero self confidence and low self esteem.” Another parent goes on to say, “If schools were more focused on meeting the child’s individual needs, I would have kept my children in the school system.”
Interestingly enough, even though parents recommend home-school to families (mean of 3.4 for question 21 with 93% of the parents agreeing or strongly agreeing), many feel that it is a lot of extra work for parents (mean of 3.0 for question 17 with 74% agreeing or strongly agreeing). One parent put it quite simply, “It is a privilege and luxury to be able to do this wonderful thing. Having said all that, it has been the most challenging thing I have ever done.”

Table 4

*Home-school Students Enrolling in Public School*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22. Before 12th grade, I intend to enroll my child in a public school.</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. If you agree with question 22, which grade level would you enroll your child?</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only a small number of parents are interested in sending their child to public school after they have been home-schooled. Of that 18%, a majority of those parents would only send their children once they had reached high school.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The public school system can be based on presumed values. Not everyone is programmed to feel the same way about public education. Home-schooled students make up an estimated 2.9% of the total school age population, and recent data indicates this proportion is growing (Blellck, 2008). It is important to understand the reasoning behind the parental decision to home school, because eventually these students may become a part of the public school system and as teachers we need to understand their individual learning needs and backgrounds in order to differentiate their instruction. Home-schooled students make up a small percent of the educated population, an estimated 2% to 5% of the total school age population (Klipsch, 1995).

The research supported the findings of previous studies that stated that the reasons identified for home schooling can generally be placed into four categories: (a) ideological reasons, (b) pedagogical reasons, (c) influence of media, and (d) availability of resources. The first two, ideological and pedagogical, are motivational reasons for a parent choosing to home-school. The other two, media influence and availability of resources, are termed accessibility reasons for choosing to home-school.

For ideological reasons, the survey supported this as a primary factor in deciding to home-school, as the survey indicated that 51% of surveyed parents agreed or strongly agreed with the survey question that asked if the parent chose to home-school their child for religious reasons. Additionally supporting this was the answer to the survey question which asked whether teaching religious or moral values is an
advantage to home-schooling. Eighty-four percent of parents surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with this question.

For the pedagogical reasons, the survey also supported this as a primary factor in deciding to home-school. When asked whether the parents choose to home-school their child/children in order to challenge them academically, 87% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

On the availability of resources being a factor in the choice to home-school, the survey asked whether there are disadvantages to home-schooling. Of the parents surveyed, 74% agreed or strongly agreed that there are disadvantages to it. Several respondents indicated that they feel that it is a lot of extra work for parents. This may indicate that, even though still challenging, there are still resources available to allow parents to home-school, particularly as 93% of respondents would recommend home-schooling to other parents. This is one area that may require further research to develop an understanding of this as a factor.

The survey did not specifically address the findings in the research that the media may have influence over the decision to home-school. Future research is recommended to explore this issue and validate its influence on the decision to home-school.

The survey also revealed some results that expand upon the research identified in Chapter 2. Specifically, the survey revealed data about the educational levels of the parents who choose to home school and, interestingly, a gender split among parental educational level in terms of the parent who actually performs the home schooling.
Additionally, the survey elicited strong responses regarding parental concern about shielding their children from negative influences as a strong motivational factor for home-schooling. Lastly, in the comments section of many of the survey results, parents mentioned the advantages of home-schooling for their special needs child. Unfortunately, this was not explored specifically in a targeted survey question.

The survey indicated that the educational levels of the mothers of home-schooled children exceeded that, on average, of the fathers of home-schooled children. Specifically, the survey found that 41% of surveyed mothers had a college degree, while only 32% of home schooled fathers had a college degree. Also, 66% of surveyed mothers had a college or graduate-level degree, while only 59% of surveyed fathers possessed a similar level of education. Additionally, a separate survey question asked whether parents chose to home-school their children in order to challenge them academically. The responses to this question were cross-referenced with the responses related to parental educational level. Of the mothers that had a college degree, 90% of them agreed or strongly agreed with the question on whether they chose to home school for academic reasons. The same percentage of fathers had this response, as well. This shows that parental educational level is a strong factor in having educational achievement as a motivational factor for deciding to home-school.

