

## REVIEW OF RESEARCH

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# THE MODERN HOMESCHOOLING MOVEMENT

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*Homeschooling is a popular and fast-growing trend in the United States and Canada. This article presents a comprehensive overview of current research on homeschooling and provides historical, academic, psychological, and political information to build a proper context for appreciating the contribution of homeschooling to civic welfare.*

They were thought of as bizarre, fringe, isolationist, and selfish only 15 years ago (Hadeed, 1991; Knowles & Muchmore, 1995; Mayberry, Knowles, Ray, & Marlow, 1995). Now most Americans know at least one family who does it; and increasingly they are thought of as simply a little different, almost mainstream, thoughtful about how they raise their children, and hardworking as they give up a second income (Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1998; Ray, 1993, 1999). They are homeschoolers.

The purpose of this article is to provide a general overview of the homeschooling movement with special attention given to a) its historical context, b) the apparent effects of the practice on the home educated and society in general, c) the philosophical, educational, political, and social issues raised by the practice of homeschooling, and d) opposition to the popularity and growth of homeschooling.

## DEFINITION AND RENEWAL IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Homeschooling is an approach to the education of children and youth in which parents commit to personally taking a decisive and significant role in raising, educating, socializing, and training their children. Homeschooling is the education of children that is home-based and family-based and usually

parent-led but sometimes student-led. Although it is based in the home, the parents and children engage in community activities and utilize resources available to the public whenever such will benefit the education of the child. Homeschooling is not sending children away to institutions, public or private, to be taught by certificated and licensed workers who are controlled by a state agency or a private business or organization. Children who are home educated spend most of the conventional school hours with their parents and siblings and in other personally chosen associations rather than in a conventional schoolroom with professional teachers. Homeschooling is a private endeavor that is privately funded and (according to homeschoolers) enhances the public or common good. Homeschooling is parents dedicating a season of their own lives to focus primarily on the educational, social, and spiritual needs of their children and family. Homeschooling is a pedagogical practice that entails individualizing and tailoring the curriculum and learning environment to the gifts, needs, strengths, and weaknesses of each individual child (Ray & Lloyd, in press).

Homeschooling is the oldest form of education in human history. The fact that the preceding 25 years of modern home-based education is simply a small part of this history is made clear by Gordon and Gordon's (1990) history of tutoring. Even many notable historical figures in the West's recent history were homeschooled (Klicka, 1993). For example: At least 10 U.S. presidents were substantially taught via homeschooling. Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing, and her sister were instructed by their father in the subjects of English grammar, history, philosophy, foreign languages, and the Greek text of the Bible. Author Agatha Christie, scientist Blaise Pascal, author C. S. Lewis, college president and orator Booker T. Washington, author Phyllis Wheatley, author Mark Twain, inventor and scientist Thomas Edison, renowned preacher of the "Great Awakening" John Wesley, and distinguished World War II American General George Patton were all homeschooled.

Although both home-based education and privately funded and privately governed classroom schooling had seen much success (Glenn, 1988; McCarthy, Oppewal, Peterson, & Spykman, 1981; McCarthy, Skillen, & Harper, 1982), institutional and state-controlled schools came to dominate many nations, including the U.S., during the 19th century. Home-based education became almost nonexistent in the U.S. by 1975. For numerous reasons, however, interest in and the practice of homeschooling mushroomed in the U.S. and other nations (e.g., Canada, Germany, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland) during the 1980s. It is estimated that approximately 12,500 students, grades kindergarten through 12th grade, were homeschooled in the U.S. in 1978 (Lines, 1998; Ray, 1999). By 1983, there were about 93,000; in 1990 about 300,000; in 1995 about 1.1 million; by the fall of 2000, 1.5 to 1.9 million.

