



The Experiences of Homeschooled Students in Northern California in Relation to Societal Stigmas Surrounding Homeschooling, 1990 – 2010

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The Experiences of Homeschooled Students in Northern California in Relation to Societal Stigmas
Surrounding Homeschooling, 1990 – 2010

Melissa Lauren Tallman Merrill

A Thesis in the Field of History
for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

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Abstract

Currently, there is an entire generation of societally integrated adults who experienced the home education movement during its infancy. Yet we know very little about their personal thoughts in regard to being part of a pioneering educational choice that is now becoming increasingly mainstream. The object of this study is to shed light on the mindset and experiences of formerly homeschooled students in Northern California during the years of 1990 – 2010 and examine how it shaped them during their K-12 years, entering college, the workforce, and even potentially parenthood today. Through the use of remote one-on-one interviews, the aim is to provide a more rounded picture of the homeschool movement and its long-term effects on students. Given the resurgence in homeschooling, this can contribute to our knowledge of home-based education and how it benefits parents, children, and educators alike. This thesis will explore many topics including parental dynamics, religion, college, and stereotypes. By interviewing former students, we can expand and enrich our understanding of what they experienced during an innovative time in home education.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the many people in my life who have supported me throughout my educational journey. First to my children, who I likewise aim to homeschool one day. May this work be both inspirational and a reference for you in your lives, depicting an example of other students who led the way for you to have the freedom and acceptance to learn at home. To my husband who has been a constant support, sounding board, and bouncer of ideas throughout the process of finishing both this degree and thesis. Without you, achievement of both tasks would not have been possible. You never lost your faith in me, helped me talk through every thought I had, and continued to bolster my spirits even when they were at their most despairing. Thank you for everything. Always. To my siblings who experienced the pioneering home education our parents embarked upon at my side. No one else can relate to the stories we can tell for they are unique to us five. Without you all, homeschooling would have been boring and very lonely! Thank you for playing all the roles classmates and friends embody and for your support over the entirety of our lives. Lastly, and most importantly, to my parents without whom this entire topic would not have been possible for me. Thank you for joining the movement of homeschoolers in the early 1990s and not listening to the critiques of the many doubters in our lives. Thank you for your massive sacrifices on a multitude of levels, your tolerance, patience, unwavering support, and the never-ending research you still continue to conduct on behalf of both myself and my siblings. Without your bravery to try something new, we would not be able to count ourselves among this unique generation of the home educated. I love you all.

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I would like to acknowledge my family and friends who searched through their contacts and acquaintances in order to assist me in the completion of this thesis. Without your legwork and willingness to network on my behalf, I would not have had the needed participants to complete this paper. Thank you so much for your selfless help and tireless support of my work.

To Dr. Don Ostrowski, my initial Research Advisor, who first heard and assisted in supporting my desire to pursue the topic of homeschooling. Thank you for all your guidance and advice in the early days when this paper was only an idea. To Dr. Ariane Liazos, my Research Advisor, who went above and beyond to help me expedite my thesis journey, particularly during the proposal portion. I am very grateful for all your kindness and encouragement throughout this process. And to Dr. Alexis Redding, my Thesis Director, without whom the entire project would not have come to fruition. Your optimism, knowledge, understanding, and never-ending guidance to both me and my work are incalculable. I am very grateful for the opportunity to learn from your experience, a chance of a lifetime. Thank you so much for everything, Dr. Redding.

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Chapter I.

Introduction

Homeschooling has been a controversial subject since parents began fighting for the right to educate their children outside of school. Prior to the 1980s, homeschooling was essentially illegal in the state of California. Through the determination and dedication of many parents, the battle for homeschooling began to take shape. Ultimately, parents were able to challenge the established system and educate their children at home in the manner in which they saw fit, whether it was due to a certain lifestyle, religion, a child's individual needs, and/or extra-curricular activities. As of 2023, homeschooling has been accepted in California for over thirty-five years. According to historian Milton Gaither,

though there is no explicit statutory language permitting home education and though the higher courts have historically rejected the claim that home schools are private schools, thousands of homeschoolers have registered as private schools every year for decades.... It remains the case that though California has more homeschoolers than any other state, it has no law.¹

As a result, we presently have a homeschool-educated group of adults assimilated into society both in college and workforce environments.

In the early days, homeschoolers and their parents were subjected to any number of assumptions, stereotypes, and criticisms. Doubts as to the validity of a home education prevailed. Academics and outside objectors alike would express their negative views on the idea of taking a child outside the mainstream educational system and schooling them

¹ Milton Gaither, *Homeschool: An American History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 2017), 217.

in their own homes with parents who were, in their minds, underqualified for the task at hand.² Long standing concerns regarding a homeschoolers' lack of socialization, the validity of their education, inability to integrate into college, be productive members of society, or regarded as isolated religious zealots were habitually expressed. In a study conducted by Medlin in 2000, now more than twenty years old, he explains,

A survey of public school superintendents found that 92% believed home-schooled children do not receive adequate socialization experiences. When asked to explain their views, some of these superintendents commented that home schoolers 'don't want any influence other than parents' in their children's lives, believe 'communities at large are evil,' and 'want to ensure their children's ignorance'. The parents 'have real emotional problems themselves,' one superintendent asserted, and do not realize 'the serious harm they are doing to their children in the long run, educationally and socially'.³

A number of studies have explored different aspects of the stereotypes surrounding the homeschooled child. These include the topics of socialization, collegiate integration, and how students amalgamate into society at large.⁴ According to Medlin in "Home Schooling and the Question of Socialization",

Home schooling parents, not surprisingly, disagree on every point. They describe conventional schools as rigid and authoritarian institutions where passive conformity is rewarded, where peer interactions are too often hostile or derisive or manipulative, and where children must contend with a dispiriting ideological and moral climate. Home schooling parents argue that this kind of environment can stifle children's individuality and harm their self-esteem. They say it can make children dependent, insecure, or even antisocial.⁵

Typically, parents who choose to homeschool are aware of the potential pitfalls in this manner of education and thus are prepared to combat the situations that may develop.

² Richard G. Medlin, "Home Schooling and the Question of Socialization," *Peabody Journal of Education* 75 (2000): 107–23, 109, <https://www.tandfonline-com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/doi/pdf/10.1080/0161956X.2000.9681937?needAccess=true>.

³ Medlin, 109.

⁴ Christina Watson, "Perceptions on Homeschooling" (Undergraduate thesis, Kent State University, 2019), 1-2, 14, https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/rws_etd/send_file/send?accession=ksuhonors1525513771346317&disposition=inline.

⁵ Medlin, "Home Schooling and the Question of Socialization," 109.

Instead of succumbing to the negatives they may face, many parents see the pros of homeschooling and determine they outweigh the cons.⁶ Despite the active role a parent may take in their children's education in order to combat hypothetical drawbacks, stereotypes on home education nonetheless persisted throughout the 1980s and into present day.

The scholarly literature available on homeschooling aimed primarily to frame its history, provide background on the different homeschool movements, and attempted to explain the legalities surrounding the battle fought by parents. These included historical scholars Milton Gaither, Joseph Murphy, and Shawn F. Peters, as well as philosopher James G. Dwyer.⁷ Scholarly study conducted by Mary Beth Bolle et al., and theses by Jean W. Scheriff, Christina Watson, Daniel Hamlin, and Albert Cheng, all explored different subtopics surrounding the homeschool student, highlighting specific areas often of concern to traditional educators. These include a student's socialization capacity, the societal perspectives surrounding homeschoolers, and homeschool students' transition into college. The data presented displays minimal differences between the homeschooled or traditionally schooled child and their subsequent assimilation into adult society, thus leading these intellectuals to the collective conclusion in favor of the option to permit homeschooling.⁸

⁶ Medlin, 109.

⁷ Gaither, *Homeschool: An American History*; Joseph Murphy, *Homeschooling in America: Capturing and Assessing the Movement* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2012), <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/lib/harvard-ebooks/reader.action?docID=1993873&ppg=12>. ; James G. Dwyer and Shawn F. Peters, *Homeschooling: The History and Philosophy of a Controversial Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), <https://doi-org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.7208/9780226627397>.

⁸ Mary Beth Bolle, Roger D. Wessel, and Thalia M. Mulvihill, "Transitional Experiences of First-Year College Students Who Were Homeschooled," *Journal of College Student Development* 48, no. 6 (2007): 637-654; Jean W. Scheriff, "A Descriptive Case Study of Homeschooling and Implications For The Future of Public Schools," (Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses, 2008); Christina Watson, "Perceptions

While the academic scholarship strives to discuss homeschooling objectively, discussions in the media can be more heated, demonstrating the stigma associated with homeschooling. One such individual is Cindy E. Soehner, who wrote three opinion pieces for the *New York Times* in 1988 and 1989, advocating for homeschooling. In these articles, Soehner discusses the issues she faced with her eldest son in the public school system, ultimately leading to her decision to homeschool. The troubles she faced mirror those of many parents who decide to remove their children from public or private schools. While becoming increasingly more accepted as an educational option in our current decade, the backlash Soehner faced for her decision was commonplace in the 1980s. “I had expected some reader criticism, but I was completely unprepared for the ferocity of the negative responses”.⁹

One response to Soehner’s article was Rena G. Kunis’s contrasting critique. Her judgement on Soehner’s decision to withdraw her son was blatant, saying,

The paradox examined ... that “to continue to enjoy learning, ‘her son’ may just have to drop out of school” resolves itself when we think that, despite the fact that medical doctors don't all cure us of every ailment, we do not drop out of medicine and become self-treaters. It is true that some teachers leave a lot to be desired, but certainly in general a trained teacher knows more about education than the average parent.¹⁰

Kunis’s opinion, while unabashedly disapproving, reflected the opposing argument to Soehner’s idealistic viewpoint on homeschool education. She argued above that the

on Homeschooling” (Undergraduate thesis, Kent State University, 2019); Daniel Hamlin and Albert Cheng, “Homeschooling, Perceived Social Isolation, and Life Trajectories: An Analysis of Formerly Homeschooled Adults,” *Journal of School Choice* (2022): 332-59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2022.2028338>.

⁹ Cindy E. Soehner, “There Are Benefits in Homeschooling,” *New York Times*, December 17, 1989, <https://www.nytimes.com/1989/12/17/nyregion/l-there-are-benefits-in-homeschooling-128189.html?searchResultPosition=2>.

¹⁰ Rena G. Kunis, “In School, Facts Have Priority Over Fun,” *New York Times*, April 17, 1988, <https://www.nytimes.com/1988/04/17/nyregion/l-in-school-facts-have-priority-over-fun-499388.html?searchResultPosition=3>.

“average parent” is not in a position to evaluate the education her child receives. She continued by expressing the need for children to learn social skills, disciplined structure, and maturity through the medium of public school at the hands of professional instructors.¹¹ While Soehner and Kunis are only two individuals highlighted here, their contrasting opinions hit at the core of the homeschool arguments: those in favor and those against. This mindset is not uncommon when assessing whether parents have the right, or ability, to gage what is educationally appropriate for their children.

According to education scholar Patricia M. Lines, “A media stereotype would have homeschooling children start the day with a prayer and salute to the flag and then gather around the kitchen table for structured lessons. This is not only atypical, it fails to present the full range of practices”.¹² These “atypical” assumptions, as mentioned by Lines, often surround the homeschool student. And while there have been so many questions and suppositions surrounding the topic, what do these children have to say? A perpetual stigma surrounds homeschooled children, and the stereotype begs the question: is it accurate? What were their experiences and thoughts? Did they consider homeschooling unusual? How did it affect their relationship with their parent(s)? With others outside the family? Would they have preferred to go to what is often deemed as “traditional” school? What method of homeschooling did their parents favor? How did they find being educated at home affected their lives as they transitioned to college or into the workforce? What was their perspective on being educated in such a pioneering way?

¹¹ Kunis, “In School, Facts Have Priority Over Fun.”

¹² Patricia M. Lines, “Homeschooling Comes of Age,” *The Public Interest* 140 (2000): 79, <https://www.nationalaffairs.com/storage/app/uploads/public/58e1a4/f6d/58e1a4f6dc64a937336266.pdf>.

The available literature on homeschooling is mostly authored by parents, educators, politicians, and side-line critiques. In light of current exploration into alternative methods of academia, learning from former homeschoolers can be highly useful. Yet such accounts are limited. Homeschooled youth from the 1980s – early 2000s are now grown adults with degrees, careers, children of their own, and/or any combination of the above. Presently, there exists an entire generation of students with a wealth of first-hand accounts on the topic who remain as untapped resources. At this point, they have become a measurable metric on the effectiveness of homeschooling simply by exploring their adult lives.

Hopefully, through the voices of the formerly homeschooled, a more complete understanding of what it means to be homeschooled will be developed, potentially challenging beliefs held by those who have historically favored a more traditional form of education. Through personal accounts, new information presently missing within the genre of education may offer insight into alternative modes of education. Current scholarly sources of Gaither, Murphy, and Dwyer and Peters are highly informative on background, methodology, and legalities, yet their work is lacking the experiences of a very important group within the homeschool education movement and precisely what this thesis aims to address: those of the students themselves. By asking the above questions, a historical gap in the American education system can be filled via the personal responses and experiences of homeschoolers.

Definition of Terms

Charter School. A charter school is “a tax-supported school established by a charter between a granting body (such as a school board) and an outside group (as of teachers

and parents) which operates the school without most local and state educational regulations so as to achieve set goals”.¹³

Cooperative (Co-Op). Schooling that focuses on bringing together small groups of homeschool parents and children in order to learn as a group. In this manner, students at different levels can benefit from the knowledge of the collection. This structure provides support for parents who possess varying strengths and weaknesses.¹⁴ Co-ops are beneficial for homeschooled children with a parent who is strong in math, for example, but not the sciences or social studies. In this way, parents can cooperatively share knowledge by breaking into small class groups instructed by different homeschool parents.

Deschooling. The period following the withdrawal of a child from traditional school is referred to by homeschool parents and educators as deschooling. Here, the child and parent are learning to adapt to a new method of learning best befitting their child, which may or may not include traditional school methods.¹⁵

Homeschool. Any method of education not specifically conducted in a traditional school environment. Typically, educating one’s child at home.¹⁶

“Normal.” The most common word used by other children and adults to describe children who attend traditional school. There is a societal misconception that if you are homeschooled, you are not “normal.” Most often, children are heard derogatorily using

¹³ “Charter School,” Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, accessed March 7, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/charter%20school>.

¹⁴ Gaither, *Homeschool: An American History*, 264.

¹⁵ “Deschooling,” Oxford Reference, accessed March 7, 2022, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095712549>.

¹⁶ Gaither, *Homeschool: An American History*, xiv.

this term toward other children with a negative connotation, such as, “You are not normal.”¹⁷

Socialization. According to Klaus A. Schneewind in “Socialization and Education: Theoretical Perspectives”,

Socialization refers to all processes by which an individual learns the ways, ideas, beliefs, values, and norms of his particular culture and adapts them as part of his own personality in order to function in his given culture. ... From the vantage point of institutions, socialization takes place in different settings that, in some instances, are especially designed to advance the development of a broad spectrum of individual dispositions and competencies, either by formal or informal learning processes, that is, families, schools, peer groups, work settings, and so on.¹⁸

This definition is relevant to homeschooling because homeschoolers and parents are often asked about socialization.

Traditional Schooling. Traditional schooling is used to describe public or private school, i.e., the “traditional” form of education in the United States.¹⁹

Historical Background

Education scholar Joseph Murphy notes that the homeschooling movement “unfolded in three stages: the period before compulsory public schooling; the stage when required, institutionalized schooling moved to the high ground; and the modern

¹⁷ This definition stems from my own background and preliminary research with other homeschooled individuals. A common occurrence for many of us who are homeschooled is to be spoken to in a derogatory manner by our peers. Phrases such as “not normal” were intentionally utilized to marginalize and insult.

¹⁸ Klaus A. Schneewind, “Socialization and Education: Theoretical Perspectives,” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, ed. James D. Wright (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2015), 861, <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.92071-3>.

¹⁹ Michael H. Romanowski, “Revisiting the Common Myths About Homeschooling,” *The Clearing House* 79 (2006): 125–29, <https://doi.org/10.3200/TCHS.79.3.125-129>.

homeschooling era.”²⁰ The first compulsory education law passed in the state of California was in 1874. This law was modeled on the first law passed in Massachusetts in 1852, stating:

Every person having under his control a child between the ages of 8 and 14 years shall annually during the continuance of his control send such child to some public school in the city or town in which he resides at least 12 weeks, [...] and for every neglect of such duty the party offending shall forfeit to the use of such city or town a sum not exceeding \$20.²¹

Prior to this decree, some semblance of homeschooling was the typical manner in which children were educated. Education scholars Gaither and Lines explain, in antebellum America many parents preferred home tutoring due to John Locke’s argument that traditional schools corrupted children at a young age.²² Though Locke felt the results from home instruction inferior to that of traditional schooling, it was preferred to the immoral exposure faced within the public-school environment.²³ Despite Locke’s reservations, children educated in this manner were nonetheless knowledgeable. As expressed by Gaither, parents would employ tutors in order for their children to learn the ways of society, books, and modernity.²⁴

Industrialization post-World War I became a huge factor in the mass enforcement of anti-homeschool laws. Immigration, technological advances, and dense cities saw families discovering the outlawing of child-labor and the mass implementation of mandatory education for children.²⁵ As the Great Depression of the 1930s took hold of

²⁰ Joseph Murphy, *Homeschooling in America: Capturing and Assessing the Movement* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2012), 30-31, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/lib/harvard-ebooks/reader.action?docID=1993873&ppg=12>.

²¹ Walter S. Deffenbaugh and Ward W. Keesecker, “Compulsory School Attendance Laws and their Administration,” *Department of the Interior: Bulletin* 4 (1935), <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED542358.pdf>.

²² Lines, “Homeschooling Comes of Age,” 76.

²³ Gaither, *Homeschool: An American History*, 41-42.

²⁴ Gaither, 43.

²⁵ Gaither, 69-73.

the United States, more and more children began attending school because there was nothing else for them to do. Objectors commenced to search for alternatives, and they found them in private religious schools or home education. Parents were not in step with the budding phenomena of mass, government controlled public school, leading to complaints on religious or ethnic grounds.²⁶

By the 1970s and 80s, the home education crusade had become entrenched in the American consciousness of those seeking alternative education from public school systems. Chief among these activists were stay-at-home-moms who wanted to educate their children themselves. Primarily college educated women, they held the belief they could provide better, more tailored instruction for their children than public schools with overflowing classrooms.²⁷ Lines muses, “Only recently have we begun to treat schooling as a full-time affair entrusted to professional teachers. And yet, in such a short span of time, most of the nation has come to accept classroom schooling as the norm”.²⁸ The growing resentment of the impersonal school system, in conjunction with interference from the government, led parents to remove their children from these environments.²⁹

The battle to legalize homeschooling in the United States was an arduous one. Gaither notes, while many had been comfortably educating their children at home in states where it was widely accepted, there were other locations that were not as civil. By the 1990s, he continues, homeschooling had become nationally recognized and legal in all 50 states. In California, the dissent against home education was minimal. For decades, parents registered their children under the private school umbrella with little to no

²⁶ Gaither, 93.

