

CASE STUDIES: AFRICAN AMERICAN HOMESCHOOLERS:
WHO ARE THEY AND WHY DO THEY OPT TO HOMESCHOOL?

BY

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ABSTRACT

CASE STUDIES: AFRICAN AMERICAN HOMESCHOOLERS: WHO ARE THEY AND WHY DO THEY OPT TO HOMESCHOOL?

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Homeschooling is not an aberration but a phenomenon which many scholars believe to be associated with the most idiosyncratic individuals. As unconventional as this educational method may appear, the practice of educating children at home is one alternative to charter, public, private, or parochial school that has increased in its appeal in the African American community. To date, there are no large-scale longitudinal, empirical, or qualitative studies about the thousands of African American homeschoolers. The study by Fields-Smith & Williams (2009), found race, religion and home-school interactions as reasons for electing homeschooling. According to African American parents in this study, race, religion, culture, and teacher's low expectations are the most common reasons for opting to homeschool.

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DEDICATION

I could not have made it alone and without the encouragement and support of many family members, friends, and colleagues. Many feel that religion has no place in education, but how can you dissect a person from their beliefs? First, I must give the highest praise to my creator and sustainer, Jesus Christ, Hallelujah, for giving me a sense of purpose and the vision to direct my path to Michigan State University. Second, I would like to acknowledge my late parents, Tazie and Earlene Sherman, who passed away five weeks apart during my Ph.D. journey. I am grateful for their unconditional love and support over the 18 years it has taken me to go from Masters to Ph.D. this dissertation defense & anticipated celebration comes only with mixed emotions as I think of you. Your values in attaining the “most education I can get” is one reason I am here. I do this in memory of you and your love for me; others should be so blessed to have had two parents like you for 43 years of their lives. My children, Alexis Nicole has watched me go through so many changes during her years of life from birth to adulthood-finally huh?? Sydney, not unlike her sister, has never known a time when her mom has not been in school-it would not surprise me to see you as a scholar; keep up the good work and the 4.0 grade point average. Thanks to my many friends, Michelle, Bronwyn, Leezah (Dr. Brown-Ellington), Gene, Jean and Jennifer to name a few for your support and ear from beginning to end.

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

AERA	American Educational Research Association
AAHNET	African American Homeschoolers Network
ATM	Automated Teller Machine
AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress
CAT	California Achievement Test
DOE	Department of Education
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
FOCUHS	Families of Color Using Homeschooling
HSLD	Home School Legal Defense
JBHE	Journal of Blacks in Higher Education
MAT	Metropolitan Achievement Test
NAAHA	National African American Homeschoolers Alliance
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NCES	National Center for Educational Statistics
NCLB	No Child Left Behind Act 2001
NHERI	National Home Education Research Institute
NHES	National Household Education Surveys Program
PFI	Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Homeschooling was common at the church I attended. My church was primarily White but my husband is Black, so my children are biracial. I wanted them to experience the world as Black children not from a White perspective.¹

—Donna, homeschooling mom

I saw some kids at church with negative attitudes, a bad demeanor towards life, and other bad habits; it reminded me of how I acted as a kid. My husband had been homeschooled and had already been a part of this experience.

—LaTrice, homeschooling mom

I have had a mixture of teachers in public schools. When I lived in Georgia, the pre-school and kindergarten teacher didn't know what to look for in my daughter and the teacher's son was in that class. Her first-grade teacher was nurturing, her second-grade teacher was excellent, but her third-grade teacher was just okay. Then we moved to Illinois. After my school district rezoned, the students were mostly Black but all the administrators were White, and they were not willing to accommodate my daughter's needs.

—Rita, homeschooling mom

Initially, I thought it was just weird, White church folks who homeschooled. But my son requested to be homeschooled after dealing with his last teacher and principal in Farmington Hills. He is a high achiever, he was reading at 3 years old. He knew the difference between upper and lower case letters and could read 100 sight words by the time he was 4 years old.

—Rachel, homeschooling mom

We started reading some of the books in the curriculum. There is no mention of anyone other than a White person. It is a lie, it is insulting, and it is not right, so that is one of the most important aspects of homeschooling—that you can empower your child with the

¹ It is important to note the terms: Negro, Colored, and Afro-American are all outdated words for people of African ancestry; however, for periods in time, these terms were appropriate. Today, Black or African American is an acceptable, synonymous term that refer to an individual who belongs to the African American or Black, non-Hispanic community. “The term, ‘African American’ refers to approximately 33 million people who make up 13 percent of the U.S. population with largely African ancestral background” (Mickey, 2008).

truth. We went to the Potomac Bookstore and my son Zebulon said, “Mama, why is everything about Jesus and why is He white everywhere?”