## BASIC DEMOGRAPHICS OF HOMESCHOOL FAMILIES

Numerous studies have presented basic demographic statistics about home-school families (e.g., Ray, 1997, 1999; Rudner, 1999; Wartes, 1987). Typically, both parents are involved in the educational process, with mothers being the ones who provide most of the daily formal instruction. The vast majority (95% to 98%) of the households are headed by a married couple (Mayberry et al., 1995; Ray, 1997; Rudner, 1999). Median total household incomes (about \$43,000 to \$50,000) are slightly below the national median household income but slightly above the national median family income (Mayberry et al., 1995; Ray, 1997). On average, these families spend \$450 to \$600 per pupil per year on educational materials and instruction. The parents' average formal educational attainment (i.e., a bachelor's degree for the father and a couple of years of college for the mother) is above the national average (i.e., a high school diploma or a year of college) for adults. These families contain significantly more children—3.0 to 3.3—than the national average of 1.9 (Ray, 1997; Rudner, 1999). So far, it appears that the ethnic proportions involved in home-schooling do not match national proportions, but interest among minorities appears to be quickly increasing (Aizenman, 2000; Coleman, 2000; McDowell, Sanchez, & Jones, 1999, 2000; Ray, 1997; Rudner, 1999). The majority of the families regularly attend religious services of some form (e.g., perhaps about 80% attend at least weekly, while the national average is about 45% who attend at least weekly) (Mayberry et al., 1995).

Although several summary traits have just been described, it is important to realize that a wide variety of individuals are involved in home schooling, just as the United States is comprised of a pluralistic population. Home-based education includes (but is not limited to) atheists, Christians, and Mormons; conservatives, libertarians, and liberals; families with 5-, 10-, and 17-year-old children; low-, middle-, and high-income families; Black, Hispanic, White, and Asian people; parents with Ph.D.s, parents with bachelor's degrees, and parents with no degrees; and families containing 1, 5, and 10 children. (Ray, 1999, p. 7)

Although the large majority (about 80%) of homeschool parents today identify themselves as basic, Bible-believing Christians (Batterbee, 1992; Mayberry et al., 1995; Ray, 1997) and emphasize the centrality of their faith to their homeschooling, it should be noted that the first persons to discuss and encourage homeschooling in the late 1970s were not emphasizing discussions of religious faith. In addition, discussions of philosophy and religious belief as related to homeschooling are encompassing an ever-wider spectrum of voices. One can find Roman Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, and pagan groups of homeschoolers, among others, active today.

As with their demographic characteristics, homeschoolers' pedagogical practices vary widely. Parents range in their approaches to the education of their children from ones that essentially reproduce conventional classroom schooling at home (Taylor, 1993; Van Galen, 1991), to very structured and workbook-oriented forms, to "lifestyle of learning" (Howshall, 1998) or "relaxed homeschooling" (Hood, 1994) styles which are explicitly based on a biblical understanding of the nature of children, to unschooling which focuses on reuniting living and learning without necessarily focusing on religious worldview (Sheffer, 2000).

In general, homeschoolers tend to focus on the traditional subjects of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and history and give more emphasis to philosophy, worldview, and religious education than is given in state-run schools. At the same time, the individualized and flexible nature of home-based education offers much opportunity for students to focus on and excel in special areas of interest. For example, there were disproportionately high numbers of homeschooled students in the 2000 National Spelling Bee and the top three winners were homeschooled. The first-place winner also placed second in the 2000 National Geography Bee.

## **SIGNIFICANT AND POSITIVE EFFECTS?**

### **THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF THE HOME EDUCATED**

The question has been asked for 20 years: Does it work? Is it possible for common parents—who are not professionally trained, certificated, and licensed teachers—to teach their children successfully? Dozens of studies have now been completed. Students who are home educated typically score at the 65th to 80th percentile on nationally normed standardized academic achievement tests; this is 15 to 30 percentile points above the public school average of the 50th percentile. Following are descriptions of several representative studies.

Wartes (1987, 1991), a public high school counselor, studied the Stanford Achievement Test scores of hundreds of home-educated students, grades K-12, in Washington State for several years. He found that these students consistently scored above the national average in various academic areas (e.g., reading, language, math, science), with their median score at about the 67th percentile on national norms.