²⁷ Gaither, 119.

²⁸ Lines, “Homeschooling Comes of Age,” 77.

²⁹ Gaither, *Homeschool: An American History*, 123.

incident. Thousands more joined charter schools and co-ops. Yet in 2008, Judge Walter Croskey ruled homeschooling as private schooling, according to legal precedent, was illegal. In 2010, Judge Croskey reversed his opinion after receiving much backlash from the national community. While the law did not change, homeschooling has since continued to proceed in California without incident.³⁰

Historiography

With limited historical scholarship available, books by historians Gaither, Murphy, and Dwyer, with philosopher Peters, provide their audiences with an understanding as to the history of education in the United States, descriptions of the different homeschool movements, and insight into the legal fights to nationalize the option to home educate. Individually, they culminate their findings with extrapolations as to future implications of the homeschool movement societally.³¹ Scholarly journal articles written by Patricia M. Lines and Richard G. Medlin, a study conducted by Bolle et al, as well as theses by Scheriff, Watson, and Hamlin and Cheng, provide more focused angles on individual outcomes or questions of homeschooling. These include addressing the issue of socialization, governmental statistics on percentages of homeschooled students, their standardized testing results, rate of homeschoolers' college admittance, and interviews with parents on their motives behind the choice to homeschool.³²

³⁰ Gaither, 207-208, 217.

³¹ Gaither, *Homeschool: An American History*; Murphy, *Homeschooling in America: Capturing and Assessing the Movement*; Dwyer and Peters, *Homeschooling: The History and Philosophy of a Controversial Practice*.

³² Bolle, Wessel, and Mulvihill, "Transitional Experiences of First-Year College Students," 637-654; Scheriff, "A Descriptive Case Study of Homeschooling,"; Watson, "Perceptions on Homeschooling"; Hamlin and Cheng, "Homeschooling, Perceived Social Isolation, and Life Trajectories," Medlin, "Home

An important resource on the history and background of the subject is Milton Gaither's *Homeschool: An American History*. This book contains a plethora of information outlining the beginnings of education in America conducted from the 1600s into the present 2000s. The most relevant portion of the book, for the purposes of this thesis, explains the grassroots movements beginning in the early twentieth century, ultimately leading to the establishment of laws defending the rights of parents to choose to homeschool their children in the latter half of the aforementioned period.³³ According to Gaither, discontented parents are the ones breaking with traditional school options, subsequently reverting back to homeschooling. The historic "dissatisfactions" outlined below are often the same ones referenced in modern times and still lead to the same decision of seeking alternative forms of education:

While agreeing with the critique of public education that had led thousands of conservatives into Christian day schools, some parents couldn't accept this solution. Reasons for dissatisfaction with private schooling varied: some families couldn't afford the tuition; some disagreed with the theology their local school(s) espoused; some had personality conflicts with principals or teachers; some, especially those with special needs children, felt that the private school couldn't adequately address their child's individual circumstances; some believe that the Bible gave responsibility for education to parents only; and some, especially mothers, simply wanted to spend more time with their children.³⁴

Though specifically referencing the rejection of private education, many of those reasons also applied to the alternative option of public school. These "dissatisfactions" are important to understand as they provide necessary insight into the parents who opt to keep their children at home.

Schooling and the Question of Socialization," 107-23; ³² Richard G. Medlin, "Homeschooling and the Question of Socialization Revisited," *Peabody Journal of Education* 88 (2013): 284-297, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2013.796825>. Lines, "Homeschooling Comes of Age," 74-85.

³³ Gaither, 1-285.

³⁴ Gaither, 118-119.

Gaither's work is thorough in tracing the beginnings of schooling in America, the legal battles early homeschool parents faced, and explaining the various homeschool methodologies. Describing homeschooling pioneers such as John Holt, Raymond and Dorothy Moore, Gregg Harris, Michael Farris, Mary Pride, and Rousas J. Rushdoony, Gaither takes us on an informative journey into the mindsets of those he describes as having "exerted profound influence on the homeschooling movement".³⁵ This movement was multifaceted and appealed to various groups of parents for assorted reasons. Though Gaither excellently outlines the factual roots of education and varying homeschool movements, he lacks insight on the perspective of the average homeschooled student.

Joseph Murphy provides a similar comprehensive overview of the homeschool movement and its history to date by evaluating studies and theoretical analysis in his book, *Homeschooling in America: Capturing and Assessing the Movement*. Murphy clarifies from the onset, "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." He later expands on this thread, diving into the limitations on the research currently available to the scholar attempting to evaluate the outcomes of homeschooling. He explains controlled studies on homeschooled students are difficult to come by, with longitudinal studies near non-existent. Yet despite the lack of scholarly research available to him, Murphy delves into what evidence there is. He utilizes it to support his statement that a tailored approach is one of the key characteristics of homeschooling which appeals to parents looking to school their children in a specific manner.³⁶

³⁵ Gaither, 136.

³⁶ Murphy, *Homeschooling in America: Capturing and Assessing the Movement*, 3-4, 125, 158.

According to Murphy, homeschooling provides one-on-one instruction where students can absorb the same information, tailored to their needs, more efficiently than they would in a larger classroom. “Particularly important here, analysts inform us, is the elimination of the negative peer culture sometimes seen in conventional schools. In its stead, one often finds a supportive culture that grows from committed families and loving parents”.³⁷ Murphy shows with his research the overall nurturing atmosphere of parents in a homeschool capacity is more positive for the child than in traditional public/private schools. The analysts he utilizes in his concluding chapters are seemingly encouraging in their assessment of homeschooling and its outcomes. And yet, as in Gaither’s work, Murphy likewise fails to produce the voices of the children and their perspectives regarding one-on-one instruction in the home. Did the students assessed in Murphy’s book experience the positive schooling his book reflects?

A third book coauthored by philosopher James G. Dwyer and historian Shawn F. Peters further expands on the contextual information available on homeschooling. They begin by providing much the same background as Gaither and Murphy in regard to the inception of education in the United States. However, towards the later chapters, the authors veer in a more conjectural direction with the aim to prompt discussion.

Our approach ...is more abstractly analytical than the preceding historical study, at times highly conceptual or theoretical, and at certain points making much of what might seem like small distinctions – for example, the distinction between having a *right* to decide certain things about children’s lives and being *permitted* to exercise authority as to such things. The line of reasoning pursued will likely be unfamiliar, even jarring, to most readers. The aim is to induce people of good will on all sides of the issue to think about the “ought” question in a new and more rigorous way than is common in everyday discourse.³⁸

³⁷ Murphy, 160.

³⁸ James G. Dwyer and Shawn F. Peters, *Homeschooling: The History and Philosophy of a Controversial Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 109, <https://doi-org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.7208/9780226627397>.

Dwyer and Peters utilize this line of probing into the reasoning and morality behind the question of whether homeschooling is a viable form of education the state should or should not endorse. Topically, their mindset appears against the right of the parent to decide the educational fate of the child, yet their discourse is more complex. Dedicating large portions of their book to the question of the state's role in education with a philosophical angle, they argue we should be able to live-and-let-live as adults, yet this cannot be extended to children. They conclude for the reader they are of the belief the state should act as trustee on behalf of children "focused on what is in their best interests."³⁹

Dwyer and Peters tackle some of the biggest topics raised on the subject of homeschooling by parents, educators, and politicians. The authors lay out their approach within their Introduction, even expressing their desire for "readers from all perspectives to see the practice and the policy issues in a new way".⁴⁰ This includes a section on "Ruling Out Extreme Views about Homeschooling," covering blanket condemnation parents choosing to reject traditional schooling receive, to the activist attitude homeschool parents adopt from becoming near daily advocates of their educational decisions.⁴¹ Would the children educated in what was not a typically traditional manner themselves endorse home-based education? Would they apply it to their own children in order to duplicate their experiences and results? Did they feel the need to advocate on their parents' behalf? Did they receive the same criticism as their parents? Through discussion with the formerly homeschooled, these questions can be answered.

³⁹ Dwyer and Peters, 130, 156, 160.

⁴⁰ Dwyer and Peters, 4.

⁴¹ Dwyer and Peters, 108-118.

Another educational scholar who discusses homeschooling and its growing influence with American families is Patricia M. Lines. Beginning by noting the upward trajectory of homeschool enrollment in recent years, she follows with a brief history and continues to address stereotypes surrounding both students and parents. Lines argues the media tends to feed the societal stigma surrounding homeschooling, causing for misunderstanding and judgement on parents and students alike. She writes, “Critics see homeschoolers as isolationistic, atomistic, and even undemocratic.” She underlines subsequent studies testing socialization of homeschoolers; which, she concludes, demonstrated homeschoolers are more “well-adjusted” than the media and educators would suggest.⁴² In 2000, Richard G. Medlin’s article “Home Schooling and the Question of Socialization” dives further into the discourse on the socialization of homeschoolers, presenting contrasting opinions of psychologists and educational institutions with those of homeschool parents. Research on the question of homeschoolers and socialization, Medlin concludes, is favorable and he suggests there is more to homeschool families than the stereotypes would imply.⁴³

In 2013, Medlin revisited the question of socialization and homeschoolers, citing new research to reevaluate if his previous deductions remained intact. Medlin concludes that not only were they still valid, they were strengthened with the passage of time. The studies conducted in the interim thirteen years since his original article supported his original research, leading him to believe more firmly in the capacity of homeschool parents to more than adequately socialize their children. Medlin states future research is imperative to fully understand the socialization homeschoolers undergo: “We might learn

⁴² Lines, “Homeschooling Comes of Age,” 74-80, 82-83.

⁴³ Medlin, “Home Schooling and the Question of Socialization,” 107-23.

much, therefore, by shifting the focus of homeschooling research from the outcomes of socialization to the process itself, from how well homeschooled children are doing to how parents help their children become a part of the social world around them”.⁴⁴ In Medlin’s opinion, future research should shift its focus from whether homeschoolers are properly socialized, to *how* are they socialized?

Neither Lines nor Medlin address the homeschooled student directly in their respective articles, instead opting for publicly available data and personal summation to support their arguments. In fact, there are limited academic studies that include the voices of the homeschooled children as adults. One scholarly study and some undergraduate and master’s theses do include the experiences of the formerly homeschooled students. The study by Mary Beth Bolle, et al. explores the “Transitional Experiences of First-Year College Students Who Were Homeschooled”.⁴⁵ Jean W. Scheriff correspondingly has a scholarly work entitled, “A Descriptive Case Study of Homeschooling and Implications for The Future of Public Schools”.⁴⁶ Christina Watson’s undergraduate thesis, “Perceptions of Homeschooling” employs an online quantitative survey of Kent University students to evaluate homeschooling and self-concept. Her goals were to address the perceptions surrounding homeschooling, specifically exclusion and stigmatization of the homeschooled student, and whether these had any emotional, psychological, or academic impact to their self-esteem.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Richard G. Medlin, “Homeschooling and the Question of Socialization Revisited,” 285, 293-294.

⁴⁵ Bolle, Wessel, and Mulvihill. “Transitional Experiences of First-Year College Students,” 637-654.

⁴⁶ Jean W. Scheriff, “A Descriptive Case Study of Homeschooling,” 79.

⁴⁷ Watson, “Perceptions on Homeschooling”, 1-2, 14.

Watson's broad target group surveyed were students from Kent University.⁴⁸ As a result, her sample group was narrow in focus. The student selection was anonymous and required students to volunteer information on themselves via her questionnaire. They also were asked to type in both their positive and negative perceptions, the origin of their aforementioned perception, and whether they themselves had ever been homeschooled.⁴⁹ Watson's findings are useful to this thesis as she provides both the stereotypes and their perceived origin, in turn, creating a category to expand upon when interviewing the formerly homeschooled. Furthermore, Watson's work addresses minimal, prewritten questions with a scale answer, leaving little room to expand upon personal experiences for the homeschooled student. This thesis, by contrast, had in-depth interviews with a few formerly homeschooled students about their experiences. By addressing the individual directly, a more complete picture surrounding the homeschooler emerged, building upon Watson's online survey regarding the perceptions of homeschoolers. Socialization was likewise mentioned, and the avenues offered or withheld by parents for societal participation were explored.

Similar to this thesis, Daniel Hamlin and Albert Cheng interviewed formerly homeschooled adults regarding their socialization experiences and whether social isolation negatively impacted their lives post-home education. They dive into the complex psychological consequences surrounding social isolation and how it can be a potentially dominant issue affecting homeschooled children. Presented are contrasting potential outcomes contingent upon the homeschool parent and social networks they may or may not provide for their children. Hamlin and Cheng reaffirm the lack "of empirical

⁴⁸ Watson, 14.

⁴⁹ Watson, 15-19.

scholarship on homeschooling and social outcomes,” further indicating the need for more scientific research on this topic.⁵⁰

Hamlin and Cheng’s work is predominantly focused on the social aspects and outcomes surrounding homeschooling. They interview thirty-one formerly homeschooled adults and share the data in a statistical capacity, with a scattering of anonymous quotes from the students. They include categories of separation, such as length of time homeschooled (“short-term 1-2 years homeschooled), substantial (3-9 years homeschooled), and long-term (10-12 years homeschooled)”), household income, and race.⁵¹ (p. 11). Though similar to this proposed thesis, both Watson and Hamlin and Cheng discuss the outcomes of socialization, isolation, and stigmatization through anonymous surveys and targeted interviews. Hamlin and Cheng only include minor quotes, in turn, omitting the bigger picture around homeschooler’s experiences. This thesis will expand and explore their experiences on a wider scale, highlighting both the positive and negative impacts on homeschoolers’ lives, and their perspectives on home-based education. This investigation will add to the missing narrative regarding the individual experiences of the student; stories which are missing from the academic work presently available.

As more formerly homeschooled students reach adulthood and are integrated into the wider world, fresh avenues of gathering evidence are available to the discerning scholar, either refuting or supporting such outcomes. Some adults have discussed being homeschooled, yet there are so many more who have yet to share their stories. Adults educated during its legal infancy can provide answers to questions still surrounding this

⁵⁰ Hamlin and Cheng, “Homeschooling, Perceived Social Isolation, and Life Trajectories,” 1, 5.

⁵¹ Hamlin and Cheng, 11.

period, such as insight into their thoughts during the process, whether they considered their manner of education unusual, and would they duplicate it for their own children. Did they feel the need to become advocates defending their parent(s) educational decisions on their behalf? Would they have preferred to have attended either a public or private school? And if so, why? Here we dive into the stigmas surrounding homeschooling, and how homeschoolers navigated them both as students and later adults. By documenting their tales for posterity, we may widen our understanding to the unique experiences' students faced while being educated at home.

Chapter II.

Methods

In order to gather the needed participants for this thesis, I began by reaching out to my personal contacts who, perhaps, still had ties to former homeschooled students between the years of 1990 – 2010. My goal was to find people to interview with whom I had never met or interacted prior to this thesis. Certain criteria needed to be met in order to conclude whether an individual qualified for an interview. This included having the prospective interviewee respond to an online preliminary survey with questions such as:

1. Were you homeschooled in Northern California?
2. What years were you homeschooled?
3. In what grades were you homeschooled?
4. What style of homeschooling did you have?

Study Setting

This study was conducted in a remote capacity with former students homeschooled in Northern California. By using a snowball method and specific geographic region, I was able to isolate and target a particular age-group of former homeschool students and their unique educational experiences within the same legislative rules and timeframe. After completing and returning both a preliminary qualifying survey and consent form, participants had the option of either a Zoom-call or phone call for their interview.

Participants

In the end, eleven former homeschoolers were able to be recruited to participate in the research for this thesis. They were engaged through my connections reaching out to their acquaintances and asking them to contact me directly, through text or email, stating their interest in the project. Upon connection, a preliminary email with information on the project was sent, along with links to a Qualtrics qualifying survey, and consent form. All efforts were made to assure I had never had prior knowledge of or interaction with the potential interviewees. Ultimately, this occurred with nine of the eleven participants. The last two selected were the adult children of distant parental acquaintances from more than thirteen years in my past.

For this study, the only needed qualifiers to participate were having been homeschooled in Northern California sometime between the years of 1990 – 2010. No other restrictions were placed on the applicants. All names were changed to protect the identities of the participants.

Materials and Measures

My sample included 55% women and 45% men. 82% were either fully homeschooled or a combination of home and co-op, while 18% were educated solely through a co-op or independent study sponsored through a public school. All participants were home educated in Northern California between the years of 1990 – 2010. 36% never attended a public or private school prior to being homeschooled, while 64% did. All participants had siblings, a minimum of one and a maximum of five. Five participants

self-identified their race (2 Caucasians, 1 Black, and 2 Pacific Islanders) with the others refraining. 46% participants were Protestant Christian, 27% were Catholic, and 27% did not share. 82% stated they were educated in a religious capacity with 18% saying it was secular. 36% said they were educated solely by their mother and 10% said solely by their father. 36% said mother and father shared responsibility with 18% mentioning no parental involvement, instead, having only tutors or co-op instructors. 100% declared partaking in a structured curriculum. 64% of participants did music studies during their time as homeschoolers, 27% did not state, and 82% were involved in sports. 91% of participants attended college and, of those, 80% graduated with four-year degrees, and 40% went on to receive either advanced or multiple degrees. 73% of individuals had children at the time of their interviews and 27% did not. Of those participants with kids, 75% were homeschooling their children. 82% of the eleven participants would or had situationally recommended homeschooling to others if/when asked.

The participants selected were those who reached out to me directly and expressed interest in participating in this project. Research for this thesis was entirely conducted online or remotely. All surveys and forms were sent using Qualtrics survey software available through the Harvard Extension School. A total of two survey-based questionnaires and one consent form were emailed to participants utilizing a link. The questions asked in each survey were created by me and approved by both Professor Alexis Redding and the IRB.

Data Collection: Design

Mixed methods were utilized to collect data for this thesis. The first part consisted of a preliminary qualifying questionnaire plus a consent form, and the second part

involved a 60-to-90-minute remote interview. There was also an optional demographics questionnaire submitted upon completion of the interview.

