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Why American Parents Choose Homeschooling

Abstract: This study explored factors that impact parents' decisions to homeschool their children and examined the relationship between selected demographic factors and families that homeschool using an online survey snowball sample. Past research has focused on four main constructs: religious reasons, school safety, academic instruction, and a child's special needs. This study elaborated on these four constructs and expanded to include other reasons parents might homeschool such as a need for family time, family travel, distance to school, financial reasons, or wanting to take a nontraditional approach to student learning. Findings suggest that academic instruction, family time and the desire to take a nontraditional approach to education are the reasons that parents homeschool. Demographically the homeschool population has not changed since the landmark 1999 Rudner study. However, the reasons that parents choose to homeschool have shifted to reflect the current state of unrest education in the United States.

Keywords: Homeschool, Educational Reform, k-12 education, alternative education

The pressures for education to change have been persistent and vocal over the last half-century. Beginning with the *Nation at Risk* (1983) moving through *No Child Left Behind* (2001) and then the *Common Core State Standards Initiative* (2010), education in the United States of America has increasingly been seen as deficient and responsible for the lack of global competitiveness in the country. More regulations for districts, administrators and teachers plus increasing frequency of standardized testing for students are challenges at the heart of the unrest and dissatisfaction with education in public schools. In response, options to traditional education such as charter schools, private schools, and religious schools have gained popularity as an alternative to public education. Another option that is quickly gaining momentum during these educationally challenging times is homeschooling.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Since 1642, the first homeschool on record, many changes have occurred in the education system (Blumfield 2004). In an attempt to enhance their children's

learning, parents are choosing homeschooling as an alternative approach to educating their children in schools. Due to educational policies and parental concerns about safety, academics, and moral instruction, the landscapes of the U.S. primary and secondary educational environments are changing rapidly. Some parents wish to customize a curriculum and learning atmosphere for their child in a way that schools cannot; others are choosing to homeschool due to concerns about the school climate (Noel, Stark & Redford 2013; Ray 2015). Parents who homeschool their children are placed in two main categories: ideological or pedagogical (Harrison 1996). Homeschooling gives parents the flexibility to use pedagogical approaches that are untraditional in a public school setting and to teach a particular set of values, beliefs, and worldview(s) to their children (Ray 2014). Pedagogically, parents believe they can better serve the needs of their children and create a more appropriate learning environment for their children at home. Ideologically, they choose to homeschool based on religious or philosophical beliefs (Mayberry, Knowles, Ray, & Marlow 1995).

In 1999, 2003, and 2007 The National Center for Educational Statistic (NCES) conducted nationwide studies of reasons that parents decide to homeschool their children. Based on results from government surveys, reasons given by parents for homeschooling students include student safety, religious beliefs, and curriculum. A review of literature in recent years documents a lack of empirical research on the reasons parents choose to homeschool their children (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 2005; Kunzman 2015; Murphy 2012). The net result is a data gap regarding any trends on the subject of why parents choose to homeschool their children and differences that may exist based on parental motivations. The problem is that there is limited recent research exploring the reason(s) why parents homeschool their children. My main research question was: What factors are considered most important among parents as reasons they homeschool? Therefore, this study identified the reasons that parents decide to homeschool their children and determined if there were differences in these reasons based on selected variables. Secondarily, the study compared these findings to the previous studies.

According to federal researchers (Noel, Stark & Redford 2013), some of the reasons parents choose to homeschool their children include safety, ethical beliefs and concern for the state of education. As the upward trend in homeschooling continues, it is important to understand the needs of the homeschool population. Implications of the increase in the number of homeschooled students have yet to be determined. School administrators, legislators, and the public can use information from this study to become more informed about the unique nature of homeschooling families by understanding the motivations parents' have for homeschooling their children.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers estimate that approximately 2.2 million students in America were homeschooled in 2010 (Noel, Stark & Redford 2013; Ray 2014) compared to 1.1 million students in 2003, and 800,000 in 1998 (Princiotta, Bielick, & Chapman 2004). Although estimates vary widely, and actual numbers are uncertain, the number of children being homeschooled has clearly risen over the past thirty years (Ray 2010). The number of children whose parents choose to forgo traditional education is growing seven times faster than enrollment in K-12 schools every year and is considered a movement of significance (Lawrence 2012). Education must transform to meet the needs of families who homeschool (Crowson 2000; Kunzman 2015).