State departments of education, such as those in Oregon and Tennessee, often report that the home-educated students (for whom they have scores) in their states are scoring well above average on standardized achievement tests (Oregon Department of Education, 1990, 1998; Tennessee Department of Education, 1988).

An in-depth nationwide study included a variety of families from all over the U.S. (Ray, 1997). Data were collected on 1,657 families and their 5,402 children. These students scored, on the average, at or above the 80th percentile in all areas (i.e., reading, language, math, listening, social studies, and study skills). Ray (1994) made similar findings in his Canadian nationwide study. And consistent with many preceding studies, Rudner's (1999) recent large-scale study of about 21,000 home-educated students nationwide in the U.S. revealed that the students' average achievement percentiles were in the mid-60s to mid-70s. At each grade level, the percentile corresponding to the median scaled score was typically in the 70th to 80th percentile range.

Not all studies, however, show home-educated students scoring above average. Rakestraw (1987, 1988) found only four of six grade levels of elementary homeschooled students above average in math, and average reading scores for the first through sixth grade students ranged from the 54th through 97th percentile. The Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction (1985) also found scores that were not particularly high, with the home educated scoring at the 62nd percentile in reading, 53rd percentile in mathematics, and 56th percentile in language.

Overall, the body of research clearly indicates that homeschool students perform at least as well as their institutional school counterparts in the subject areas considered the basics of American education and the essential tools for success in college and in society.

## **CORRELATES OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

Several researchers have explored the relationship between selected background variables—some of which are usually significant in the public school environment—and the academic achievement of the home educated (Ray, 1997, 1999, 2000b). First, whether the father or mother has ever been a certificated or licensed teacher has shown no effect in most studies. Second, the parents' formal education level appears to have a slight positive effect on achievement, but the relationship is likely weaker than it is in public schools. Third, the amount of money that parents spend on homeschooling the student has little to no effect on achievement. Fourth, the degree of regulation of homeschooling by the state has no effect. Fifth, family's income has either a weak or no relationship with achievement. Finally, the number of years that a student is home educated may have a slight positive effect on academic achievement. Perhaps most homeschool parents and students naturally—that is, without formal training—practice many of the things that researchers have found to be effective for teaching and learning. In the estimation of Good and Brophy (1987), private individualized tutoring “is the method of choice for most educational purposes, because both curriculum (what is taught) and instruction (how it is taught) can be individualized and because the teacher can provide the student with sustained personalized attention” (p. 352).

Perhaps it should not surprise anyone—state- or private-school teacher, educational policy maker, teacher union leader, or parent—that the home educated do well in terms of learning (Ray & Lloyd, in press).

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL, EMOTIONAL, AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING**

Both the curious and skeptical have asked, in many ways, “What about socialization?” Although the question is a vague one and could imply many things, a number of studies have explored various aspects of this issue. One approach of researchers has been to study the self-perceptions, which are related to socialization, of the homeschooled. Taylor (1992) focused on self-concept as one significant aspect of the psychological development of children. His nationwide study revealed that the self-concept of homeschool students was significantly higher than that of public-school students in all areas measured by the Piers-Harris Children’s Self-Concept Scale (PHCSCS). Kelley (1991) also used the PHCSCS and concluded:

The self-concept of home schooling children...was significantly higher...than the norms of conventionally schooled children.... A low anxiety level could be a contributing factor.... More contact with significant others, parental love, support, and involvement, peer independence, and a sense of responsibility and self-worth may be other contributing factors. (p. 9)

In her study of self-esteem and socialization, Tillman (1995) found

that these home schoolers are not isolated but active, contributing members of society, even in childhood. Ninety-eight percent are involved in weekly church meetings and other activities which require interfacing with various ages and settings...[and] have above-average self-esteem.” (p. 5)

Delahooke (1986) compared the social and emotional development of nine-year-olds from private schools to those who were homeschooled. The only significant difference was that “private school subjects appeared to be more influenced by or concerned with peers than the home-educated group” (p. 85) and it appeared that home-educated children perceived their parents as primary authority figures more often than did the private-school children.