Data Collection: Procedure

To begin finding participants for this study, I reached out to my personal contacts I hoped knew people who were homeschooled between 1990 – 2010 in Northern California. The aim was to find participants I had never met or heard of before this paper. My personal contacts shared my information with those former homeschoolers and interested individuals could get in touch with me directly. Some of my personal contacts shared the email or phone number of potential homeschoolers I could alternatively reach out to, and I sent a preliminary email or text message to try and gauge interest. The former homeschoolers who expressed interest were sent a preliminary email with more information, as well as links to a Qualtrics qualifying survey (see Appendix A) and a consent form (see Appendix B). Of those who completed the survey and consent form, another link was sent to a Google Calendar where they could schedule their phone or Zoom interview. They were asked to specify their preference between a phone call or Zoom-call.

Participants were interviewed from a list of IRB pre-approved questions (see Appendix C) and were voice recorded with participant consent. Questions were primarily based on their early educational experiences with homeschooling, family dynamics, college, career, and reflections on their homeschooling experiences. My personal status as a former homeschooler was shared with interviewees at the start of the interview, as well as niceties and introductions. The interviews were conducted primarily via phone call, with only one participant requesting a video Zoom call. I selectively transcribed all

of the responses from the recordings personally, editing only for quality control, and omitting such things as additional words (“ummm”, “aaandd”, “uhhh”, etc.), sounds, and/or long pauses. A pseudonym was assigned to all participants for anonymity, and is used in all subsequent written documents.

Upon completion of the interview, a follow-up email was sent to all participants. Included was a request to forward my first email with links to anyone else they felt would have interest in participating in this study. More participants were able to be recruited from this request, culminating in a total of eleven persons joining. A final Qualtrics demographics survey was sent (see Appendix D) of which only four participants completed.

Table 1. Participant Information

NAME	AGE	TYPE OF HOME-SCHOOLING	CALENDAR YEARS HOME-SCHOOLED	ATTENDED PUBLIC OR PRIVATE SCHOOL?	ATTENDED COLLEGE ?
Nyah	37	Home	1989 – 2003	None	Yes
Amanda	37	Home/Co-op	1992 – 2003	Public	Yes
Justin	36	Home/Co-op	1992 – 2004	None	Yes: AA Degree
Rachel	35	Home/Co-op	1993 – 2003	None	Yes
Kayla	35	Co-op	1995 – 2003	Public	No
Tyler	37	Home/Co-op	1995 – 2003	Private	Yes
Nicole	37	Co-op	1997 – 2003	Public	Yes
Joseph	35	Home/Co-op/ Hybrid Private School Program	1997 – 2004	Private	Yes

David	36	Home	1998 – 2004	Private	Yes
John	29	Home/Co-op/Charter	2001 – 2011	None	Yes
Amber	28	Independent Study through a Public School	2010 – 2012	Public	Yes

Table highlighting participant information.

Analysis

Once all transcriptions were complete, I used thematic analysis in order to code the data, first analyzing into ETIC themes and second into EMIC themes.⁵² From the ETIC analysis, four overarching themes emerged: 1) Stereotypes, 2) College, 3) Parental Dynamics, and 4) Religion. After identifying these larger themes, I went back through the transcriptions in an EMIC capacity and found sub-categories which emerged from the overarching topics.⁵³ Quotes were selected that best supported the sub-category. The quotes chosen either fit a specific word criterion, or they used emotions and/or events to describe the theme, thus fitting into both the sub-category and the overarching larger theme. These quotes were then sorted into positive and negative categories. A Microsoft Excel sheet was maintained and added-to throughout this process, with general information on each participant in order to understand both their backgrounds, activities, and educational arcs. Transcripts were read repeatedly to ensure nothing was missing from the EMIC analysis.

⁵² Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology,” *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2006): 79, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/scholarly-journals/using-thematic-analysis-psychology/docview/223135521/se-2>.

⁵³ Braun and Clarke, 80.

After all quotes were pulled and categorized, I created a Microsoft Word document of each overarching theme with the sub-categories listed at the beginning of the chart. From there, each document was split into positive and negative sections, with a list of all participants in each section. Next to the participant's name, all quotes from said participant relating to the overarching theme were pasted in the corresponding positive or negative category. After that, I used these Microsoft Word documents as references for writing the next chapters of this thesis.

Chapter III.

Parental Dynamics

It would be impossible to separate parental involvement from the homeschool experience of most students. Indeed, the uniqueness of the homeschool experience of each student can reflect the uniqueness of home life. Ultimately, the day-to-day life of a traditional school student is fairly similar and predictable to one another. The schedule and aims of most collective schools are universal for all attending students. The uniqueness of homeschooling allows for it to be tailored to the student, their needs and desires, and the homelife of the family as a whole. In *Kingdom of Children*, Stevens asserts,

All home schoolers are passionately committed to the notion that their children have distinctive selves that need to be nurtured by individualized care. But the idea that each child's idiosyncratic needs are of paramount importance has become widely taken for granted in our culture.⁵⁴

No two parents are the same nor do they parent similarly; likewise, no two children are the same. Thus, the educational experiences of the homeschooler will be separate and different from one another in a manner which is unable to be duplicated. Through interviews conducted with former homeschoolers, examination into their parental relationships occurred. Parental relationships with children can be complex, made more so in how the differentiation between being a parent and an educator becomes indistinct. Furthermore, the parental involvement with children beyond an academic capacity, as

⁵⁴ Mitchell L. Stevens, *Kingdom of Children: Culture and Controversy in the Homeschooling Movement*, (Princeton, New Jersey and Woodstock, Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press, 2001), 69.

well as an eventual adulthood appreciation for parental sacrifices made in order to homeschool, is also addressed here.

Letting Go

An interesting aspect to examine is how the aforementioned distinctiveness affected homeschoolers as children and, eventually, as adults. Most of the interviewed persons addressed the relationship of their parent(s) to themselves in some capacity. One particularly interesting discovery was the difficulty of parents being able to let go of adult children, which can be primarily observed in the three solely homeschooled students.

Nyah discusses the implications of this on her family of four, sharing:

I would say that on the other hand, because we were SO connected to each other, that it was harder for my parents to let go and have us grow up and leave the nest because of our ties. Sooo...yes: it helped bring us close while we were there, but then it also created some maybe unhealthy connections later on when, like for myself, growing up and getting married or leaving the home was very hard. Because my mom who was homeschooling us and stayed at home, she didn't have a job outside of teaching us, it was really hard for her to see her babies leave home. I think being homeschooled and being that connected may have added to that difficult change to adulthood.

Those in this study who had a co-op, charter school, or independent study situation during the bulk of their home education experience did not mention the same conflicts as Nyah did with their parents. This may, in part, be due to the parent being unprepared for the inevitable reality of the child becoming an adult. Those who utilize a co-op, charter school, or independent study would likely have some measure of separation from their children; potentially even alternative work in order to supplement household income. However, more research would need to be conducted in order to quantify this theory. Furthermore, information on traditional students would also need to be compared as the

sampling for this thesis cannot comment on the potential universality of this parent-child dynamic beyond a homeschooling scope.

When parents dedicate so much time and effort on their children, it can potentially consume their existence. The child becomes their present, future, and career. Stevens discusses,

Some women make considerable career sacrifices to stay home. Lissa Foster, a mother of two, holds a Ph.D. in biology but left the field after finishing her degree to be at home with her children full-time. [...] Like so any women who face the hard choices about how to balance work and family, Lissa's calculus includes many factors: her husband's career opportunities, her deep desire to be a mother, income constraints, and the range of opportunities for school and child care that are available to her household.⁵⁵

Yet, this does not always lead to a smooth transition into adulthood. Indeed, the three fully homeschooled students discussed their difficulties and the relationship that developed as a result. Rachel mentions:

I would not attribute any of our closeness or distance to anything related to home education. I think, when it comes down to it, the thing that affects both a parental, as well as a sibling, dynamic within a family would only be amplified one way or the other due to homeschooling. Essentially, if systems were in place that created tension among parents or siblings, they would be amplified in the setting where you are there all the time. And if there are healthy systems, then those would be amplified. I think it's almost like homeschooling, and the sheer amount of time spent together is necessarily affecting it. More it is a magnifying glass on whatever is the root of what exists there.

Most of my participants discuss how their parents, due to one or more parents being at home, led to the parent being unable to let go and "move on" from the child. This includes typical transitions into adulthood such as college, friends, dating, and eventual marriage. In *The End of Adolescence: The Lost Art of Delaying Adulthood*, Hill and Redding discuss the effects of leaving home on the adolescent, and how the

⁵⁵ Stevens, 79-81.

transformations that may take place can alter dynamics with parental figures and returning home,

The changes that youth experience while they are away mean that they no longer fit seamlessly into the relationships and way of life they left behind. Ultimately, they face the reality contained in a familiar adage: you can't go home again. The seemingly subtle changes they have experienced come into stark relief when they return. Youth are different and, in their absence, both the social and physical aspects of home also shifted, along with their memories of them (Chow and Healey, 2008). Consequently, youth have to negotiate reentry into places that were once familiar and grapple with ideas that were previously unquestioned.⁵⁶

David shares the realities of his present-day situation with his family, saying:

I would say I'm pretty close with my immediate family. I definitely have points of tension with my parents. I don't always agree with the things they do and the things they believe. So, there are differences there, but I'm really close with my brothers for sure. I'm still close to my parents even though I dislike a lot of...there's definitely some tension there for sure.

The outcome of this type of situation, as reported by interviewees, is tension with the parent(s) which later does end up resolved, but perhaps with expense to the relationship in the interim period. David discusses the effects to both himself and his brothers, explaining:

I feel like my experience was not the norm. I had certain aspects that were not the average within the homeschooling community. Because my dad was not working. So, my dad was actually homeschooling one of my brothers while my mom was homeschooling the other brother. [...] I'm the only one that's ever had relationships. Like at all. My other two brothers have never had a girlfriend or boyfriend or partner at all. It's just me. And I wonder was it just because I went to a little bit of regular school first? I don't know. But it's kind of sad because I feel they're gonna be single forever if I'm being realistic about how I assess my brothers with that. That makes me upset for them.

David is not the only interviewee to make mention of siblings affected in addition to themselves, as noted with Nyah's comment at the beginning of the chapter. Hill and

⁵⁶ Nancy Hill and Alexis Redding, *The End of Adolescence: The Lost Art of Delaying Adulthood*, (Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2021), 19, <https://doi-org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.4159/9780674259225>.

Redding's work dives into the difficult situations that can arise when youth return home.

According to Hill and Redding,

Conflicts that surface are not just about the broader philosophical differences that stem from expanded horizons. Parents often struggle to balance warmth and a desire for connectedness with appropriate space and autonomy as their youth transition to adulthood (Koepke and Denissen, 2012; Laursen and Collins, 2009; Seiffge-Krenke, 2013). While students live on campus, parents also lose the ability to intervene in their lives directly and likely feel less justified in doing so as well (Parra et al., 2015).⁵⁷

Considering the potential reasons parents may choose to homeschool, an example being to control the influences in their children's lives, suddenly having exterior forces enter the situation can lead to tension. One interviewee reported how her decision to homeschool her own children in an "unschooled" style created controversy with her mother due to the fact her mother was highly regimented in her own homeschooling choices years prior. What may appear simple on the surface has deep roots with the parent due to their original connection with their children. Stevens provides a potential explanation, "'Mothers and fathers can provide deeper security, sheerer closeness, shaper instincts, longer continuity, warmer responses, more logical control and more natural example than the staff in the best care center' [...]. The message is clear: schools cannot substitute for parent-child intimacy and the 'instinctual' knowledge of parents."⁵⁸ The potential friction in the balance of parent and child relations is highly nuanced and complex even beyond the college era. This was exemplified by one interviewee with her mother and fueled by early intimacy shared between mother and daughter.

Another angle the children reported is the blurring of lines between parent and educator. When the parent(s) take on the heavy responsibility of both rearing and

⁵⁷ Hill and Redding, 22.

⁵⁸ Stevens, *Kingdom of Children: Culture and Controversy in the Homeschooling Movement*, 40.

educating their children to become successful, productive members of society, they can occasionally warp the traditional role of parent and child. Rachel describes:

When I look at myself and I look at people that I know who were homeschooled, I feel like there were two extremes in regard to their relationship today with their parents. And I think some of that has to do with how formalized things were. When parents prioritize their role as teacher in a formal sense, I'm using teacher kinda in the school mindset as opposed to an educator and a guide, that prioritization of roles can have some damaging long-term effects on that relationship. If you're gonna homeschool it ought to be forefront in your mind that you are always a parent first.

Rachel's reflections on navigating between being both educator and parent open insight into the difficulties of such a path. As she continues explaining below, perhaps the overall pressures placed on the parent by either themselves or society to educate in a formal manner becomes a contributing factor.

Parents naturally have a role in education. They are, potentially, the best educators. But to not give up parent role, and parent naturally as educator, to be teacher. That being a space where relational breakdown can happen that can have more long-term effects, to me that sacrifice wouldn't be worth it. That is the sad thing that people forget; any parent is educating their kids. Doesn't matter if they're going to school or not. [...] There's almost a scary level of pressure that's put on formal education for homeschool parents and I think that should be approached with caution. When I see negative long-term effects, I would guess that is something that was at play.

While there is a certain level to which parents are natural educators to their children, as discussed above by Rachel, homeschooling takes this to a level beyond the standard situation. Research has not yet examined how this role distortion contributes to the inability for the homeschooling parent to let go of the homeschooled child later in life, but these participants' stories suggest that a link may exist.

When attending a traditional school, parents have limited control over the day-to-day aspects of their child's life. In contrast, this ascendancy could theoretically be amplified in a homeschool capacity, thus, potentially leading to the creation of naivety of

the outside world. In her “A Descriptive Case Study of Homeschooling and Implications for the Future of Public Schools,” Scheriff dives into this issue, saying,

Parents conveyed a desire to have some control over what was being presented and what their children were pursuing. This was demonstrated by a parent's vision of "exposure to as much of the world as I feel they are prepared for" and a different parent's statement that their program provided a "superior education at home with more control over what they learn." Parents described their vision of homeschooling in terms of attachment with children, more parental involvement, greater family involvement, discipline, a healthy environment, controlling negative influences and avoiding rougher schools. While parents want flexibility, they also want some degree of control over what is learned, where it is learned, who presents the learning and how the learning is structured.⁵⁹

This could be both in a social context and in an educational one as well. David expresses:

[Traditional schoolers] were more autonomous. A little less codependent on their parents. I feel a lot of homeschool kids had very limited horizons of the world. Very sheltered kids for the most part. Some of them were not. My family was one of the worst most restricted ones. Sometimes I'd be like “hey – can I get permission to do a thing” and they'd be like, “well – this one other family that's more strict than us...” The *one* other family maybe, who lived like they're from the 19th century, *Little House on the Prairie* kind of outfits. That's not really a good example to choose.

It would appear, based upon discussions with both David and other students, the higher the involvement of the parent in the education aspect of the homeschooling, the higher the expectation of excellence from the child. While this pattern may not extend beyond my data, the preliminary finding is interesting and merits further exploration. In this instance, David catalogs how high expectations can potentially go south for the parent:

It could have been very different if it was just, “Oh, David is into, I don't know, making websites and graphic design. We will allow him to pursue these things more.” That is a very different case then, “No. We want to isolate you from the world.” [...] In my early twenties to early thirties it was a lot of drugs, a lot of partying. You kind of react to one extreme with the other extreme, right? I feel now more in the middle with a synthesis. You try to integrate the different aspects of your experiences of life together. But it's definitely a weird combination, not gonna lie.

⁵⁹ Scheriff, “A Descriptive Case Study of Homeschooling,” 60.

In David's case, previous hostility appears to turn into understanding once he goes off to college and/or in his career, in turn, recognizing the benefits of the pushing parent.

When discussing their parents, productive involvement is a continual thread mentioned. Nyah states:

We had a lot of extra curriculars and part of why we did was, again, my mom was this amazing instigator. She would be able to get discounts because she would help bring students to the instructor. And by getting certain students to sign up she was able to get a discount so we could be in so many different things.

The desire for the success of their child led these parents to get involved in any manner they could. This does not only involve pushing on an academic level. According to

Murphy in *Homeschooling in America: Capturing and Assessing the Movement*,

A number of parents tell researchers that they are sensitive to the chill of separation. They homeschool because they want to be with their children, to be a part of their growth and learning to a much greater extent than is possible when children are away at school (Gustavsen, 1981; Lyman, 2000). They enjoy being with their children and do not want to turn them over to the care of others no matter how well intended or competent those others may be (Hegener & Hegener, 1997; McCurdy, 1997). To do so, they maintain, would be to deny themselves critical aspects of satisfaction that accompany the parental role (Guterson, 1992).⁶⁰

Many of my interviewees felt positively about parental attentiveness. Some students, like Amanda, were grateful for the devotion provided by her parent midday which would not have been possible had she been at a traditional school:

My dad actually worked really close by, so I remember him coming home for lunch, which was really unusual. He owned his own business, so he was able to drive the five minutes home every day and have lunch with all us kids, which was awesome. It was super unique to have him around, and he would always ask what are we doing today or what are you guys working on. That was a really cool family dynamic that I remember.

⁶⁰ Murphy, *Homeschooling in America: Capturing and Assessing the Movement*, 101.

This lunchtime interaction with her father was something valuable to Amanda, creating a bond with family that may or may not have been as cultivated through a traditional school experience. Kayla, likewise, shares her appreciation for maternal awareness when educating, sharing some of her experiences:

Sometimes, every so often on a Thursday, my mom is like “let’s just go outside today. We don’t have to do this.” Which now I see as a parent, that’s just good parenting. We don’t need to be doing the same thing every day all the time. We are not tiny workers; we’re still children. That’s the part I appreciate about homeschooling. Having a parent or a guardian who cares in the room to be like, okay – math isn’t going so well today. Obviously, everyone’s brain is not in the mood for structure.

The flexibility of homeschooling is cherished here, permitting Kayla to learn in a tailored manner unachievable elsewhere. Having the parent actively involved and present is repeatedly mentioned and appreciated. Amanda shares:

My dad didn’t really take an official subject, but I feel the beauty of the whole family buying into ‘hey – we’re doing this all together’ can really benefit the kids seeing that as all one vision. As a family unit to be like, hey – we’re all doing this together.

Some students, like Kayla and Amanda, had parental figures more involved in their education than others, as noted above. According to Scheriff, “[...] families expressed a desire for high levels of academic challenge. One parent was emphatic that “challenge” was the most important thing in a homeschool program and other parents agreed that challenge was important, although with a different ranking of importance”.⁶¹ Joseph mentions his pre-homeschool days, which later also bled into his homeschool experiences with his mother:

My mom was notorious, even when I went to public school earlier, that I was a pretty bright child so I would be able to finish my homework really quickly. I’d get good grades and catch onto stuff pretty quickly. She would always push me.

⁶¹ Scheriff, “A Descriptive Case Study of Homeschooling,” 60.