While the common reasons for the increase in the number of children being homeschooled include concerns about school environment, dissatisfaction with academic instruction, and parent's choice to provide moral instruction (Bielick, 2008), the ranking of the reasons parents choose to homeschool have shifted since the first National Center for Educational Statistics survey in 1999 (Bielick, Chandler & Broughman 2001; Noel, Stark & Redford 2013). The rise in the number of students homeschooled raises many questions about the future of public education and the resources parents are using to provide education for their children in homeschool situations (Murphy 2012; Whitehead 2007).

During the 1980s–1990s, many states attempted to regulate homeschooling and tighten restrictions as homeschooling movements continued to gain popularity. In 1993, Michigan was the last state to overturn compulsory attendance laws, making homeschooling legal (Somerville 2005). The number of families choosing to homeschool has increased by 75% percent since 1999, making it the fastest-growing form of education in America (Lawrence 2012). Researchers caution about methodological limitations of many studies on the homeschool population because most of the studies involve serious sampling issues (Kunzman & Gaither 2013; Rudner 1999). Some national surveys (Ray 1997; Rudner 1999) used to triangulate data are limited to voluntary users of services or members of specific organizations (Bielick, Chandler & Broughman 2001). According to the International Center for Home Education Research (ICHER), studies using membership in an organization or the use of a testing service should not be used as conclusive evidence that homeschoolers academically outperform their public and private school peers. Studies requiring membership or fee-based services involve sampling issues (Kunzman 2015). The major cited studies have been descriptive and cross-sectional, and not causal-comparative in design (Kunzman & Gaither 2013; Murphy 2012; Ray 2015; Rudner 1999).

The government sponsored studies had low responses (Princiotta & Bielick 2006). The 1999 NCES survey had 275 homeschool and 16,833 non-ho-

meschooled families that responded to their survey. The 2003 NCES survey was based on responses of parents of 11,994 K-12 students, 239 of which were homeschooled (Princiotta, Bielick & Chapman 2004). The NCES 2007 survey interviews involved parents of 10,681 children in K-12, including 10,370 students enrolled in public or private schools, and 311 homeschooled students. Parents are wary of reporting to government entities, which is reflected in the declining number of respondents (Collum 2005, Ray 2010). In 2011, the method of survey moved from direct dialing to mail surveys due to the declining response rates in telephone surveys and increase of cell phones replacing landline phones. Due to this change, researchers caution about comparing to prior government studies (Noel, Stark & Redford 2015).

While the underlying constructs may be the same in different studies, the questions are different. Questions the NCES used to ask about the parental motivation for homeschooling were not well designed, which can be challenging for researchers (Lawrence 2012). “The most important reason for homeschooling” was asked differently in 2003 and 2007, and cannot be compared across time (Bielick 2008). This change in language limited the possibility to compare results from different studies (Spiegler 2010). In 2007, parents cited the three most common reasons for homeschooling were concerns about the school environment, a desire to provide moral or religious instruction and dissatisfaction with the academic instruction (Bielick 2008). When asked to identify their most important reason in the 2007 NHES report, 36% of parents identified moral or religious instruction followed by school environment at 21%, with 17% indicating dissatisfaction with academic instruction (Bielick 2008). In 2011, parents indicated that the three most important reasons for homeschooling were concerns about school environment, to provide moral instruction, dissatisfaction with academic instruction or desire to provide religious instruction to their children. The difference in the 2007 and 2011 survey was the divided category of moral instruction and religious instruction, which had previously been included in the same question (Noel, Stark & Redford 2013). When asked to select the single most important reason they choose to homeschool in 2011, 25% of parents identified school environment, 19% choose academic instruction, 16% selected to provide religious instruction, and 5% indicated to deliver moral instruction as the most important reason for choosing to homeschool (Noel, Stark & Redford 2013).

