Reasons Families Choose To Homeschool: A Study Of Homeschooling Families In Minnesota

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REASONS FAMILIES CHOOSE TO HOMESCHOOL: A STUDY OF
HOMESCHOOLING FAMILIES IN MINNESOTA

by

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching

Hamline University
St. Paul, Minnesota
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DEDICATION

Thank you to my husband, Mark Smetak. Your love, sacrifice, and encouragement are what made these past eight years possible. I love you, always.

And to our children. You bless our lives in every way.
“Minnesota, considered a leader in school choice, has experienced rapid growth in the incidence of home-educated children. Such growth raises questions for school administrators about why parents choose to homeschool their children.”

(Dahlquist, York-Barr, and Hendel)
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

During the spring of 2016, researchers for the U.S. Department of Education estimated there were 1,689,726 students ages 5–17 being homeschooled nationwide, based on data gathered from the National Household Education Surveys program of 2016 (Ray, 2018). It was the second such study, the first being collected and tabulated in 2012. It was reported that this number represented 3.3 percent of all school-age children that given year. Numbers were pulled from the 16 states that track their homeschool population, of which Minnesota is one. Lines (2000) calls homeschooling “one of the fastest growing initiatives in America’s educational options” (p. 74). The home-based education movement is an under-researched population, but a significant population that needs more consistent studies tabulated at regular intervals. Mills (2018) writes, “A common misconception among beginning researchers is that the worth of a topic is directly related to the amount of literature available about it. This is not the case. For many new and important areas of research, few studies have been published” (p. 48).

Ray (2018) writes that if the data from states tabulated in the National Household Education Surveys program are representative of what is happening in the other states, then homeschooling is continuing to grow in both absolute numbers and as a portion of the overall school-age population. Murphy concludes, “there is not an overabundance of solid empirical work on homeschooling. Much of the literature in this area comprises testimonials and pieces that explain how to successfully start and conduct a homeschool”
Dahlquist, York-Barr, and Hendel (2006) write that Minnesota, along with the rest of the nation, has also experienced its own rapid growth in the area of homeschooling. Why are so many families choosing to educate their children at home? According to Nemer (2002), “The time has come for in-depth study and critical analysis of this movement, its lessons, and its future” (as cited in Murphy, 2012, p. viii).

As a Minnesota parent who has considered the option of homeschooling my children, these numbers are relevant to me. The resources I have been able to find and access have helped inform my decision on whether or not homeschooling was right for our family. As I researched the topic more, with my own list of reasons for considering homeschool, I found that there is no documented “overarching reason” families choose to homeschool their children. Homeschooling is not for families of one particular bent, or state of mind, but rather, there is a whole tapestry of reasons families enter into the world of home education. I learned that people may begin the journey of home education because of academic reasons, religious reasons, safety reasons, scheduling reasons, specific family preferences...the list goes on. The realization that there is a much larger depth and breadth of reasons behind parents’ decision to pull students from the public educational system to educate them at home than I had initially first thought is what spurred the research behind this paper. This chapter will explain my rationale and context for exploring the question: What are the primary motivations for Minnesota parents choosing to homeschool?

Rationale

In my own personal schooling journey while growing up, I experienced many different combinations and types of schooling. I attended multiple private schools—some
traditional in nature; one with a “work at your own pace” mindset, complete with cubicles; and one on a four-day-a-week schedule. I also attended public school and had a brief stint with homeschooling. In all, I experienced eight different school situations/institutions, and moved just as many times, before graduating from high school.

Within the eclectic mix of schooling I experienced, I attended a very small, private school in Colorado that had only six students in grades 9-12. Because of the size of the school, and several administrative decisions that changed the direction of the school’s vision, my parents chose to pull me out, and as an alternative, they purchased an online homeschool curriculum. I am an extrovert energized by camaraderie in a social setting, so I found that I struggled with motivation during my sophomore year as I worked on the computer at home by myself. There were no homeschool groups or co-ops in the area that my family was aware of, and in my mind, the idea of homeschool became synonymous with isolation and a curriculum style that didn’t work for me.

The following year, after realizing that a 100% online curriculum was not the best setting for me to learn in, my parents enrolled me at the public high school to take electives while I continued to complete my core classes at home. Within two years, I had gone from a school of 6, to a school of 1, to a school of 1,500. Once I began attending the public school, I flourished within the myriad of class electives and learning style opportunities that opened up to me.

Years later, once I became a mother, schooling options took on a whole new dimension, as my husband and I realized the enormity of the task of making schooling choices for our own children. We are the parents of two beautiful, intelligent children.
One of my children is already enrolled in school, and he is gifted and talented in the area of reading. At the age of 3.5, my son began reading aloud the words he saw when we were grocery shopping or in stores. During evening story time, he began pointing out words my husband and I had missed or glossed over as we read to him. Pretty soon, he was reading his bedtime stories to us. Now, at the age of 8, my son’s favorite pastime is going to the library and getting his hands on every technology manual he can. He spends his evenings sitting in his reading chair, pouring over 500-word manuals. Not only does he read the manuals, but he finishes them in only a matter of a couple hours. When quizzed on what he read, his comprehension is spot-on. I will ask him about particular brands of smartphones or smart watches, and he will list the stats for each model I am interested in, then give his opinion on which would be the best option to consider purchasing. The other day, in fact, we picked up a children’s book from a Little Lending Library to bring to our family cabin, and my son said, “Now the cabin has two children’s books—this one, and the smart phone manual.”

Because my son reads at such a rapid pace (faster than either my husband or I, and we are both avid readers), he is unmatched in reading groups at school. He attends a private school where the teacher-student ratio is much more intimate than at the local public school. It is a struggle for teachers to match him with age-appropriate content that engages and challenges him. When he sits in reading groups, many of his peers are still intermittently sounding out words while he has already finished his passage. He comes home and tells me about how bored he was in reading groups. He is not whining, not bragging, just stating a fact. On one hand, it is good for him to see that his ability to read and comprehend vast texts is a gift, not a given. On the other hand, I would like to see
him engaged in the reading at school, rather than put off by it. Because of all these factors, my husband and I sat down and had our first-ever “homeschool” discussion. In my mind, people homeschooled because they wanted to teach their children from a specific faith-base, but my son was already attending a Christian private school, so the idea of trying to figure out whether or not we should engage in the homeschool movement was a surprising thought for me. I was also worried about the social aspect of homeschooling because in my personal history, homeschooling had meant sitting in front of a computer screen, with no real creative outlets.

I did not want to pull my son completely from his school setting to homeschool him, because his personality is very similar to mine, and schooling at home had not been successful for me. So we looked into alternate options. Should we pull him from school for half days, so I could focus on his literacy skills in a way that challenged him but was also content-appropriate for his 2nd-grade mind? Or should we sit down every year and have the same discussion with his new teachers, asking them to find something that challenges and engages him beyond his grade-level reading?

As I began to look into the idea of homeschooling, I discovered that many families in my suburban area homeschool their children, and I found that every family had a unique way of puzzle-piecing the idea of “homeschool” into the perfect fit for their individual family unit. From 100% home-based schooling, to taking electives at alternate institutions, to half day at the private school or public school, to utilizing co-ops and local homeschool groups as “touch points” for their schooling, there are countless ways to make homeschooling work for each household. I also discovered the idea of homeschool
co-ops and support groups, something that had not existed years ago in my small Colorado town.

Recently, I met with two very dear friends of mine. We began to chat over coffee, discussing life and children and a whole myriad of topics, then our conversation turned to homeschooling. Both of my friends chose to pull their children out of public school last year and began homeschooling their families. As we discussed curriculum and the reasons behind their decisions, with topics ranging from academics to safety to scheduling, I began to realize that any preconceived notions I had pegged in my head for why families choose to homeschool their children had been shortsighted. As I began hearing the depth and breadth behind my friends’ decisions, I began to question previous suppositions I had made regarding homeschooling. Were there more reasons families chose to homeschool than my limited experience had allowed for? Where there outlets for play and socialization homeschooling families could tap into? Did homeschool curriculum always have to be online? Curious, I began to investigate the topic more. I wanted to look into homeschooling in general, but also into local homeschooling in Minnesota. And so began my journey of researching the question: What are the primary motivations for Minnesota parents choosing to homeschool?

**Guiding Question**

Many factors have influenced my desire to research the topic of homeschooling, from the experience I have with my son’s heightened ability to read beyond his grade-level, coupled with the rich discourse I have had with several of my friends and peers on the topic of homeschooling, along with my own personal experience in homeschooling, as well as preconceived notions I had about homeschooling in general. With all these
elements in mind, the aim of this thesis is to research answers the question, “What are the primary motivations for Minnesota parents choosing to homeschool?”

Overview of Chapters

Chapter one of this thesis outlined my rationale for researching homeschool, and the question that was formed to guide my research: “What are the primary motivations for Minnesota parents choosing to homeschool?”

In chapter two of my thesis, I will look into what literature has to say about different aspects of the homeschool movement. I will explore the history of homeschool and the requirements needed to homeschool in Minnesota; then I will look at the current data tabulated on the number of homeschoolers in the nation; followed by some of the main reasons found in literature as to why parents choose to homeschool their children as well as some of the special considerations to take into account when choosing to homeschool.

In chapter three, I will explain the methods I used to conduct research based on the question, “What are the primary motivations for Minnesota parents choosing to homeschool?” I will explain the rationale behind my research methods, my research design, the setting and participants in my study, data collection methods, and my data analysis.

In chapter four, I will discuss the results of my study and the empirical data collected through contact with different homeschool families, organizations, and co-ops as I sought to answer the question, “What are the primary motivations for Minnesota parents choosing to homeschool?”
Finally, in chapter five I will report on the conclusions of my study; address

correlations found between my study and the literature review of chapter two; and

summarize the main points I learned during my time reviewing, researching, and writing

this study.
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Overview

In chapter one, I discussed my background for writing this research paper and my reasons for researching the question, “What are the primary motivations for Minnesota parents choosing to homeschool?”

This chapter will focus on the history of homeschooling and the roots behind the homeschool movement, requirements needed to register to be a homeschooling entity through the state of Minnesota, data and statistics on the current institution of homeschooling, some of the primary reasons parents choose to homeschool their children, and considerations to take into account when deciding to educate children at home.

What is Homeschool?

In seeking to answer the question, “What are the primary motivations for Minnesota parents choosing to homeschool?” it would first be prudent to define what homeschooling is. In general, homeschooling (also known as home education or home-based learning) refers the educational option of teaching one’s children at home, rather than sending the child to a conventional public or private school setting full-time (Coalition for Responsible Home Education [CRHE], 2013-2017a; PublicSchools.org, 2019).
In this section of the literature review, themes that will emerge include: the roots of the homeschooling movement in our nation, legalization of homeschooling in Minnesota, and parental and state requirements for homeschooling in Minnesota.

**A Rich Heritage.** As long as family exists, homeschooling exists in one form or another. In my research, I discovered that there is a rich and broad history in the United States of children learning life skills, as modeled by parents within the home. d’Escoto and d’Escoto (2007) state, “In the 17th and 18th centuries, when this country’s founders were firmly rooted in biblical principles, parents were the primary teachers of their children. Education was not the responsibility of the government” (p. 2). In our nation’s early history, the Bible served as the primary text book in most homes, and it served as the motivation for acquiring literacy skills (d’Escoto & d’Escoto, 2007). According to Sheble (2003), during the years when children were widely instructed in a home, other instructional resources included the *New England Primer*, *A Grammatical Institute of English language*, and the *American Spelling Book*, which were filled with spiritual rhymes and biblical principles.

Throughout history, there have been many notable homeschooled figures including presidents, inventors, scientists, writers, composers, artists, religious leaders, educators, business entrepreneurs, and athletes (Klicka, 2002; Bridgeway Academy, 2014-2017). The names of recognizable homeschooled individuals include Abraham Lincoln, Benjamin Franklin, Patrick Henry, Phyllis Wheatley, Booker T. Washington, Mercy Warren, Florence Nightingale, Thomas Edison, Dwight L. Moody, and Andrew Carnegie (Klicka, 2002; Kulp, 2019). The above is only a small sampling of people who
made a difference in the pages of our nation’s history after being schooled within their homes. d’Escoto and d’Escoto (2007) write,

home education, one of our most basic freedoms, has been a blessing to our land, bearing forth a great many leaders. Would our country be where it is today without the properly nurtured hearts and minds of so many distinguished individuals, including men and women of faith, who forged our Constitution and fought for freedom so often taken for granted? (p. 5-6).

One can hardly imagine our nation’s history without homeschooled individuals. What would our history look like without the contributions of George Washington, our first president; or Clara Barton, the pioneering nurse who founded the American Red Cross; or Ansel Adams, whose iconic photographs of the American West left a nation breathless with wonder? Individuals from across the pages of time, as well as current influential leaders, philanthropists, athletes and artists benefited from an education at home that allowed them to thrive (Klicka, 2002).

According to the Edison Innovation Foundation (2010), one specific individual whose mother chose to nurture his heart and mind at home was Thomas Edison. After one of Thomas’s teachers belittled him, calling Thomas’s mind “addled,” Mrs. Edison decided to teach Thomas at home, where, “Through a great deal of nurturing and leadership, she gave him the basic tools to learn, both in the form of process and content” (Edison Innovation Foundation, 2010). Regarding his schooling at home with his mother, Thomas Edison is quoted as saying, “My mother was the making of me. She understood me; she let me follow my bent” (as cited in Powell, 1995). Powell goes on to say that Mrs. Edison’s dedication to her son went far beyond that of what a regular school
teacher’s was likely to be. Powell continued by saying that Mrs. Edison was also afforded a flexibility in teaching young Thomas at home that allowed for experimentation in nurturing her son’s love for learning.

**Roots of the National Homeschool Movement.** Hoffman & Hoffman (2014) write that homeschooling, as it existed for centuries prior, felt its first big change when Massachusetts passed the first compulsory school attendance law in 1852. Other states began to follow, and the first compulsory education law in Minnesota was passed in 1885 (Hoffman & Hoffman, 2014). All states had enacted similar compulsory legislation by 1918 (Home School Legal Defense Association [HSLDA], 2018). However, according to the HSLDA (2018), missionaries and foreign service workers still had the choice of sending their children to boarding schools, or homeschooling them, while remote families and families with ill children found homeschooling to be a necessity. In my research, I found that with the emergence of compulsory education in America, homeschool took a backseat to public schooling, but it continued to smolder under the surface of the fabric of the educational system.

In 1962-1963, prayer and Bible reading were removed from schools, and Christian private schools saw a dramatic rise in enrollment (Hoffman & Hoffman, 2014). The Coalition for Responsible Home Education (CRHE, 2013-2017b) writes that, in the 70’s and 80’s, homeschooling began to experience its own kind of “renaissance.” CRHE cites this homeschooling re-birth as part of the movement that began on the heels of a series of publications by educational theorist John Holt.

In the vast body of his written work, Holt conducted research to promote reform in public schools, and came to the conclusion that homeschooling was the superior option
According to Stevens (2001), Holt saw the bureaucracy of schooling, with all its standardized ways of measuring achievement and distributing rewards, as stifling to the inherent learning capacity of children. According to Stevens (2001), Holt wrote many books on the subject of the intrinsic learning nature of children, and within that body of work Holt “articulated core tenants of homeschooling philosophy: that children are unique individuals from the moment of birth, and that their essential beings are demeaned by conventional schools” (p. 37).

Educational theorist, Dr. Raymond Moore, along with his wife Dorothy Moore, added their voices to the homeschooling discussion in the mid-70’s, and they are considered by many to be “the grandparents” of the modern homeschooling movement (Hoffman & Hoffman, 2014). Moore and Moore wrote numerous books on the subject of homeschooling, arguing that children should be schooled at home until at least the age of eight or nine (Moore & Moore, 1984, pg. 38). The Moore’s felt that early schooling in a classroom setting was detrimental for the child and that time spent at home in the early years would be to the child’s advantage, grounding them in a firm educational, psychological, and moral foundation (CRHE, 2013-2017). Stevens (2001) writes that, though the Moores and Holt called for similar action on the part of parents—notably, pulling their children from the school system—the emphases of their message was different: “Holt sought to protect children’s rights to self-determination,” while the Moores sought, rather, “to protect children from schools” (p. 38).

In the 1972 U.S. Supreme Court case, *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, members of the Old Order Amish religion and the Conservative Amish Mennonite Church were “convicted of violating Wisconsin’s compulsory school attendance law...by declining to send their
children to public or private school after they had graduated from the eighth grade,” (Legal Information Institute, 1972). The U.S. Supreme Court decided that the Yoder family’s decision to homeschool their children fell under their First Amendment right to religious freedom, and thereby paved the way for future court decisions on the matter of homeschooling in the United States.