Even when I was in public school, she would say, “Oh, are you done with your homework? Here’s some more.”

“But mom, I already finished!”

“Here’s some more.” With homeschooling she definitely pushed me as well and encouraged me to really reach my potential. So a combination of self-motivated, but more mom-forced would be more accurate. But that’s what she’s supposed to do so I’m grateful for it.

Joseph’s mother took a more active role in his studies, while students who had the co-op/charter/independent study faculty guiding them possessed more dissatisfaction overall, sharing mixed feelings on their ability to succeed in college and beyond. In “Homeschooling and the Question of Socialization Revisited” Medlin states, “On the Self-Report of Personality measure, students attending conventional schools described themselves as having significantly more problem behaviors than did homeschooled youth. They also expressed a more negative attitude toward school, and their composite “school maladjustment” score was significantly higher”.⁶² While this questionnaire was completed utilizing traditionally educated students, the findings could potentially be applied to those homeschoolers who had minimal parental involvement in their education, effectively creating more of a “traditional” school atmosphere. Nicole examines her experiences with the lack of academic demand:

The only thing I now sometimes regret, and they were just doing their best. Like I said, I didn’t feel like it was, in hindsight, super academically demanding as well as what I did mention which was expecting a lot of you as far as, “You could go to a really great school and start off not just still figuring things out.” Not that we’re not all figuring things out, but I felt that was the norm coming out of graduating from high school. “Okay: now try community college and see how that goes,” instead of having more direction.

Justin further builds on Nicole’s comment by discussing his time in college:

⁶² Medlin, “Homeschooling and the Question of Socialization Revisited,” 290.

It actually ended up taking me two-and-a-half or three years to finish my two-year degree because of that. And some of it, I think, I'm the youngest of four. My parents have a lot going on. You know what I mean? Just didn't really take the time to look into it or go through the whole process of how do you navigate college. How do you navigate declaring a major and having a clear path? It was just kind of like: take some classes and see what happens.

In other words, for these students, high parental involvement during the K-12 years encouraged later success in college and/or career despite objection from their children at the time.

Life After Homeschooling

Interestingly, exterior locations could not offer the same support a parent could to their child. Two students in particular reference the influence their parents held over their college paths, both of which shared positive outcomes and/or gratitude. Joseph says:

I don't feel my co-op was super involved in my college process. It was more, what I remember from it, me and my mom. Because when I went to a four-year university, she was the one that said, "Hey – there's this humanities honor's program. You should do that." So I was like, okay. I applied for it and they saw my SAT score and were, yeah you're in. My mom was the one who played the role of what a guidance counselor would have played. I know there were counselors at my private high school. But it was really more my mom who was the one digging for those opportunities and making sure I was as set up as possible.

Nyah reinforces Joseph's experience, recalling:

I feel my parents were a really amazing resource. They really supported me in applying for college and they really wanted me to start at a community college. I started at 18 so it was a good segue from being a kid to an adult. They were really my support system. But my mother does not have a college education and my dad has very minimal college education, so I felt I had to figure it out myself. My independent study helped me to independently research, how do you apply to a junior college? And how do you actually get into certain classes and what classes do I need to take? I don't even remember ever going to a counselor. I just remember going online and figuring out myself what classes do I need to take and when do I need to take them to get a degree. I was pretty self-sufficient. I used my parents as resources for support.

Justin's views support the two above, sharing his thoughts on the influence of his parents not just on a college path, but also on his life as a whole:

Going into the work force, it's hard to separate between being homeschooled versus working since childhood. Establishing a work ethic, a sense of responsibility, a sense of wanting to do a good quality job and stand by your work. That sort of thing. Growing up in a home where your dad is self-employed, you're homeschooled, all those sorts of things, in general your culture and your attitude is very independent. It was easy for me to just take responsibility in that sense.

Overall, those with parents who were more involved and held a higher level of influence over their choices and education felt they could attribute their later success to the early pushing their parents provided them. As Nyah expressed:

I was very dedicated as a student, and I definitely followed through. I was the student that never missed a day of class, I never missed an assignment, I never turned in anything late and that was something my parents instilled in me. Part of that is their parenting style and part of that was their teaching style.

The "teaching style" as mentioned by Nyah is important to note as one can see the clear influence her parents had over her education even beyond the homeschooling experience. Rachel felt the severity of her mother's high level of expectation during the K-12 years. Stevens touches on this subject, saying, "Whether hidden inside an ethos of sacrificial motherhood, derided as unskilled, or dismissed as maternal pathology, it may be that the labors of self-making are kept hidden precisely because they are so costly".⁶³ In adulthood, Rachel came to understand how difficult it must have been for her mother to meet what her mother felt were the demands of this pioneering form of education:

I look back now, shifted my view, and look back with much more merciful eyes at my parents and the fact that I do believe they were doing what they thought was best. I know that my mom worked her butt off at it. When I imagine trying to keep up with the rigidity that she had established, I'm like holy shit! That is insane. I don't know how you did that cause I could not do that.

⁶³ Stevens, *Kingdom of Children: Culture and Controversy in the Homeschooling Movement*, 197.

For many of the participants in this study, a combination of contemplation, success, maturity, and even parenthood provided an understanding of how and why their parents' chose to instruct in the manner they did. As with most things, time and distance offered reflection, empathy, and perhaps even appreciation for their education.

As previously mentioned, the uniqueness of the homeschool experience of each student reflects the uniqueness of home life. Nyah, Justin, Joseph, Rachel, and Nicole, all share different interactions with their parents, ultimately leading to different positions on the same topic. Their take-away on their own success appears to correlate directly to the level of involvement their parents played in their educational experiences. Data from this study suggests that children with higher parental involvement overall recorded higher success and satisfaction in their later adult lives than the alternative. However, additional research is needed to confirm this pattern in a broader population of homeschooled students.

Recognition of Sacrifice

Recognition of sacrifice in order to achieve a homeschool experience for their children is likewise expressed by several interviewees. Joseph states:

It was a big sacrifice for my parents financially. My dad was the only income earner. To be able to do that was a big sacrifice they undertook for me. In terms of added perspective that I have now, I don't think my perspective has really changed because I feel like I was so involved with those decisions that it was the same me that decided those things as I am today.

Whether the student was able to note the financial expense to the family during the occurrence of the home education, or if it came with hindsight, is unknown. Scheriff addresses this demographic concern in his case study saying,

Of the respondents, the range of family incomes was from "\$30-50,000" to "\$140,000." [...] The pattern of results indicate that homeschooling families are reticent to share information of family income, but of those that responded, there was no significant difference in incomes between homeschool and district families.⁶⁴

This can indicate families are either financially burdened or middle-class, with none in the top income brackets. Indeed, of the interviewees in this thesis who responded to the demographics question, one indicated being "low/poor income" with the others responding as "middle class". As middle class is a subjective terminology due to the fact it is based upon the recollections of those who, at the time, would have been youth perhaps not privy to the financial situation of the family, it is difficult to gauge where the interviewees fell socio-economically when being home educated.

Yet financial sacrifice is not the only cost to the family by their decision. As reflected by Nyah:

I know my parents' decision to homeschool us was definitely out of tremendous love and sacrifice. For their belief system, they really wanted to make sure that they were teaching a Christian education. And that they were really in control of what we learned, and we didn't get exposed to certain things that a lot of kids get exposed to in the school system.

Her thoughts are mirrored by Justin, who says:

I'm very glad my parents decided to homeschool us. There were times when I was younger that I felt I was missing out on other opportunities and sports and things like that. Then in hindsight, you realize it's really not that important. Some of that is just the difference between being a kid and being an adult. I'm glad my perspective only changed slightly. And in some ways, I was at times proud to be homeschooled because I knew the quality of the education was a lot better than what some of my friends were receiving.

Amber, who did not switch to a home education until high school and thus did experience some of the situations mentioned above by Nyah and Justin, muses:

I wish I'd started earlier. I've told my parents that. I definitely loved doing independent study, and my parents were shocked when I asked to do it and

⁶⁴ Scheriff, "A Descriptive Case Study of Homeschooling," 55-56.

thought something went wrong at school. They put a lot of trust in me because it's not something that was common in my community by any means. They trusted that I'd figure it out. But it took them a few months into it to realize it was a good thing.

Interestingly, the precise occurrences Justin and Nyah's parents were attempting to spare their children from are what Amber experienced, which led her to seek out an alternative mode of education with the support of her parents. Rachel shares what she believes her mother must have gone through attempting to secure a strong educational foundation for her children, explaining:

I certainly have grace for my mom. She did not have an education background, which I now have an education background. And even just her personality; she is a "one", she is a type-A, very by the book perfectionist and, I believe, she probably had a lot of anxiety of, "Am I doing this right? Are my kids gonna be able to survive in higher education; in life?" There's a lot of fear that fed into the way she chose to structure things.

Parental involvement appears to be valued later on in life by the student, contributing to the fond memories of being educated at home through whatever method is utilized.

Parental involvement in the lives of their children, to some degree, is inevitable.

When examining the stories of the participants above, it is interesting to note the importance of parental relationships and the impact it inexorably had. Like all things in life, there are positives and negatives shared, including the potential difficulty of balancing the roles of being both parent and educator, as well as parental involvement with children beyond an academic capacity. Ultimately, the data presented in this study found participants developed an appreciation in adulthood for parental sacrifices made in order to homeschool them. Overall, the individuals I interviewed for this study were grateful for the opportunities given to them and often even opted to duplicate the home education path with their own children, in turn, creating a new generation of homeschoolers.

Chapter IV.

Religion

The notion that all homeschoolers are religious is a stereotype which prevailed in the early days of homeschooling and has only been challenged more recently by the influx of homeschooling brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. Scheriff addresses this prevailing myth in “A Descriptive Case Study of Homeschooling and Implications for the Future of Public Schools” saying, “The belief that homeschooling is primarily motivated by religion has allowed school officials to relinquish responsibility for parental dissatisfaction or non-selection of the public school option. If, however, leaders viewed homeschooling as an informed choice with multiple motivations they might examine the trend in order to meet more fully the needs of all their constituents”.⁶⁵ Despite the fact many homeschoolers are secular, there were a significant portion of my interviewees who did incorporate religion into their education in some manner. They mentioned the public school systems as a point of contention in regards to their parents’ decision to homeschool.

Of the eleven interviewed, nine participants mentioned religion affecting their homeschool life in some capacity. Six discussed it in a favorable light and three mentioned it in a mixed manner. The two who did not mention it appeared to have been homeschooled in a secular capacity. These findings are notable as it tells us not all

⁶⁵ Scheriff, “A Descriptive Case Study of Homeschooling,” 9.

homeschoolers are religious and, of those that were, recollections of their religious experiences were primarily favorable.

Within this chapter's overarching theme, religion prompted several interesting categories including how religion played a part in the day-to-day life of our interviewees, how it assisted in shaping their moral values, and the manner in which their parents built a community of support around them based upon Protestant Christian values. Lastly, it also prompted discussion for a few former students on the manner in which either their parents or religious communities attempted to restrict or shape their mindsets and world views. In this chapter, only interviews with religious homeschoolers will be examined.

Day-to-Day Homeschool Life

Interestingly, the incorporation of religion into their daily homeschool routine was mentioned in neutral tones, explaining the usual day in a matter-of-fact manner. Rachel said:

We would get up in the morning usually around seven or seven-thirty. We ate breakfast, got dressed in our uniforms, [...] we are Catholic and there are daily worship services, so every morning we would go to the church down the street from us. That was from eight-thirty to nine. Then we would come home at nine.

Attending daily worship was prevalent; however, some others incorporated it in alternative ways, such as Amanda, who shared:

My mom would get her tea or coffee, and we would sit in the living room and do our morning Bible studies. It was about eight or eight-thirty after everyone was up and dressed for the day, she would have us sit down in the living room on the couch or wherever we wanted to sit. She would lead us in a morning Bible study. And we did all sorts of different things. We would do quick little devotions, and then we would have a Bible verse to memorize for the day. Sometimes we would go through a book of the Bible. [...] It was usually three or four questions at the end, and then we'd do our own journal time.

Having religion become a part of the curriculum is mirrored by Nicole, who recalls:

As a Protestant-Christian, family faith was a big deal. [...] I would actually start the day with a devotion time. And then end up spending tons of time doing that, and my mom would be an hour and a half later knocking on my door, 'Okay! Time to move on to a different subject! You're still praying in there; I can hear you singing.' That was actually really formative for me to have enough time during the week to develop my faith more.

As depicted by three different individuals above, religion became an integral part of their education. And many, like Nicole, were grateful for the ability to be more in touch and immersed in their faith. Murphy expresses in his book *Homeschooling in America: Capturing and Assessing the Movement*, "[...] studies consistently documented that homeschooling families were motivated primarily by religious convictions and spiritual beliefs. On surveys and in interviews throughout this period, parents routinely told researchers that God was behind their decision to homeschool".⁶⁶ Rachel, Amanda, and Nicole are all examples of parents embodying Murphy's description.

Some students garnered benefits from the fusion of religion and academics, such as Joseph. In high school, he transferred into a dual-enrollment program where he was simultaneously homeschooled and attended a private high school in his local area. Being a religious high school, Joseph was required to complete a Bible assessment prior to enrollment. He states:

As a Christian school, they would do a Bible test for every student that would enter just to see what their familiarity was with the Bible. And a counselor said I was the first person they'd seen that aced the test. So apparently the Christian education was helpful in at least that way.

Curriculum that included immersion in religion plays an integral part of these student's lives. As a result, something like sitting for a Bible aptitude test seems simple. As long as other, more traditional subjects are still being taught and learned with the same level of

⁶⁶ Murphy, *Homeschooling in America: Capturing and Assessing the Movement*, 88.

propensity, then including a religious component can assist in creating a more rounded education.

Building a Community of Influence

Part of pious instruction includes building a community that can be trusted and is beyond the exterior influences the parent is attempting to protect the child from. Joseph describes this portion of his adolescence, highlighting:

I'd say one aspect that is really significant to me, as a Christian, is looking at the relationship between my schooling and my church community. Because for the first twenty years of my life, and in particular until ninth grade before I went to community college, the level of depth that I had of friendship with those relationships is a form of stability and mutual just doing life together and interdependence. That I think is rare in a lot of Western culture. And to have the same friends when you're fourteen years old, and you've literally had the same friends your whole life, just to have that stability and even second mom figures. [...] If my parents needed something, we had plenty of families they could call that they could trust that we knew there were shared values. To be able to have a school that reiterated the values that I learned at church and was part of that safe community was really impactful for me.

By having children exist within the boundaries of this community, it can provide unexpected opportunities for freedom. Hamlin and Cheng discover in their article “Homeschooling, Perceived Social Isolation, and Life Trajectories: An Analysis of Formerly Homeschooled Adults”, “In response to concerns about the link between social isolation and religious fundamentalism, homeschooling supporters contend that children of devout religious families are likely to have enhanced social engagement through close networks and social ties within their religious communities”.⁶⁷ This unique sense of community was reinforced by Nyah, who mentioned:

I would say we were all part of the same sort of group. If I wasn't talking with homeschoolers specifically, it would be another group that we were part of like

⁶⁷ Hamlin and Cheng, “Homeschooling, Perceived Social Isolation, and Life Trajectories,” 336.

our church group. [...] I often knew other friends because we were in within a similar cohort which gave us common ground. [...] I feel all of our circles though were very Christian based, so we had similar morals and values and that shaped the way we communicated with each other or the things that we talked about. If I was a part of a group that was, let's say, un-homeschooled and secular, that may have been an awkward experience. I didn't really have a whole lot of friends that weren't a part of a Christian community, or Catholic community. I think that created a comfortable space for all of us to communicate and share.

The idea of creating a community was expressed mostly positively among the interviewees. Nevertheless, it seems with everything there is a pro and con.

In Dwyer and Peters *Homeschooling: The History and Philosophy of a Controversial Practice*, the authors reference the motivations for removing a child from the parameters of a public education and, instead, placing them in a selected community tailored to their beliefs,

Parents were not shy in articulating their religious motivations for homeschooling. [...] parent from Texas explained, "Our issue in home schooling wasn't purely academics. It was more out of religious conviction. We wanted to pass on to our children our Christian faith, our biblical values and standards. And that cannot be done in the public school anymore." Of course, parents have ample time outside school hours to "pass on" their beliefs to their children, if by "pass on" one means convey or teach about, so implicit was a perception that public schools were not simply devoid of religious instruction but actually antithetical to faith and undermining parents' efforts to ensure their children would always hold the same beliefs.⁶⁸

Joseph discusses what he witnessed as the potential side-effects of this style of social experience on those students who venture out beyond its margins:

there's pros and cons with being in a quasi-isolated community. It's helpful to reinforce values. But at the same time, there's not as much exposure, per say, to other things, which is positive and negative. [...] when you're a homeschooler you still take the SAT test. [...] And I remember [one of my friends] he went to the local junior college after graduating from the co-op and I asked him one day, "So how is it? How's college?" And he's like, "It's like going to SAT testing every day." But he wasn't talking about the boringness of an SAT test, more just the social aspect of it. Of how different it was going to this big place with all these

⁶⁸ Dwyer and Peters, *Homeschooling: The History and Philosophy of a Controversial Practice*, 86.

people you don't know as opposed to people that you've known for the last eighteen years.

Nicole also mentions the limitations within this construct, expressing:

I don't think that our particular community thought very broadly. [...] It was a very integrated community and, in some ways, like a bubble. You go to church here; you go to school here. I would say there was a vibe that I at least felt I picked up on [...] a little bit of 'we're better than the public schoolers. This is what we're doing, and we don't have these negative things that public schools have.' And I think maybe morally there's a lot of truth to that? But I do think academically some of the kids that were in public school from my youth group went to better schools right away and had a wider view of what life could be.

The existence of a seemingly narrow-minded religious community certainly assists in fueling the myth of "all homeschoolers are religious", as documented time and again when discussing this particular educational choice. Joseph and Nicole ventured into explaining the cons of a tight-knit community and the impact on growing beyond its boundaries. Murphy says in *Homeschooling in America: Capturing and Assessing the Movement*, "The extant body of research illustrating the motivations of home educators reveals that the goals are not mysterious or hidden. Repeatedly, consistently, unequivocally, the finding is reported that the primary motivation for most home educators reflects a moral, spiritual, or religious component" and "Religiosity has long been associated with homeschooling".⁶⁹ Quotes such as these hinder the ability for many to see beyond the religious stigmatization of homeschoolers. As elaborated by some select interviewees, attempting to restrict the creation of a worldly mindset was one takeaway they had of their religious home education experience.