As technology becomes more widely available, more parents are turning to online resources for help or to enroll their children in virtual schools (Humanson, 2012). Online classes offer the option for advanced placement classes not offered at a student’s assigned public school or may be out of the parent’s ability to teach (Christensen & Horn 2008). In the 2009–2010 school year, there were an estimated 1.8 million students from K-12 school districts registered in an online distance- education course. Of these students, 74% of these enrollments were in high school. Out of the 74% of high school students registered, 62%

were for credit recovery and 29% were enrolled in advanced placement classes (Queen & Lewis 2011).

The K-12 online education market is growing by an estimated 30% annually (Van Beek 2011). A total of 311 full-time schools with an estimated enrollment of 200,000 students were identified by the National Education Policy Center (NEPC) in 2012. In the 2011–2012 school year, K12, Inc. enrolled 77,000 alone (Molnar, Rice, Huerta, Shafrer, Barbour, Miron, Gulosino & Horvitz 2014). Virtual-school enrollment as a whole increased by 38% in 2011 and 2012 (Barth 2013). In 2017, thirty-four states have fully online schools operating across the entire state, ensuring that students anywhere in the state can attend an online school (Molnar 2017). In 2013–14, researchers estimated that over 315,000 students attended statewide, fully online schools, an increase of 6.2% from the previous school year (Watson, Pape, Murin, Gemin, Vashaw 2014).

Florida Virtual Schools is a recognized district in the state of Florida and has approximately 214,000 course enrollments and is considered a leader in public school virtual learning (Van Beek 2011). Students are offered choices to take one or two courses while attending a traditional school, attend through a flexible part-time program at the student's own pace or enroll full-time and graduate from the Florida Virtual School. Other states that stand out in online educational options with a wide variety of full-time and supplemental choices for students across most grade levels are Arizona, Kansas, Minnesota, Utah, Washington and Wisconsin (Watson, Murin, Vashaw, Gemin & Rapp 2013). In 2006, Michigan became the first state to require an online course as a graduation requirement and has since been joined by Alabama, Arkansas, Florida and Virginia (Watson et al. 2013). Virtual schools receive public funding and often offer homeschooling families incentives to enroll.

Public schools are funded through a per-pupil formula, which varies by state. According to projections of the NCES, the national average of funding allotted per pupil to public schools in the 2014–2015 school year was \$12,281 (Husser & Bailey 2013). In order to retain federal money to help offset costs of homeschooling, some homeschool organizations have won charters and are operating as new public schools. These charters received public funding to pay for materials, facilities and management time, Internet connections, and testing that would have otherwise been out of pocket expenditures for parents (Hill 2000).

After the dramatic increase in online charter schools, many states have revisited the funding formulas for online charter schools and virtual schools due to concern about loss of funding to the student's assigned public school district (Molnar 2014; 2017). To combat funding losses due to drops in enrollment, some public school districts are beginning to experiment with programs that allow for homeschooled students to attend select classes at a local public school in order to secure per-pupil funding. Several states have developed online virtual schools that are available free of charge for students who are state residents and fee-based for students outside the state. As students enroll in cyber charters,

they are stimulating a growing market for more valuable online content. Online curricula and offerings from for-profit entrepreneurs give parents more options (Chubb, Moe & Cuban 2009). Companies will contract with school districts to provide homeschool students curriculum, educational consultants and perks to homeschooled students while the districts get a portion of the tax base funding they would have lost with the regular homeschool option (Bohon 2012).