In 1979, Dobson interviewed Moore on the *Focus on the Family* radio program and exposed thousands of parents to an idea that was considered “new” in the modern age: the idea of raising and educating children at home (Hoffman & Hoffman, 2014). Farris writes that Dobson’s interview of Moore was the catalyst of the modern Christian homeschooling movement (as cited in Hoffman & Hoffman, 2014, p.199).

As the minorities of the homeschool movement began to surface, Rushdoony, a philosopher, historian, and theologian known for his extensive contribution to literature and his leadership role in education, became more and more involved in advocacy for Christian schools and homeschooling (Chalcedon Foundation, 2010-2019; Gaither, 2017). Rushdoony (as cited in Gaither, 2017), believed that life should be understood from the premise of God’s Word being authoritative and true, and his stance had profound influence in the thought of the modern Christian homeschooling movement.

According to the CRHE (2013-2017), the 1980’s became a turbulent time for homeschoolers. After Dobson added his voice to the mix of homeschool advocacy, big numbers of evangelical and fundamentalist Christians began joining the homeschool movement. The CRHE (2013-2017) maintains that it was around this time legal battles began to ensue in earnest, as public school officials became uncooperative, with some school officials even beginning to feel threatened by the growing number of
homeschoolers. Homeschool families began to petition at the state level for laws to accommodate schooling their children at home (CRHE, 2013-2017).

According to Stevens (2001), two separate organizational homeschool advocacy structures had formed: those who had beginnings as activists imagining a diverse and democratic homeschool movement with plenty of room for political and philosophical disagreement, and those who existed in the evangelical and fundamentalist world. Stevens believes the term *entrepreneurs* would be most appropriate for these early homeschoolers, as they were the ones willing to start and build social movements and take risks for the cause. Stevens writes that the earliest adherents of homeschooling “differed not only by faith but also in the histories they inherited” (p. 5).

**The Homeschool Movement in Minnesota.** 1982-1983 saw a big boom in the formation of homeschool coalitions in Minnesota. The Minnesota Homeschoolers Alliance (MHA) was founded; The Rochester Area Association of Christian Home Educators (RAACHE) was formed; Michael Farris and Michael Smith formed the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA); and the organizational meeting for the Minnesota Association of Christian Home Educators (MÂCHÉ) was held in the Powderhorn Park building in south Minneapolis with roughly 50 people in attendance (Hoffman & Hoffman, 2014).

In 1984, Jeanne Newstrom, a Minnesota-based parent who chose to home-educate her child, was found guilty of violating the Minnesota Compulsory Attendance Law. In 1985, the Supreme Court reversed the lower courts’ rulings, citing the Compulsory Attendance Law as being “unconstitutionally vague” in the area of teacher qualification, especially seen in the law’s inconsistent interpretations in the courts of Minnesota. A
Compulsory School Attendance task force was formed to rewrite Minnesota’s law. After fourteen meetings over the course of seven months, the Compulsory School Attendance Task Force submitted its outline for a compulsory education law to the Education Committee in January of 1987. In April of 1987, the Minnesota Legislature voted on the proposed Compulsory Attendance Law H.F. 432, and it passed. On July 1, 1988, the law took effect, and homeschooling became legal in the state of Minnesota (as cited in Hoffman & Hoffman, 2014). As it stands today, homeschooling is legal in all fifty states, but homeschooling requirements vary from state to state, sometimes widely.

Requirements for Homeschooling

Gaither (2017) suggests that, because U.S. Education law is a state affair, rather than a federal affair, people should view the history of homeschool as fifty separate stories to tell. Of the fifty states, eleven states do not require that families with an intent to homeschool contact any state or local officials; fifteen states require only a notice of intent to homeschool and no documentation beyond that; twelve states require assessments but have various exceptions (Minnesota falls into this category); seven states require assessments with low thresholds for intervention; and five states require thorough assessments combined with other provisions (CRHE, 2013-2017). The focus of this research will be on the story of homeschooling in Minnesota and the specific state legislation it encompasses.

Minnesota’s Requirements. According to the MN Department of Education (MDE), there are a wide variety of school choices one can choose from when living in Minnesota, including: attending one’s resident public school district, open enrollment across district lines, magnet schools, charter schools, state-approved online learning,
alternative education, and nonpublic schools (including private schools). Homeschooling is considered a type of private-schooling in Minnesota, and Minnesota’s compulsory instruction law requires all children ages 7-17 to attend a public or private school, making homeschool a legal option in Minnesota (MDE, 2018).

According to the The Revisor of Statutes, State of Minnesota (2018), Homeschooled students in Minnesota must receive instruction in state mandated subjects: reading and writing, literature and fine arts, mathematics and science, social studies including history, geography and government, and health and physical education. The state of Minnesota requires homeschooling families to complete annual assessments, with no ramifications (Huseman, 2015).

The MDE (2018) does not help select the curriculum for private schools, nor subsequently, homeschooled students. If parents want curriculum that aligns to Minnesota state standards, the MDE suggests they consider public school at home (public online learning) rather than homeschooling. Currently, The Minnesota Department of Education (2018) states that Minnesota recognizes one accrediting association for accrediting homeschooled students, called the Minnesota Home-Based Educators Accrediting Association (HBEAA). The association was formed in 1989 “to provide accountability, guidance, and encouragement to families who have a conviction to educate their children at home,” (HBEAA, 2018). Additional services available to homeschool students include: part-time enrollment at the local public school district, full access to extracurricular activities (equal to that of public school students), and shared-time special education services (CRHE, 2013-2017).

**Parental Requirements.** Regarding the parental requirements necessary to teach one’s children at home, Clarkson and Clarkson (2011) state that there is a myth of
qualification in regard to homeschooling. They write, “The myth that you must have some kind of higher education in order to give your children a good education suggests that being smart is more important in homeschooling than being committed. It isn’t” (p. 29). Rather, they suggest, the real standard of a parent’s qualification is being faithful, available, and teachable. Moore and Moore (1981) write that parents who simply act as consistent, alert, and responsive models provide the greatest teaching to their children.

Any parent may educate their child in the home, as long as the provisions of Minnesota statute 120A.22 are met (MACHE, 2017). According to the Revisor of Statutes in the state of Minnesota (2018), this means the parent of the homeschooled child must meet at least one of the following requirements:

1. hold a valid Minnesota teaching license in the field and for the grade level taught;
2. be directly supervised by a person holding a valid Minnesota teaching license;
3. successfully complete a teacher competency examination;
4. provide instruction in a school that is accredited by an accrediting agency, recognized according to section 123B.445, or recognized by the commissioner;
5. hold a baccalaureate degree; or
6. be the parent of a child who is assessed according to the procedures in subdivision 11 (MDE, 2018).

In addition, Minnesota law does not prevent parents who have committed criminal activity from homeschooling. (Huseman, 2015).
A parent who decides to homeschool their child must turn in a full report to the superintendent of the student’s resident school district, either by October 1st of the first year of homeschooling after a child turns seven years of age, or within fifteen days of removing the student from their public school district (MDE, 2018; Minnesota Homeschoolers’ Alliance, 2013). Every year thereafter that a parent chooses to homeschool their child in the state of Minnesota, a Letter of Intent to Continue to Provide Instruction must be filled out and submitted to the school district by October 1st (MDE, 2018).

Homeschool Data

This section will explore some of the current data surrounding homeschool: the numbers of homeschooling families in the U.S., whether the amount of homeschooling families is fluctuating or stable, and student achievement. In this section, themes that will emerge include: numbers and figures behind the homeschooling movement and current data in the field.

**Number of Homeschooled Students in the United States.** Murphy (2012) writes that the majority of literature on the subject of homeschooling focuses more on “how-to” manuals and testimonials, rather than there being much in the way of solid empirical evidence. According to Ray (2011), only thirteen states collect data on homeschool families in a manner that can be accessed. The Minnesota Department of Education (2018) states that they do not keep records of any homeschooled student, so information on those student populations is hard to come by. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) was one of the first organizations to attempt to estimate the number of homeschoolers in the United States, using a rigorous sample survey of
households, rather than relying on incomplete state lists, homeschooling vendors, or homeschooling organizations (Grady, 2017a).

Beginning in 1999, NCES began publishing homeschooling estimates as part of the National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES). Grady (2017a) tells us, “One of the primary challenges in collecting relevant data on homeschool students is that no complete list of homeschoolers exists, so it can be difficult to locate these individuals.” For this reason, a nationally represented household survey was necessary. As an example, in 2012, the NHES program contacted 159,994 addresses. Because the studies begin with a random sample of addresses, and because of the spread of homeschool families relative to the U.S. population of those 159,994 addresses, the NHES ended with only 397 completed homeschooling surveys (Grady, 2017a). Grady writes, “Despite these constraints, the data from NHES continue to be the most comprehensive that we have on homeschoolers” (Grady, 2017a).

The results of the 2012 survey reported that, from 1999 to 2012, the percentage of students homeschooled in the U.S. doubled from the estimated 1.7% of 1999 to 3.4% in 2012 (Grady, 2017b). According to Grady (2017b), after the NHES program published its 2012 findings, their numbers were the only current national homeschooling data on record until the new 2016 NHES results (as administered by the Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey) were published in the fall of 2017. The estimated percentage of homeschooling students in the U.S. stayed consistent with the numbers seen in 2012, leveling off at 3.3% (Grady, 2017b). That translates to around 1,690,000 estimated students currently homeschooled in the U.S.
Student Achievement. It has been my experience that critics often suggest that homeschooled children lag behind socially and academically. However, advocates quickly counter the argument with impressive statistics. Ray, founder and president of National Home Education Research Institute, states, “Home educated students generally score at the 65th to 80th percentile on achievement tests, 15 to 30 percentile points higher than those in public schools” (as cited in Beattie-Moss, M., 2005). Ray (2019) also writes that home educated students typically score above average on the ACT and SAT tests that colleges consider for admissions. d’Escoto and d’Escoto (2007) state that, overall, homeschoolers are proving to be well prepared for college and career life, with many institutions of higher learning awarding scholarships to homeschool applicants.

Reasons for Homeschooling

From school mismatches to alternate/unique scheduling; from worldview differences to inability to afford other options; from gifted and talented students to students who are chronically ill; the reasons for families choosing to homeschool are vast and varied. This section explores the different reasons, given in the literature, as to why families choose to homeschool their children. Hundreds of pages could be devoted to each of these topics, and indeed, one can find all manner of books, literature, and internet sites devoted to each of these topics. It is the intent of this thesis to briefly touch on many of the commonly cited reasons for homeschooling, as seen in the homeschool literature-base, before moving on to the research portion of this essay regarding the specific primary motivations for Minnesota-based homeschooling families.

Regarding the motivation of individual family units in regards to homeschooling, Ray writes,
The rationale that homeschoolers share for reclaiming the privilege and responsibility of teaching their own at home are as individual as the families themselves. Reasons are usually a combination of proactive and reactive ones, such as providing richer academic experiences, minimizing negative social settings, and meeting the special learning needs of their children. By far, the strongest convictions shared by parents is that of instilling in children their faith and values (as cited by d'Escoto & d'Escoto, 2007, p. 9).

As I conducted my literature review, I found that many literary sources break down the “reasons” for homeschooling into different categories or headings, some being more simplified, and others being infinitely more complex. Watson (2018), writes that, traditionally, homeschoolers have fallen into two groups, those who choose to homeschool because of ideologies, which are usually religious in nature, and those who choose to homeschool so their children’s education will be more academically rigorous. Watson continues by writing that as the number of homeschoolers has increased, so too are we seeing a wider diversification in the variety of listed reasons why parents choose to homeschool their children. Jeub (1994) writes that parents generally choose to homeschool their children for four main reasons: social, academic, family, and/or religious reasons.

The Coalition for Responsible Home Education (2013-2017a) has also created a list for some common reasons families may choose to homeschool, including: concerns about the environment and academic quality of public schools, a desire for child-directed learning that isn’t constrained to a classroom, education in accordance with a family’s
particular set of religious or faith-based beliefs, health-related reasons, flexibility, and the ability to focus on the natural learning styles or personalities of one’s own children.

**Limitations in Research.** While reading this section, it is important to keep in mind that motivational research has severe limitations and that people’s motivations can be quite complex (Lois, 2013). According to Lois, (2013), “most parents cite several motivations, which overlap at any one time as well as rise and fall in importance over their careers” (p. 46).

It is also important to note that not all reasons for homeschooling cited in the literature review apply to all homeschoolers. For example, the section on religious and faith-based reasons may not be applicable to a secular homeschool family, and the section on school environment may not have factored in for others. And while this section seeks to explore some of the most commonly cited reasons for homeschooling, some families will have reasons for entering into homeschool that this section may not have explored or that may not be represented in literature on homeschooling. The remainder of this chapter will be dedicated to examining some of the main branches of reasoning for home educating one’s child, as cited in literature.

**Reasons for Homeschooling in the National Survey.** Every four years, the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) conducts its National Household Education Survey (NHES). In a report put out by Redford, Battle, and Bielick (2017) for the American Institute of Research, it is reported that in 2012, 91% of homeschool families represented by the survey, cited concern about the environment of other schools as a reason for choosing to home educate their children (Appendix A). Of the survey respondents, 25% specified environmental concerns as the
primary reason for choosing to homeschool their child. According to Redford, Battle, and Bielick (2017) the statistics from 2012 boil down to this: “Nine in 10 homeschooled students’ parents reported that concern about schools’ environments was an important reason for their decision to homeschool” (p. 11).

The results of the 2016 survey, as reported by McQuiggan, Megra, & Grady (2017), were similar to those of the 2012 NHES survey, with 80% of homeschool families citing concerns about the environment of other schools, and 34% choosing to homeschool primarily because of those environmental concerns (Appendix B). Some of the other primary reasons families choose to educate their children at home, listed in the 2016 study, included: dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools (listed by 17% of participants as their primary reason for homeschooling); a desire to provide religious instruction (16% of survey participants); the desire to provide moral instruction (6% of survey participants); the desire to provide a “nontraditional approach” to education (6% of survey participants); and having a child with a physical or mental health problem (6% of survey participants). The remaining 21% of primary reasons families choose to homeschool were grouped into a total called “other,” and this group was comprised of reasons such as: family time, travel, finances, and distance (McQuiggan, Megra, & Grady, 2017; NCES, 2018).

School Mismatch. As this section of the literature review explores reasons families decide to homeschool, a constant theme that almost all categories of reasoning fall under is the category of “a school mismatch”—be it with flexibility, environmental factors, worldview differences, etc. Bauer (2018) is a strong proponent of flexing our current K-12 system so that it fits our children, rather than “forcing our children to
conform themselves to school” (p. xi). Bauer encourages families to protect their child’s mind, emotion, and spirit, while highlighting possible misalignments between children and the system. Once a mismatch has been identified, Bauer gives specific strategies for dealing with those mismatches. She states,

> Once you’ve identified the mismatch between your child and the system, you have two choices: stay with the system, and try to flex it so that it’s a better fit for your child. Or step completely out. If you’re going to stay in, you will need to constantly negotiate with teachers and administrators (p. 92).

Bauer goes on to say, “There comes a point when you’ve flexed the [educational] system as hard as you can—and it still doesn’t fit” (p.181). Bauer suggests that if the fit with the current educational system is bad enough, it’s time to step out. She maintains that homeschooling is “simply a reasonable choice” (p. 181) when other options, and the current system, have failed a family.

**School Environment.** As stated earlier, in the National Center for Educational Statistics survey taken during the 2011–12 school year, 91% of homeschool families represented by the survey said that their concern over the environment of other schools (which included factors such as safety, drugs, and negative peer pressure) was a factor in the decision to homeschool their child, while 25% of families cited these concerns over school environment as their primary reason for choosing to home educate (Redford, Battle, & Bielick, 2017). When a similar study was completed in 2016, as a response to the question “You are concerned about the school environment, such as safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure,” 80% of homeschool families marked “yes,” while 35% cited concern for school environment as their primary reason for choosing to home educate
(McQuiggan, Megra, & Grady, 2017). It is interesting to note that the percentage of parents who were generally worried about school environment went down (from 91% in 2012, to 80% in 2016), while the percentage of parents who are primarily concerned about school environment as a main reason for choosing to homeschool their children went up (from 25% in 2012, to 35% in 2016) (Appendix A, Appendix B). Environmental concerns included such factors as safety, drugs, and negative peer pressure. According to Jeub (1994), while socialization can be good for a child, not all social interactions will be productive, with some actually becoming counter-productive. Jeub writes that some social activity, and the resulting peer pressure from that socialization, could lead to “drugs, alcohol, tobacco, harassment, premarital sex, guns, and violence.” As seen in the 2012 and 2016 NHES surveys, these environmental concerns are a huge driving force behind parents entering the homeschool movement.

**Physical protection.** Wilson (2016) writes that as their family was discussing the decision to homeschool, the biggest factor behind their decision to educate at home was based on protection. Wilson writes about hearing of multiple stories about molestation and abuse in the school system that had remained hidden and under the radar for years, and she states, “I knew that for every person that brought it out in the open, there were many more cases that remained a secret” (p. 7). Wilson chose to homeschool her children to keep them at home and reduce their chances of becoming victims, saying, “I firmly believe we have a responsibility as parents to protect our children…it’s our job to defend them in the best way we know how” (p. 8).