As a final example, Shyers (1992) compared those who were solely home educated to solely public schooled students in terms of their social adjustment. The only significant differences were in their actual observed behaviors: Institutionally schooled students received significantly higher problem behavior scores than did their home-educated agemates. The conventionally schooled tended to be considerably more aggressive, loud, and competitive than were the home educated. Shyers surmised that this was due to those in

public schools modeling after their immature peers while the homeschooled were modeling more after socially mature adults.

Research has established that the homeschooled are actively involved in myriad activities outside the home with peers, children of different ages, and a variety of adults (Medlin, 2000; Ray, 1997, 1999). The data from these studies suggest that homeschoolers are neither socially isolated nor emotionally maladjusted. The home educated appear to be doing well in terms of social, psychological, and emotional development. Perhaps the fact that most of these children have siblings, spend much time in a family setting, and are engaged in a variety of social activities makes the research findings on socialization not surprising.

## **CIVIC INVOLVEMENT AND LEADERSHIP ABILITIES OF HOMESCHOOLERS**

Some people assume, because homeschooling is different from the current educational majority or because they lack understanding of the practice, that homeschool parents and children are not participating in civic life and the children have no opportunity to learn leadership skills. In fact, research has documented that homeschool students frequently participate in many of the same kinds of social activities as do their conventionally schooled counterparts (Medlin, 2000; Ray, 1997, 1999). Examples of these activities are group sports, volunteer work, group classes for selected subjects, field trips, scouts, 4-H clubs, and Sunday school or other religious group education. Montgomery (1989) found that homeschooled 10- to 21-year-olds were engaged in many social activities and concluded that homeschooling “nurture[s] leadership at least as well as does the conventional system” (p. 8). Lines (2000) explained that there is plenty of anecdotal evidence that homeschool families are politically active. Furthermore, Smith and Sikkink (1999), who used federally collected data to study the involvement of different families in civic life, concluded: “The empirical evidence is clear and decisive: private schoolers and home schoolers are considerably more civically involved in the public square than are public schoolers” (p. 20).

## **ADULTS WHO WERE HOMESCHOOLED**

Many observers wonder how the homeschooled will do in the “real world” of adulthood. First, it should be noted that adults who were home educated apparently have a positive outlook on their homeschooling experiences (Knowles & Muchmore, 1995). The fact that home-educated girls are becoming young women who develop personal voice and “the strengths and the resistance abilities that give them such an unusually strong sense of self” (Sheffer, 1995, p. 181) would suggest that they will be adults with hearty personalities. In addition, limited research suggests they are prepared to take

jobs in all areas of modern life, including industry and technology. Research suggests they attend college at about the same rate as do conventional schoolers (Ray, 1997). The National Center for Home Education in Virginia maintains a list of hundreds of colleges and universities that have accepted homeschooled students. Limited research shows that the homeschooled do at least as well in college as their conventionally schooled peers in terms of academic achievement (Galloway & Sutton, 1995) and critical thinking (Oliveira, Watson, & Sutton, 1994). Furthermore, Galloway and Sutton (1997) found that the homeschooled in college held significantly more positions of leadership and semesters of leadership service than did one group of students from institutional schools.

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH ON OUTCOMES AND EFFECTS**

It has been noted before that researchers often find it especially challenging to obtain samples that are definitely representative of all homeschoolers in the populations of interest (Lines, 1998; Ray, 1999; Welner & Welner, 1999; Wright, 1988). Sampling homeschoolers is clearly not as simple a matter as randomly selecting students from within a largely captive audience such as that found in public or private schools. Therefore, each study's methodology must be read carefully before drawing many conclusions regarding its findings.

Second, one of the main problems with drawing firm conclusions from the research described above on the specific topic of learner outcomes is that it is not experimental (Cizek & Ray, 1995; Ray, 1986; Wright, 1988). That is, no one randomly assigns children to three types of education (i.e., public, private, and home), lets them live for 12 years in those environments, then measures and compares their academic achievement, social and emotional maturity, and motor skills, all in order to determine whether the type of education caused differences in the measured factors. This cause-and-effect relationship is a challenge in almost all social science research, not just research on homeschooling. It is still the case that more causal-comparative studies are needed that simultaneously and carefully control for various background variables in order to more clearly assess whether cause and effect may be determined.