The per-pupil expenditure allotted for each student is now being shifted to for-profit organizations instead of public school budgets, as initially intended. Parents pay \$500.00–\$600.00 per school year on average to homeschool their children (Ray 2014). The offer to enroll in virtual schools at no cost to the family, plus often receiving free perks including materials and computers, entices homeschool parents to sign on (Gaither 2009). As this form of education continues to grow, it will reshape current education policy (Bauman 2005). Competition from homeschooling encourages public schools to think unconventionally about how to serve students (Jackson 2007). Virtual charter schools, either for profit or public school sponsored, have changed the face of homeschooling by giving students options for courses they would not have had access to otherwise. While there has been some improvement in what is known about supplemental K-12 online learning, there continues to be a lack of reliable and valid evidence to guide the practice of full-time K-12 online learning (Molnar, et al. 2014). The educational community would benefit from more knowledge of the perspectives of homeschool parents (Humason 2012) and the exploration of how online learning and virtual charter schools impact public education. It is important to understand the needs of the parents who homeschool and the motivations behind their decisions as the numbers of homeschooling families continue to increase.

DESIGN OF STUDY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SURVEY PROTOCOL

This study used survey methodology. An online survey was developed by the researcher based on the constructs used in the 1999, 2003, and 2007 surveys by the National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES) conducted by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). This survey examined the reasons that parents choose to homeschool their children.

The federal government surveyed homeschooling parents in 1999, 2003, and 2007. This survey instrument for this study was designed based on the federal government surveys. There were five broad constructs in the surveys: concern about school environment, academic instruction, religious or moral instruction, the child has physical or mental health problems, and the child has other special needs.

According to NCES 1999 survey, the most frequently reported reasons for parents choosing to homeschool were parents ability to give their child a bet-

ter education (49%), religious motivations (38%), and a poor learning environment at school (26%) (Bielick, Chandler & Broughman 2001). The 2003 NCES survey indicated that parents chose to homeschool out of concern about school environment (85%), to provide religious or moral instruction (72%), or dissatisfaction with academic instruction (68%) (Princiotta & Bielick 2006). There were two limitations of the 1999 survey addressed in the 2003 survey, open ended questions and the opportunity to select the “most important” reason to choose to homeschool. The first limitation was addressed by restructuring the questions from open-ended questions to providing a series of choices and asking whether particular reasons applied to them in 2003. The second limitation was addressed by requesting that parents choose the most important reason for homeschooling, which had not been asked previously (Princiotta & Bielick 2006).

A category labeled “non-traditional approach” was added to the 2007 survey that not included in the 1999 or 2003 government surveys (Bielick, Chandler & Broughman 2001). The 2011 survey had contained the option to choose “to provide religious instruction” and “to provide moral instruction” as reasons to homeschool in two separate questions, which had been asked as one question in previous years (Noel, Stark & Redford 2013). Spiegler (2010) asserted that the methodology used to discern parental motivations has had an effect on the results. Some categories were much broader than others; “poor learning environment” could be a subset of “concern about school environment” which could be a subset of “desire to provide moral or religious instruction.” If a parent scored two or higher in any of these constructs, they were given a subcategory of questions on the topic.

The NCES surveys also offered an “*other*” category for parents to choose if they felt the options given for homeschooling, dissatisfaction with instruction, moral or religious concerns, school environment, or homeschooling due to a child’s special need did not apply to their situation (Noel, Stark & Redford 2013). The survey instrument for this homeschool study was designed to assess the reasons parents listed in the *other* category: family time, time for family travel, a nontraditional approach, financial reasons, and distance to school (Noel, Stark & Redford 2013) and were included in this study as primary constructs.

DATA COLLECTION AND PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

A link to the survey was posted on the researcher’s Facebook page, Google+ page and Twitter account. According to the Pew Research Center (2011), the number of surveys being conducted over the Internet has increased dramatically since 2001 due to the rise in internet availability and the relatively low cost of conducting web surveys in comparison with other methods. The researcher requested that parents who homeschool their children click on the survey link, take the survey and then share the survey link on their personal social media pages or

send the link via email to other parents that homeschool. The survey link stayed active for two weeks, with requests to forward the survey link re-posted on the researcher's social media accounts one week after initial request. Within the first 24-hour period, 1,451 parents responded to the survey. Responses slowed considerably with 2,034 total completed surveys in a two-week period.