—Monique, homeschooling mom

LaTrice, Donna, Rita, and Rachel are African American homeschooling mothers who have provided a glimpse into their reasons for choosing homeschooling as the approach to education instead of entrusting their children to a charter, public, private, or parochial institution. In lieu of the common tradition of sending the child off each weekday to learn under the direction and supervision of trained pedagogical practitioners, these students can stay home and learn in their pajamas. The opinions and concerns expressed by these mothers are not atypical of the sentiments among an increasing number of African American homeschooling families. For these families, the primary concern is to make sure their children are well-prepared with a solid foundation to become productive and contributing citizens in the United States.

Homeschooling is not a clear concept in many individuals’ minds. In general, little is known about homeschooling. Many people simply do not understand how homeschooling is done, why a family would want to do it, or what kind of person chooses this kind of educational alternative. This research is comprised of four case studies. The case studies enable the reader to learn who these families are in addition to background information regarding their obstacles to public schools and the versatility within the homeschooling movement. Last, this research will attempt to offer a clearer lens for comprehending the situational contexts of African American homeschooling families.

When designing case studies such as these, it is imperative to provide a rich and descriptive context. Yin (2003, p.13) defined a case study as, “...an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when boundaries

between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident....” Therefore, this study triangulates data about African American homeschoolers through case studies, semi-structured face-to-face interviews, and a survey instrument. According to Merriam (1988, p. 8), “A case study can also include data gathered by a survey instrument.” Through this triangulation method, the researcher aims to inform readers by supplying evidence to interpret this “culture’s web of symbols,” in other words, to determine who these African American homeschoolers are and why they have opted to homeschool (Gertz, 1973).

Educational systems have undergone a lot of transition, reform, and turmoil in an effort to improve student achievement to give our students a competitive edge on a global level. There have been countless initiatives to improve the academic standing of our students collectively when compared to systems in other countries worldwide. One of the earliest reform efforts is commonly known as *A Nation at Risk*. However, the complete title of the report submitted by the National Commission on Excellence in Education is: *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. Here is an excerpt from this report:

Our society and its educational institutions seem to have lost sight of the basic purposes of schooling, and of the high expectations and disciplined effort needed to attain them... (p.5). The people of the United States need to know that individuals in our society who do not possess the levels of skill, literacy, and training essential to this new era will be effectively disenfranchised, not simply from the material rewards that accompany competent performance, but also from the chance to participate fully in our national life. A high level of shared education is essential to a free, democratic society and to the fostering of a common culture, especially in a country that prides itself on pluralism and individual freedom (p.7). (U.S. Department of Education, *A Nation At Risk*, 1983)

This passage from *A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (1983) suggests that the United States is a country that allows for diversity and permits individuals the freedoms to promote their political beliefs, religions, and the liberty to select the institution that is best suited to educate their children. Even though homeschoolers are exercising their liberty and for some, their religious beliefs as they home school their children, homeschooling families

remain a minority group because they choose to educate their own children. Many citizens oppose and do not believe parents should have a fundamental right to home school.

In a democratic society, majority rule must be coupled with guarantees of individual human rights that, in turn, serve to protect the rights of minorities—whether ethnic, religious, or political.... The rights of minorities do not depend upon the goodwill of the majority and cannot be eliminated by majority vote. The rights of minorities are protected because democratic laws and institutions protect the rights of all citizens. (U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Information Programs, December 15, 2010)

These freedoms are integrated components of democratic principles. Whether one agrees with the concept of teaching your own children or not, there are implied guarantees under the premise of democratic principles. As U.S. citizens who have inherited the fundamental rights to these freedoms, parents have been empowered to select the educational institution that best supports their own values and beliefs. “Parents” would also include homeschooling parents and their human rights as part of a minority population. In essence, the majority of the population chooses to delimit their options to public, private, or parochial institutions. Fundamentally, only a small minority of the population opts for a different direction by invoking the right to educate their children at home.

Therefore, this research study will present data of a few of the African Americans from this growing segment of the population. Contained in this study are various perspectives of their fundamental right to home school as a viable alternative to public, private, or parochial schools. This chapter is divided into the following subsections: (a) Government Involvement; (b) Homeschooling as an Educational Alternative; (c) Historical Comparison of Black and White Homeschoolers; (d) Statement of Purpose; (e) Purpose of Study; (f) Research Questions; (g) Background and Rationale; and (h) Summary of Introduction.