The reality of everything having pros and cons is validated here when discussing the formulation of a religious homeschool "bubble." Not all the former homeschoolers

⁶⁹ Dwyer and Peters, 87.

interviewed felt this way and it is important to note most of my participants shared an assortment of thoughts on the incorporation of religion into their education. Indeed, most are still devoutly religious and continue to educate their own children spiritually as well. Nonetheless, some expressed what they thought were potential cons of the community to which they belonged. The variety of topics addressed reflect the aspects they felt either affected themselves or others around them. Nicole said:

I would say I would have liked it to be a place where more questions were allowed and not just the sort of questions where the answers were prepared for. [...] I'm married to a philosopher, who's also a Christian. [...] questions are very much okay. And they're a sign that you're using your mind. If what you believe in is strong enough to stand up to questioning, then it's worth believing in, and we shouldn't be afraid to ask questions.

Tyler says:

Early on, and I think this is a Protestant-Christian bias of Boomer parents more than anything; 'Oh those public-school kids...be careful, you don't know what you're gonna learn from them. They're all gonna go get knocked-up and do drugs.' Now I knew most of the kids that I would interact not through homeschool or private school, were ones that I knew through church. Or knew through dance. Or knew through just being in the neighborhood. No one was terribly dysfunctional. [...] I would say our parents looked down on them. Or maybe even more looked down on their parents for not taking the interest in them to send through private education or homeschooling.

David claims:

[...] it was a bit of a controlling atmosphere to be honest. As soon as I'd hang out with people and they'd hear rumors of things that happened they didn't like it was, 'Oh, you can't hang out with them anymore.' Even other homeschoolers [...] I may have had some kind of friends. I wouldn't say they were of my own choice. It's kinda like 'here's five people who are your age. That's all you got!' [...] I think I viewed my socialization as almost a negative thing. Like, 'they're going to expose me to drugs and alcohol and sex with women.' It was almost verboten.

Kayla concluded with:

My mom taught Bible study for a long time so she would teach me how to study the Bible. Coming across a word in the Old Testament, then looking it up in the dictionary, and cross referencing it, [...] It can take you down these long deep rabbit holes, that often segue with other cultures and religions. When you are dealing with a primarily evangelical Christian perspective, they don't want you to

do that. [You're] being encouraged to do research and use your brain, but not being encouraged to look outside this one little box.

In order to understand more the realities these students faced, one can turn to

Romanowski as he discusses the mindset behind the philosophy driving this method of education,

The ideologues' argument is essentially religiously based and criticizes the values and beliefs that are taught within public schools. It is often the case that "these parents view the public schools as grounded in secular humanist philosophy that does not include strong Christian values" (Marchant and MacDonald 1994, 66) [...]. These parents have a strong concern for their children's moral, ethical, and spiritual development, and they feel that public schools do not provide appropriate moral or ethical instruction, much less religious values. Therefore, they opt to homeschool their children in an attempt to avoid public school's attempt to strangle religion's influence.⁷⁰

What Romanowski and the former homeschooled students are discussing is the situation of attempting to control the learning environment of their children. By removing what is perceived as negative influences, ideally, they are now able to mold the student without exterior sources persuading them against their teachings. While this may work on many levels, there is inevitably going to be push back or discoverance of an alternative mode of thought at some point, as discussed in the last section of this chapter.

Shaping Moral Values

For the parents who opted for a Protestant Christian education, this decision was partially motivated by the desire to build a set of strong moral values for their children. Murphy describes this drive saying, "[...] for a large number of parents homeschooling has the potential both to protect children from the unacceptable values in play in public schools and society at large and to foster the Protestant Christian perspective that is the

⁷⁰ Romanowski, "Revisiting the Common Myths About Homeschooling," 128.

lifeblood of their families”.⁷¹ The perspectives offered here by different students were developed as a result of their own arrival to parenthood. Justin shares his thoughts on the perspective of cultivated morality as would apply to both his own youth and eventually his children:

One of the things you’re developing through all of your education as a whole is your world view. As a Christian, as a homeschooler, a homeschool family, as a parent that is a big part of your goal. Establishing a solid world view for your kid so that as they’re going out into the world and they’re faced with all these contradictory ideas and opinions, they know what they believe and why they believe it. I felt pretty strong, pretty rooted in my world view coming out of being homeschooled, coming out of being from the co-op.

When one becomes a parent, a reexamination of life and the role one’s own parents played launches. Questioning and wondering what aspects were beneficial, and thus, should be incorporated into the lives of one’s own children comes to pass. As with anything, there are aspects chosen to be maintained and others to be discarded when developing a path of guidance and education for new youth. During this self-reflection, Justin reevaluated the desire for his parents to solidify strong moral values as something important to him as a parent. Rachel muses:

My perspective is that [...] you can have the same choice, or something that looks like the same choice, and you can be choosing for a good? Or you can be choosing against an evil. And I think that homeschooling is a place where that really plays out. [...] Initially, and to this day among religious homeschoolers, homeschooling was chosen as something against an evil. When homeschooling is done specifically as ‘I want to protect you from society or these kinds of ideas’ that can be really harmful. Personally, rather than choosing to face things head on and engage, whether it’s a world that you agree where it’s going, and not even subjects where you agree on where the subjects or the topics are, removal from something rather than choosing to engage with it based on your belief system [...] can be really damaging. That is something I feel is a potential harm with homeschooling. Because I look and I see so much of my ability to engage outside of my own view, those were things I really had to learn and be conscious of as an adult. That was something that was not very integrated for me.

⁷¹ Murphy, *Homeschooling in America: Capturing and Assessing the Movement*, 89.

Both Rachel and Justin opted to homeschool their children as adults, though they did not begin that way. As their children grew into their local school systems, they found dissatisfaction with the manner in which their children were learning in both public and private atmospheres. Joseph, likewise, presently has his children in a local homeschool co-op. He reflects on his experiences, saying:

For public school, you learn as a Christian where those values are taught that are different than the values that you have. You learn how to deal with that in a hostile environment that's sometimes antithetical to those environments particular in a place like California. Then in a homeschool environment, you learn how to be self-motivated. You learn how to set your own pace, you learn how to be self-starting, and when even nobody is giving you something, to continue moving forward with the task. And that has been extremely helpful for me. I have been a self-employed business owner for pretty much my whole adult life and even as a teenager. [...] in private school I learned how to navigate those social environments that were really challenging. [...] I really do feel like I got the best of all the worlds.

For these three individuals, homeschooling was ultimately a positive outcome and the religious component an important aspect in shaping their mindsets and futures. They opted to guide their own children in a homeschooling environment with some level of religious integration. Joseph, Rachel, and Justin reflect the religious beliefs held by most of my participants in this study. Contrastingly, the decisions of two interviewees are not as clear-cut and exploration is still occurring as to their individual approaches.

Challenging the Community's Influence

For participants David and Nicole, the religious portion of their education was not the part to which they objected. Instead, it was the control from the community they were a part of they reflected as not always being entirely positive. Nicole highlights:

With the school that we went to, being a little more of a conservative Christian bubble, it is kind of an interesting experiment to see who all came out of that. Or how they turned out and who has chosen to completely stick with it. And not. I

would say the majority of people that I know now we're parents. [...] most of the people I grew up with have not stayed specifically in that bubble of 'I wanna do exactly what I experienced.' And part of that I think is the world has changed so much. [...] Most of the people I grew up with have rethought 'what do I want to do'.

David sums up the experience, stating:

Because for [my parents] homeschooling was a means of restricting our influence by what they viewed as negative worldly forces. In terms of homeschooling [...] most of the people I met that were homeschooled had a lot of fundamentalist religious beliefs. I've since met one person who [had] more liberal, hippie parents, which would be a very different experience of the world. [...] I feel that's an inescapable part of why these parents, at least in my homeschool groups and networks [homeschooled]. It's hard for me to disentangle all these aspects because they're inextricably linked. [...] it was more of they wanted us to not be tainted by the influence of the world. Which I view as that's not going to result in very adaptive children who are well suited to handle real life.

Nicole expanded on David's thoughts, sharing:

I do think in ways that [my] co-op school was a little bit a reaction to the culture. Especially in somewhere like California. [...] I don't want to say it was fear based? But like, 'Ooo, we don't want to be like these so we're gonna start something.' As opposed to, 'Let's try to create excellence with the goal.' I didn't feel like that was the goal. It was more [...] guarding the traditional family and pioneer like we're going out west and we're doing our own thing. But we're keeping an idealized version of what a family should be. [...] It didn't feel people went there because of the academics. It felt maybe a little more protective, a little bit guarding, and don't cross this line. Don't be like those people.

What is interesting is, without having left home and entering college, neither would have realized the cultivated construct in which they lived. By leaving the controlled atmosphere of their parentally chosen community, their horizons were expanded in a manner previously unknown. Hill and Redding discuss this occurrence in *The End of Adolescence: The Lost Art of Delaying Adulthood*,

Leaving home loosens the ties to the people and places that have long been the center of daily life. Moving to a new context gives youth the opportunity to define their identity on their own terms and to separate themselves from past expectations (Cicognani et al., 2011; Hormuth, 1990). Distance from home also provides the space to question ideas about the world and to refine previously held beliefs (Chow and Healey, 2008; Johnson, 2017; Perry, 1999). These beliefs were

originally honed within deep and complex relationships with parents and affirmed through close friendships.⁷²

Hill and Redding perfectly sum up what occurs for the religiously home educated students who branch out and depart from their tight-knit communities. While there are some who were content within its margins, others want to explore beyond its boundaries. In the process, they learned about themselves and where they fit in conjunction with their own individualistic religious beliefs. While Nicole remains a devout Protestant Christian, her children are not educated at home, and she is unsure, at this time, whether she will homeschool them. David did not reference his current religious state, nor does he have children. Nonetheless, he expressed doubt on whether homeschooling is the route he would select as his primary mode of education should he have children.

Despite the drawbacks mentioned throughout this chapter, there are homeschoolers who do not share those sentiments. Amanda elaborates:

How beautiful your parents teach you characteristics and things about God, and how the world works. Why can't that continue into education? I think it's a beautiful option, and I really never had, other than I still remember crying over math, I never had a 'I wish I could be in public school' or 'I wish my parents would not have chosen this' or 'why did they' kind of thing. I never really had that. I still don't.

Her thoughts echo most of the students interviewed for this thesis yet are likewise unique to her individual experience. Diving into the religious world of my participants, the outcomes of a Protestant Christian education are shown not to be straightforward. Beginning with explaining how religion was incorporated into their daily routine, to how morality shaped the homeschooler by both their parents and hand-picked communities; faith played a large part in the formation of these nine participants, albeit both positively

⁷² Hill and Redding, *The End of Adolescence: The Lost Art of Delaying Adulthood*, 14.

and negatively. The concluding thoughts of those who felt more passionately regarding their devout backgrounds indicate the potential shortcomings of educational choices with a limited world view. Whether homeschooled in either a secular or religious fashion, in the end, the singular choices of each family group as well as individual experiences are what ultimately structure each distinct student for life.

Chapter V.

College

One societal measure of academic success is whether or not an individual attends college. In today's world, the need for a bachelor's degree in order to "succeed" in Western society continues to increase. According to Fuller and Raman, "Postings for many jobs traditionally viewed as middle skills jobs (those that require employees with more than a high school diploma but less than a college degree) in the United States now stipulate a college degree as a minimum education requirement".⁷³ It has become a given next step on an educational path. Entrance into college at one point was a topic of uncertainty for a homeschool student. Admissions were something new, needing to be battled for both students and parents hoping their children would continue onto higher education post-high school.

Of the students interviewed for this thesis, all but one attended college. And of those that attended, all but one graduated from a four-year university. Many others further continued onto specialized degrees or master's programs. The early interactions of these interviewees on how they entered college and what steps were taken by either themselves, their parents, or both, are similar and yet diverse. Many discuss their experiences with college admissions and how that was navigated. The culture shock or

⁷³ Joseph B. Fuller and Manjari Raman, "Dismissed by Degrees," *Accenture, Grads of Life, Harvard Business School*, October 2017, 2, <https://www.hbs.edu/managing-the-future-of-work/Documents/dismissed-by-degrees.pdf>.

naiveté many former homeschoolers experience is perhaps predictable to some, yet the ability to time manage or be independent may be a surprise.

College Admissions

One of the first steps for getting into college is the admissions process. In this, the interviewees were candid with their descriptions of navigating the systems in place. This challenge is not new. Gaither says in his book *Homeschool: An American History*, “In 1986 ninety percent of the nation’s colleges and universities had no explicit homeschooling admissions policy. A recent study found that by 2004 over 75 percent did and that the vast majority of admissions officers surveyed had very positive feelings about homeschooled applicants”.⁷⁴ Often, interviewees cited their parents as a knowledgeable resource or support network for getting into college. Their sentiments are mirrored by Amanda, who says, “My parents were both college graduates, so they were super supportive of getting info when I had to apply and all that sort of stuff. I never felt like I was left out.”

The first line of information for a homeschooler is typically their parents. Amanda and many of the former homeschoolers found strong, positive resources in their parents.

This support was likewise felt by Nyah, who shared:

I was very nervous to take a college class. I actually didn’t want to go to college because I didn’t think I was prepared for it. But my dad made me do it because he told me that I couldn’t say I couldn’t do something if I’d never tried it first. He really wanted me to try it. It was one of those things where I felt, I didn’t feel ready even though I actually was mostly ready for it. But it was so unknown it was the fear of the unknown. It didn’t go without some tears along the way.

⁷⁴ Gaither, *Homeschool: An American History*, 213.

For their parts, their parents worked hard to verify where their children needed to be and what they needed to do in order to succeed in being admitted. Sorey and Duggan in “Homeschoolers Entering Community Colleges: Perceptions of Admission Officers” state, “Although it is simple to suggest homeschooled applicants should be required to complete the same admission procedures as their non-homeschooled counterparts, in reality this may not be a simple process. Homeschoolers are different in that they may have different documentation or possibly no documents to submit for evaluative purposes”.⁷⁵ Nyah and Amanda were among the fortunate students whose parents were highly involved in their college process. Joseph shared his similar situation, stating:

It was, what I remember from it, me and my mom. Because when I went to a four-year university she was the one that said, “Hey – there’s this humanities honor’s program. You should do that.” So I was like, okay. I applied for it and they saw my SAT score and [said] yeah, you’re in. My mom was the one who played the role of maybe what a guidance counselor would have played. I know there were counselors [...] But it was really more my mom who was the one digging for those opportunities and making sure I was as set up as possible.

Having high parental involvement in the process would have been invaluable for the student attempting to navigate the potentially difficult process of admissions. Of the interviewees for this thesis, four said they went to a community college first. However, the four who mentioned they transitioned straight to a four-year university did so due to their parents pushing, as exemplified by Joseph above. With attainment of an undergraduate degree transcending into a societal expectation, the resource of parental influence over college can be viewed as merely another step in the educational journey involving both parent and child.

⁷⁵ Kellie Sorey and Molly H. Duggan, “Homeschoolers Entering Community Colleges: Perceptions of Admission Officers,” *Journal of College Admission* no. 200 (2008): 27, <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/trade-journals/homeschoolers-entering-community-colleges/docview/219140233/se-2>.

For those homeschoolers who had less involved parents in the college process, the transition was not as straight forward. Nicole recalls:

When my class graduated from high school, there were fourteen of us in the co-op. Probably half went to the local community college to start out. Like, “I’m not sure what I want to do, but I’ll go here and start some classes.” But it wasn’t like they were ready for “I know what I want to do.” And then a few people started straight in at a four-year university. Maybe. Maybe actually no one did? Some people were like “I’m just gonna not do college. I’m just gonna maybe do something else, or trade school, or whatever.” That is one regret I have. Not being pushed to go somewhere, not that the name matters more than it does, but I do feel the scope wasn’t super high. There was not a lot of talk of “its college application season”. In hindsight I see the lack of it.

Justin, likewise, felt the ramifications of a lack of involvement from either his parents or co-op. He said:

I feel I didn’t have a ton of direction, or guidance, hand holding...any of that stuff. It was: here’s a catalog, here’s some classes you need to take to fulfill requirements, and just picking classes that fit your schedule. Kind of under the impression that the first two years you don’t really need to declare a major you just need general education. That was the feeling I have. I’ll just do the general education while I decide what I want to major in. In the meantime, I’ll just take a couple random classes here and there.

For both Justin and Nicole, their experiences highlight the lack of guidance from their co-op system. Sorey and Duggan elaborated on how,

The majority (73 percent) of the officers' colleges did not provide special programs, workshops, or services for homeschooled applicants and/or their parents. Several respondents commented on the special needs of homeschoolers, with one suggesting, “Although we treat the homeschooled students like concurrent students, we recognize that they need help navigating the college process”.⁷⁶

Simply because parents have a desire for their children to continue into higher education does not indicate parents know how to navigate the system in order to assist them. This can create some difficulties for the homeschooler as they attempt to apply to admissions. David explained:

⁷⁶ Sorey and Duggan, 27.

I didn't have formal resources through the program at least. But on the other hand, my parents were very into the idea that you must be academically successful, and that's how you succeed in the world by being smart and doing well in academics. I did get to do practice tests. I did have resources from that perspective of my parents were putting me in practice tests and such. But if they hadn't done that, I don't know that there would have been any.

Practice tests, while helpful, are not exactly the whole admissions processes. Sorey and Duggan mention, "Homeschooled applicants may not be comfortable with the institutional approach found in many community colleges. What seems normal to those of us who work in higher education – from an application for admission to financial aid and placements tests – may be a foreign language to a homeschooled applicant".⁷⁷ Yet despite the struggle surrounding higher education, all three student examples above continued on to college and thrived. Justin received his AA degree, Nicole her bachelor's degree, and David has multiple advanced degrees and certifications. Thus, while guidance into college admissions processes was lacking, it was perhaps not as much a hinderance as it could have been.

Integrating into College Life

Homeschooled students, once arriving to college, discover they have strengths their traditionally educated peers battle with instigating into their routines. One such strength revealed was their ability to both time manage and be independent on a level their traditional peers appeared to struggle with as undergraduate students.

I remember articulating to people at the time, I had spent most recent years managing my time. It is kinda funny when you think about it, you take high school students who have spent eight hours a day sitting at desks, and then you give them a regular college schedule. And I remember people being, oh – I have so much free time. And not understanding, not knowing how to manage. You have to do all this other stuff when you're not there. I remember, and again I took

⁷⁷ Sorey and Duggan, 27.

a year so I was a little bit of an older college student, but I remember being like, “what is wrong with these people?” I don’t know how you expect to get all this done. It’s not all gonna happen. In that sense, and that’s part of why I think hybrid schools are such a valuable thing. They take the pressure off the parents in a lot of ways. It is much more what higher education would look like.