In this study, 2,034 respondents answered an online survey about their decision to homeschool. Sixty-three respondents' results were expunged due to invalid United States zip code or no longer homeschooling children, bringing the number of usable surveys to $n = 1,971$. Parents were given a list of factors that may influence parents to homeschool their children and asked to choose the answers that best fit their decision to homeschool. The responses were based on a Likert scale of one to five, one being not concerned at all and five being extremely concerned. The rank order of reasons that parents choose to homeschool children based on means statistics of factors that impacted their reason to homeschool is displayed in Table 1.

	N	Mean	Median	Mode	SD
Academic Instruction	1922	4.18	5.00	5.00	1.047
Family Time	1822	4.06	4.00	5.00	1.144
Non-Traditional Approach	1815	3.53	4.00	5.00	1.307
Moral/Religious	1937	3.23	4.00	5.00	1.546
School Safety	1958	2.95	3.00	2.00	1.260
Family Travel	1819	2.61	2.00	1.00	1.368
Special Needs	1815	2.57	2.00	1.00	1.670
Finances	1820	1.76	1.00	1.00	1.183
Distance to School	1820	1.20	1.00	1.00	0.667

Table 1. Rank Order of Reasons Parents' Homeschool Their Children

Academic Instruction was the most important factor that impacted parents' decision to homeschool. When parents indicated that academic instruction was a factor and ranked it two or higher on, they were given further questions about academic instruction in their child's assigned school that reflected a more in depth look at factors related to academic instruction as shown in Table 2.

	N	Mean	Median	Mode	SD
Class size	162	4.19	4.00	4.00	0.785
Overall Classroom Instruction	160	2.78	3.00	3.00	0.976
Confidence in teaching staff	162	2.59	3.00	3.00	1.121
Curriculum	156	1.64	1.00	1.00	0.871

Table 2. Factors Related to Academic Instruction at Child's Assigned School

Within the subcategory of academic instruction, parents reported that they felt class sizes were too large for learning. Overall classroom instruction and confidence in teaching staff scored between slightly and somewhat effective. If curriculum was selected as a reason for homeschooling, a further question was asked concerning the role Common Core State Standards on their decision to homeschool. Results are presented in Table 3. Less than 41% of respondents indicated that Common Core State Standards was a factor in the decision to homeschool their children. Only three percent indicated that it was the primary reason.

	Frequency	Percent
Did not impact	632	40.2
One of several factors	432	27.4
Played a role in decision	286	18.2
Slightly impacted	176	11.2
Primary reason	48	3.0
Total	1574	100.0

Table 3. Common Core State Standards

Parent Comments Concerning Academic Instruction. There were 1,159 comments from parents related to academic instruction. Typical concerns were things such as: “Schools teach kids to pass a test and not truly learn or love learning.” “The style of learning and large class sizes was a major reason for homeschooling.” Or “The curriculum does not align with our educational philosophy.” One parent noted, “My child was pulled out of his class to prepare for the FCAT the school was afraid he would fail. Meanwhile, he missed out of regular class assignments for three months that put him further behind. We had planned on homeschooling only one year, but he did so well that I could focus on his weaknesses and he could focus on his strengths that we continued to homeschool.” One parent stated, “Common core and the continual testing are the leading reasons we chose to home school; however, the lack of flexibility in allowing children to stand or move about in classrooms is a contributing factor as well.” A common thread that resounded with parents was, “No homework!!!”

Moral or Religious Instruction at school ranked fourth overall in order of importance regarding parents’ decision to homeschool. If religion or moral reasons were a factor and ranked two or higher, a subcategory of questions was given to parents asking about the impact of religious or moral reasons on their decision to homeschool as reported in Table 4. Within the subcategory of moral or religious instruction, wanting to provide an education with religious foundation ranked highest and was considered moderately important by parents as a reason to homeschool. School-based sex education as a reason to homeschool scored lowest and was considered a somewhat important reason to homeschool.