**Emotional protection.** I have read of many instances of children dealing with bullies in school or negative peer-influences in the school setting. When appropriate
measures have been taken to work with the situation, and failed, parents may opt to pull their child from the system to “free them” from those negative factors. According to Bauer (2018),

Children in school are powerless. They have been placed in a situation where they have no freedom of movement, no option to walk away or quit or leave. They’ve probably been taught that being a tattletale is a bad thing, yet they have no legitimate weapons of their own to use against bullies and shamers. Dealing with a bully or a hostile teacher requires sophistication and clarity that adults have a hard time achieving—let alone eighth graders. Or third graders. Or kindergartners. Intervene and protect. (p. 82)

“Bullying” has become a nationally known term, with websites created, school reforms enacted, and legislation passed to combat it (American Psychological Association, 2019; StopBullying.gov, 2019). Many parents are finding the answer to protecting their child is simply choosing to remove their child from the school premises (Redford, Battle, & Bielick, 2017; McQuiggan, Megra, & Grady, 2017). Wilson (2016) writes that it isn’t paranoia to worry about what our children are seeing, hearing, or experiencing in the school setting, rather, it’s being practical about our call, as parents, to protect the precious children entrusted to us. Too often, she states, people put more effort into thinking about how they will protect their dogs or their physical property than they do their children.

*Racial protectionism.* Mazama and Lunde (2012) object to the notion that African Americans’ motives for homeschooling can simply be subsumed under White motives (p. 742). Mazama and Lunde (2012) write that racial protectionism, defined as “the
conscious act of protecting one’s child from school racism” plays a critical part in the decision of many African American families as they engage in homeschool. Mazama and Lunde continue to write that, in a school system where the curriculum is primarily Eurocentric, African-descended people are finding themselves excluded from the curriculum. Mazama (2015) says that through her interviews of 74 African-American homeschooling families from around the U.S., the two main sources of complaint she encountered were the curriculum used in public schools and White teachers’ racial prejudices and racist actions. She discovered that the “Eurocentric” orientation of public school curricula results in a “general school-sanctioned ignorance about Africa and its descendants and in a disdain for the black experience” (p. 726). Mazama writes that eventually, if left unchecked, these sentiments can become a potent source for institutional racism, and that “many black homeschooling parents engage in racial protectionism, so that [their children] will have the self-confidence and knowledge necessary to face and overcome the hurdles that white racism appears to place in their path” (p. 735).

In his study on the motivations of African American parents for choosing homeschooling, Ray (2017) writes,

“[I] found that these African American parents’ reasons for homeschooling are similar to those of homeschool parents at large in the United States. In addition, some of them mentioned race/ethnicity-related issues as part of their many reasons for homeschooling. Findings in this study offer no solid evidence that this group of Black homeschoolers chose home-based education primarily to promote
anything like Afrocentrism, although it might have been one reason amongst many that they gave” (p. 95).

The five main reasons for homeschooling chosen by the Black parents participating in Ray’s study were: prefer to teach the child at home to provide religious or moral instruction; to accomplish more academically than in conventional schools; to transmit values, beliefs, and worldview to the child; to customize/individualized education for each child; and the desire to provide religious or moral instruction different from that taught in public schools. (Ray, 2017)

In her own research, Mazama (2015) found two general strategies observed among black home educators: the first is imparting self-knowledge, and the second is imparting self-esteem through positive teaching and resources about African and African Americans. Mazama found that homeschooling gives parents the freedom to piece together a curriculum from a vast array of resources and materials from different point-of-view sources than the standard Eurocentric-curriculums of the public schools (Mazama, 2015).

**Worldview Differences.** Guba defines the term worldview as a basic set of beliefs that guide one’s actions (as cited in Creswell, 2014, pg. 35). In my research, I found that families from all walks of life and faith-bases have entered into the world of homeschool. Beattie-Moss (2005) writes that “[the homeschool] movement attracts families from all religions, races, and socio-economic classes.” And as Stevens (2001) puts it, “The plurality of homeschoolers makes them harder for the rest of us to comprehend. On what could fundamentalists and atheists, Muslims and Mormons, Buddhists and Baptists all agree?” (p. 5). Simply put, homeschooling gives parents the
freedom to choose the worldview through which they will teach their children (MÂCHÉ, 2017; Ray, 2019). This gives great flexibility to the homeschool family to expound on worldviews that are not elaborated on—or even touched on—in the public school system. It also allows freedom to cross-compare and discuss the different worldviews held throughout history by different nations and people-groups, as well as the ability to depart from evolutionary and humanistic-based curriculum sources, if they so choose. Wayne (2018) writes that it is important to make worldview training a priority in the teaching of children and teens, and to seek to integrate apologetics into every subject at every grade level.

In this section of chapter two, this thesis will explore several sub-points for the worldview-related reasons many families choose to homeschool: morality; religious and faith-based reasons; and the debate on humanism, evolution and origins.

*Morality and values.* While the desire to pull children from negative influences of the school system is a reactive one, d’Escoto and d’Escoto (2007) discuss a proactive reason for wanting to raise children within the safety of the home setting:

In stark contrast to the godless public education system, home education is an opportunity for parents to reclaim the roll of discipling children, teaching them to shine in the midst of darkness. It can be looked at as a spiritual revival, a wake-up call to a land in serious moral decline (p. 10).

The results of the 2016 NHES survey, as reported by McQuiggan, Megra, & Grady (2017), show that 67% of the survey population found “a desire to provide moral instruction” (Appendix B) as an important reason for homeschooling. Adams and Purdy (1996) identify two broad orientations for parents choosing to homeschool their children,
one of which is concern regarding the values and morals their children are learning (the other main concern being academic and social needs). Clarkson and Clarkson (2011) write,

> Your goal is not just an educated child, good SAT scores, and college or even a career with a good salary. Those may be fruits of your efforts, but your overriding goal should be to raise spiritually mature children who have both the will and the skill to learn and the desire and ability to keep learning… (p. 21).

Though I have placed this section under the “Worldview Differences” category in this thesis, the desire to teach a specific set of morals or values is not limited to Christian or faith-based families. As Weldon (2010) writes, we live in a time when families are able to embrace those things that have truth and meaning for their personal set of values and beliefs, and that the way parents nurture their children is one of the most “profound ways” they can model those values to their families (p. 272).

**Religious and faith-based.** Lois (2013) writes that, in addition to the difficulty of tunneling down to the bedrock of reasons and motivations families choose to homeschool their children, a large subset of the research on homeschoolers’ motivations has attempted to assess the influence of faith, which she calls an “infinitely complex concept which is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to quantify” (p. 47). Gatto (2001) states, “It’s difficult to imagine anyone who lacks an understanding of Western spirituality regarding themselves as educated. And yet, American schools have been forbidden to enter this arena even in a token way since 1947” (p. 287).

Hoffman and Hoffman (2014) write that prayer and Bible reading were removed from schools in the early 1960’s. As the minorities of the homeschool movement began
to surface around that time, Gaither (2017) writes that Rushdoony became more and more involved in advocacy for Christian schools and homeschooling. In his first written work on education, Rushdoony, pointed out several internal contradictions in the public school system of the United States that were fundamentally at odds with a Christian understanding of the world (as cited by Gaither, 2017, p. 152).

Several Bible verses that have inspired Christian-based homeschool families include Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it” (English Standard Version); Ephesians 6:4, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord,” and also Deuteronomy 6:6-7:

> And these words I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

Wayne (2018) writes that every subject can be taught from a Biblical worldview. Many homeschool families have chosen to educate their children with the Bible as their foundation, or to incorporate their own faith-based system. Sheble (2003) writes,

> We tend to think of homeschooling only in terms of conservative Christian homeschoolers. But in reality there are homeschool parents of many faiths. For example, there are Jewish parents who use a Torah-based education, Islamics who dislike the integration of the sexes in public schools, Catholics who seek to follow the advice of Pope John Paul II that “parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children,” and Eastern Orthodox adherents who
cannot accept the materialism and humanism they see in government schooling (p. 10).

It should be noted that while there might be a dominant evangelical Christian presence in the homeschool movement, there are also many secular homeschooling families (Homeschool Adventures, 2018b; Jolly, Matthews & Nester, 2012). In writing about his own family’s homeschool experience, Hewitt (2014) writes that homeschooling is not only for religious or faith-based families. He says, “[Our family does not] identify with any particular religion…In fact, I am not aware of a single homeschooling or unschooling family in our community—and there are many—that chooses home education in order to provide religious instruction” (p. 15).

**The debate on humanism, evolution, and origins.** Hoffman and Hoffman (2014) write that Christian private schools saw a dramatic rise in enrollment when prayer and Bible reading were removed from schools in 1962-1963. In my research, I found that the deviation in schools from treating the Biblical text as truth to that of schools adopting a humanistic and evolutionary worldview model has been a factor that has contributed to a number of evangelical Christians joining the homeschool movement. According to Mayberry and Knowles (as cited in Adams & Purdy, 1996), many parents who are homeschooling their children for religious reasons want to avoid the “secular humanist” curricula in public schools and, instead, opt to teach them at home.

According to d’Escoto & d’Escoto (2007), “The basis of our current education system has its roots in an eclectic blend of unbiblical worldviews, injected into the mainstream by men like Mann, Dewey, and Darwin,” (p. 8). Rushdoony (1963) wrote
that while Dewey’s influence extended into religion and philosophy and other areas, his chief contributions to life and thought were in the area of education.

Dewey was born in 1859, the same year Darwin’s *Origin of Species* was published (d’Escoto and d’Escoto, 2007). According to Brand (2009), it wasn’t until about 1940 that Darwin’s theory of natural selection was accepted by the majority of biologists. Bowler (1990) claims that Darwin’s success was due to “the exploitation of evolutionism by those who were determined to establish science as a new source of authority in Western civilization, in place of theology” (p. 140). d’Escoto and d’Escoto write that later, through Dewey’s efforts, traditional values, such as patriotism and reverence for God, were wiped out of the public school system in favor of humanism, and that, because of Dewey’s endeavors, “humanism would become the religion of the schools...” (p. 7). Regarding this type of school-wide religion that Dewey promulgated, Rushdoony (1972) wrote, “The state school is [Dewey’s] established church...” (p. 160).

The theory of evolution became a counterpart to the prevailing humanism taught in public schools, and d’Escoto and d’Escoto likened the coupling of humanism and evolution as “fuel and fire” (p. 7). Bowler writes that “it hardly seems to matter whether you love Darwin’s message or hate it; you cannot escape the fact that it helped to overturn the traditional Christian worldview” (p. 11).

Rushdoony (as cited by Gaither, 2017), pointed out several internal contradictions in the public school system of the United States that are fundamentally at odds with a Christian understanding of the world; he wrote,

Schools reject God but still want students to believe in things like truth, justice, and virtue. They reject the Biblical account of creation but still want students to
find the environment meaningful. Their commitment to Darwinism leaves human life the product of random mutations, but schools still seem to want students to believe that they possess autonomy and rationality (as cited by Gaither, 2017, p. 152).

Rushdoony found this inconsistency to be “breathtakingly incoherent” (p. 152).

Astrophysicist Lisle writes that inconsistency is common in secular thinking and that, “secular scientists claim that the universe is not designed, but they do science as if the universe is designed and upheld by God in a uniform way. Evolutionists can do science only if they rely on biblical creation assumptions (such as uniformity) that are contrary to their professed belief in evolution” (p. 59).

There are thousands of scientists in the United States who believe that the theory of evolution is scientifically erroneous, and that the theory of creation is a superior scientific model for explaining evidences related to origins (Answers in Genesis, 2019; Gish, 1995; Lisle, 2009; Morris, 1982; Taylor, 1998). Lisle (2009) writes, “Creationists and evolutionists have a different worldview—a different ultimate standard by which all evidence is interpreted. Once we understand the different worldviews, it is easy to see why people draw different conclusions from the same data” (p. 35). He continues to write that evidence cannot speak for itself, but rather, it is “interpreted,” and that interpretation is guided by one’s worldview. Hatfield (as cited by Taylor, 1998) writes, “Scientists who utterly reject Evolution may be one of our fastest-growing controversial minorities…Many of the scientists supporting this position hold impressive credentials in science.” According to Deckard, Berndt, Filakouridis, Iverson, and Dewitt (2003), “What one believes about origins is a significant component of an overall worldview.” Deckard
et al., summarized their study with the conclusion that students who attend public high
schools were much more likely to have a weaker initial creation worldview than those
who were enrolled in Christian high schools or homeschooled (2003).

As stated earlier in this thesis, racism and racial-protectionism are two
components that play a role in parents choosing to homeschool their children, and as I
researched the topic of evolution and humanism in schools as a possible reason families
choose to homeschool, I found there was some significant overlap in the concept of
racism being perpetuated by evolutionary thoughts in schools (Ham, 2018a; Bergman,
underlying Christian account of human origins, and the historical criticism of the Bible
undermined confidence in its authority and reliability” (p. 56). Ham (2018a) states that
evolution, as proposed by Darwin in *The Descent of Man*, is an “inherently racist
philosophy,” and that Darwin’s work perpetuated racism with his ideas of lower and
higher-order races, believing that certain dark-skinned people were closer to their
supposed ape-like ancestors than light-skinned individuals (Ham, 2018a, p. 12). Indeed,
Galton, Darwin’s cousin (as cited in Walker, 1991, p. 7), believed that intellectual ability
was “strictly biological” and that heredity could be looked upon as the sole determinant
for mental acumen. Walker (1991) writes that, today, we know that intelligence and
giftedness cannot be accurately predicted. Gould (2003) writes that, following the
acceptance of evolutionary theory, biological arguments for racism increased
significantly by and large. According to Lee, Mountain, and Koenig (as cited by Callister
& Didham, 2009), the idea of biologically based human races also played a part in
colonialism, giving scientific justification for exploitation and the practice of slavery.
Harvard law professor Dershowitz (as cited by Bergman, 2013) notes that “racists, militarists, and nationalists” were among those actively advocating evolution in the 1920’s, and he states that the eugenics movement also “took its impetus from Darwin’s theory of natural selection.”

Ham (2018b), at one time a science teacher in Australia, writes about an instance when he told his class he rejected Darwin’s concept of ape-like creatures evolving into humans, as well as Darwin’s belief that there were lower and higher races of people groups. Ham (2018b) states. “I taught them that all humans are one race, one family, all equal before God.” He continues by saying that after class, three Aboriginal girls came up wanting to hear more, and that it made a difference in their self-perception to hear that they were racially related to their white-skinned teacher. Prior to that they had been told, through evolutionary theory, that they, as Aborigines, were closer to apes than people with light skin were (Ham, 2018b). Lisle (2009) writes, “In order for the origins debate to be rationally resolved, we must deal with the competing worldviews—not just isolated evidences. If we are going to rationally resolve which worldview is better than the other, then creationists must learn to understand the worldview of the evolutionists, and evolutionists must learn to understand the worldview of the creationist” (p. 32).

In my research, I have learned that families who want to move away from the humanistic, evolutionary model of the general public school curriculum to a Biblically-based curriculum, or another alternative, have found homeschool to be a good answer to their families needs in this regard, as they can choose curriculum from a large variety of sources, and in fact, the Christian Resources Library in Minnesota was created for that very reason. The library started as a Young Earth Creation Science library, and has since
expanded to include over 3,300 titles in their juvenile fiction and historical fiction
sections, as well as numerous non-fiction titles covering such topics as: peer pressure;
body image; Christian answers for a secular world; developing a Christian worldview;
spiritual growth; as well as books dealing with the Christian view of sex and teen dating
(The Christian Resource Center Library, 2019).

Mitchell (2013) reminds us that the need for Christian curriculum and school
materials did not originate with homeschool itself, but that Christian schools had the
same needs, and that Christian parents who are hoping to equip their children for spiritual
and academic success do not need to use curricula that promotes evolution. Instead,
Mitchell (2013) writes,

students preparing to enter the world need to know what arguments will be
presented in favor of evolution and equipped to discern the difference between
experimental, observational science and the worldview-based interpretations that
constitute origins science…[parents] need to choose textbooks that measure all
truth according to the yardstick of God’s Word. Only then will they help their
children build the biblical worldview they need to face the onslaughts of a world
that is increasingly hostile to God.

According to Deckard et al. (2003), “Few issues could be of greater importance to the
Christian family and the church than to teach the biblical doctrine of creationism.”

**Academic Reasons.** According to Jolly, Matthews, and Nester (2012), there has
been a shift in homeschooling—moving away from religious reasons as being a primary
driving force behind the homeschool movement, to more of a general disillusionment
with public education. In my literature research, I have found that families who
homeschool children exhibiting multiple intelligences, children who are gifted and talented, or children with special needs, may have entered into homeschooling because they found dissatisfaction with general education, as outlined in the following sections.