Above, Rachel goes in-depth into the transition of college schedules and witnessing her peers struggle with the structure of a college week versus a K-12 one. Bolle, Wessel, and Mulvihill reported in “Transitional Experiences of First-Year College Students Who Were Homeschooled”, “The students indicated that homeschooling helped them develop the ability to learn on their own, good study habits, self-motivation, how to be responsible, flexibility in learning at their own pace, and self-discipline”.⁷⁸ Further, the authors note: “All five of the students who lived on campus cited homeschooling as equipping them with time management and study skills needed to succeed in college”.⁷⁹ Several other interviewees also discuss this, such as John, who says:

One big benefit I felt I had at the university was I had already had practice setting my own study schedule. I already had a layer of studying discipline that a lot of my peers were learning there at school. That was one advantage I had.

Nyah reinforces both comments above, recollecting:

Some of the benefits were just independence. Being able to organize my time, follow through with deadlines, be really responsible. Now as a college educator, I’m often trying to teach students how to just be a student and part of that is just responsibility and understanding how to commit to timelines and create timelines and sticking with them. I felt like that really prepared me for that and part of that was how my parents taught me. The value that they had in homeschooling. It may not have been their homeschooling directly, but it was their indirect modeling, and their indirect teaching of what it means to follow through and be responsible and be independent. Those were some of the biggest things that created success for me.

Another who felt this way was Amanda, who shared her thoughts on the topic:

I would say the co-op school was a benefit to me because it was a better transition having gotten assignments and stuff two days a week from other teachers besides my mom. And it was you have an assignment, and it’s up to you to pace yourself

⁷⁸ Beth, Wessel, and Mulvihill, “Transitional Experiences of First-Year College Students,” 640.

⁷⁹ Beth, Wessel, and Mulvihill, 648.

out to get this done by the deadline. I feel the co-op school helped me learn independent study as opposed to if I'd been totally homeschooled that whole time. Because going to college when you only have your classes once or twice a week really helped having that structure segue into college for me.

Interestingly, John, Nyah, and Amanda were all homeschooled through different platforms. John had a combination of home, co-op, and charter school homeschooling; Nyah was fully at home with her parents, and Amanda was a combination of home and co-op. Despite utilizing different methods to homeschool, it seems to result in a similar cultivation of both independence and time management skills. Thus, it could potentially be concluded it is the process of home education itself that creates this readiness.

However, further research would need to be conducted in order to prove this point.

Amber, educated through an independent study program sponsored by her local public school, reflects:

I think the most valuable years I had were the ones I spent doing independent study. [...] It gave me some really great skills. I don't know if I would have gone as far with my education had I not had that time to learn how to study on my own and gain those skills that you need as a homeschooler/independent study.

Co-op and home educated Nicole concludes the series of insights with:

I like to joke that I've never had a normal five day a week rhythm that's the same five days a week since I was like ten. Because junior high/high school was with the co-op every other day. Then you go to college and you have Tuesday/Thursday classes and Monday/Wednesday classes. I loved the variety of it.

Perhaps the unintentional preparation in independence which homeschooling offers lends itself to creating a student who is able to handle a college atmosphere more effectively.

Romanowski in "Revisiting the Common Myths about Homeschooling" states,

Homeschooled children generally score at or above the national averages on standardized tests. The ACT publisher reported scores of 1,926 homeschooled students from the graduating class of 1997. These students scored higher than the national average in English, reading, and the overall composite of the ACT. However, there was little difference regarding reasoning skills (Ray 1999).

Evidence indicates that homeschooled children learn the “right” things without attending public schools.

Universities and colleges all over the nation realize that homeschooled students are well prepared for the academic rigor of college life. In analyzing college ability, Galloway and Sutton (as cited in Klicka 2003) found that homeschooled students demonstrate comparable academic preparedness and achievement in college as students from conventional schools. Their conclusion: Homeschooled students perform satisfactorily in college level academic settings.⁸⁰

While there are other aspects homeschoolers are likely lacking when entering the college atmosphere, the nearly universal feeling of being prepared to time manage and being independent is undeniable.

Culture Shock

Naiveté and culture shock were components of college that some sheltered homeschoolers reported struggling with. Amanda put this phenomenon into words, stating:

I'd say a drawback was the culture shock. I had other family friends that were not homeschooled but there's so much age range when you go to college or around a college campus just the range of walks of life and stuff, you can't really prepare your kid for that unless you've been verse in that sort of thing. I don't know how sheltered compared to other people just, wow – that man has a lot of tattoos. I don't know that I've ever seen someone with *that* many tattoos. Someone would want to do that? I probably saw stuff on TV, but I don't know...maybe it was different sitting next to someone in a classroom. And then, now we're working together on this project...okay, great. A detriment would be the culture shock of having to interact with people you're not totally used to.

She herself admits to the inexperience she has in interacting with other people outside her typical circles. Bolle, Wessel, and Mulvihill's study addresses the issue raised by

Amanda, reporting,

When going to college for the first time, students encounter others with value systems different from their own. This was true for the students who were interviewed and especially for the students who came from a Christian

⁸⁰ Romanowski, “Revisiting the Common Myths About Homeschooling,” 128.

background. Some of these students had little interaction with people different from themselves. For them, meeting others with different values was especially enlightening and eye opening.⁸¹

Justin explains witnessing this struggle among his homeschool peers:

we weren't very sheltered as homeschoolers. I hung out with the kids in the neighborhood all the time, we had ex-cons living in our home...we weren't sheltered from things of the world. It was interesting when I went to community college, there were other kids that were homeschooled. Some of them came from my co-op. And it was for some of them, a complete shock to their world to be at a public community college. Some of them couldn't handle it very well. I knew people that dropped classes because one of their teachers used a swear word in class, and they just couldn't handle it.

Justin did not feel this was an issue for him; yet for others, it was. In "Homeschooling and the Question of Socialization Revisited", Medlin examines the research surrounding college integration of homeschool students,

Studies of homeschooled students who have gone on to college have shown that they were "successfully integrated into the college culture" (Holder, 2001, p. vi), as indicated both by the students' own report (Jones, 2010) and by objective measures such as the number of extracurricular activities in which they were involved (Sutton & Galloway, 2000).⁸²

The ability for parents to prepare their children for the "wider world" is possible, considering Justin did not feel he faced any social issues upon arriving to college. Thus, it cannot be assumed all homeschoolers will be hit with "culture shock" when entering either college or the work force.

Another aspect of homeschool naiveté reported by those interviewed here was ignorance in social situations. Tyler states:

Socially I had blind spots. I still can remember conversations where I had no idea what people were talking about. Most of the time that was either pop culture references, or music, or something that I just wouldn't have clicked into. But I don't know that I would have clicked into those had I gone to a fulltime school anyway? Being a somewhat nerdy introvert.

⁸¹ Bolle, Wessel, and Mulvihill, "Transitional Experiences of First-Year College Students," 645.

⁸² Medlin, "Homeschooling and the Question of Socialization Revisited," 292.

In his situation, Tyler did not feel that, had he attended traditional school, it would have been any different for him. Nevertheless, the bubble he describes was also expressed by other students, such as David, who said:

I feel I didn't have very good social awareness, social skills, interpersonal skills, sexual relationship skills. And not just the sex part, but gender dynamics, how to meet women, how to talk to them. Full spectrum of how to be a balanced adult. [...] There's a lot of aspects...I was privileged looking back, but I didn't realize the bubble that I was in.

The ability for a parent to control and guide their children when they are home based is extensive, potentially leading to the creation of a sheltered young-adult. Interestingly, in the study "Homeschooling, Perceived Social Isolation, and Life Trajectories: An Analysis of Formerly Homeschooled Adults" conducted by Hamlin and Cheng they found similar situations among their sampling of interviewees, subsequently reporting,

most adults found that their transition into higher education or the workforce was smooth from a social standpoint, but they highlighted an early process of social adaptation where they had to learn mainstream social norms, and, in some instances, overcome social gaps between the interactions they were accustomed to as homeschooled children and social expectations in higher education or workforce settings. Several adults recalled having culture shock at first.⁸³

Typically, many of the interviewees for this thesis did not notice how sheltered they lived until outside of it. Amanda expressed:

I met a couple of families we would hang out with but...I don't know maybe my parents were good at filtering out bad influences or something because I remember them being pretty normal. Or maybe on the conservative side of public-school kids? And I didn't really notice a huge...not till college then I was like, "Woah!"

Whether or not the experiences above are a disadvantage to the homeschooled child remains up for debate. Some individuals, such as Nyah, felt it was a service her parents afforded her. She shares:

⁸³ Hamlin and Cheng, "Homeschooling, Perceived Social Isolation, and Life Trajectories," 348.

growing up, I wasn't exposed to any of that. I was among a lot of really wonderful Christian, homeschooling folks where I didn't experiment with anything. It really protected me from this tainted world. With that again, a double-edged sword, I was pretty naïve growing up, and I'm really glad I had close friends that were good and caring because I think I could have maybe gotten myself unintentionally into a not-so-great situation. I didn't realize what was going on just from being really naïve. With everything there's a balance, there's always a pro and a con.

When choosing to homeschool, many parents, both secular and religious, had aspects of traditional schooling they were perhaps not particularly fond of. This may have been a reason they sought out an alternative method of education for their children. It is possible the “bubble” described by many homeschoolers was an intentional direction the parent chose to pursue due to the social portions of traditional education they were dissatisfied with. This may have been due to experiences they, the parents, had when they were in traditional schools in their youth. Other aspects that may have influenced this direction could also be altering political and social times or not having access to school systems parents felt were good enough for their children. According to Scheriff,

A large number of homeschool families reported that their decision is motivated by concerns about school violence and unhealthy cultures within schools (Angelis, 1998). Recent research indicates that thirty-one percent of homeschooling families reported that the primary reason for their decision to homeschool was the environment of traditional schools (Kunzman, 2005; Leubke, 1999; Lyman, 1998). Parents who chose homeschooling reported fears about crime, drugs, and student safety in schools (Grubb, 1998). Many homeschool families see the family unit as superior to other social structures and use education as a way to strengthen the family and to communicate family-centered values. [...] Home school parents see themselves as the role models to mold and guide their children and value the opportunity to transmit their values through home education (Angelis, 1998).⁸⁴

The reasons behind the choice to homeschool can be vast and multi-faceted. Thus, coming to any exact reasoning here is fruitless.

⁸⁴ Scheriff, “A Descriptive Case Study of Homeschooling,” 26-27.

Nevertheless, the ramifications of parental choices during the K-12 education of their children manifested in college. There were other disadvantages those interviewed discussed on an array of topics from never having used scantrons before, to being unfamiliar with school spirit and student life, or even being ill-prepared for group discussions and/or presentations. Yet, these can be universal struggles when transitioning into college regardless of schooling type. A traditional private school may not introduce scantrons or group presentations. A student can choose to be intentionally reclusive and, in turn, not participate in either school sports or events regardless of what schooling method they attended.

There were, however, two former homeschoolers interviewed who did mention some very interesting insights into the idea of transitioning into college from being homeschooled. One felt unconfident and ill-prepared, while the other found it positive and “easy”. Nyah, who struggled with the transition into college, explains:

I would say, because I was homeschooled, I went to college feeling very unconfident and like I didn’t belong. And when I went to college, I met a really amazing instructor. That instructor gave me the confidence to share in the class, and he shared with me that I did have something valuable to say. I felt very seen and heard and known by this instructor. I never thought that I could feel so seen, heard, and known, and that I do belong in such a public setting.

Because he made me feel that, which I didn’t even know was possible, and it was such a gift for me that I felt like I belonged somewhere, I felt I had something important to say, and it changed my life really. I wanted to be able to give that gift back to the same community. That whoever might be soul searching, lost, not really sure of their identity, feeling like they don’t belong; I wanted to provide them that gift of no – you absolutely belong here. You have something important to say. In this class, you are going to discover yourself and the importance and the value that you have. Did my homeschooling influence that? Yes, because I came to college feeling less than confident. And then by being in a certain class I gained that confidence, and I gained self-awareness. I wanted to provide that gift for future students.

That which Nyah divulges she attributes to her time homeschooling. Still, it is possible to enter college with the same array of emotions and concerns regardless of schooling method.

Rachel's experience with college contrasts Nyah's. She highlights:

Looking back on it now, I think [homeschooling] had positive and negative effects. I would say the positive was I found the transition, and then potentially into the work force, I found it significantly easier than a lot of other people my age. I think the fact that I knew how to manage my time per se. But I'm the oldest in my family so I'm kind of used to, there wasn't a lot of attention or focus on me. I knew how to learn without a lot of support or focus directly from an educator. I could go to class and get whatever I got out of class; I could generally figure out what it was, how I needed to fill the gaps. Or any of those more independent types of learning weren't particularly hard for me. Especially in the early years of college. Academically I did fine. I knew how to figure out what a teacher wanted and give it to them. I was always a straight A student through undergrad. [...] There were parts that were hard certainly, but I felt well prepared. I didn't feel particularly overwhelmed or anything in college.

Here, we must hark back to the original thought of homeschooling being a unique experience for each student due to the uniqueness of each parental group. Rachel felt well prepared for college. Nyah did not find the same confidence until working with a professor who assisted her in finding herself. Both were fully homeschooled during roughly the same years, yet with vastly different views on their level of conviction and readiness.

Nyah's desire to give back to the students in her classroom is not solely geared towards assisting only college-bound homeschoolers. She references anyone feeling as she did to be her target audience. Thus, whether her experience can be exclusively attributed to her homeschool years seems, perhaps, narrow. The level of preparedness a student feels when entering college, regardless of the manner in which they are homeschooled, does fall largely on the shoulders of the parent and their choices educationally, the level of involvement the parent chooses to have in the college

admissions process, and the overall guidance they provide from the start of the parent-child academic journey together.

Parental involvement can assist in easing the stresses of admittance into college for the home educated, encouraging early success. Many of the students with less parental involvement, nevertheless, managed to navigate the system and similarly thrive. Higher education can be a daunting task; homeschoolers are no less excluded from this thought. Learning to navigate college admissions, student life, naiveté entering the unknown while leaving behind the familiar, and discovering strengths perhaps previously unidentified, are all a part of the university experience felt regardless of your schooling method.

Chapter VI.

Stereotypes

There have been many stereotypes placed on homeschoolers throughout the years. These are frequently in the religious or anti-socialized realms. Homeschoolers can be judged through a lens of ignorance, thus, leading to inaccurate assumptions and reactions from both children and adults. In Watson's thesis entitled "Perceptions of Homeschooling" she discusses the issue of stigmatization based upon homeschooling being "non-normative",

Because homeschooling is non-normative and the practices surrounding it are not familiar to many individuals, it is subject to stigmatization and stereotyping. Stereotypes of homeschooling include the misconceptions that they are unsocialized, socially and educationally handicapped, bad citizens, elitists, extremists, and limited in their education and mindset. These stereotypes continue to be perpetuated by socialization agents such as formal educational institutions and the media.⁸⁵

While conducting interviews with my participants, there were some common themes that emerged which may be a surprise.

The notion of homeschooled students being "weird" or "different" surfaced in discussions with all eleven participants in this study but does not seem to appear often in the literary sources available to us on homeschooling. In contrast, the subject of socialization continues to be one of the main questions most homeschoolers seemingly will, at some point, contend with. Yet, as discovered in the interviews conducted by this study, socialization was not such an unachievable notion as many might believe. Bullying

⁸⁵ Watson, "Perceptions on Homeschooling," 1-2.

due to homeschool status appeared when my interviewees dug into their recollections of their years as children, and their experiences with such persecutions are subsequently discussed further in this chapter.

During the Homeschooling Experience

The Concept of “Weirdness”

Both during and post home education, inaccurate assumptions of the student may be made. According to Watson,

Homeschoolers have been perceived in a number of ways, both positively and negatively. Negative perceptions about homeschoolers appear to be more prevalent than positive perceptions, as evidenced by the number of negative stereotypes that exist about homeschoolers. Researchers examining this topic state that the biggest misconception about homeschoolers is that they are unsocialized. [...] Homeschoolers have also been referred to as “social misfits”, “socially and educationally handicapped”, “backwards”, and “elitist”.⁸⁶

Throughout the interviews, all eleven participants mentioned assumptions about the “weirdness” of homeschoolers being addressed on some level. Additionally, they themselves framed their view of being different to others in some capacity. This concept of “weirdness” came up organically in each of these conversations.

Knowing that teens and young adults are particularly susceptible to criticism, it is not surprising that it was a dominant thread. Bonduelle, Chen, Wu, Braet, De Raedt, and Baeken explain the reaction of the average individual to social judgement in their article “Exposure to Criticism Modulates Left but Not Right Amygdala Functional Connectivity in Healthy Adolescents: Individual Influences of Perceived and Self-Criticism”, “As

⁸⁶ Watson, 5-6.

social beings, we are wired to care about what other people think of us and to pick up on subtle cues of social rejection. A seemingly mild example of social rejection is criticism, which can actually be quite impactful”.⁸⁷ With this information in mind, the following recollections of my interviewees could be construed as foreseeable. Nicole reflected on times when she was put in a position of describing her form of education:

It was annoying every time someone asked you where you went to school. To have to describe it because it was so unusual. [...] It did feel like, why can't I have an easy answer to this question? [...] There were times where I was more or less sold on the idea during it. When I would be like, 'oh I wonder if the public school people that I know are way more normal and cooler.' During those times it would be I have to explain why I'm different, and I don't even know if I'm on board with this totally.

Often, when speaking with the participants, they shared feelings of being different to others their age who attended more traditional schools. Mirroring Nicole's remarks, Rachel shared her perspective on growing up with homeschooling:

I think it bothered me. [...] when homeschooling was brought up, it felt like a reminder of "you're weird". You're not doing the thing everyone else was. So, it wasn't necessarily that I felt like people were being overly critical. It was more just like, I didn't like it cause it was a reminder of being different.

Justin's interactions with other school-age children further fueled the thoughts of being different as a homeschooler, which he'd already perceived:

Sometimes there was almost this feeling of you have to prove yourself cause you're not going to a 'real' school. You have a friend who's going to public school and they're saying, "Well, have you learned about Supernovas??" And you're like, "Yeah! I know about Supernovas." [...] It was usually kids that were acquaintances, or you'd met for the first time. They had to ask more questions.

⁸⁷ SLB Bonduelle, Q Chen, G.R. Wu GR, C. Braet, R. De Raedt, and C. Baeken, "Exposure to Criticism Modulates Left but Not Right Amygdala Functional Connectivity in Healthy Adolescents: Individual Influences of Perceived and Self-Criticism," *Front Psychiatry*, July 2021, 2, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8290839/>.

One of the biggest stereotypes mentioned by my participants involved the wider public questioning the validity of a home education. Amber discusses her transition leaving public education and entering homeschooling as follows:

A lot of people weren't aware of exactly what independent study was. So just educating them mostly. I would let them know *yes*, it's a high school diploma. *Yes*, I'm going to college. *No*, I'm not pregnant.