	N	Mean	Median	Mode	SD
Wanted to provide moral instruction with religious foundation	1493	3.91	5.00	5.00	1.371
Wanted to provide moral instruction with non-religious foundation (character education)	1445	2.99	3.00	1.00	1.543
School based sex education impacted decision to homeschool	1491	2.80	3.00	1.00	1.497

Table 4. Moral or Religious Instruction

Parent Comments Concerning Moral or Religious Instruction. There were 304 comments from parents related to moral or religious instruction. Typical concerns were things such as: “Public schools teach a world view that is in opposition to our family’s world view.” “Public schools do not teach the values we wish to instill in our children.” One parent stated, “Homeschooling isn’t about being over-protective of your children. For us it is about providing a better atmosphere and God-centered learning.”

School Safety ranked fifth overall in impact on parents’ decision to homeschool their children. When the importance of this construct rated a two or higher, the respondents were directed to a subcategory of questions as shown in Table 5.

	N	Mean	Median	Mode	SD
Overall school environment	1665	3.95	4.00	4.00	0.965
Bullying	1678	3.63	4.00	5.00	1.172
Peer pressure	1678	3.42	4.00	4.00	1.175
Drugs	1679	2.80	3.00	2.00	1.282
Threat of violent incident on campus	1676	2.80	3.00	2.00	1.225
Actual violent incident on campus	1674	2.67	2.00	2.00	1.279

Table 5. School Safety

Within the subcategory of school safety, parents ranked overall school environment as the most important reason for choosing to homeschool with a mean of 3.95. An actual violent incident on campus scored least important as a reason to homeschool. Also in this subcategory, parents (n=1971) were asked about whether or not their child had been bullied at school. The results are shown in Table 6. Although bullying ranked as second highest reason for homeschooling in the school safety subcategory with a mean of 3.63, 70% of parents reported their child had not actually been bullied at school.

	Yes	No
My child has been bullied at school	30%	70%
My child has been bullied on social media by students with whom they attend school	3%	97%

Table 6. Bullying as Related to School Safety

Parent comments concerning school safety. There were 87 comments from parents related to school safety. Typical concerns were things such as: “The safety of our children is a big concern. We love that our children are safe and still able to get an education.” For parents that expressed bullying concerns, they felt this issue was personal and extremely important. “Bullying got so bad at school, by both peers and staff, that my son was suicidal.” Or “Our son was bullied at school. The school policy is that they notify only the bully’s parents. The bullied are not notified. We found out only because other students told their parents, who in turn told us. He was physically hurt on the playground and during P.E. on multiple occasions. To this day, our son will not talk about it. He never wants to return to public school.”

Special Need(s) of Child Homeschooling because of a child’s special need ranked seventh in importance related to parents’ decision to homeschool. If a child’s special needs were a factor and ranked two or higher, a subcategory of questions was given to parents asking about the impact of a child’s special needs on their decision to homeschool. Responses are reported in Table 7. Within the subcategory of special needs, physical challenge(s) of a child ranked most important among parents who homeschool with a mean of 1.90. A challenge other than a physical or mental health challenge ranked lowest with a mean of 1.59.

	N	Mean	Median	Mode	SD
Physical challenge	999	1.90	2.00	2.00	0.298
Mental health challenge	997	1.79	2.00	2.00	0.404
Child has been identified as “gifted”	985	1.72	2.00	2.00	0.451
Other than physical/mental health challenge	989	1.59	2.00	2.00	0.492

Table 7. Special Needs of a Child as Reason to Homeschool

Parent comments concerning a child’s special needs. There were 107 comments from parents related to academic instruction. Typical concerns were things such as: “After meeting with the school to discuss my youngest child’s special needs, I just didn’t feel like they believed in her like I do.” Or “I chose to homeschool my special needs child because I felt he was not being supervised well enough to ensure his own safety and that of others.” “They could not tailor the curriculum to meet my child’s special needs because they were not severe enough.” Another parent stated, “The school did a poor job of following the accommodations required by her IEP.”