**Multiple intelligences and learning styles.** Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences (as cited by Singleton, 2018; Jasmine, 1996) designates eight distinct modalities of learning: linguistic, logical/mathematical, bodily/kinesthetic, musical, spatial, naturalist, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligence. Most mainstream school programs focus primarily on linguistic intelligence and logical/mathematical intelligence, which, according to Wilson (2012) means that “those [students] who excel in other styles can be left out or labeled as having learning difficulties or other learning issues…” (p. 34).

According to LeFever (2004), each of us has a specific learning style, and when we are taught in that style, we are more likely to succeed. When a parent chooses to homeschool their child, they are in the unique position to best determine their child’s particular modality of intelligence, and their child’s innate skills and interests, and can then make informed choices that tailor the curriculum to those specific needs (LeFever, 2004; Weldon, 2010; Wilson, 2016).

**Gifted and talented students.** American psychologist Terman was the first to use the term “gifted” as he used standardized tests in a study he was conducting to identify children with IQs of 140 or higher (Walker, 1991). According to Walker (1991), a measurement for “giftedness” is hard to pin down, as it can mean many things to many people, and over the years, experts have defined giftedness in different ways, including: the top one percent of students in general intelligence; students’ whose performance is
consistently remarkable; students who exhibit human traits that are above average in general abilities, task commitment, and creativity; and students who are capable of high performance due to their outstanding abilities. According to Hoagies’ Gifted (1997-2019), “gifted children are a population who have different educational needs, thanks to their unique intellectual development. What we're not so sure of, is how to identify them, and what this different education should look like.”

While it may seem like school will be a relatively easy rite of passage for this population of students, West (2012) writes that, from personal experience, heading to the gifted and talented classrooms in the traditional school setting set her apart from her peers in a way that was threatening to other students. As a result, she sustained insults and quickly learned to hide her abilities. She continues by saying that her giftedness was put aside in order to fit in.

Families who want to encourage and affirm their child’s giftedness may choose to homeschool because of peer pressure and ostracization, but other reasons to homeschool may simply lie in the fact that some gifted and talented children are not challenged enough in the public school setting. Jolly, Matthews, and Nester (2012) write, “…parents felt that the unique learning needs of their gifted children were not being met properly and therefore homeschooling was a better option” (p. 130). Winstanley (as cited in Murphy, 2012, p. 102) writes “Homeschooling can be a last resort for frustrated families where gifted children are not having their complex needs met through mainstream schooling.” Wayne (2018) writes that homeschooling is “ideal” for the gifted student because they can work at their own pace, without being held back by the “bell curve” of the classroom (p. 137).
Every child, gifted and talented included, have their own unique needs, and Wilson (2016) points out that the homeschool parent is better equipped to meet their particular children’s needs better than the school teacher who is trying to juggle the needs of a whole classroom of students. Walker (1991) writes that, typically, the two forms of intelligence that schools tend to address are those related to language and math. For those specialties that fall outside of this arena, it can be “hit-or-miss” on whether a gifted child’s interests will be met, and if the teacher will also have an interest in pursuing those areas (Walker, 1991, p. 17).

Walker (1991) writes,

“On the one hand, we as a nation believe in excellence, which means that everyone should be allowed and encouraged to reach his or her full potential. On the other hand, we believe that we’re ‘all created equal,’ which means that singling out any group represents un-equal treatment.” (p. 9).

Walker goes on to say that the two ideas cannot coexist, and she quotes Thomas Jefferson as saying, “Nothing is more unequal than equal treatment for unequal people” (as cited by Walker, 1991, p. 10).

It is my experience that a school teacher may make admirable effort to offer extras to gifted students and try to group them with others closer to their ability level, but, in the end, there is no way to help every child in a large classroom-setting excel to his or her specific ability. Wilson (2016) writes, in relation to the classroom setting, “I know for a fact that it’s just not possible to be everything for every child” (p. 6).

**Special needs.** Wayne (2018) writes that, the entire structure of the institutional educational system supports the concept of “average,” however, “the problem is, no child
is truly average” (p. 133). Wayne (2018) writes that each child is unique and diverse in the way they think, learn, and understand the world around them, and nowhere is this more clearly evidenced than in the area of students with special needs. He continues to say, “In most cases, home education works so much better than institutionalized schooling, even for students who face difficulties” (p. 133).

Bielick, Chandler, and Broughman (as cited by Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007) identified parental beliefs about education, specific to a particular child’s needs, as a motivator for homeschooling. Murphy (2012) writes that special needs students usually fall into three overlapping categories: children who are floundering in a formal educational setting; children whose families believe their uniqueness calls for a more unique approach to learning; and traditionally defined special needs students (learning disabled or gifted individuals). Murphy goes on to say that an increasing numbers of parents turning to homeschooling for their learning disabled children.

In a study related specifically to homeschooling students with autism, Hurlbutt (2011) writes, “Teachers may be inadequately prepared for the increasing number of students being identified with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), as students with ASD may not respond to traditional methods of instruction” (p. 239). Hurlbutt continues to write that, given the fact that the number of students with ASD have been increasing rapidly, and because educators may not feel adequately prepared to meet the special needs of those students with ASD, parents of children with autism “may be concerned that educational programming available through public school systems will not prepare their children for the future” (p. 239). Wayne (2018) writes that “no one could know your child as well as you do, and no one could care as much” (p. 133), and that parents can
connect their students to many good resources without sending them to government schools.

**Flexibility.** Homeschooling allows families a measure of flexibility not afforded to families through conventional schooling, and “many children may find that homeschooling is a good fit for their natural learning styles or personalities” (CRHE, 2013-2017a). A child who is chronically sick will need flexible hours, while a child who has specific time-requirements in their extracurriculars may want to build their school schedule around those commitments (i.e. scheduling around ice-time on the rink for figure skaters and hockey players, road-time for traveling sports leagues, robotics competitions, etc.). Gaither (2017) tells the story of the Shriffrin family who chose to homeschool their children so they would have more time to learn life skills and focus on skiing. Their daughter, Mikaela, went on to become a two-time Olympic gold medalist and World Cup alpine skier. Homeschooling Teen Magazine (2016) writes about another family, the Hamiltons, who moved to Hawaii for its surfing opportunities. Their daughter, Bethany, began winning surfing competitions in her age division at the age of eight. After sixth grade, Bethany began homeschooling so she would have more time to surf.

There is no written rule that states that the time students set aside for academics must always be from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m, or even a set nine months each year; rather, homeschool can be any time of day, and some families even choose to adopt a year-round method (Mitchell, 2019). Bauer (2018) writes,

> reading, mathematics, speaking, and writing are the ways in which civilized human beings have understood and transmitted culture since ancient times. That’s it. X doesn’t have to occupy 12 years. It doesn’t have to use textbooks and
teachers. It doesn’t have to happen during a particular part of the day or year (p. 173).

The beauty of homeschooling is the ability to give children the gift of time (Weldon, 2010; Wilson, 2016).

More time together. Parents have a specific instinctual knowledge of their child that will not be, and can not, be replicated by any other educator (Stevens, 2001). In my experience teaching, it is quite clear that in a classroom with upwards of twenty students, teachers will not be able to meet the needs of all their students in the way a parent is able to. Teacher knowledge cannot substitute for parent-child intimacy, and according to Marshall (as cited by Beattie-Moss, 2005), many home educators want to strengthen their family unit and they find that, through homeschooling, they have the ability to get to know their child in a way many parents of traditionally schooled children are unable to achieve.

When parents choose to home educate their child, it gives the family more time together to bond and encourage closeness and intimacy. Wayne (2018) writes that the more involved a parent is in their child’s education, training, and development, the better. As the saying goes, “the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world” (Moore & Moore, 1981. pg. 27; Stevens, 2001, pg. 40), and many families don’t want to entrust the raising of their children to someone else. Moore and Moore (1981) write, “Let us not forget that the God who designed the kids ordained the family to nest them” (pg. 27).

Unique Approach to Education. Many families are choosing to enter into homeschooling because of the manner in which they are able to piece together a custom learning experience for their children, and tailor a unique approach to education (Weldon,
2010). Some of the groups that benefit from homeschooling’s combination of flexibility and uniqueness are families who educate through travel, and families who educate through informal instruction (child-led instruction), as discussed below.

**Travel learners.** Weldon (2010) writes that some homeschooling families have made a lifestyle out of part or full-time travel, whether for work, recreation, or service, and their education takes place everywhere they go. Another term for homeschooling on the road is “roadschooling” (Sathre-Vogel, 2014). These families who homeschool because of flexibility with their traveling lifestyle may live in sailboats, RVs, houseboats, converted buses, or all sorts of accommodations that allow them to see the world and immerse themselves in the travel experience (Weldon, 2010).

**Unschooling.** As Galileo Galilei wrote, “You cannot teach man anything; you can only help him find it within himself” (as cited by Weldon, 2010, p. 31). Stevens (2001) cites educational theorist Holt, who believed that parents ought to expect self-directed learning from their children, rather than living in the “crippling mindset” that education must be a system of formal instruction. Holt made an appeal for parents to liberate their children and begin to follow a pedagogical method that is now known as “unschooling” (as cited in Stevens, 2001, p. 37).

Weldon (2010) writes that it is recognized that children gain incredibly when they pursue their interests, and that they naturally learn from experience and by doing while engaging in the world around them. According to Holt (1967), children are experimental by nature as they touch, taste, heft, bend, and break things to gain insight into how the world works. In many child-led models (such as “interest-based learning” and “free range
learning”) the child is responsible for her/his own learning as they become fully absorbed in the work of play (Weldon, 2010).

**Individualism.** The development of individualism—specifically self-worth, independence, and nonconformism—is an additional motivator in educating children at home. In her specific work on researching homeschooled, adolescent girls, Sheffer (1997) writes that homeschooling allows students to ask deep questions about their identity, such as “Who am I?” and “What do I really want?” and may give students a stronger sense of self (as cited by Ray, 2019). Weldon (2010) writes that the key elements in building self-awareness are not found in long hours spent in a classroom or bent over homework, but rather, through “free-play, purposeful work, encounters with nature, or deeply fulfilling relationships” (p. 273). Walker (1991) states that interpersonal and intrapersonal learning—those very things that Sheffer (1997) wrote give students a stronger sense of self—are discouraged in the traditional school setting, rather than encouraged.

At times, the individualism seen in some areas of the homeschooling movement can seem quite radical in its counter-cultural bent, and to that end Clarkson and Clarkson (2011) write,

> It is a nonconformist educational movement in a culture that has invested heavily for at least six generations in first a common school and then a public school system that requires conformity for it to work well. Institutional or public (government-run) schooling is now so entrenched in our American experience and mindset that most citizens never even think to question its existence or its effectiveness (p. 32).
Wilson (2016) writes that her homeschooled children are “independent thinkers who have no need to follow the herd” (p. 9), giving them the chance to think of their own thoughts, come up with their own ideas, and have the opportunity to experiment when they are given the gift of time.

Hewitt (2014), a homeschooling parent and proponent of learning through living, also called “unschooling,” writes that his children are by-and-large unconcerned with how they are perceived, and that they may be seen as different. Hewitt writes that the path they are following frequently deviates from “the norm” (p. 22). He admits that in living the way they do—in a rural area, dependent on their own resources—and schooling the way they do, there is a certain isolation from society at large. However, he writes that he has found that the more his family fervently embraces their chosen lifestyle, the more they seem to connect with others who are being intentional about making the same lifestyle choices.

Health Related. There may be times when children have illnesses or health-related issues that propel their family to enter into the world of homeschooling (CRHE 2013-2017a). The HSLDA (2019) writes, “For children who suffer from chronic health problems, homeschooling offers great advantages…[and] is a valid option for children suffering from chronic illness.” With homeschool, parents have the freedom to work with a child’s “good days,” which may mean completing school work during different hours of different days, schooling on weekends, and year-round schooling, rather than the traditional nine month schedule (Mitchell, 2019).
**Food Allergies.** Some families may choose to homeschool because they worry about the public school environment as it relates to the safety of their child with severe food allergies (Home-Curriculum, 2008-2018).

**Trials and loss.** When a family-member is going through a prolonged or chronic sickness, a family is frequently at the hospital, or a parent is ill, homeschooling can be the best option for schooling for a season. Wilson (2016) writes that, because trials, hardships, grief and loss are a part of life, it is the job of parents is to prepare their children for those hard and beautiful and messy and painful aspects of real life.

From a faith-based perspective, Wilson suggests that homeschooling parents can word things in a way that is fitting and age-appropriate for each child, and in doing so, she writes that parents can give their children the precious gift of a Biblical worldview in the midst of very sensitive times. Wilson (2016) writes that conversations can be filtered through a Biblical lens using “the grid of God’s Word,” (p. 41). These moments of dialogue can happen organically and naturally, as each child processes the events unfolding in their lives. Wayne (2018) writes, “The goal is to share our lives with our children and to help bear their struggle and burdens. Sure, it would be easier to...let them be someone else’s responsibility. But God didn’t give that child to someone else. He gave that child to you” (p. 139).

Wilson (2016) writes that, homeschooling through tough times may only be for a season, but it may be the most powerful season in a child’s life as they witness the model of their parents’ faith during that time. She continues, “[when] we embrace the trials and grief, when [our children] see us trusting God in our deepest pain, we show them a very real, very powerful, very loving God” (p. 41).
Considerations/Concerns

When a family has chosen homeschooling as the best educational match for their child, there are several special considerations to take into account, such as finances, when to make the transition to homeschooling, “puzzle piecing” everything together, and socialization. This section will touch on all of the above listed considerations or concerns of parents first entering into the world of homeschooling.

**Finances.** The financial ramifications families will want to consider when choosing to homeschool include the possibility of living off of one income, the financial factors involved in purchasing curriculum and materials, and the possibly cost of special clubs and co-op fees (Wilson, 2016; Wayne, 2018). Homeschool costs vary greatly, and are largely determined by the specific curriculum a family has chosen, as well as the extracurriculars the family engages in, and the special equipment needed to supplement the interests of the children of each family (Wilson, 2016). The Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HSLDA, 2019) has published a list on their site of free educational resources homeschool families may choose to use as their primary, or supplemental, curricula.

**When to Make the Transition to Homeschool.** Once a parent has decided to homeschool their child, they may wonder when they should pull their child out of the public school system. When is the best time to make the transition? Bauer (2018), writes to this concern, saying, “Remember that you don’t have to make any immediate choices. You can pull your kids out of school—or, for that matter, put them back—at any point during the year. Take some time to explore your options. When the time is right to make a decision, you’ll know” (p. 186).
Once a family has made the decision to pull their child from the educational system to homeschool, or to puzzle-piece together any of the myriad of educational opportunities available to them, they can do so right away. Then, they should notify their school district within fifteen days of removing their child from the school system (Minnesota Homeschoolers’ Alliance, 2013).

“Puzzle Piecing” it all Together. What type of schedule and routine will work best for the homeschooling parent and child? Will the family choose to part time homeschool, full-time homeschool, or create their own customized sampling of homeschool scheduling? Parents also need to determine if they will homeschool all their children, or a select child. Being able to puzzle-piece a system that works best for a family is part of the flexibility afforded through homeschooling (Bauer, 2018).

Some families utilize one type of curriculum systemically in their homeschooling, while some use a mix from year to year; and if a family launched into homeschooling because of a bad previous school experience, they may choose not to use any formal curriculum for a while, and instead just enter in for a time with “no curriculum…no plan…no schedule” (Stevens, 2001, p. 45-46). This unstructured approach may help facilitate a time of healing while a family eases into homeschooling.

Bauer (2018) lists many different schooling options that can make up the “puzzle pieces” of a child’s customized education, so parents can flex school to fit their child. The options she listed include: alternative assignment completion suggestions (as per Gardner’s multiple intelligence theory); single subject acceleration (SSA) in the traditional school setting; becoming a part-time home educator; “afterschooling”; pull outs; home-organized schooling, conventional schooling at home, and nontraditional
homeschooling. Parents may gain the fullest possible benefit from the different options by knowing what each of the options are and what they comprise, capitalizing on the puzzle pieces that work for their child, and sloughing off those that don’t. Within the home school model, there is no one-size-fits-all system, rather, homeschooling can be custom tailored to the needs of every individual household (CRHE, 2013-2017a; Bauer, 2018).

**Socialization.** In my research, I found that one of the main questions parents ask when beginning the homeschool journey is how they should socialize their children. Children are in the process of learning social skills through their everyday activities and interactions, with their most valuable social-interaction stemming from the nurturing home and family environment (MÂCHÉ, 2017), yet some parents worry about their children having adequate time spent with peers from outside their home. They wonder what socialization should look like and how many opportunities should be scheduled for socialization (Wayne, 2018). Wilson (2016) suggests that one should look to their child for the answer to those questions. What are the child’s interests? Is the homeschooled child an introvert or an extrovert? Along with those basic, guiding questions, a homeschool parent should ask themselves how much money they are willing to spend (on club fees, museum or event entrance fees, etc.) and how much time they have to devote to socialization activities (Wilson, 2016).