Government Involvement

It is important to highlight some of the contrasts in government involvement with kindergarten through twelfth (K-12) grade education when examining educational options which include home schools. For the purposes of this study, I will present a brief comparison of the level of government involvement with homeschoolers versus other types of educational alternatives. These two aspects of government involvement with K-12 education are funding and regulation. I submit that these forms of involvement should be compared because as taxpayers, citizens provide financial contributions to public schools. Homeschooling parents are taxpayers and, perhaps, homeowners. Therefore, some of their earnings go to public schools through income taxes from wage earnings or if they are homeowners, their dollars go to public schools through assessed property taxes. There are three typical ways of funding schools: (1) Local spending; (2) Foundation program; or (3) Power equalization program (Munley, V. G., & Harris, M. H. 2010, p.26-27). The level of involvement by local, state, or federal governments varies from state-to-state. Government is involved in the educational process in some aspect. Although this study will only highlight some of the challenges homeschooling families experience to inform the body of current literature, there are opportunities for future research in the areas of financing home school education and the variance in state regulations of home school education.

Government Funding

In general, society may assume the government exclusively supports public schools education only from kindergarten through grade 12. I contend this is not true. Vouchers are available in some state to parents who opt for alternative schooling options such as private, parochial, or charter schools. Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana are a few states who assist parents with alternative schooling vouchers. Tom Corbett, Governor of Pennsylvania, proposed a bill

that would allow vouchers to be used to transfer out of public schools to private or parochial schools. Indiana allows vouchers for private, parochial, or charter schools. Ohio supports vouchers for private and parochial schools. In each of these states, parents who are considering the option of home schooling cannot use vouchers as an alternative to public school, private or parochial schools despite the documented evidence that academic gap between White and Black homeschoolers has closed. Evidence will be stated in the literature discussed in Chapter 2. When it comes to funding homeschooling families with similar support that students would receive in private, parochial, or charters schools, typically, homeschooling parents face barriers to teaching their own children at home.

In a comparison of the financial support given to educational entities and home schools, the government demonstrates a level of disparity with financial support for families who desire to home school and families who select to enroll in other schooling options such as private, parochial, or charter schools. States and federal governments typically support the majority of public schools in the form of grants. When school districts accept state or federal grant dollars, they also accept the regulations that come with receiving those funds. Grants are provided to public schools with a portion of taxpayers' contributions: local, state, or federal assessments. Generally, when a state or federal government provides a grant to a school district, the school district has agreed to expend the money according to limitations and conditions of the specified grant. If the district fails to follow the grant's stipulations, the district will be required to repay the money and could, subsequently, face sanctions in subsequent years. Usually, grants given to districts will pay for supplemental materials to close achievement gaps, provide teacher development workshops and training, purchase supplies or equipment that will increase literacy, and to provide supplemental tutoring services to students who are identified at-risk of failing

either because of socio-economic status, a language barrier, cognitive/speech impairment, or disability, for example. To date, there is no local, state, or federal grant or bank loans to support home schools in the same regards as public schools. However, there are banks that will lend to parents for private school tuition. There are no grants to support home- schooling parents' professional development or training, and no grants to provide supplemental materials to close achievement gaps or to get services for students with special needs. There has been no precedence to support that if given the financial assistance to teach their own children that homeschooling families would not comply with the government regulations.

When examining government assistance to families who teach their children at home, an examination of assistance to parents who teach their children at the pre-school level cannot be overlooked. According to a longitudinal study of a 2001 cohort of children aged birth to 4 years by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), as of 2005–2006, approximately 13% of children in the sample had attended home daycare provided by a parent or relative (NCES, 2008). A daycare often takes the form of a home school when instructional activities are provided to young children in preparation for entering a conventional school program. A daycare is defined as a “daytime supervision and recreational or medical facilities for preschool children, physically challenged people, or seniors wanting special assistance” (American Heritage Online, 2010).

Many times, financial support to open a daycare is available from either public school funding or federal grants issued by the state. Ironically, the government can be identified as a biased home school supporter, because it does provide assistance with a home school in the form of daycare for children who are not required to attend school. However, there seems to be disparity by governments in relation to parents who home school and parents who run home

daycare centers. An argument is that government finally supports home daycares because it provides employment to the parents who run them and they can, in turn, service the community by allowing other parents the opportunity to receive child care by these parents. However, it appears that parents who home school would also provide services to their own children; in some cases, they would also teach other homeschooling children if they are part of a cooperative group. There are federal programs to support Head Start, Pre-School Enrichment Programs, and Early Childhood Block Grants for children at risk and special needs. However, for parents who are interested in educating their children at home, there is no funding when wanting to teach their own children from 0-4 years. However, there are means for parents to borrow money for tuition if the child attends, private, charter or parochial schools in K-12. A review of the literature on homeschooling showed that no studies have addressed the issue of financial support by government or by banking institutions in the form of a student loan to assist with payment or enrollment of online courses and programs for homeschooling families.