Finally, it is interesting to note that to date not much research has investigated the effect of home education on other aspects that are important to home educators (Cizek, 1993; Ray, 1988, 1999). Scattered research has been done to address such long-term outcomes as close family relationships and mature, home-educated adults who hold true to certain values and ways of thinking and living (Ray, 1999). This type of research will add greater richness and depth to the current body of research on home-based education.



## DISPUTATIONS AND RESISTANCE DESPITE HOMESCHOOLING'S SUCCESSES

It is understandable that 10 to 20 years ago many professional educators, policymakers, and everyday parents were skeptical about the practice of homeschooling. They asked questions such as: How can parents who do not have college degrees, let alone teaching certificates, successfully educate their children in the three R's (and even if they could, how could they teach advanced algebra)? How will these children, who are ostensibly isolated from normal social interaction, be able to get along with others in the "real world"? What will this do to the common good that is promoted by state-run public schools? Regardless of the fact that these and many other questions about homeschooling are loaded with assumptions and unspoken presuppositions about education and society, they were and are asked. It is not as understandable that similar critical questions and resistance to parent-led home-based education persist today even though most research to date suggests that homeschooling has positive effects on individuals and society. Why might such negative criticism and resistance persist?

First, it is possible that the evidence is simply not sufficiently comprehensive and convincing. As mentioned above, the challenges of social science research such as sample representativeness and lack of causal-comparative designs complicate the making of conclusive and consistent comments about the positive or negative effects of homeschooling compared with public or private schooling. Some critics are merely critical thinkers who want more evidence before they decide that homeschooling has either a positive or negative statistically significant effect in terms of various constructs.

Second, it may simply be human nature to resist change. After all, about five generations of Americans have almost exclusively experienced institutional, classroom schooling with mainly state-licensed teachers. I have heard many adults say, "I went through it and I turned out okay," implying that the status quo, although different from a generation ago, is good enough.

Third, some critics have met homeschooled individuals whom they judged as "failures." The critics often make judgments such as that the homeschooled youth or young adults they met were socially inept, did not know basic algebra, or were not tolerant of others' ideas. I have noticed that while these critics may admit their judgments are based on anecdote and limited experience, they rarely recognize that they might make the same judgments about significant numbers of youth and young adults who attended public and private schools.

Fourth, monetary interests may simply motivate some critical individuals and organizations. They are concerned that fewer students in public or private schools will lead to fewer jobs for teachers, administrators, and staff at those schools. I have personally heard these comments but they rarely show up in

the literature.

Fifth, some critics may simply feel they are obligated to speak against homeschooling because of the advocacy nature of their affiliations (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1993; National Association of State Boards of Education, 1996; National Education Association, 2000). In a sense, some of these groups *de facto* present themselves—by not explaining their objections in terms of premises to support their claims—not as advocates of the education of children but as advocates of state-controlled, tax-funded schooling. In a similar vein, a private organization like the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA), that supports private institutional schooling, may promote institutional schooling while implying the lower value of homeschooling. For example, the NCEA, while saying it respects the right of parents to homeschool their children, refers to a 1972 document, which precedes the robust emergence of the modern homeschooling movement by at least a decade, and claims that “Catholic schools afford the fullest and best opportunity to realize the threefold purpose of Christian education among children and young people” (NCEA, 2000, p. 1).

Sixth, there is the possibility that some professionals simply do not want to accept the idea that those who are not professionally trained at institutions of higher learning may be able to teach or tutor children effectively. Writing of changes that took place in America during the late 1800s, Bledstein (1976) said, “Professionals controlled the magic circle of scientific knowledge which only the few, specialized by training and indoctrination, were privileged to enter, but which all in the name of nature’s universality were obligated to appreciate” (p. 90).