Weldon (2010) suggests that homeschool groups can be found nearly everywhere, and that one key to making connections is keeping an eye out for other families out and about during the school day. She suggests that families introduce themselves to one another and acquaintances. Other ways to find opportunities for support and socialization
include checking local library listings, online listings, homeschool co-ops and local homeschool support groups, extracurricular activities through the local public school, church activities or bulletins, play groups, field trip groups, clubs, community activities, or simple word of mouth (Weldon, 2010; Ray, 2019).

According to the Minnesota Department of Education (2018), it is a legal right that homeschooling families may participate in the extracurricular activities of their resident school district. d’Escoto writes that 98% of homeschooled students are involved in two or more activities outside the home, which require interaction with various age groups in a variety of settings (as cited in Rey, 2004, p. 59).

Medlin (as cited by Guterman, O., and Neuman, A., 2017b) writes, “It appears that parents understand the importance of social encounters for homeschooled children intuitively, since a number of researchers have shown that the socialization of children in homeschooling is important to their parents” (p. 2,783). In the research conducted by Guterman and Neuman (2017b), it was found that there was a significant correlation between parental personalities and the social encounters of homeschooled children.

Moore (as cited by Jeub, 1994) states that the home-setting must not be overlooked as a rich opportunity for socialization with one’s parents, siblings, and other family members in a non-threatening, positive setting. He states that a child who feels needed, wanted, and depended on at home is much more likely to develop a sense of self-worth, which is a basic ingredient in positive sociability. Moore and Moore (1981) write that the family is still the bedrock of social interaction, and that it must continue as such for society to survive (pg. 26). While Ray (2019) states, “The home-educated are doing well, typically above average, on measures of social, emotional, and psychological
development,” and that research measures include “peer interaction, self-concept, leadership skills, family cohesion, participation in community service, and self esteem” (para. 4).

Not all socialization is good. Negative environments and socialization that can lead to succumbing to one’s peers and the influences of drugs, alcohol, premarital sex, etc, is one of the main reasons why families choose to homeschool their children (Jeub, 1994; McQuiggan, Megra, & Grady, 2017; Redford, Battle, and Bielick, 2017). Choosing to conduct home-based education may eliminate many of those negative factors.

Summary

Throughout this chapter, many aspects of homeschool were reviewed throughout literature: the history of homeschool, specific numbers and data on the population of homeschool families, the many varied reasons families choose to homeschool their children, and special considerations families should take into account when beginning to homeschool.

As seen in chapter two of this thesis, homeschooling can be warranted when a school mismatch occurs in the traditional school setting, or a family has preference for the homeschooling option. There are many benefits to homeschooling, but also considerations and concerns one must take into account when choosing to homeschool. Homeschooling is legal across the nation, and requirements for homeschooling in Minnesota can be easily located (MDE, 2018).

The foundation of literature reviewed in this chapter shows that there is a whole tapestry of reasons families enter into the world of home education. Chapters three through five will look further into the specific reasons behind parents’ decision to educate
their children at home in Minnesota. As this paper moves on to interview and study specific Minnesota-based families and their reasons for homeschooling, my guiding question, “What are the primary motivations for Minnesota parents choosing to homeschool?” will help inform the methods I used to collect data and my research methods as discussed in chapter three.
CHAPTER 3

Research Methods

Introduction and Rationale

In chapter one of this thesis, I discussed my background for writing this research paper and my reasons for researching the question, “What are the primary motivations for Minnesota parents choosing to homeschool?”

In chapter two, many aspects of homeschooling were reviewed: the history of the modern homeschool movement, national data trends on homeschooling, some of the key factors behind families choosing to homeschool their children, and special considerations to homeschooling.

In chapter three, I will use my review of literature on the topic of homeschooling—at both the national level and specific Minnesota-based case studies—to inform my study and explain the research methods I used as I sought to answer the question, “What are the primary motivations for Minnesota parents choosing to homeschool?” In this chapter, I will explain the rationale behind my research methods, my research design, the setting and participants in my study, data collection methods, and data analysis.

Throughout my literature review, I discovered that most books on the topic of homeschooling are either written as first-person accounts of families who have chosen to homeschool and want to share some of their experience, thereby providing background info on their particular reasons for choosing to homeschool, or as case-studies, citing...
specific interviews or accounts relating to homeschool choice and reasoning. There are not many data studies on reasons families choose to homeschool, as the NCES only conducts its National Household Education Survey once every four years. There is even less information on the specific homeschooling population in Minnesota. Murphy writes, “…there is not an overabundance of solid empirical work on homeschooling. Much of the literature in this area comprises testimonials and pieces that explain how to successfully start and conduct a homeschool,” (2012, p. 3). In this chapter, I will explain the methods I used to complete my study as I sought to add to the empirical evidence pool based on the population of homeschoolers in Minnesota and answer the question, “What are the primary factors behind the homeschooling movement in Minnesota?”

**Research Paradigm**

The majority of my research consisted primarily of qualitative data collection techniques, mostly in the form of answers I received from the homeschool survey I created and sent out to homeschool groups and co-ops all across the state of Minnesota. Mills writes, “The decision about what data are collected for an action research area of focus is largely determined by the nature of the problem. There is no one recipe for how to proceed with data collection efforts,” (2018, p. 83). Miles & Huberman (as cited in Creswell, 2014, p. 255), call qualitative research an investigative process—one where the researcher seek to establish the meaning of social phenomenons through comparing, contrasting, replicating, cataloguing and classifying the object of study. Also, according to Creswell, the process of qualitative research involves data that inductively builds from particulars to general themes, with the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. Creswell states, “Those who engage in...inquiry support a way of looking at
research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation,” (2014, p. 32). And Morse (1991), calls the qualitative research approach quite useful when the subject has never been studied or addressed with a certain sample to population of people (as cited in Creswell, 2014, p. 50). Mills (2018) writes that a researcher’s unique area of focus will determine the best data collection methods for that researcher’s specific needs and questions.

In my research, I engaged in a mixed-methods approach, with my main form of qualitative data acquired through answers from the survey I created and sent out to homeschool groups across Minnesota. I also sought to establish triangulation with my results in the form of phone and email interviews.

**Research Design**

I will undertake a phenomenological approach with my research design, which is a type of study that focuses on gaining understanding by investigating the way different families feel and make meaning of their subjective experiences within a specific phenomenon, namely, homeschooling (Moustakas, 1994, as cited by Jolly, Matthews, & Nester, 2012, p. 125).

After researching and writing the literature review in chapter two of this thesis, I found that the nature of my topic of study is a personal one that varies from family to family due to a mix of personal choices and factors. Because of this nature, my survey was written in such a way that participants could rate how highly different factors weighed in to their homeschooling decision. Rather than strict “yes” or “no” based questions, there was fluidity in a large part of the construction of my survey questions allowing me to get a feel of the “pulse” behind those factors that weigh in most heavily
on the part of Minnesota-based homeschooling families. The data gleaned from the survey, and subsequent phone and email interviews, gave me an in-depth look at the particulars behind different family’s motivations for homeschooling, and allowed me to see certain trends and patterns begin to emerge between the answers given by Minnesota-based families and those who took the surveys conducted at the national level (Appendix A, Appendix B).

**Setting and Participants**

My survey was conducted online, which allowed me to reach out to homeschool groups and co-ops in various counties across the state of Minnesota. I contacted faith-based and secular homeschool groups, as well as support groups, socialization groups, location-based groups, play-based groups, high-interest and niche-based groups, and groups affiliated with professional associations. I also reached out to statewide associations, including:

- Minnesota Homeschoolers’ Alliance (MHA)
- Eclectic Community of Homeschooling Opportunities (ECHO)
- Minnesota Council for the Gifted and Talented (MCGT) Homeschoolers Chapters
- Minnesota Association of Christian Home Educators (MACHE)

All survey participants were Minnesota-based homeschool families. After receiving the link to the survey, multiple parents reached out to me, via email or phone, to discuss the study, and to hear more about the background for this research. As a result, I received rich input on homeschooling through avenues beyond just the survey results.
Human Subject Research.

Because my research involved data collection from human participants, I applied for approval from Hamline’s Institutional Review Board (Hamline IRB, 2019) to complete low-risk research according to federal regulation 45CFR46.104. After submission of all research methods and survey questions, I received approval from the Hamline University IRB (#2019-04-19E), and from Hamline University’s district office to conduct this study. As with any study, the loss of confidentiality is always a risk. However, the risk was minimized in that at no time were survey participants required to give their name, and the identity of participants in this study will remain anonymous as results will be aggregated and will not include any personal identifiers. The survey I created also allowed for “no response” or “prefer not to respond” as an option for almost every survey question, and participants maintained the right to withhold information as they saw fit.

Data Collection Methods

As I contacted different homeschool families and groups across the state, I sent out a survey consent letter, detailing the academic nature of the survey. Potential participants were informed that the survey would be open for 30 days and that the researchers would gain no benefit from their participation in this study beyond the publication and/or presentation of the results obtained from the study, and the invaluable research experience gained from the survey results. Participation in the survey was voluntary, and a link to the survey was included in the survey consent letter.

For those participants who chose to access and take the homeschool survey, they first had to read through and electronically sign an attached informed consent letter with
the nature and research of my topic written out. Participants did not have to identify their name in the electronic signature. Participants were also able to indicate in the survey if they wanted to receive an emailed report of their answers for their own records.

After the survey had been open for thirty days, I closed the survey link to any additional responses. As part of the survey, there were several instances when I allowed participants to add any optional, additional comments or thoughts regarding specific questions. Creswell (2014) notes that researchers should plan to develop an *interview protocol* they follow at each and every interview, to make sure steps are not missed and that the information gathering remains the same from interview to interview. A survey easily creates the conditions necessary for phrasing questions the same way for each participant. Creswell also recommends researchers keep a log for keeping records for analysis (Creswell, 2014, p. 244). The survey site used kept record of all participant answers so I could analyze the results and and make inferences and correlations based on the data.

Questions in the survey included demographic information from survey participants across the state, a section participants were to rate to indicate how strongly different factors weighed into the decision to homeschool, and comments on curriculum. Participants were given my contact info so they could contact me with any clarifying questions or additional insights. I heard from several families who participated in the survey, and was able to expound on survey results through phone and email interviews.

**Data Analysis**

Creswell (2014), states that data analysis of qualitative information is like peeling back the layers of an onion, then putting it back together. The intent is to make sense of
the audio and visual (which he calls “text and image data”) and transcribe it in such a way that the data is winnowed down to the necessary components. Creswell states that the very nature of text and image data is so rich, that it is impossible to transcribe every single detail. Therefore, the researchers ability to “winnow” the data—focusing on some parts, and disregarding others—is of paramount importance to the research process. Creswell maintains that a very large difference between quantitative vs. qualitative data gathering is that in qualitative research methods the goal is to “aggregate data into a small number of themes, something like five to seven themes,” (p. 245).

Because I received a rich wealth of data and information from survey participants, it was imperative that I chose those answers and comments that best supported my guiding research question, “What are the primary factors behind the homeschooling movement in Minnesota?” Analyzation of my data began during the survey creation process itself, as I formulated questions that would help guide my research and provide data that would expand on the picture of homeschooling in Minnesota. Creating sections in my survey helped categorize data threads that I was later able to weave together in a computer-based spreadsheet program. Those data threads combined to create data patterns, emerging into a number of themes, as Creswell suggests.

**Summary**

Chapter three explained the research methods I chose to employ as I sought to answer the question “What are the primary motivations for Minnesota parents choosing to homeschool?” Through the use of a qualitative research approach, utilizing a custom-created online survey, as well as phone and email interviews, I gained insight into my guiding question, and discovered a whole tapestry of reasons families in Minnesota
choose to homeschool their children. Chapter four will look, in-depth, at the data patterns seen from the results of the survey and I gleaned through the use of the phenomenological approach I took with my research design and methods.
CHAPTER 4

Results and Discussion

Introduction and Overview

Within this chapter, I will discuss the results of my research into the question, “What are the primary motivations for Minnesota parents choosing to homeschool?” The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that play a part in the decision to homeschool in Minnesota as identified by home educators. This chapter will discuss the results of the survey I sent out to homeschool groups across the state and my findings in relation to my guiding research question.

The first part of this chapter will look at the demographics and family structure of the survey participants. All participants in my survey were Minnesota-based, but family structures, homeschooling ages, religious affiliation, and years spent homeschooling varied widely. This section puts in perspective the diversity found in this sample population as part of the broader-homeschooling population in Minnesota.

The second part of this chapter will look at the varied considerations and reasons this sample-population of families in Minnesota chooses to homeschool. I asked a series of twelve questions and asked respondents to rate each of those items on a scale of how high/low those particular questions factored in their decision to homeschool. Having each family that participated in the survey answer the series of twelve questions gave me a broader picture of how many facets are involved in each family’s decision to homeschool, before ultimately asking each respondent to choose the one primary factor.
Each respondent selected (or typed out) a primary reason for choosing to home educate, and many shared additional comments. The results of this section were varied and encompassed a whole spectrum of reasons that answered the question, “What are the primary motivations for Minnesota parents choosing to homeschool?”

The third part of this chapter will look at curriculum choices. Participants were asked to share the main criteria they use when choosing curriculum for use in their home studies. Many respondents gave additional comments on why those curriculum choices best matched their family’s needs and homeschooling philosophy, and provided an intimate glimpse into the structure of individuals’ homeschool units.

By looking at the data surrounding the demographics and family structure of survey participants, along with each family’s specific considerations when determining their main reasons for homeschooling, followed by a glimpse into the home-life of individual homeschool families, readers of this thesis will gain a clearer picture of the many facets and threads that weave together the diverse population of homeschooling families across the state of Minnesota.

**Homeschooling Survey**

**Number of responses.** After completing my survey, I contacted local and statewide associations and reached out to over 50 homeschool groups and co-ops across the state. I was not partial in my invitations or requests. I sent emails to multiple faith-based groups (Christian, Jewish, Muslim, etc.) and emails to groups that specified themselves specifically as secular. I reached out to niche populations based on common interests, book clubs, location, educational philosophies, etc. I reached out to state and city-wide associations. I approached different Facebook and social media groups to see if
they would list the link to my survey to their members. My survey was open for the entire month of April, 2019, and at the end of that time, I received responses from over 120 homeschool families across the state.

**Special considerations.** When participants accessed the survey for this research, there were three questions required to complete the survey (Appendix C). The first required answer was to the question “Do you agree to the terms of this survey?” Participants had to answer yes with an electronic email signature to continue on to the rest of the survey. The second required answer was to the question “Do you live in Minnesota?” All participants in the study had to confirm that they lived in the state of Minnesota for their answers to be validated in the survey. The third required question was “Please choose which one answer best summarizes your primary reason for homeschooling?” Participants were given a list of thirteen options to choose from, with an additional option labeled “other.” If they elected to choose “other,” they were then prompted to write in their own answer. The remaining twenty-four additional survey questions were optional.

**Setting and Participants.** As part of the homeschool survey I conducted, I asked homeschooling families to confirm they live in Minnesota (this question required an answer in the affirmative to continue on to the rest of the survey); to specify what county they live in; which family member is primarily responsible for teaching and educating in the home; the highest level of education attained by adults within the home; ethnicity; whether the family considered themselves to be religious or faith-based; number of children and how many children are homeschooled within each home; number of years participants had been homeschooling at the time of the survey; the grades of students; and
whether or not the family unit has felt push-back or encountered difficulty from their school district regarding their decision to homeschool.

**Represented counties in Minnesota.** The first question participating families were met with in the survey was, “Do you live in the state of Minnesota?” This question required a “yes” response in order to continue on to the rest of the survey. Of my survey respondents, all affirmed that they live and homeschool in the state of Minnesota.

Within the state of Minnesota, there are 87 different counties (Appendix D). After emailing support groups and homeschool co-ops around the state of Minnesota, I received responses from families representing 26 different counties across the state (Appendix E).

Stearns County was my most represented county, with 28.2% of my survey population listing it as their county of residence. According to the most recent estimates of the Minnesota State Demographic Center (2018), Stearns County is the 7th most populated county in Minnesota, and it encompasses the city of St. Cloud (Minnesota’s 10th largest city).

The second most represented county in my survey was Hennepin County, representing 21.4% of my respondents. Hennepin County has the highest population of all counties in the state of Minnesota, and it encompasses the city of Minneapolis.

Anoka County was the third most represented county in my survey and represented 10.3% of my respondents. Anoka county is the 4th most populated county in the state of Minnesota.

**Ethnicity.** The majority of the survey sample population (93.3%) listed their family ethnicity as “white” (Appendix F). The remaining 6.4% of respondents specified
Hispanic/Latino, Asian or Asian American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and/or a mix of ethnicities.