With regard to shielding their children from negative influences, 85% agreed or strongly agreed with the question of whether this was a factor in making the decision to home-school. This supports the findings of the research outlined in Chapter Two, where Grubb (1998) reported that over 98% disliked the social influence of peer
groups in public schools. The survey did not, however, relate this socialization factor to other factors such as religious and moral reasons to determine whether this was a primary factor, and how they may interrelate.

Several parents mentioned addressing the education of their special needs child as a factor in their decision to home-school. This was not a factor that was identified in the research or listed as a survey question. The significant number of respondents who mentioned this issue, however, indicates this may be an unexplored motivational factor.

Based on the survey findings and analysis, there are several recommendations the researcher has for future study on the issue of the parental decision to home-school. Specifically, these are:

1. Determine which parent within the household does the actual home-schooling, and whether educational level and/or gender are factors in this choice.

2. The significance of special needs children as a motivation factor in the decision to home-school, and a more detailed understanding of the factors behind this choice for the parents of special needs children.

3. Further exploration of how individual motivation factors interrelate. Specifically, how the factor of avoiding negative influences interrelates with other pedagogical and ideological factors.

Home-schooling is a legitimate alternative to a traditional education taught in a brick and mortar school. Parents who home-school their children feel that through this
approach, they can provide their children the best foundation for a successful life. Although parents' reasons for choosing home-school may vary, whether they be for ideological or pedagogical reasons, ease of accessibility or the influence of the media, the bottom line is that parents want what is best for their child's education and future.
Home School Survey

**DIRECTIONS:** Please fill in the blank or circle the response that answers each question.

1) How many children ages 5-18 do you have that are home schooled? _______

2) How many children ages 5-18 do you have that are enrolled in public or private schools? _______

3) Was either parent home schooled (K-12) at any time? Yes No

4) What is the highest level of education for the home schooled child’s mother?
   - Some High School / High School Graduate / Some College / Technical Training / College Degree / Post Baccalaureate

5) What is the highest level of education for the home schooled child’s father?
   - Some High School / High School Graduate / Some College / Technical Training / College Degree / Post Baccalaureate

6) I choose to home-school my child/children for religious reasons.
   - Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / No Opinion

7) I choose to home-school my child/children in order to challenge them academically.
   - Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / No Opinion

8) I am satisfied with public education in my local school district.
   - Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / No Opinion

9) I believe home-schooling protects my child from negative influences such as drugs, alcohol, etc....
   - Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / No Opinion

10) Teaching religious or moral values is an advantage to home-schooling.
    - Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / No Opinion

11) Changing the curriculum to meet my child’s interests and/or learning style is an advantage to home-schooling.
    - Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / No Opinion

12) I home-school my child in order to spend more time with him/her.
    - Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / No Opinion

13) Most children’s social and academic needs are met in public schools.
    - Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / No Opinion
14) Most children would benefit more from public schooling than from home-schooling.  
Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / No Opinion

15) The needs of some children would be met better through public schooling.  
Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / No Opinion

16) Socializing with other students is an advantage of public schools.  
Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / No Opinion

17) Home-schooling is a lot of extra work for parents.  
Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / No Opinion

18) There are disadvantages to home-schooling.  
Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / No Opinion

19) Extracurricular activities, such as field trips are an advantage for public schools.  
Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / No Opinion

20) One advantage to public schools is that they have special equipment, such as playground equipment, laboratories, and computer labs.  
Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / No Opinion

21) I would recommend home-schooling to parents.  
Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / No Opinion

22) At some point before the 12th grade, I intend to enroll my child in a public school.  
Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree / No Opinion

23) If you agree or strongly agree with question 22, at which grade level would you enroll your child in public school?  
K-3 / 4-6 / 7-8 / 9-12

24) Do you have any additional comments to make about home-schooling?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey and helping me finish my Master’s Degree at Sacramento State. If you are interested in the results of this survey, I would be happy to e-mail you once all of the data has been collected.
REFERENCES

American Institutes for Research of the Education Statistics Services Institute.

(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED439141)