Most participants mentioned having encounters with stereotypes in some capacity. Some reactions could be construed as simultaneously positive and negative. For instance, Amanda says:

I mean, not to toot my own horn, but people were usually shocked that I was. "Wow – really? We always think homeschoolers are so weird," and the whole stigma. I think usually people were pleasantly surprised.

Amber subsequently/later put a positive spin on the concept of being "different", citing her father's support as influencing her to embrace the path she was on:

I liked that it was different, and I liked I was paving my own path, *per se*. I think that is something my father always made me feel good about: there's nothing wrong with doing something different. That gave me confidence in my decision.

John also discusses how the support of his friends would assist in helping him feel included despite the differences that were present:

There were sometimes when I was with a group of friends who all went to the same public school. They would have had experiences, or teachers, or other things that they shared that I just wasn't part of because I wasn't in that social circle. But I feel like I had a good group of friends. They were all really aware of how my situation was different and they all were really inclusive in that. So, they would explain to me what I was missing. Or we'd just find things we could all talk about; movies that we'd seen, or this or that. I felt like, while things were a little different, I feel like everyone involved did a good job of making sure we bridged those gaps well.

The stigmatization of homeschoolers into a "weird" category is hardly surprising. Many of the participants in this study primarily referenced individuals who were unfamiliar with the subject of homeschooling. Such limitations created a barrier between the

“weird” homeschooler and society at large with subsequent generations parroting this unfamiliarity, as noted above by those who encountered judgements from both children and adults alike. In the late 1980s – early 2000s, enough time had not yet occurred for broader society to comprehend this alternative educational choice. And yet, there were those former students who still had supportive and understanding individuals surrounding them, such as John. His experiences show once knowledge on a subject is present, acceptance and integration can be achieved.

The Question of Socialization

Social situations naturally arise in the lives of individuals. Yet, one common stereotype found to be held is the question of socialization. Romanowski debates many of the common myths surrounding homeschoolers in his work “Revisiting the Common Myths about Homeschooling”, explaining,

the assumption that traditional schooling offers socialization experiences that home- schooling cannot is flawed. Schools are not the only place that children can learn these basic life skills. There are other institutions, groups, and activities outside the home that can provide students with age-integrated opportunities to gain needed socialization skills. Nelsen argues that “home schooled children are more frequently exposed to a wider variety of people and situations than could be expected in a traditional classroom environment where their exposure is limited to twenty-five to thirty-five people of similar age and socioeconomic background” (1998, 35). This seems to be an advantage for homeschoolers. From research findings, Galloway (as cited in Medlin 2000) concludes that because home-schooled students are not peer-grouped in school, they learn to get along with a variety of people, making them socially mature and able to adjust to new situations.⁸⁸

Many people tend to be unaware of the degree of socialization homeschoolers actually receive. In fact, parents are highly aware of the issue of socialization and are thusly

⁸⁸ Romanowski, “Revisiting the Common Myths About Homeschooling,” 126.

motivated to seek out situations for their children in order for them to interact with other people of all ages. Nyah provides one example of this approach:

My parents did everything they could to ensure that throughout the week I had several different activities that I went to. And those activities really socialized me, got me knowing other people, I wasn't just this person who sat at home and did school all day. That was something that, if anyone ever said something like, "Oh well, homeschoolers just stay at home all day – they don't ever socialize." I would feel 'yeah, *some* homeschoolers, but not my parents'. My parents did a really, really good job at that. But there were other people that would say that homeschoolers are awkward and yeah, there are a lot of homeschoolers that are and it kinda ruins it for the rest of us. There is a chunk of homeschoolers who create the stereotype. But know not all of us fit in that mold.

Here, Nyah is explaining how her parents went out of their way to make sure she was interacting with individuals outside the home and having outside experiences. And while acknowledging that there are some homeschoolers whose parents may fall short on this aspect of education, the vast majority conscientiously attempt not to. According to participant Tyler:

I don't think I ever managed to fit the stereotype of anti-social homeschooler. I'm very introverted, but I have lots of people I am friends with. Some of which I have lost touch with over time. But like I was saying earlier, there are people that I am still in touch with. They were here on Monday for Halloween that I went to elementary/co-op with. Or we interacted through Boy Scouts when we were ten years old that I'm still in touch with. And most of them were homeschooled too.

Tyler's experiences were common among the eleven homeschoolers I interviewed.

Despite parents making a seemingly successful effort to educate their kids in social situations in addition to regular scholarly studies, many of those outside the homeschool circle continue to question whether socialization is occurring for the home educated student. In "Homeschooling and the Question of Socialization Revisited" Medlin states,

The research indicates that homeschooling parents expect their children to respect and get along with people of diverse backgrounds, provide their children with a variety of social opportunities outside the family, and believe their children's social skills are at least as good as those of other children. [...] Compared to children attending conventional schools [...] research suggest that they have

higher quality friendships and better relationships with their parents and other adults. They are happy, optimistic, and satisfied with their lives.⁸⁹

Medlin's findings are echoed in John's comment about his friends who would aid him when the question of socialization came up. The mere fact that John had understanding and meaningful friends willing to debate other questioning adults reinforces Medlin's conclusions. John says:

I feel like there were situations that it arose, but I don't feel like it became a thing. I found a lot of times I had friends coming to my aid. I had a number of situations growing up where someone would ask, "Are you afraid that you won't get the social interaction that you need?" And I had friends that would come to bat for me like, "Well, you know, cause John is such an anti-social kind of person, you know. He struggles a lot with that, right?" I found that often times my education and my friends were my defense against those kinds of questions and doubts.

Here, John describes how his friends understood when he needed support and would attempt to defuse the situation through humor. However, the implication of stereotyping him was still present. Kayla offers an interesting insight into the phenomena of questioning socialization:

"How are they socialized?" Yeah. Know what's funny though? No one ever thinks well, this interaction we're having right now, which is really random and bizarre while my kids are standing here, counts as socialization.

Interestingly, the instances when a homeschooler will agree with a stereotype is typically in relation to others. When sharing their own situation, they tend to disagree with the assumptions made on their lack of socialization. As Nyah states:

But I would say too that what I often found myself saying was, "Yeah...you're right. A lot of homeschoolers are kinda weird." Some of us are really awkward. And I'm really grateful though that not all homeschoolers are like that. My parents did really great job in socializing me. And that's probably the one part where I always felt very proud of with my family and that I always defended it. My mom and my dad didn't just say, "Okay, you're homeschooled, we're sticking at home. You only learn here." They created experiences for us where we learned outside the home.

⁸⁹ Medlin, "Homeschooling and the Question of Socialization Revisited," 284.

Nyah is expressing how her parents went above and beyond in order to combat the potential issue of remaining only at home. And yet, even with parents, friends, or other relatives being aware of the socialization aspect of education in order to create a whole individual, there are those homeschoolers who felt insecure about their method of education. This caused some level of anxiety when interacting with others from outside their sphere. John says:

There were times when I wondered if I was prepared to enter social situations that were unfamiliar to me. As a matter of education, I always felt pretty prepared. There were times when I would question mid-process “hey, how is this going?” But I would get results back from standardized tests and I was always doing fine. So I felt like I was doing okay when it came to education, like how much I was learning. But particularly with social situations where there’s less of a metric, there were times when going into a new situation I would wonder, and occasionally even stress, about how it would turn out.

Due to stereotyping he had received in the past, John was, at times, wary of social interactions due to how he may be perceived. There is a sort of “style” a person with a home-based education can tend to create. Kayla mentions this, explaining:

I will say there does tend to be the socializing aspect, but like we're saying that can happen to you in school and not in school. But the part of you that knows when you're talking to a homeschooler, that part of the social aspect, I don't know what you call that. That part of us as homeschoolers...I feel there's a larger portion of us who have not learned how to blend in with the rest as well as others have.

Occasionally, the homeschooler can stick out in a situation, as mentioned by both John and Kayla above. However, one question remains, as referenced by other interviewees: is this due to their self-perceived differences or the judgements placed upon them by others over which they have no control? An interesting observation which would require further inquiry beyond what could be accomplished in this thesis.

Bullying the Homeschooler

The characterization of homeschooling as “different” and “weird” throughout the 1990s and early 2000s led many students to receive a certain measure of “bullying” by peers. Amanda recalls:

It would come back to people almost making fun of homeschooling. That is the only thing I can remember: getting teased. Like “Oh, that’s right you were homeschooled;” those situations that come up where you’re like “well, I guess that’s true...but that’s not a reason to put someone down.”

In some of her experiences with others outside of her homeschooling group, Amanda was teased for an educational decision that was not her choice. The conclusion to homeschool fell upon her parents, yet Amanda was the one being tormented by her peers. Indeed, homeschooling is often the decision of the parent; and yet, it is frequently the student who lives the ramifications of the stigmatization. Amber states, “I did get a lot of push-back and people were mean about it. Especially in high school. Kids can be so mean, and I did have that. I did have some negative feedback with that.” What is seen with Amber’s comment is that: it’s not simply adults who stereotype homeschoolers, but other children as well.

Situations can be unique to the individual; there is no conceived knowledge as to why a family decided to homeschool. Perhaps there were deeper reasons, or perhaps they were topical. Yet stereotyping remains intact even when others are not expressly downplaying their educational choices as heard above. David expresses:

Looking back, I probably got a lot of, “Oh that’s interesting...*nerd*.” But I didn’t see that as such. I probably just didn’t pick up on a lot of the cues that people were giving off. Like now, I feel I pick up things a lot more than I used to because I didn’t know how to look for certain cues, body language, or what not.

David was either too young or too naive to perceive others are judging him for the decisions of his parents. Such a situation is unfortunate, but not unexpected. According to

Medlin “[...] homeschooling remains controversial. For example, it has been argued (most articulately by Reich, 2005) that homeschooling permits a kind of “parental despotism” so absolute that children may “fail to develop the capacity to think for themselves”. They may grow up to be “unfree” and “civically disabled”, and a pluralistic democracy such as ours depends upon citizens who are “self-governing and self-determining persons””.⁹⁰ Stigmatization around homeschooling in the 1990s and early 2000s led to situations such as the one David faced. He was judged for the decision of his parents to homeschool, in turn living out said judgements all the way into college.

Interestingly, people outside the homeschool sphere are not the only ones who judge. There are also those within the homeschooling community who seek to pass judgement on their peers as well. Tyler shares a story in which he is excluded from a particular after-school activity due to his “hybrid” homeschool status:

We had a mixed group between people who went to the co-op, a two-day a week school, and people who were five-days a week homeschooled. And there was a schism there in that they collectively did not feel we were truly homeschooling. There was, if you’re taking to folks from [my area], there was, I don’t remember what it was formally called, but it was always colloquially called the County Homeschoolers. There was another ISP, and it was a much more loose ISP. Mostly of parents who were much more “we will teach you every subject and you will learn the subject our way.” But an example was they had a speech and debate group that they did. And I wanted to join the speech and debate group. But I was not a County Homeschooler. I was a co-op homeschooler and I could not join. [...] Stands out in my mind to this day. Being...I will abuse the term...discriminated against for being a hybrid homeschooler. And not from public schoolers, and not from private schoolers, but from homeschoolers who thought they were that much more nose-in-the-air about it. [...] But it was an interesting thing that I still remember of the people who were most against my form of homeschooling were other homeschoolers.

⁹⁰ Medlin, “Home Schooling and the Question of Socialization,” 284.

Religious homeschoolers may judge the secular homeschooler; similarly, fulltime homeschool families may judge part-time or independent study homeschool families.

Kayla underlines these thoughts with her comment:

Even the stigma within the homeschool community. It's fine that you want to homeschool your children with an all-Christian curriculum, and it needs to be fine that I don't. Because I'm not coming over there, yelling at your kids "God's not real!" But from the religious community, there very much is like a, no you're not homeschooling in the *right* way if you're not doing it with the religious aspect very strongly attached to all of it.

With the vast variety of homeschooling options, opportunities, and styles, it is possibly predictable there are those within the homeschooling community who decide it is their place to judge other homeschool families for their decisions. Yet as we have seen throughout this study, there is no right or wrong way to educate and it is ultimately up to the individual families to determine what manner works best for them and their children.

Stereotyping during the K-12 homeschooling experience is unfortunate, but not unsurprising. It is during those formative years most students receive instruction at a traditional school in a specific manner: with one teacher per classroom surrounded by children all the same ages. Thus, if vying from the normality of a traditional school, stigmatizing homeschoolers as "weird" may be unsurprising. Similarly, "how are they socialized" is a likely follow-up question as homeschoolers are not being socialized in a conventional manner. The ultimate subtle and/or blatant bullying home educated students experienced is a probable side-effect of the unknown, a natural categorization of homeschooling during its infancy in the 1990s – early 2000s.

After the Homeschooling Experience

Following all the stereotypes placed on homeschool families and children, as outlined above, one would believe these situations would cease to arise once the K-12 portion of one's education has concluded. However, this does not appear to be the case as expressed by my interviewees. Ten out of eleven interviewees for this study attended college. Out of those ten, nine graduated with bachelor's degrees at a bare minimum. Four shared they transitioned to a community college prior to a four-year university, and four others went directly to a four-year institution. The last two college attendees did not state where they initially began their university journey.

Despite moving into a new sphere of their education, the concept of homeschoolers being "different" continued to afflict our participants. However, while the stigma is as prevalent as ever, it is primarily the homeschool student noticing how "different" they are as they adjust to college life and to their new college peers. In this chapter, collegiate life is examined from the perspective of a homeschooler's stigmatization, as are the beginnings of dissolving such opinions due to the startlingly unprecedented occurrence of the global 2020 pandemic creating a nation of homeschoolers within the United States.

The Admissions Process

Beginning prior to the college application process, Amber experienced many questions as to the validity of her education and whether it was "enough" to get her accepted into college:

In my area, not a lot of people went through homeschooling or independent study. I remember someone who was a good friend of mine was pretty confused about it and asked whether I would be able to get into college. I ended up feeling very

shocked. She asked if I was only getting my GED since I was doing that, but I told her I was getting my diploma, my high school diploma. And she asked if I could even get into college with it, then asked if I was going to start with community college, which is a great route for many people! But I think she was insinuating that...I think she was confused about the process, and I remember being surprised by the lack of knowledge in independent schooling or homeschooling.

Many students in the 1990s – early 2000s faced such questions as Amber did due to the lack of knowledge on the legitimacy of homeschooling. Further, there was no documented measurable record for home-based students going to college and the outcomes. Bolle, Wessel, and Mulvihill expressed the views of some college administration staff, saying,

many authorities are still concerned about homeschooled students entering college. The most common concern is a fear that homeschooled students lack socialization (Luebke, 1999). Others feel that homeschooled students do not have a broad view of the real world and that homeschooling leads to a sheltered existence without exposure to different people and views. Some believe that homeschooling thwarts the public good because parents focus on their individual children to the loss of the whole of society.⁹¹

It was with these preconceived notions by administrative staff and peers that students such as Amber and Nyah, embarked on attempting to enter into the college atmosphere.

Within the College Community

Once accepted, former homeschoolers faced needing to prove they warranted attending college like any other traditionally educated student. Such difficulties generated self-doubt and uncertainty among some. And yet, according to findings by Bolle, Wessel, and Mulvihill, those thoughts were likely misplaced. The authors state,

Sutton and Galloway (2000) examined the undergraduate experiences of high school students from three different secondary educational backgrounds (public school, private school, and homeschool) and measured success based on five factors (achievement, leadership, professional aptitude, social behavior, and

⁹¹ Bolle, Wessel, and Mulvihill, “Transitional Experiences of First-Year College Students,” 639.

physical activity). [...] The authors concluded that all three types of educational settings prepared students for a college career of comparable achievement, aptitude, social skills, and physical activity. [...] Notably, the results of the study indicated that homeschooled students are adequately prepared to transition and succeed in college and that their college experience is comparable to that of traditionally educated students.⁹²

Such results should bolster the spirits of the homeschooler entering college. Yet years of previous justifications and judgmental conditioning continued to plague certain students.

Nyah expresses her concerns attending college, sharing:

I was worried that someone would say, “Well how do we know that you really know what you know?” I almost felt a little bit like a fraud. Or like an imposter. Here I’m going to college, but did I really have an education growing up? It looked so different than my peers that were not homeschooled. But I felt a little bit like an imposter.

Nyah’s apprehensions of having to prove her merits are similar to some of the experiences of those in the “During the Homeschooling Experience” section above. The questioning of normality also pops up frequently in college, as mentioned by Nicole:

One thing that, I’ve actually been told this a lot of times, “You’re the most normal homeschooler I’ve ever met.” I don’t know if that’s true! Then people get to know me and, “No, I can tell you were homeschooled.”

Tyler also feeds into this same thread, claiming:

It rarely came up. More socially than it would come up in a class. And it was usually ‘Oh, that’s interesting’ or ‘That’s surprising.’ I think they expect if I’m not wearing Birkenstocks how could I be homeschooled. Or I don’t have a mullet. You know, they’re missing some tell that they’re expecting.

Often, the homeschooler is not much different than the traditionally educated student once attending college. Alas, stereotypes of peers searching for “some tell they’re expecting”, perpetuate regardless. The concept of what is normal versus abnormal continues with Nyah who says:

I met my husband in college [and] he’d asked what school I had gone to. When I shared with him that I’d been homeschooled my whole life, I’d never gone to a

⁹² Bolle, Wessel, and Mulvihill, 639-40.

public school, his automatic reaction was, “Oh my gosh, but you’re so normal!” That kinda made me laugh, and I’d heard that before, [...] I heard it more in college [...] Because they had this preconceived notion that homeschoolers are awkward, or they’re not well spoken, and when they met me, I didn’t fit that picture. But I didn’t experience that when I was in grade school or high school. [...] Maybe because I was outside of my bubble, and I’d never really been outside of my bubble before.

The outright disbelief of her normalcy is something society appeared to grapple with.

Others, like Rachel, found ways of spinning their homeschooling, turning it into something “cool” rather than “weird”:

There were many homeschooled people who went to my college. So people were very familiar with the idea of homeschooling. But people usually reacted with, “I didn’t even realize you were homeschooled,” which I always thought was the best compliment. This is what happens when you get homeschooled in Northern California. [...] They homeschooled us, and we’re like weird homeschoolers, but at least they did it in Northern California so it could just be that we were kinda hippie weird.

Rachel sees being told “I didn’t even realize you were homeschooled” as a compliment, which attests to how frequently the idea of “not being normal” arose throughout her life.