**Primary home-educator.** When asked which family member was the primary educator in the home, an overwhelming majority of 97.5% of all survey participants listed “mother” as their answer (Appendix G).

The less common answers were “father” as their primary home educator (1.7% of the survey population); “both parents equally” as the primary home educator (1.7% of the survey population); and two typed responses in the “other” field, each representing 0.8% of the survey population. The two typed in responses included “mother in a two mom family” as the primary home educator and “father helps with different classes on different days.”

**Highest level of parental education.** According to the sample population of my survey, the parents/guardians of homeschool families are highly educated (Appendix H). When asked about the education achieved by the parents or guardians in the home, the majority of responses, representing 49.2% of the survey population, stated that a bachelor's degree was the highest level of education earned. Master’s level achievement was the next highly represented level of education earned, representing 27.9% of the survey population. An education at a vocational or technical college level represented 17.2% of households, and a high school level of education represented 4.9% of families. Only 0.8% of respondents listed less than high school as the highest level of education achieved by parents in the home (it is interesting to note that an education of less than high school was the case in only instances where families elected to home educate because of chronic health issues on the part of the child).
Years spent homeschooling. I asked my survey participants how long they had been homeschooling to date. I found my results on number of years spent homeschooling represented a large range, but that the survey participants, in general, were not new to the art of homeschooling, and had been homeschooling their families for several years at the time of the survey (Appendix I).

The majority of my homeschool population (32%) reported having homeschooled their children for the past 4-7 years. The next most common answer was 1-3 years, which characterized 27% of the survey population. Families who reported having homeschooled their children for 10 years or more characterized 21.3% of the survey population. While 8-10 years of homeschooling and less than 1 year of homeschooling characterized 11.5% and 8.2% of the survey population, respectively.

Family size. When asked how many minors each survey participant was the parent or guardian for, families with 1, 2, 3, and 4 children in the home characterized 84.3% of the survey population (Appendix J). The most represented family-size in the survey population were families with three minors in the home, which comprised 27.3% of the survey population, the highest percentage in family-size represented in this survey. The second-most represented family size seen in this survey were families with two minors in the home, which described 22.3% of the survey population. The third-most represented family size were families with four minors, which characterized 19% of the survey population. Other family-sizes represented in the survey were families with one, five, six, seven, eight, and nine minors in the home, which described a combined 13.3% of the total survey population.
Homeschool-population size. After asking how many minors lived within the households of the survey participants, a separate set of data needed to be acquired as to how many of the minors within each of the represented homes were homeschooled. Not all families homeschool all their children, and some minors which are accounted for in family size are yet too young to be included in the homeschool data (i.e. infants and toddlers).

The results of the survey show that 369 minors were represented in the homes of the families that completed this survey, and of those, 274 were homeschooled (Appendix K). Whereas the most represented family-size in this survey included 1, 2, 3, and 4 minors (Appendix J), the most represented amount of children homeschooled was also 1, 2, 3, and 4 minors, but in a different order (Appendix K). The majority of the survey population homeschooled only one child, and characterized 30.3% of the survey population; the second-most represented amount of minors homeschooled in the home was two children, characterizing 28.6% of the survey population; while three children homeschooled in the home characterized 24.6% of the survey population; and four children homeschooled characterized 10.7% of the survey population. Homes where five, six, and seven children were homeschooled represented a combined total of 4.1% of the survey population.

Grade level of students. The next question asked was what grades the homeschooled students of the survey families were in (Appendix L). The majority of homeschooled students represented in this survey (29.4%) would be considered kindergarteners if they were enrolled in the traditional school setting. The second most
represented grade-level population within this survey was fourth grade (24.4%), and third most represented grade-level population was first grade (21.8%).

If I divided my survey population into elementary-aged homeschool students and middle/high school-aged students, more elementary-aged students were represented in the survey. I considered grades kindergarten through sixth grade as the survey’s elementary population, and those students made up 176 of the reported population. I considered grades seventh through twelfth as the survey’s middle and high school population, and those students made up 94 of the reported population.

Of the 274 reported homeschooled students in the previous question, 270 were represented in this grade-level question. The four-student difference in the reported totals is either accounted for by the instance of twins (families with twins, or students in the same grade-level, checked the appropriate grade-level box for those students only one time; see Appendix C for survey question wording), or the fact that more families answered the question regarding homeschool population size than the question on grade-levels of their students. In either instance, the number of reported homeschooled students in this survey differed from the number of grade-levels represented by only four students.

**Religious background.** When asked if they considered their family to be religious or faith-based, 71.3% of survey respondents answered in the affirmative; 23.8% answered that they were not religious or faith-based; and 4.9% answered that they were unsure (Appendix M).

**Reported difficulty with state or school districts.** When asked if they had any difficulty with their state or school district over their choice to homeschool, an overwhelming majority of survey respondents, 95.1%, answered that “No,” they had not...
had any difficulty (Appendix N). 1.6% of the survey population answered that, “Yes,” they had encountered difficulty, and the remaining percentage of respondents, 3.3%, selected “Other” and wrote in their specific comments. Some responses included being lied to by their school or district; the reaction of defensiveness on the part of the school district; or no direct interference, but a pervasive “feel” of being judged.

In the comments section for this portion of the survey, one parent wrote that a principal told them it was not legal to homeschool a child with special needs. Another parent explained that the school was very unhappy when the family pulled their child out, and school personnel took it personally. However, years later, they said that individuals in the school saw how well the homeschooled child was doing and recognized that it was the best choice for that child. This parent summed up the encounter by saying, “They did not directly try to interfere with the process itself. Just felt defensive about the choice.” A third family explained that they had not encountered any specific issues with their state or school district, but that in their 10+ years of homeschooling, there had always been the feeling “of Big Brother looking over our shoulder and threatening to take away parental rights.” And another respondent stated that the intention to homeschool in Minnesota does not need to be made known until the child reaches seven years of age, and as a parent homeschooling a kindergarten student, their family had not needed to make any of their intentions known and had therefore not encountered any feedback as of yet.

The results to this portion of the survey show that the majority of families have not had any trouble with their decision to homeschool in the state of Minnesota, with a small population reporting instances of push-back or shame or difficulty in regards to relations with the public school or district.
Reasons for homeschooling. After answering basic family and demographic information in the previous portion of my online homeschooling survey (Appendix C), participants were asked to rate a series of questions regarding the considerations that weighed into their decision to homeschool (Appendix O). This section of the survey asked parents to rate different considerations on a scale of 0-4, based on how much those items factored into their homeschooling decision. The question was framed in this way, “How important were the following considerations in making the decision to homeschool your child?” and included these items:

- A desire to provide religious/faith-based instruction
- Concerns about school environment, such as safety, drugs, bullying, or negative peer pressure in the traditional school setting
- Dissatisfaction with the academic instruction of other schools
- A desire to provide a nontraditional approach to your child’s education
- The flexibility homeschool allows
- A desire to spend more time with your children or as a family
- A desire to personalize instruction for your child
- The gifted and talentedness of your child
- The physical or mental limitations of your child
- Chronic sickness, illness, or hospital visits in the family
- Financial or monetary reasons

The above list was inspired by reasons found in the literature review portion of this thesis discussed in chapter two. Survey respondents could choose the option of 0 as an answer (which indicated that a particular item was not an important factor in their choice to
homeschool), up to a response of 4 (which indicated that a particular item was an extremely important factor in their choice to homeschool). Answers could range anywhere from 1-3 in between, as well, depending on the level of importance to each particular survey respondent.

Highest rated factors to homeschool. Of the twelve items I asked survey participants to rate (Appendix O), the highest ranked factors families took into account when choosing to homeschool their families, listed in order of the percentage of survey respondents who marked these items with a 4:

- A desire to spend more time with your children or as a family (71.3%)
- A desire to personalize instruction for your child (69.7%)
- A desire to provide moral instruction and instill character values (54.9%)
- Concerns about school environment, such as safety, drugs, bullying, or negative peer pressure in the traditional school setting (46.7%)

(It is important to note, that respondents could mark any combination of these items with a 0-4 rating, but in the next session we will look at which answer each respondent chose as their primary reason for homeschooling)

Primary reason to homeschool as seen in the survey results. After rating the level of importance regarding each of the twelve different survey items listed above (and seen in Appendix O), survey participants were then asked to choose the one primary reason of those twelve that was their most influential reason to enter into homeschooling (or write in their own). The survey was set so that participants were only able to choose one answer for this question (rather than multiple). The results were varied, diverse and visually stunning when entered into a graphic depiction (Appendix P). No single
“obvious” reason outweighed all others as to why Minnesota families choose to homeschool their children. Instead, this study uncovered a mosaic of reasons.

15.6% of respondents cited “personalized instruction” as their primary reason for homeschooling, and another 15.6% chose “religious/faith-based instruction” as their primary reason. The third and fourth most often cited reason for homeschooling, as measured by this survey, included 12.3% of respondents who cited “a desire for a non-traditional approach to education” as their primary reason for homeschooling, and another 12.3% of respondents citing “concerns about negative school environment” as their primary reason.

Reasons participants wrote under the “other” category included: a combination of chronic, medical conditions along with physical/mental issues; personalized instruction due to physical and mental needs; concern for food allergies/unsafe environments; homeschooling being a better fit than traditional public schooling; changing reasons each year; children asking to be homeschooled; and a more play-based approach to schooling.

Several of the survey participants wrote in additional notes and comments regarding their main reasons for homeschooling. One parent wrote that the school had been restraining their autistic child and the parents did not want their child (who is gifted, twice exceptional) injured. This parent said that when they made the switch from public school to homeschool, they found that their child did better learning at home, 1:1. This is just one such example from multiple comments received.

Many participants wrote that summing up their main reason for homeschooling was a hard exercise, if not impossible. One parent commented, “The primary reason changes a bit each year…” while another parent wrote, “The reasons we homeschool are
specific to each child.” A third parent wrote that it was hard to choose just one answer, because “there are many primary reasons, each one so very valuable and crucial to the decision [to homeschool].”

Other parents commented that they had initially entered into homeschooling for one reason, but that initial reason morphed or changed as time went on. For example, one parent wrote,

“My main reason for starting to homeschool my children was [because of] religious reasons. However, it has become SO much more than that! I love how my children have relationships with each other, how they have friends of different ages, how they can think outside the box, how they have freedom to choose topics they learn about, etc. Since we spend all day together, our family is very close. I love that!”

A similar statement came from another parent who said, “There are many reasons we chose to homeschool, not just one, but being able to give our children a customized education in a way that aligns with our faith is at the top of the list.”

**Curriculum choice.** Near the end of the survey, I asked participants what they look for most when choosing curricula for their family’s needs. Participants could select as many criteria options as were applicable to their family (Appendix Q). “Curriculum materials that hold their child’s interest” was the most often selected criterion, representing 71.1% of survey respondents. 53.7% of respondents said they choose their curriculum based on ease of use. 41.3% said choosing curriculum with minimal lesson planning was an important factor. Literature-based curricula, and curricula with hands-on activities, were both selected by 40.5% of the survey population. 32.2% of survey
participants chose Biblical content as part of their main criteria when choosing homeschool resources. And 26.4% of the survey population said that the visual appeal of curricula played an important role regarding their curriculum choice.

After asking about the criteria parents used when choosing curriculum resources for their family, I asked survey participants to write in the best curriculum they have used and why they consider it the best for their family. Some families had specific curriculums they listed as their favorite, others had a complete “puzzle-piecing” of resources they used and loved, and still others didn’t use any type of curriculum at all. Regarding the “best” type of curriculum they’ve encountered, one parent wrote, “What?!?! Way too hard to answer! It varies by age group and subject…” The majority of survey participants listed one or more specific curriculum titles they loved based on their children’s needs and learning styles. One parent wrote, “We don’t use a specific curriculum. We combine a few to tailor our daughter’s education to meet our specific educational goals.” And some parents wrote that they don’t use any formal curriculum at all, instead, opting to use life as their learning-base. One parent wrote, “The world is our curriculum! It is ever-changing and always present. We are never in school and always in school.”

**Conclusion to the survey results.** Minnesota is a state rich in its vivid educational diversity. The reasons for homeschooling that survey participants listed were varied and, through comments I received, it became clear that those reasons have movement and growth over time.

One homeschool parent wrote, “After 20 years home educating my children, I would like to say that my reasons for doing so have changed over the years.” Just as families grow and mature and change, so too, it seems, the reasons for homeschooling
develop and expand to accommodate the needs of each family member during the particular season they are in.
CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Introduction to the Conclusion

This thesis seeks to explore the guiding question, “What are the primary motivations for Minnesota parents choosing to homeschool?” After the study of literature on the topic of homeschooling in chapter two, setting up study methods in chapter three, and conducting and reporting on my research in chapter four, chapter five will conclude this study.

This chapter seeks to discuss what I, as a researcher and writer, have learned from the results of this study. This chapter will explore correlations between study results and those of the literature review in chapter two, take into account special considerations regarding the results of the study and its findings, and make recommendations based on the findings.

Results

After receiving over 120 survey responses from across the state, and reading through the diverse answers and comments from respondents, a picture began to form in my mind as an answer to the question, “What are the primary motivations for Minnesota parents choosing to homeschool?” Rather than a representation of static data and graphs, the heartfelt replies from respondents formed more of a tapestry, full of color and life and love, built up over time. Asking survey participants to pick one specific, primary reason for homeschooling seemed to be the equivalent of me asking them to pick one thread
from the overall tapestry and call it the most important. In most families represented by this survey, several components made up the motivation and reasons for parents choosing to homeschool their children. Each family had a unique set of needs, circumstances and desired outcomes. With its flexibility, the ability to choose from a wide variety of resources and curriculum-types, and the ability to personalize instruction, homeschooling has been the answer for many families in Minnesota.

**My Impressions.** Throughout this study, I was confronted with many new ideas and discovered a history that, prior to now, I had not been exposed to. Some of the things that struck me most were the challenge it had been for parents to choose their main, primary reason for homeschooling in the survey, the interconnectedness of homeschool families, and the humbling experience that this study has been.

**Challenges.** I did not realize the challenge I was ultimately setting myself up for when I first formulated the guiding question to my study, “What are the primary motivations for Minnesota parents choosing to homeschool?” I thought it would be relatively easy for each family to pinpoint their main reason for choosing to homeschool, and that I could compare the data-points. However, a large portion of survey respondents wrote to me and said that it was nearly impossible to choose just one reason. One parent commented, “It's hard to pick just one [main reason], because in many ways, so many are equally important.”

Limiting parents to choose just one primary reason for homeschooling may miss the mark. As the Coalition for Responsible Home Education writes, “If there is one thing that can be said about parental motivations for homeschooling, it is that they are anything but monolithic” (CRHE, 2013-2017a). While many parents do have an initial inkling as
to why they first begin looking into homeschool, as I did with my son who wasn’t being challenged enough in the area of reading, those reasons seem to morph and grow and weave and get patched over until they become so intertwined it is impossible to see where one reason ends and another reason begins. One comment that particularly struck me came from a parent who wrote about how their main reason for homeschooling grew to include so many more of the very reasons that have been discussed and explored in this thesis. He/she wrote,

“My main reason for starting to homeschool my children was religious reasons. However, it has become SO much more than that! I love how my children have relationships with each other, how they have friends of different ages, how they can think outside the box, how they have freedom to choose topics they learn about, etc. Since we spent all day together, our family is very close. I love that!”

This sentiment is a great portrayal of what I heard from several parents—that there were many reasons for why they first entered into homeschooling, and that they are still continuing to discover reasons for homeschooling even while they are already immersed in the homeschool experience.

**Humbling experience.** It was a humbling experience to reach out to groups I did not know; ask them to help me—a person they’ve never met before—with my survey; and watch results begin to pour in and to hear stories and anecdotes from the home worlds of people I had not previously known. The families that participated in this survey allowed me an intimate glimpse into their lives, and I am richer because of that experience, and so thankful for their input and candor.
Interconnectedness. Another thing that struck me, after reaching out to over fifty different homeschool groups and co-ops across the state, was the interconnectedness and networking that was present between homeschool groups. It became apparent that parents don’t have to homeschool alone. Despite having different reasons for homeschooling, families across the state have a common bond in the schooling choice they have made for their families. There were several instances when I would contact the touchpoint person of a co-op, and I would hear back from them that they had already seen my survey listed on one or more of the homeschool pages they frequent.

One of my favorite “small world stories” occurred after I had spoken to a neighbor of mine who homeschooled. She emailed me to let me know that she had taken the survey, and offered to pass the link on to her homeschool co-op. I told her that it would be wonderful if she could share the link. Around the same time, I had attended an interest-based lecture in the metro area, and made some acquaintances. One person I had the privilege of meeting was a mother who homeschooled. I asked her if she would be interested in taking a survey on homeschooling, and she told me that she had just seen a link to my survey that afternoon! We discovered that my neighbor was a friend of both of ours, and just like that, we had a common bond. Small world stories like this would pop up often, much to my surprise and delight. For a month, while the survey was open, I had the chance to taste the interconnectedness that homeschool families across the state share, and it was a wonderful experience.