Finally, some critics’ ideology about who should have the greatest authority and control over the education of children and thus over the ultimate functioning and philosophical and political direction of the state (i.e., the nation) is simply different from homeschoolers’ ideology. As I have previously pointed out (Ray, 2000a), this struggle for command over who will control what goes into the minds and affects the hearts of children is nothing new in America (Baer, 1998; Carper, 2000). Historical accounts provide insight regarding the motivations behind advocates of state-run education. For example, McCarthy, Oppewal, Peterson, and Spykman (1981) explained that Thomas Jefferson had tension in his thought

between his theoretical commitment to individualism and his pragmatic bent toward collectivism....Jefferson did not take a direct route to the state [guaranteeing societal order]. He turned instead to the school as the primary institution to guarantee the order and freedom he desired in society. In Jefferson’s thought the school gave up its autonomy to the state and became little more than a department of the state. And Jefferson saw nothing wrong with indoctrinating students into a philosophy of government as long as it corresponded to his understanding of orthodoxy.

Benjamin Rush...saw that Jefferson's program was but another form of sectarianism....[but] he followed the same route into pragmatic collectivism that Jefferson followed. (p. 85)

He [Rush] unabashedly predicted that "our schools of learning, by producing one general and uniform system of educator, will render the mass of the people more homogeneous and thereby fit them more easily for uniform and peaceable government." (p. 86)

Everhart (1982) explained that a battle ensued in the late 1800s as the American state gained a monopoly over children's education. Horace Mann and others were able to accomplish in the mid-1800s what Jefferson was not able to do in the late 1700s. "Mann was successful in that he convinced enough people that a system of public schools which championed a supposedly nonsectarian religion was essential to the well-being of the social, economic, and political order of the state" (McCarthy et al., 1981, p. 86). Glenn (1988), likewise, uncovered much of the thinking that has been behind the advocacy of state-run education in several nations; his findings also corroborate the kinds of thinking exhibited by Jefferson and Rush, as noted above.

This reason for resistance to homeschooling—control over minds and hearts—is generally an unspoken, and rarely a written, reason. Not many opponents of homeschooling will admit that they want to be in control of what is taught to children or how America's children are educated. Their thinking, however, is sometimes not difficult to discern, as may be seen in the few academic articles written on the subject (Apple, 2000; Franzosa, 1984; Lubienski, 2000). It is likely that such ideologically driven opposition to homeschooling will last long into the future.

Interestingly, many of the alleged disadvantages of home-based education were at one time or are still made about private institutional education. For example, some accuse private school families of elitism and social-class segregationism at best and, worse, "White flight." In like manner, homeschoolers have been accused of racism as a reason of their homeschooling (Caldwell, 1999). As another example of claims made against homeschooling (or private schooling), some professional educators say that tax-funded "Public education happens to be the foundation of democracy..." (Caldwell, 1999, p. 1G) or "You must remember that public schools are what made America great" (Mungeam, Highberger, & McQuade, 1993) and claim that homeschoolers remove themselves from some of the most important aspects of civic life. In like manner, some educators allege that those parents and children who are involved in private schooling have removed themselves from the democratic consensus-building process that is a critical part of America. Walter Feinberg, professor of philosophy of education at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, publicly made this claim on April 22, 1999, as a presenter at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in Montreal. Many of these claims are sim-

ply examples of the logical fallacy of arguments from ignorance. Further, some are simply arguments based on the "is versus ought" fallacy. In distinct contradiction to such opinions against homeschooling, the very limited research done to date suggests that homeschool parents and their children are more civically active and involved in public leadership activities than are the general public (Galloway & Sutton, 1997; Montgomery, 1989; Smith & Sikkink, 1999) and like the antifederalists, homeschoolers are asserting their historic individual rights so that they may form more meaningful bonds with family and community. In doing so, they are not abdicating from the American agreement. To the contrary, they are affirming it (Lines, 1993).