The 2020 Pandemic

When the year 2020 dawned, many could hardly anticipate the many changes that were in store: public mask requirements, remote working environments, altered hospital policies, isolation, and even mass remote education, to name a few. For many parents, the latter proved to be a massive adjustment as they were ill equipped for the very real struggles of homeschooling their children. Joseph discusses the phenomena that was the pandemic for shifting perceptions towards homeschooling:

I mean 2020 was a watershed moment for that because people were homeschooling whether they liked it or not. Where I think that before it was a very marginalized activity. Particularly in California, the reputation that is had that the thought in the homeschooling community towards the government in California was that of the government doesn’t really want us to be doing this.

They want to be controlling our education. And almost as a quasi-resistance movement. So when 2020 happened and more and more people that weren't driven philosophically to homeschool, but were driven to lifestyle-wise and out of necessity to homeschool. I think that there was some respect that was added. I know there were moms that were, "Oh my gosh. I didn't realize how hard other homeschooling moms had to work to be able to pull this off and man, my hat goes off to you." I think that a lot more during that time, the amount of respect for the homeschooling community grew in 2020.

Many states mandated remote learning for all grades, from kindergarten through college, including California. In an effort to minimize the exposure of children to COVID-19, many schools closed for in-classroom learning, resulting in enforced home education on an unprecedented scale. For parents who were already homeschooling their children, this came as a non-issue. Most of what was problematic for those parents was the elimination of extra-curricular activities and the limiting of co-op learning styles. Alternatively, for parents with children in full-time public or private schools, their lives were altered in a manner that was unparalleled. The subject of home-based education was unavoidable as everyone was forced to now homeschool, leading many parents to have insight into the subject, and the realities parents of that community faced prior to Covid. Nicole mentions:

with Covid, a lot of people started homeschooling. So I think it's gotten more respect, at least the last two-three years of "wow – homeschoolers did this before they needed to?" and like "this is really hard." Homeschooling parents have gotten more respect for what a big job it is. And I think as there has been more and more decades of people successfully going off to school, in a lot of really creative or outside the box thinkers had the space to become that way in years of homeschooling.

Navigating through this unprecedented and unexpected situation has begun to create even more questions as to the manner in which we educate our nation. With technology, there are fewer reasons for us to leave our homes for work or school. Many of these advancements were put to the test when the pandemic hit. Rachel is highly candid in her

thoughts on the subject of technology with it providing a “fly-on-the-wall” experience for parents on a level never before achieved with traditional school:

I think Covid, honestly, really changed perceptions. Right? Cause when, all of a sudden, you have a screen, because at one point we were doing remote school from our kid’s school. When you have a camera into your kid’s classroom and you realize what it’s like, I’m sure for a lot of people, for me, it wasn’t triggering it was just angering. But I think for a lot of people it was really triggering to be like, oh my gosh; my years of being educated this way, what a miserable situation. So I think that was a part of it. I think people, remembering what school is like, has softened their view on homeschooling. And I think the expansion of homeschooling both in terms of it becoming, and I imagine this is not true in all parts of the country, but in general, I feel homeschooling expanding beyond homeschooling for religious reasons. There being more secular homeschooling has helped change the perception in some ways. And the variety, I feel like now people, maybe not your average parent, but anyone who has even slightly dipped their toe into learning about homeschooling, realizes you can do anything from having a rigid program provided by a school, to doing it online, to Charlotte Mason, to unschool. They realized there’s like a hundred different ways to homeschool. And I think that certainly changes it.

Technological advancements are now enabling parents to take home learning to another level. In turn, schools are beginning to alter their infrastructure to incorporate more and more Internet-based classes. This enlightenment will inevitably modify the way we, as a society, view the accessibility of education to the public at large.

When entering a college environment, the feeling or treatment of being “different” continued to follow the participants of this study despite having moved past their homeschooling education. As they integrated more into college life, these former homeschoolers discovered their ability to hold their own among other students, subsequently, leading many of their peers to likewise accept their homeschool roots. Ultimately, the 2020 pandemic enforcing a nationalization of home studies influenced a reevaluation from the community at large on the subject of homeschooling. Previously held stereotypes were consequently reexamined as the general populace experienced a small taste of what home educators had been doing for decades. This illumination may

lead to an entirely different perspective on homeschooling in the future, particularly as many parents discovered a previously unknown desire to seek out alternative methods of education for their children. Inadvertently, the pandemic may have assisted in the creation of more homeschoolers than ever before seen in the history of our country. A controversial topic in the best of times could now become the new standard, in turn, causing our society to reassess previously held stereotypes about homeschoolers and their educators.

Chapter VII.

Conclusion

Throughout the years, parents, educators, politicians, and outside individuals on the margins have all shared either their support or dissent on the controversial subject of home education. The children homeschooled in the 1990s to early 2000s grew into adults with degrees, careers, children, and or some combination of the above. Yet literature minimally shares their voices. These former students now live as fully grown, contributing members of society, having been schooled in a pioneering manner of education with much to share on the subject and its outcomes. In light of changing times providing opportunities for schooling alternatives, learning all we can from these former homeschoolers is prevalent in order to understand all modes of education.

In this thesis, I interviewed the formerly home educated in order to hear their stories and share their voices. Through interviews, many questions were addressed and explored. The common stigmatization of homeschoolers was a dominant theme when discussing childhood, as were struggles in social situations with traditional schoolers or judgmental adults. Following the transition into college and/or career, everything seems to balance out. Homeschoolers emerge with minimal differences. It is the interim K-12 years that are seen as the most different and potentially difficult.

My findings were surprising on a number of levels, including discovering how many of the formerly homeschooled were now homeschooling their own children. Furthermore, every former student from this study was sought out by either coworkers,

friends, family, and even strangers, during the Covid-19 era spanning the years 2020 - 2022 in order to discuss their schooling experiences and ask for advice. Suddenly, something typically viewed with a skeptical eye was front and center nationally. The information former homeschoolers could provide the remotely challenged parent was invaluable and enlightening.

This thesis discussed the topics which came up most often among the participants: parental dynamics, religion, college, and stereotypes. Within these broader topics, many issues were raised on what both affected them as children and the outcomes as adults. Many struggled in the transition to college from a culture shock or social perspective, yet thrived academically as they felt prepared for the scholastic portion of collegiate life. The beauty of homeschooling is the unique and tailored opportunities it can provide the student. Parent and child are growing together in symbiotic harmony, learning from one another as they go, adjusting the path as needed. This personalized approach can create unique minds that think in a manner more outside the box than the children educated in a more traditional approach.

Another aspect to the homeschool world is the myth surrounding socialization. The homeschool student is typically highly socialized. What much of society forgets when asking this question is how living daily life creates opportunities for socialization. Going to the grocery store and interacting with the counter clerk is socialization. Having friends of all ages, from birth to death, creates socialization on a level a traditional school cannot match. The world outside the K-12 years involves people from all walks of life and all ages. Traditional schools only permit interaction with the people within the walls of the institution, typically involving a single teacher and children all of the same ages.

This does not reflect regular life accurately, nor will it encompass the experiences outside the classroom children will face in adulthood as members of society. Homeschooling typically causes parents to seek out socialization for their children, creating a more diverse and eclectic collection of interaction traditional schools cannot compete with. As with anything, there are drawbacks, and it is possible the student is isolated at home and, in turn, does not experience assorted engagements with anyone in the outside world. However, in the constructs of this thesis, it did not appear to be my finding from discussions with my interviewees.

In the times since these adults were educated, viewpoints have started to shift. At least for some people, homeschooling has begun to find its place as a viable option for education equal to that of traditional public or private schools. The question of “What is homeschooling?” will likely not plague students of the ensuing decades in the way it did for the participants’ of this study. Nor will having to navigate the stereotypes and stigmatization placed upon the home educated student. However, the work of understanding homeschooled students and minimizing stereotypes about this form of education is far from over. The individuals here, and thousands of others like them, are the generations that assisted in shifting the tide of thought through their subsequent participation in society at large. They proved the validity of their mode of education through action, and, in turn, society as a whole is taking notice. My hope is that by sharing their stories, we can grapple with the complexities of homeschooling in a meaningful new way.

Research Limitations

There were a number of limitations which occurred during the course of the research for this study. First was the logistical difficulty of recruiting participants. There were many who responded to the initial modes of communication, but then failed to follow up beyond the preliminary enthusiasm. Furthermore, many would complete the qualifying surveys, but then never respond in order to schedule the actual interview.

A second limitation encountered was a lack of knowledge on the demographics of the participants. Following participation in the interview, only four respondents completed the demographic questionnaire. In turn, as subjects such as race and socioeconomic status were lacking, it is impossible to categorize the participants accurately. For those who did respond on the socioeconomic front, utilizing the term “middle class” is too broad a terminology and can encompass a variety of financial possibilities. These participants were children when living their homeschooling experiences and, in turn, likely were not privy to their parents’ economic situation and thus cannot reliably comment upon it.

A lack of religious diversity was a third limitation faced as every participant in this study was of a Protestant Christian or Catholic background. Subsequently, there are a variety of other faiths not represented here, in turn, reducing the potential generality of the results especially within my chapter on religion. Without a better understanding of the experiences of more faiths, conclusions cannot be drawn in regard to its effects on the broader homeschooled student.

Given the scope and duration of the study, the sample size was small and thus these interviews reflect the experiences of only a select few. Yet, the length of interviews

and the substantive responses offered meaningful data from which to draw my conclusions. Fortunately, due to the near 50/50 split between male and female participants, inferences can be drawn on the unique perspectives offered by each gender, in turn diversifying the findings. Unfortunately, a broader categorization cannot be accomplished unless more individuals were sought and interviewed. Eleven participants are not enough of a pool to find potentially duplicated patterns among homeschool practices.

Future Research

In future, talking with more former homeschoolers can shed further light as to the practices from such a mode of education. The outcomes of home education are becoming more of a common reality as these former students are integrating broadly into society. With the option of homeschooling becoming an ever more popular route taken by parents, by hearing from those who lived the outcomes of the early experiments of parents, the pros and the cons, perhaps certain situations can be both duplicated and or avoided.

Another potential angle that could be explored would be on a post 2020 Covid-19 sample. This might provide a different insight into the issue of stereotypes on homeschool students as the bulk of the nation was forced into home-study programs. Unfortunately, the circumstances on socialization would be vastly different as during the 2020 pandemic, students were required to limit or eliminate such situations. Thus, it cannot accurately mirror the experience of most homeschool students, who participate in a variety of social activities in addition to their home studies. However, conducting an explorative study on the mindset of both adults and children alike, in regard to educating

from home during such unprecedented times, might perhaps reveal perspective or even understanding previously lacking on the subject of homeschooling.

Casting a wider net geographically would assist in broadening and expanding the experiences shared by homeschoolers, in turn diversifying the results. This thesis intentionally limited its parameters to a small radius of about 100 miles within Northern California. Recreating this study nationally would enlarge the sample size and, thus, illustrate a more complete picture on the life of a homeschooler. This information could provide a contrast to the data gathered here and offer insight into the practices of different locations.

Appendix A.

Pre-Interview Qualifying Survey

Qualtrics Survey

1. What is your full name?
 - a. Response: Fill in the Blank
2. How old are you?
 - a. Response: Fill in the Blank
3. Were you homeschooled in Northern California?
 - a. Response: Yes/No
 - i. If “No”, conclude the survey with the following message:

*We thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.
Unfortunately, you have been found ineligible for the study at this time.
Thank you for your time.*

- ii. If “Yes”, proceed with the following question:

If yes, which city/cities were you homeschooled in? (Please list all locations)

Response: Fill in the Blank

4. During what calendar years were you homeschooled?
 - a. Response: Fill in the Blank
5. In what grades were you homeschooled? (Check all that apply.)
 - a. Kindergarten
 - b. First Grade
 - c. Second Grade
 - d. Third Grade

- e. Fourth Grade
 - f. Fifth Grade
 - g. Sixth Grade
 - h. Seventh Grade
 - i. Ninth Grade
 - j. Tenth Grade
 - k. Eleventh Grade
 - l. Twelfth Grade
6. What style of homeschooling did you have? (Check all that apply.)
- a. Fully Homeschooled
 - b. Charter School
 - c. Co-op
 - d. Filled Private School
 - e. Home Study Program through/sponsored by a Public School
 - f. Unsure
 - g. Other
7. What is your phone number?
- a. Response: Fill in the Blank
8. What is your email address?
- a. Response: Fill in the Blank

Appendix B.

Study Consent Form

The following is a short summary of this study to help you decide whether or not to be a part of this study. More detailed information is listed later on in this form.

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?

You are being invited to participate because you are a formerly homeschooled student from the Northern California region who was homeschooled between the years of 1990-2010.

What should I know about a research study?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- Your participation is completely voluntary.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.

- Your refusal to participate will not result in any consequences or any loss of benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you make a decision about participation.

Why is this research being done?

When conducting research on homeschooling, few accounts from former homeschoolers are available. The accounts are primarily saturated with information from parents and educators. This study aims to discuss the experiences of the student educated at home between the years of 1990-2010 through remote one-on-one interviews.

How long will the research last and what will I need to do?

*Your participation in this study will consist of a **60-90 minute interview** to discuss your experiences as a homeschooler. This interview will take place on Zoom or a phone call and will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for you. These interviews will be audio recorded and analyzed for research purposes. You can opt out at any time.*

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

It is important to note that this is a voluntary research study. As such, refusal to participate will not result in any consequences, any loss of benefits that you are otherwise

entitled to receive, impact educational courses or experiences, or affect any future relationships with the researchers or any departments involved.

We do not believe there are any risks from participating in this research. Potential minimal risks include regret or other negative emotional reactions to discussing past experiences. However, this would be no different than other reflective conversations you might have. Your identity will be kept confidential for reporting purposes but will be known to members of the research team.

Will being in this study help me in any way?

While we hope that this experience and the opportunity for reflection throughout the interview will prove to be both enjoyable and informative experience, there are no direct benefits of participating in this study.

Detailed

Information

The following is more detailed information about this study in addition to the information listed above.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to assist in filling in the gaps in the literature regarding the experiences of homeschoolers. We hope through these interviews to better understand what students went through at a time when many were asking, “What is homeschooling?” Our findings will be used to help support other parents, educators, and children in the future. This study, in conjunction with prior work, will provide a unique and powerful lens on the unique experiences of the home educated child across historical contexts. Through this study, I will learn about your experience participating in homeschooling.

How long will I take part in this research?

This interview will last 60-90 minutes.

You will have the opportunity to recommend other qualified homeschoolers to participate in the study, and in turn, assist in providing a voice to the student.

What can I expect if I take part in this research?

There is no preparation needed to take part in this study. You will simply need to find a quiet location where you have privacy in order to participate. You can schedule the interview at a time that is most convenient for you. You will meet with an interviewer who will ask questions about your time as a homeschooler. These interviews will be analyzed for research purposes and stored on a password-protected computer.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?

You can leave the research and stop the interviews at any time. Simply let the research team know, and we will remove your information from the study. We will delete any data that we already collected at that time. You are also under no obligation to participate in any future interviews.

If I take part in this research, how will my privacy be protected? What happens to the information you collect?

Quotes from your interviews may be used in research reports, presentations, and/or publications. You will be given a pseudonym for these purposes to preserve your anonymity. Any identifying details (i.e., name of your hometown) will also be deleted before these findings are shared.

We will record your interview on a digital device and keep this recording on a password protected computer. These recordings may be saved for future analysis.

Compensation

There is no financial compensation for participation.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to researcher directly or reach out to her thesis director at alexis_redding@gse.harvard.edu.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Harvard University Area Institutional Review Board (“IRB”). You may talk to them at (617) 496-2847 or cuhs@harvard.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

If you decide to participate, please complete the following information:

Full Name

Signature

Date

Appendix C.

Thesis Interview Questions

1. What did a typical school day look like and involve for you?
2. Did you have a more structured or relaxed style curriculum?
 - a. What extracurriculars did you do?
 - b. Did you feel your school structure changed between grammar school to high school?
 - c. How did that impact you when you entered college or the workforce?
3. Who was your primary educator (father, mother, grandparent(s), sibling(s), tutor, other, or combination thereof)?
4. Did/do you have any siblings?
5. How do you feel spending so much time with your parent(s)/sibling(s) affected your relationship with them?
 - a. Are you still close to/distant from said individual(s)?
 - b. Did you have a friend(s) outside your family?
6. Was there a difference when you spoke with children who attended public or private schools?
 - a. If so, what was that like?
 - b. What were your interactions with other children your age like?
7. When coming in contact with other adults from the “outside” world, what were those interactions like?
8. Were you ever asked what homeschooling was?
9. At some point did you ever attend public or private school?
 - a. If so, for how long?

- i. Which method of schooling did you prefer? Why?
 - b. If not, did you ever want to attend public or private school?
 - i. Do you feel you missed out on anything by not attending public or private school?
- 10. Did you attend college? Public or private?
 - a. What was your field of study?
 - b. What level of college did you/are you complete(ing)?
- 11. Tell me about the process of getting into college?
 - a. Did you find you had support or resources available to you in the way public or private school students did?
 - b. Did you have difficulty navigating the admissions processes into college?
 - c. How did people react to finding out you were homeschooled?
- 12. Did you find test taking in a formal setting to be difficult?
- 13. What benefits or challenges do you think it left you with transitioning into higher education and or career?
- 14. Overall, what are your thoughts on your education and your parent's decision to homeschool?
 - a. Did/has your perspective change(d) over time?
- 15. What is your present opinion towards education as a whole? Past thoughts?
 - a. Do you believe your homeschool experiences influenced your mindset?
- 16. In your experience, have the perceptions of others changed towards homeschooling?
 - a. Were you ever self-conscious about your method of education?
- 17. Do you have your own children?
 - a. If so, are they of school age? Younger? Older?
- 18. How do you plan to educate your own children (if you have or want any)? Why?

19. Would you recommend homeschooling to other parents looking at educational options for their own children? Why or why not?
20. Did you feel you were put in the position of defining, advocating for, or defending your parent's decision of homeschooling due to the stigma or lack of general public knowledge on the subject?
- a. How did you define, advocate for, or defend your education?
 - b. Did it ever bother you to have to explain your education to others?
21. *Is there anything else you would like to add or share that I did not ask?*

Appendix D.

Post-Interview Demographics Survey

Qualtrics Survey

Thank you for taking the time to complete the interview.

Please know the following survey is completely optional and for information purposes only.

1. What is your full name?
 - a. Response: Fill in the Blank
2. What is your gender?
 - a. Response: Fill in the Blank
3. What is your race/ethnicity?
 - a. Response: Fill in the Blank
4. Are you multi-lingual?
 - a. Response: Yes/No
 - i. Display the following question if the response is “Yes”:

Were you instructed in multiple languages?

Response: Yes/No

5. How would you describe your socioeconomic status growing up?
 - a. Response: Fill in the Blank
6. Is there anyone else you would recommend being interviewed for this study that fits the criteria? Please share their name, phone number, and email address here.
 - a. Response: Fill in the Blank

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