DISCUSSION

The data from this study supports prior research that reports an increase in parental dissatisfaction with instruction at school as the most important reason for homeschooling from 16% in 2003 to 19% in 2011 (Noel, Stark & Redford 2013; Princiotta, Bielick & Chapman 2004). Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is a national educational issue yet only 3% of parents indicated it was the main reason for homeschooling (Garner & Powell 2013; Wolfe 2015). This study found homeschooling for moral or religious reasons was important to parents, but not as important as previous studies suggest. Prior NCES research ranks providing religious or moral training to children as the most important reason in 2007 (Bielick 2008) or the second most important reason in 2003 and 2011 for homeschooling students (Princiotta & Bielick 2004; Noel, Stark & Redford 2013), whereas this study found it to be the fourth most important reason to factor in deciding to homeschool.

Contrary to prior research, school safety does not appear to be an important reason for parents to homeschool. Data from this study ranked school safety fifth in importance, contradicting previous NCES studies that ranked school environment, including school safety, as the most important or second most important reason that parents homeschool and first again in 2011 (Bielick 2008; Princiotta & Bielick 2004; Noel, Stark & Redford 2013). In this study, when considering school safety, overall school environment was the most important concern for parents when deciding to homeschool. Interestingly, within the category of school safety, the data found bullying at school was considered second most important reason to homeschool, yet only 30% of parents indicated that their child had actually been bullied at school and 3% on social media.

In the 2003 NCES study, family time and taking a nontraditional approach to education had been reported in an *other* category that also included family unity and individualized teaching, among other reasons (Princiotta & Bielick 2004). In the 2007 and 2011 NCES studies, family time, finances, travel, and distance were included in the *other* category (Bielick 2008; Noel, Stark & Redford 2013). When used as a primary factor that impacted parents' decisions to homeschool in this study, both factors of wanting more family time and taking a nontraditional approach to education scored higher than the previously NCES top three ranked factors of academic instruction, school safety and moral or religious instruction (Bielick 2008; Noel, Stark & Redford 2013).

In this study, 73% percent of parents reported that spending time together as a family was either a moderately or an extremely important factor when deciding to homeschool. Fifty two percent of parents indicated that wanting to provide a nontraditional approach to education was either moderately or extremely important when choosing to homeschool their children. One parent stated, "Modern education is harmful to a child's natural curiosity and love of learning, spiritual well-being, and has made subpar education the norm."

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Homeschooling should be considered a movement of significance in America. More and more parents are homeschooling due to inadequacies in the public education system that often include oversized classes, too much standardized education and assessment and not enough time for actual learning that is age appropriate for students. Although accountability is important, freedom to explore interests and passions should be included more regularly in the public school day. Less structured schedules and more time for development of natural curiosity should be included in the school day. The curriculum should be designed around encouraging student interests and less around standardized testing. Properly staffing schools and reintroducing teacher assistants to help reduce student to adult ratio in the classrooms that will allow for teachers to be able to cultivate the relationships that are important to student learning can accomplish this. Public school leaders should consider allowing a nontraditional approach to classroom instruction since family time is an important factor to parents. Further, public schools should incorporate more family oriented activities such as curriculum nights, student lead conferences and hands on learning activities that involve the whole family throughout the regular school day or special activities to encourage the family unit.

Further quantitative studies would explore the impact of family time and a nontraditional approach to education in a more in depth manner. Homeschooling is personal and an opportunity to elaborate on answer would be an added knowledge base to the field. Based on the number of respondents who indicated they were at one time a certified teacher, additional research is needed to understand the impact the dissatisfaction of academics in public schools is having on the burnout rate of both teachers and students. More research is needed on virtual and charter schools and the impact they each have on the landscape of education.

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