Anecdotal reports suggest, likewise, that the homeschooling community is a powerful social and political force (Belz, 1997, 2000; Golden, 2000). It may be that such reports in the media motivate the advocates of state control of education to energize their opposition to homeschooling.

Doing research on homeschooling and observing the movement for more than 15 years led me to write:

Proponents of compulsory schooling law and state-controlled schools, whether "leftists" or "rightists," are working, perhaps unwittingly, to make sure that something called the "common curriculum"...the one approved by those in positions of power...is taught to all (or most) children. Advocates of these government institutions hope they will long be the ones in positions of power. Conversely, most proponents of homeschooling and parental choice and authority only want to make sure that their personally chosen curriculum is taught to their children. These folks are not asking the state or anyone else for money or power to teach their curriculum to anyone else. They are asking the state and their neighbors to assume that they, the parents, have the best interests of their children and society's common good in mind. In fact, these parents are only asking the state, and their neighbors and thinkers who empower and influence the agents of the state, to let them go about their lives peaceably and quietly in the privacy of their homes and communities with their children. Advocates of home-based education are familiar with the golden rule and the big issues of liberty and justice for all in society. These parents want the state to allow individual citizens to choose freely when and how they will help other parents. (Ray, 2000a, pp. 287-288)

Homeschooling allows parents, in a context of nurture and high social capital, to choose freely a unique and effective education for their children. Each year a child grows older gives the parents and the child more opportunity to forge stronger bonds and a richer, relationally developed curriculum. Parents and children in such an arrangement, under no compulsion or coercion from the state, are allowed to escape the hidden curriculum of others and of the state, choose texts for learning, and work together in their communities as they "see work-family-religion-recreation-school as an organically related system of human relationships" (Tyack, 1974, p. 15).

The battles over power and domination that riddle state-run schools cannot sap homeschooling parents and their children of their strength, consume their energy, and destroy their zest for learning. Zeal for social justice, liberty, the common good, and being right with one's Creator can be approached from an environment of security, strength, and stability while the ever-maturing child year after year steps out into larger and more expansive spheres of challenge, democratic deliberation, and creative service to others.

The voices of those who are anti-homeschooling, anti-parents' rights, and antichoice and of those who assert that homeschooling causes "balkanization," "divisiveness," "social anarchy," "narrow-mindedness," "fundamentalism," "segregationism," and "possessive individualism" are increasingly hollow and impotent. Evidence supporting their claims is scarce to nonexistent (L. Berg, organizational specialist, National Education Association, personal communication, July 28, 1999; Caldwell, 1999). Furthermore—and tragically for this nation's children and to the chagrin of the proponents of state-run schools—the power struggles, illegal drug deals, racism (Greene & Mellow, 1998), violence, philosophical contention, religious censorship, lack of parent involvement, low academic achievement, high dropout rates, premarital sexual activities, teachers' and bureaucratic antiparental power (Baker & Soden, 1998), and greed-based high-stakes labor disputes that are associated with the halls and culture of public schools and so powerfully overshadow the significant incidents of success and joy therein make the common criticisms of parent-led homeschooling look very wan and insignificant (Ray, 2000a).

## IN CONCLUSION

It is historically evident that home-based education in America is neither new nor unique. It did, however, reappear during the late 1970s after a long and almost complete hiatus in its practice. Homeschooling stands, in many ways, within a long history and tradition of private and parent-led education of children in America and many other nations and cultures. Research evidence indicates that the discernible effects of homeschooling compared to institutional state-run schooling are generally significant and positive. At the same time, limitations in research designs restrain the conclusions about causation. Finally, opposition to homeschooling ranges, for example, from cautious and academic to that which appears to be motivated largely by jobs and wealth to the wrestling over control of which worldview should be infused in the children and youth of America or any nation. Time and perhaps more research will tell a more complete tale about the effects of homeschooling on children's academic achievement and their moral and ethical education, the involvement of homeschooled youth and adults in the civic processes of this republic, and whether they grow up to be—compared to those taught in state-

controlled institutions (or in private schools)—more destructive or constructive members of society.

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