My homeschooling experience. As I conducted my research, I came across a quote by Weldon (2010), “If learning is imposed by hours of worksheets or computer curricula, children are separated from rich stimuli that inspire them to connect ideas and
to develop meaningful competence beyond test readiness” (p. 1). After researching all the different ways homeschool families piece together curriculum, socialization, and interest-based experiences, I now realize that my experience of homeschooling as a youth, with a 100% online computer curriculum, is not the experience of every homeschooler. Of course, technology and computer-based programs exist, and are available to many homeschooling families, however, after reading about learning styles and all the puzzle pieces families can employ in their homeschool experience, I began to realize that the timing and location and options available when I was in school do not equal what families of today have at their disposal. Instead, as a result, my family launched into what Bauer (2018) refers to as “home-organized schooling.” According to Bauer (2018),

“Home-organized schooling happens when parents register as homeschoolers, but use that freedom to piece together classes that actually fit the child. These might include individual classes taken in the local public school...online classes, individual tutorials, and community college classes. (p. 184)

Home organized schooling combined the best of the educational landscapes I had at my disposal while living out-of-state, and my family tailor-made a plan that worked for me. Today, Minnesota-based homeschooling families have a myriad resources and socialization opportunities available to them, and the options for customizing homeschooling to suite the needs of individual families seems to be almost endless.

And for my son? I am pleased to say that when we discussed our son’s accelerated reading with the upper administration of his school, they sought to make changes and implement strategies right away. Because of their responsiveness, we did not feel the need to begin full-time home educating, but rather, we flexed the system in a way
that worked for us. My son’s school is working one-on-one with him, and I supplement his reading at home in the evenings and on weekends. As Bauer (2018) states, the most straightforward way to flex school to fit one’s child is to “Pick the subject that most needs changing, and teach it yourself” (p. 139). My son is learning a great deal at school, but he is also learning a great deal a home, as well.

**Correlations with the Literature Review.** Many of the results and responses I received during the survey corresponded with much of the literature reviewed in chapter two. There were two main items that struck me the most about the results I received in relation to the literature review. First, almost all of the answers and comments I received regarding the reasons families homeschool fit under the categories I had researched and written about in chapter two, which was encouraging. Second, after reading through the rationale behind each comment I received, I realized that, in hindsight, I could have laid out my categories in chapter two a bit differently. For example, chapter two currently has “Learning Styles” as a subset to “Academic Learning,” but the topic of learning styles was cited so frequently by those parent who chose to add comments in the survey, that I now believe it could have been its own category. Also, a term that came up time and time again when communicating with parents was that of “personalized instruction.” I used this term in the survey, when I asked how high parents would rate the desire to “personalize instruction” for their children. In my mind, this concept fit in well in relation to the sections on “Flexibility,” “Learning Styles,” and “A Unique Approach to Education.” However, the term “personalized instruction” was used so frequently in the comments I received from parents, that I now believe I could have had a whole section devoted to “Personalized Instruction” in the literature review. Just as different families
have different reasons for homeschooling that overlap with one another, so too did the concept of “personalized instruction” overlap with so many of the categories already mentioned that I had not initially seen the need to separate it into its own category in the literature review.

As this thesis looks into correlations between the reasons families choose to homeschool as found in the literature review, as well as those reasons found in my research, a common pattern will appear in that several of the survey comments could be placed under multiple categories, rather than just one.

**School environment.** In the survey I conducted for this research, 78.7% of the survey population said that concerns about the school environment, including safety, drugs, bullying, or negative peer pressure factored in as an important or extremely important reason in their decision to homeschool (Appendix O), with 12.3% of the survey population citing it as their primary reason (Appendix P). It is interesting to compare the results of this thesis survey population to the 2016 National Center for Educational Statistics survey, taken during the 2015–16 school year (Appendix B). In the NCES survey, 80% of homeschool families represented by the survey said that their concern over the environment of other schools was a factor in the decision to homeschool their child, and 35% of families cited these concerns over school environment as their primary reason for choosing to home educate (McQuiggan, Megra, & Grady, 2017). The 80% of families who had concerns about school environment in the NCES survey is hardly dissimilar to my own survey result of 78.7% of families.

One parent told me that their oldest two children had been bullied in school; another parent explained that they were dissatisfied with the disciplinary practices in the
elementary school their child was in; and I heard from another parent that his/her oldest child was “just having a hard time in school.” That same parent wrote, “after about a half of a year of crying every night we decided to try homeschooling.”

Another family described their dissatisfaction with the class sizes in Minnesota schools. They wrote, “We moved from out of state and the class sizes are much larger [in Minnesota]. My kids went from 15 to 34 in a class.”

**Academic reasons.** Within my thesis survey, 67.2% chose “a dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools” as an important or very important reason for their family choosing to homeschool (Appendix O), with 6.6% of the survey population citing it as their **primary** reason (Appendix P). In the NCES survey, 61% of homeschool families said that dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools was a factor in the decision to homeschool their child, and 17% of families cited these concerns over school environment as their **primary** reason for choosing to home educate (McQuiggan, Megra, & Grady, 2017).

One parent wrote that his/her main reason for homeschooling came down to academic testing:

> “Ultimately, it came down to [the fact] that schools are judged by how many tests they administer and how the children perform on said tests. Not by how many art, music, recess [opportunities are] offered or how many science experiments the students get to do. Tests don’t prepare our children for a future where they are creative participants, instead they’re obedient drones.”
I also heard concerns from parents regarding school “rigidity;” the desire for more personalized academic instruction; and the need for their children to be able to move around. For example, one parent explained:

“I chose the nontraditional option, because a huge reason we decided to homeschool is [that] I don't believe the current school situation is ideal. The thought of my 5 year old boy sitting all day in kindergarten just seemed like torture to him. [Homeschooling] has allowed him to still be a child, play so much, etc. School "work" can be done in 30 minutes for him.”

Another parent wrote about the need for their child to have more movement, as well:

“I have a son with a May birthday who, when he was eligible for kindergarten, was academically and socially ready for kindergarten but would not have been able to sit still or handle being in a classroom all day everyday. Had kindergarten still been half days we likely would have sent him to public school.”

In addition to the above mentioned factors, some parents told me that they had been licensed educators before homeschooling. One such parent wrote, “In those years I came to recognize repeatedly how much wasted time there is in schools.” Another public school educator who turned to homeschooling wrote, “Too often, well behaved, regular students are being neglected because teachers are too busy dealing with behavioral issues and students who perform under grade level.” And I heard from another parent, “It didn’t take long for my kids to know the more they know the more busy work they get.”

A parent of a homeschooled senior wrote, regarding their decision to homeschool, “We started homeschooling after a bad public school experience with my oldest and we were not selected for a GT lottery school. [Homeschooling] turned out to be a great fit or
my kids and our family. No regrets. My senior has a 4.0 PSEO GPA and an ACT 34 and will be heading to college in the fall.”

**Flexibility.** A good indicator of many of the comments I heard regarding homeschool flexibility was summed up by one parent: “I want my children to have time to explore their own interests at their own pace, and homeschooling provides that.” Flexibility, in many ways, allows for many of the other primary factors parents selected for homeschooling, such as quality time, personalized instruction, and health-related reasons.

One parent wrote, “...after my two oldest started school, I quickly found out how much of a fight it was to get them up and ready and then after school to spend hours on homework, [this] meant I missed my kids! We had no time for quality time!” Quality time was the main reason for homeschooling for 9% of the thesis survey population (Appendix P), and the flexibility of homeschool can, in many instances, create the opportunity to have those quality time moments.

Regarding quality time, one parent I spoke with, whose husband works in the field of medicine, said that her husband’s hours are non-traditional, often putting him at work during evenings and nights. Homeschooling has allowed their family the flexibility to see one another, and for the husband to have an active part in his children’s lives and education. As I considered the parents that have alternate or unique scheduling in their professions—doctors/nurses who work late into the night, parents who travel regularly for work, restaurant evening shifts, truck drivers, parents who hold professions where they are consistently on call, those who work the third-shift, etc—the flexibility that homeschool affords becomes quickly apparent. One parent, who had just started their
homeschooling journey, wrote, “[We are] hoping to be able to spend more time as a family and school more fluidly with our family schedules.”

The natural flexibility of homeschool allows for more time spent pursuing student interests and passions. One parent wrote, “My son is training in performing arts and often appears in shows. Homeschooling allows him to keep late hours and pursue his passion.”

Some parents mentioned dissatisfaction with the structure of the academic system specifically because of its lack of flexibility. One parent explained,

“I do feel currently homeschool is a privilege not afforded to all kids, even though many kids would thrive with more flexible schedules and child-led learning. I support public schooling fully, but I do very much wish they were more flexible so all kids were being afforded the opportunities to learn in the way that best fits them. In a more flexible school system I think we would have at least some of our kids in [public] school.”

**Religious and faith-based.** The thesis survey results on religious and faith-based reasons for homeschooling correlated so closely with the results of the NCES 2016 survey that it only differed by less than one percent. The desire to provide “religious and faith-based” instruction was chosen by 15.6% of my thesis survey respondents as their primary reason for homeschooling (Appendix P), while the 2016 NCES survey cited “religious” instruction as the primary reason by 16% of their survey population (Appendix B).

The amount of respondents who chose a desire to provide “religious and faith-based instruction” as an important factor in their decision to homeschool also corresponded closely to the results of the NCES 2016 survey. In my thesis survey, 48.4%
of parents chose a desire to provide “religious and faith-based instruction” as an important or extremely important reason to homeschool (Appendix O), while in the NCES 2016 survey it was selected by 51% of respondents.

One parent told me, “There are many reasons we chose to homeschool, not just one, but being able to give our children a customized education in a way that aligns with our faith is at the top of the list.” Another parent explained, “I believe God gave me these children and therefore equipped me to teach them everything pertaining to life and godliness. It is my desire to fulfill that duty to the best of my ability.” And a third parent summed up their primary reason for homeschooling by stating, “It was simple, I prayed and God told me to homeschool. He hasn’t released me from this choice, so I continue each year...and each year I experience more joy and happiness from it!”

According to the results of the thesis survey, 32.2% of respondents stated that Biblical content was one of the main criteria they looked at when choosing homeschool curricula, and 6.6% stated that “religious content of another manner” was one of their main criteria (Appendix Q).

In the literature review, there were several worldview-related reasons some families choose to homeschool: morality, religious and faith-based reasons, and the debate on humanism, evolution and origins. Of the 48.4 families who chose a desire to provide “religious and faith-based instruction” as an important or extremely important reason to homeschool, several survey respondents made additional comments in the survey about the importance of having “faith-based” curriculum, “sound, biblical content” in their curriculum, and curriculum with a “biblical worldview,” while 13.2% of
survey respondents wrote that they specifically choose curricula that has “no biblical or religious content” (Appendix Q).

**Morality.** Morality was a difficult category to research and accurately portray in the literature review in chapter two because so often the idea of morals and values are synonymous with religious or faith-based teachings, and based on that fact, I included morality and values under “Worldview Differences.” In regards to teaching morals, one parent wrote, “The religious and moral instruction are completely intertwined in our schooling. You cannot have a faith without actions behind it.”

However, it should be noted that a percentage of the survey population identified as “non-religious” or secular, and they also commented that teaching morals and values to their children was a high priority in their homeschool endeavors. For example, one parent wrote,

“We homeschool because we don’t believe our government provides the best resources for the mass at all times. While the public school is sufficient to teach the majority most things we believe we can provide strong moral guidance and personalized education better than the current educational system can” (emphasis added by the parent commenter).

**Unique approach to education.** This category was rated as one of the top four reasons for homeschooling within the survey results, with 12.3% of families choosing it as their primary reason. One parent wrote,

We are able to offer a bilingual education [for our son], which would not be possible if he were in school. It is important for us that we keep our culture as part of [our] son’s daily life, which means maintaining complete fluency in his/our
native language. We also travel often, which offers our son opportunities for learning that would be missed otherwise. Another major reasoning for us is that learning is not just sitting at a desk all day. Learning happens everywhere. Being home allows him to learn things like cooking, grocery shopping, money exchange in a natural environment, social interactions in natural settings with people of all ages. He can be involved in things that he is passionate about such as exploring in nature and helping at a local farm.”

**Health related.** 9.8% of survey participants rated “Chronic sickness, illness, or hospital visits in the family” as an important or extremely important reason to homeschool (Appendix O), while 1.6% rated it as their primary reason for homeschooling. The term “health” can encompass so many things, and I received comments from parents regarding mental health, physical health, anxiety, food allergies, etc.

One parent wrote about their daughter’s health, and how it has been better now that she homeschools:

“I wanted my daughter to have a real childhood. Her life consisted of getting up for school, school, therapy, appointments, homework, at home medical care, and bedtime. There was literally no time just to play, spend time as a family or go somewhere to dinner. It was very restrictive and limiting…her health needs began to supersede what the school could provide in adequate care for her. She has been much healthier at home. Along the way there have been many more benefits we continue to see with homeschooling such as working around her healthcare needs, being flexible with appointments and therapies, being very close as a family,
individualizing her differentiated education, make many close friends she will have and grow with throughout her teen years, and much more.”

Another parent wrote that both of their children had been dealing with health issues that would have prevented them from attending mainstream school in a regular manner, and would have potentially caused issues with the school district regarding truancy. That same parent wrote, “With homeschooling, our children have been able to meet educational goals, and stay on target for their grades, regardless of these [health] issues. Homeschooling has been a wonderful fit for our family.”

I also heard from a parent that his/her main reason for homeschooling was to “provide a safe place for learning to occur without anxiety due to environmental and food allergies.”

And another parent wrote that they homeschooled for a time while his/her son was sick, but they were unable to continue because of other factors:

“My son was ill for his 3rd grade year, and we home schooled to work around the times he was feeling poorly. He excelled that year even though he was feeling poorly, so we made a good choice. I enjoyed being able to watch him grow and soak up the knowledge of subjects I was able to teach him. If we didn't depend on my income so greatly, my son and I both would have loved to continue to home schooling.”

**Learning styles.** The literature review in chapter two touched on the concept of learning styles (Jasmine, 1996; LeFever, 2004; Gardner, as cited by Singleton, 2018). As I conducted the research for this thesis, I became more aware of the large role learning styles play in parents’ curriculum choice when I asked survey participants to outline the best curriculum they have used since choosing to homeschool. Many parents mentioned
multiple resources or different curriculums that catered to the unique learning styles of their children. Some of the comments regarding learning styles included:

“[The curriculum] fits my son’s learning style.”

“I mix and match curriculum based on each child’s needs.”

“My children each have different learning styles.”

 “[The curriculum we use] caters to all the learning styles my boys have.”

“The reasons we homeschool are specific to each child.”

When choosing curricula to use at home, many homeschool parents first look to the interests or learning styles of their children, then select their resources based on those styles. A parent made the comment, “The reasons we homeschool are specific to each child. We have 2 children in public school and 2 at home. One has medical and some learning difficulties and one has special needs typically defined as mental health and learning disabilities. Yet, both are very skilled in specific learning areas.”

As seen in the survey, 71.9% of parents said that a curriculum that holds their child’s interest is an important factor to them when choosing a curriculum to use at home (Appendix Q).

Limitations of the Study

As I was conducting research, I reached out to groups across the state. Some association and co-op leaders passed my survey info along to their member homeschool families, and some elected not to participate. I heard from some groups that it was policy not to post research in their group forums. As a result, my results depended largely on those individuals and group members who saw a link to my survey and chose to take it. Also, if group participation or word-of-mouth from one homeschooler to another took
place primarily in a particular portion of the state, I may have more representation in some areas of the state than others.

One piece from the literature review that I was unable to compare with my own study results was that of racial protectionism. Ray (2017) writes that the vast majority of research completed on homeschooling in the United States involves the majority ethnic group, White/Anglos. This was also the case in this thesis study, as the majority of participants identified as white (Appendix F). CRHE (2013-2017d) writes, “Despite changing demographics, homeschooling remains disproportionately white. Homeschooled students are as likely as other students to be Hispanic, but are less likely to be black, Asian, Pacific Islander, or other.” I did not receive any comments regarding racism or racial protectionism from any participating families.

Conclusion

It is of particular interest to note that, in many cases, the thesis survey results closely mirrored the percentages of the answers of the NCES 2016 homeschooling survey. In some cases, there was only 1-3% difference between my survey results and those of the NCES 2016 survey (Appendix B). This implies that the NCES survey results on reasons families choose to homeschool, as seen on a national level, are similar to the reasons found at the Minnesota-based level, as well.

It is a difficult endeavor for many families to choose just one reason as their primary reason for homeschooling, as many families wrote in and explained. My thesis survey tabulated four primary reasons that stood out above the others in quantity. The top four reasons thesis participants cited as their primary reason for homeschooling in this study were:
- Religious/Faith-based Instruction
- Personalized Instruction
- Concerns about Negative School Environment
- Desire for a non-Traditional Approach to Education

It is important to note that these four most cited results were not selected by every family who took the survey, but rather, these four result represent the primary reason of the highest majority of participants (Appendix P).

My goal in writing this thesis was to explore the depth and breadth behind Minnesota families decision to homeschool. The families who took my survey are mothers and fathers who are busy people. Most of the families I heard from had one parent dedicated to the schooling of their children, but there were also many cases of families where both parents worked full-time jobs and, with the flexibility homeschooling affords, wove the education of their children throughout their schedules. Throughout the study, I was consistently struck with the fact that the families I encountered were deeply passionate people who work hard on behalf of their children and their families, keeping the good of their children in mind and their ultimate end-goal in sight. For some, the end-goal is happy, balanced children; for others, the end goal is a unique educational experience; and yet for others the end goal is an education rooted in guiding principles and values. As determined in this research, it is difficult to view each family through the lens of just one specific reason for entering into homeschooling, but rather, families’ decisions are made up of a whole tapestry of reasons, woven together to color and fill the daily needs/hopes/desires of each specific family. The response I received from survey participants across the state indicates that the homeschooling population is robust and
alive in Minnesota, and that our state is made richer by its homeschooling community and the carefully cultivated family bonds this community maintains.

**Recommendations for Further Research.** The NCES conducts its homeschooling surveys every four years. In between national studies, I would recommend individual state’s conduct their own state-wide studies. It would be helpful to chart the reasons families choose to homeschool as they appear mapped across the country. Would we find certain patterns across the map? Smaller, more detailed correlations that national level research doesn’t pinpoint? Also of interest would be specific metro-area surveys, in comparison to state-wide surveys. Gaither (2017) writes that people should view the history of homeschool as fifty separate stories to tell. The results of this thesis represented over 120 Minnesota-based families and tells just one story of many.

I would also recommend further research in the specific areas of minority groups and homeschooling to see if the primary reasons minority families choose to homeschool are similar to the results found in the 2016 NCES report (Appendix B; CRHE), or if there are differences.
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APPENDIX A

Percentage of school-age children who were homeschooled, ages 5 through 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through grade 12, by reasons parents gave as important and most important for homeschooling: 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Important Percent</th>
<th>Most Important Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A desire to provide religious instruction</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A desire to provide moral instruction</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A concern about the environment of other schools, such as safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A dissatisfaction with the academic instruction at other schools</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A desire to provide a nontraditional approach to child's education</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>5 !</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child has other special needs</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>‡</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child has a physical or mental health problem</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reasons²</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‡ Reporting standards not met. The coefficient of variation for this estimate is 50 percent or greater.
! Interpret data with caution; coefficient of variation is between 30 and 50 percent.

1 Respondents were instructed to mark all that apply for the “Important” item but could only choose one as “Most important.”

2 Parents homeschool their children for many reasons that are often unique to their family situation. “Other reasons” parents gave for homeschooling include family time, finances, travel, and distance.

NOTE: Homeschooled students are school-age children who receive instruction at home instead of at a public or private school either all or most of the time. Excludes students who were enrolled in public or private school more than 25 hours per week and students who were homeschooled primarily because of temporary illness.


APPENDIX B

Percentage of school-age children who were homeschooled, ages 5 through 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through grade 12, by reasons parents gave as important and most important for homeschooling: 2015–16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Most important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A desire to provide religious instruction</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A desire to provide moral instruction</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A concern about environment of other schools(1)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A desire to provide a nontraditional approach to child’s education</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child has other special needs</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child has a physical or mental health problem</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child has a temporary illness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(\dagger)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reasons(2)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(\dagger\) Reporting standards not met. There were too few cases for a reliable estimate.

\(1\) Respondents could choose more than one reason.

\(2\) Based on the response to the question, “You are concerned about the school environment, such as safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure?”

\(3\) Parents homeschool their children for many reasons that are often unique to their family situation. “Other reasons” parents gave for homeschooling include family time, finances, travel, and a more flexible schedule.

NOTE: Homeschooled students are school-age children who receive instruction at home instead of at a public or private school either all or most of the time. Excludes students who were enrolled in public or private school more than 25 hours per week and students who were homeschooled only because of temporary illness.


APPENDIX C

Homeschooling Survey

Section 1:

This section began with a letter outlining the intent of my survey, and a consent form. After reading through the consent form and providing an electronic signature, participants were prompted to respond to the question:

1. Do you agree to the above terms? By clicking yes, you consent that you are willing to answer the questions to this survey. Yes/No **
   (A YES response was required to continue to the next part of the survey)

Section 2:

2. Do you live in Minnesota: Yes/No **
   (A YES response was required to have the answers they submitted in the survey validated)

3. What county of Minnesota do you live in? (a drop-down menu of all 87 counties in Minnesota was presented)

4. Which family member primarily teaches your children? Check all that apply:
   ____ Mother
   ____ Father
   ____ Both parents equally
   ____ Grandparent
   ____ Other

5. What is the highest level of education attained by the parents/guardians within your household?
   ____ Less than high school
   ____ High school graduate or equivalent
   ____ Vocational/technical or some college
   ____ Bachelor's degree
   ____ Graduate or professional school
6. Please specify your ethnicity:
   White
   Hispanic or Latino
   Black or African American
   Native American or American Indian
   Asian/Pacific Islander
   Other (comments): ______________

7. How many children are you the parent or guardian for and live in your household?
   __________

8. How many children are homeschooled in your household between the ages of 5-17?
   __________

9. Number of years you have been homeschooling at the time of survey:
   Less than 1 year
   1-3 years
   4-7 years
   8-10 years
   More than 10 years

10. What grades would your children be in if they were in traditional school? Please check all that apply (for twins, or students that would be in the same grade, please just check the appropriate box once)
    Kindergarten
    1st Grade
    2nd Grade
    3rd Grade
    4th Grade
    5th Grade
    6th Grade
    7th Grade
    8th Grade
    9th Grade
    10th Grade
    11th Grade
    12th Grade
Appendix C (cont.)

11. Do you consider your family to be religious/faith-based?
   Yes
   No
   Maybe/Not Sure

12. In choosing to homeschool, have you had any difficulties with your state or school district regarding your choice?
   Yes
   No
   Other (comments): ______________

Section 3:

Reasons for Homeschooling
How important were the following considerations in making the decision to homeschool your child?

13. A desire to provide religious/faith-based instruction?
   
<table>
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<tr>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was not an important factor in my choice to homeschool</td>
<td>Was an extremely important factor in my choice to homeschool</td>
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</table>
Appendix C (cont.)

14. A desire to provide moral instruction and instill character values?

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<tr>
<td>Was not an important factor in my choice to homeschool</td>
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<tr>
<td>Was an extremely important factor in my choice to homeschool</td>
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</table>

15. Concerns about school environment, such as safety, drugs, bullying, or negative

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<td>Was not an important factor in my choice to homeschool</td>
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<tr>
<td>Was an extremely important factor in my choice to homeschool</td>
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</table>

16. Dissatisfaction with the academic instruction of other schools?

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<td>Was not an important factor in my choice to homeschool</td>
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<tr>
<td>Was an extremely important factor in my choice to homeschool</td>
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</table>
Appendix C (cont.)

17. 

A desire to provide a nontraditional approach to your child’s education?

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<td>Was not an important factor in my choice to homeschool</td>
<td>Was an extremely important factor in my choice to homeschool</td>
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18. 

The flexibility homeschool allows?

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<td>Was not an important factor in my choice to homeschool</td>
<td>Was an extremely important factor in my choice to homeschool</td>
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19. 

A desire to spend more time with your children or as a family?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was not an important factor in my choice to homeschool</td>
<td>Was an extremely important factor in my choice to homeschool</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C (cont.)

20. A desire to personalize instruction for your child?

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<th>4</th>
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<td>Was not an important factor in my choice to homeschool</td>
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<tr>
<td>Was an extremely important factor in my choice to homeschool</td>
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</table>

21. The gifted and talentedness of your child?

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<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was not an important factor in my choice to homeschool</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was an extremely important factor in my choice to homeschool</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. The physical or mental limitations of your child?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was not an important factor in my choice to homeschool</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was an extremely important factor in my choice to homeschool</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
23.

Please choose which one answer best summarizes your PRIMARY reason for homeschooling:

- Religious/Faith-based instruction
- Moral instruction and character values
- Concerns about negative school environment
- Dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools
- Desire for a non-traditional approach to education
- Flexibility
- More time together as a family
- Physical or mental limitations
- Gifted and/or talented
- Chronic illness/hospital
- Other special needs
- Financial or monetary reasons
- Personalized instruction
- Other (Please Specify): ______________

24. Please choose which one answer best summarizes your PRIMARY reason for homeschooling: **

- Religious/Faith-based instruction
- Moral instruction and character values
- Concerns about negative school environment
- Dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools
- Desire for a non-traditional approach to education
- Flexibility
- More time together as a family
- Physical or mental limitations
- Gifted and/or talented
- Chronic illness/hospital
- Other special needs
- Financial or monetary reasons
- Personalized instruction
- Other (Please Specify): ______________

25. Any additional comments about your reasons for homeschooling? _____________
26. What are the main criteria you use when evaluation homeschool curriculum/programs/resources?
○ Biblical Content
○ Religious content of another manner
○ No Biblical or religious content
○ Visually pleasing
○ Hands-on activities
○ Literature-based
○ Minimal lesson planning
○ Holds my child’s interest
○ Ease of use
○ Other (Please Specify): ______________

27. What is the best curriculum you have used while homeschooling? Why do you consider this the best curriculum for your family? ____________________________

** indicated a field that required a response
## APPENDIX D

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County Name</th>
<th>Total Population, 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aitkin</td>
<td>15,821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anoka</td>
<td>352,674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becker</td>
<td>34,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beltrami</td>
<td>46,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benton</td>
<td>40,128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Stone</td>
<td>5,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Earth</td>
<td>67,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>25,245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlton</td>
<td>35,655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carver</td>
<td>102,858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cass</td>
<td>29,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chippewa</td>
<td>12,045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chisago</td>
<td>55,321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clay</td>
<td>63,789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearwater</td>
<td>8,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>5,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottonwood</td>
<td>11,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crow Wing</td>
<td>64,517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dakota</td>
<td>422,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dodge</td>
<td>20,762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas</td>
<td>37,654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faribault</td>
<td>13,671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fillmore</td>
<td>20,979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freeborn</td>
<td>30,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodhue</td>
<td>46,562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>5,904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hennepin</td>
<td>1,249,512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>18,761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hubbard</td>
<td>21,034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isanti</td>
<td>39,553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itasca</td>
<td>45,346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>9,951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanabec</td>
<td>16,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kandiyohi</td>
<td>42,768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kittson</td>
<td>4,262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koochiching</td>
<td>12,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lac qui Parle</td>
<td>6,687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake</td>
<td>10,531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake of the Woods</td>
<td>3,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Sueur</td>
<td>27,881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>5,709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyon</td>
<td>25,823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McLeod</td>
<td>35,884</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County Name</th>
<th>Total Population, 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mahnomen</td>
<td>5,572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marshall</td>
<td>9,351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>19,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeker</td>
<td>23,155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mille Lacs</td>
<td>25,878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morrison</td>
<td>33,074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mower</td>
<td>39,602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray</td>
<td>8,344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicollet</td>
<td>33,892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobles</td>
<td>21,963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norman</td>
<td>6,601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olmsted</td>
<td>155,849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otter Tail</td>
<td>58,329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennington</td>
<td>14,301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine</td>
<td>29,192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pipestone</td>
<td>9,127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk</td>
<td>31,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pope</td>
<td>10,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramsey</td>
<td>546,317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Lake</td>
<td>4,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redwood</td>
<td>15,278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renville</td>
<td>14,689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>65,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock</td>
<td>9,491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roseau</td>
<td>15,484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis</td>
<td>199,922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>144,717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherburne</td>
<td>94,748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibley</td>
<td>14,869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stearns</td>
<td>157,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steele</td>
<td>36,828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevens</td>
<td>9,748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swift</td>
<td>9,423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Todd</td>
<td>24,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traverse</td>
<td>3,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wabasha</td>
<td>21,393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wadena</td>
<td>13,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waseca</td>
<td>18,793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>256,905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watonwan</td>
<td>10,839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkin</td>
<td>6,343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winona</td>
<td>50,769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wright</td>
<td>134,365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow Medicine</td>
<td>9,881</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## APPENDIX E

### PERCENTAGE OF MINNESOTA COUNTIES REPRESENTED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stearns</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hennepin</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anoka</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benton</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramsey</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherburne</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Counties**</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Other includes Blue Earth, Carver, Cass, Chisago, Crow Wing, Dakota, Free Born, Houston, Meeker, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Mower, Murray, Olmsted, Rice, St. Louis, Scott, and Wright counties
Appendix F

Reported Ethnicity of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White or Caucasian</td>
<td>94.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Asian American</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of different ethnicities</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pie chart visualizes the distribution of reported ethnicities among respondents, with the majority being White or Caucasian at 94.3%, followed by Hispanic or Latino at 1.7%, and small percentages for Asian or Asian American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Combination of different ethnicities.
## APPENDIX G

**Primary Educator in the Home**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>97.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Parents Equally</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparent</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Bar chart showing distribution of primary educators in the home](chart.png)
Appendix H

Highest level of education achieved by the parents/guardians in the home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate or equivalent</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational/technical or some college</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or Professional School</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX I

Number of years spent homeschooling at the time of the survey

- Less than one year: 8.2%
- 1-3 years: 27%
- 4-7 years: 32%
- 8-10 years: 11.5%
- More than 10 years: 21.3%
### APPENDIX J

**How many children are you the parent or guardian for and live in your household (age 17 and under)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One child</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two children</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three children</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four children</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five children</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six Children</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven Children</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight Children</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine Children</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX K

How many children are homeschooled in your household between the ages of 5 and 17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One child</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two children</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three children</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four children</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five children</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six Children</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven Children</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What grades would your homeschooled children be in if they were in traditional school?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Grade</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Grade</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Grade</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Grade</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Grade</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Grade</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Grade</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Grade</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th Grade</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th Grade</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th Grade</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th Grade</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** For twins or students in the same grade, parents were prompted to check the appropriate grade-level box only once.
APPENDIX M

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you consider your family to be religious/faith-based</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>71.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe/Not Sure</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Pie chart showing the distribution of responses:]
- Yes: 71.3%
- No: 23.8%
- Maybe/Not Sure: 4.9%
APPENDIX N

Difficulties with state or school districts regarding decision to homeschool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>95.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other**</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX O

Reasons for Homeschooling

How important were the following considerations in making the decision to homeschool your child?

A desire to provide religious/faith-based instruction?

A desire to provide moral instruction and instill character values?
Concerns about school environment, such as safety, drugs, bullying, or negative peer pressure in the traditional school setting?

Dissatisfaction with the academic instruction of other schools?
A desire to provide a nontraditional approach to your child’s education?

The flexibility homeschool allows?
APPENDIX O (cont.)

A desire to spend more time with your children or as a family?

A desire to personalize instruction for your child?
APPENDIX O (cont.)

The gifted and talentedness of your child?

[Bar chart showing percentages for different levels of giftedness]

The physical or mental limitations of your child?

[Bar chart showing percentages for different levels of limitations]
Chronic sickness, illness, or hospital visits in the family?

Financial or monetary reasons?
Please choose which one answer best summarizes your PRIMARY reason for homeschooling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious/Faith-Based Instruction</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalized Instruction</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns about Negative School Environment</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for a Non-Traditional Approach to Education</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Time Together as a Family</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Instruction and Character Values</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfaction with Academic Instruction at other Schools</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifted and/or Talented</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical or Mental Limitations</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Illness/Hospital</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Special Needs</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Other includes: a combination of medical and special needs; concern for food allergies in the school environment; all-around better fit for the family dynamic; changing reasons each year; children asking to be homeschooled.
### APPENDIX Q

What are the main criteria you use when you evaluate homeschool curriculum/programs/resources?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biblical content</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious content of another manner</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Biblical or religious content</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visually pleasing</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands-on activities</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature-based</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal lesson planning</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holds my child’s interest</td>
<td>71.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of use</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other**</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Parents were able to check all the boxes that applied to their criteria

** Other includes: academically rigorous; practicality; variety; depth of content; every day life rather than curriculum; classical methods; solid math and science; ability to be reused for multiple children; cost and value; limited screen usage; successfully used by other homeschool families; classical methodology; efficient use of time; provides opportunity for deep discussions; geared towards learning disabilities; meets student’s educational needs; Biblical worldview; appeals to all learning styles; meets state standards; high standards for a gifted child; free resources; scope and sequence.