Government Regulation

Most local and state governments take a hands off approach with homeschooling families, others do not. For example, states such as Ohio and New York mandate reporting the intent to home school, require the name of textbooks, curriculum, evidence of progress reports and annual assessments such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, CAT, or MAT to the local school district (HSLD.org/laws/analysis/New_York.PDF, 2011-2012). Michigan does not require notification of the intent to home school or monitoring by the local school district. Later, in one case study, you will learn about an African-American homeschooling family in Michigan who utilizes the local public school for special subjects such as gym and the arts program. For states that regulate home schools and monitoring, they do so without providing financial support to

homeschooling families for these regulations. Despite the financial support provided to public schools to support student learning, funding is not given to home schools to provide parent training and development as instructional leaders. This research study is not to advocate that local, state, or federal funds should or should not be allocated to homeschooling families. The purpose of this section of the study is to inform scholars and the limited body of literature on African American homeschoolers that there is need for future research when examining the lack of financial support by the government for financing home school education and for professional training for homeschooling parents.

In recent years, government has become increasingly involved in the homeschooling process. Compulsory attendance laws vary from state-to- state and for states that have more regulations and require monitoring of homeschooling families, those procedures would increase the financial burden by governmental agencies including local school districts and, consequently, tie up human capital resources with the monitoring process. Many governmental entities have filed law suits and passed laws to increase barriers for parents who home school. Homeschooling has been debated in the United States since at least the 1830s. This debate continues today, including the regulation of homeschooling (Ray, 2000a; Burkard & O’Keeffe, 2005; Howell, 2005; Reich, 2002, Ray & Eggleston, 2008).

When parents elect to educate their own children in grades kindergarten through 12, they are often subjected to serious barriers by government institutions. Although as many as 17 states have mandated support of homeschoolers by local school districts in the form of teacher support and extracurricular programs, for instance, homeschooling families find themselves encountering a lot of resistance by public school districts (Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009, p. 382; Smith & Farris, 2011). In some cases, vouchers are given to parents to go to charter schools. In recent

years, parents have faced increased restrictions or legal actions by local and state governments as a way to promote an orthodox educational institution.

These legal sanctions and disciplinary actions attempt to deter parents from teaching their children at home. For example, Richard and Margie Cressy, homeschool parents of four children ages 8 to 14, were recently arrested by the Montgomery County (Maryland) sheriff for failing to report to local school district officials. The arrest took place despite the local district's recognition that the Cressys were in compliance for the 2009–2010 school year (Homeschool Legal Defense Association [HSLDA], 2010). A similar case began in 1984, involving Michigan HSLDA members Mark and Chris DeJonge, lasted for over 10 years, and resulted in a landmark decision in the state supreme court; this decision led to an exemption for homeschoolers from teacher certification requirements (HSLDA, 2009; Shane, 2008). "Today, Michigan boasts one of the best homeschool laws in the nation" (HSLDA, 2009).

The HSLDA cites current examples of legislation and legal cases in which parents are either facing restrictions on their right to homeschool or legal action once they have decided to homeschool. In Illinois, Representative Danny Davis has proposed increased federal grants for creating or expanding home visitation programs (H.R. 2205—Education Begins at Home Act of 2009). As of April 2009, four representatives in Alaska has proposed House Bill 69: Alaska Parents as Teachers Act, which would begin as "voluntary" monthly home visits and parent meetings and health screenings for children; however, the HSLDA fears that this now voluntary program would eventually lead to mandatory visits. Six senators have authored proposed changes to Georgia law that would require parents moving to a new district to enroll students in school or file an intent to homeschool within 30 days of commencing a homeschool program or risk criminal misdemeanor charges of up to 30 days in jail and fines between \$50 and \$500. In

addition, five Georgia House members have authored House Bill 524: Requiring Approved Home Study Programs, which would amend the language in the compulsory attendance law that a child be placed in an “approved home study program.” Currently, there is no “approved” home study program in Georgia. However, in the California case, *Mrs. B v. Community Services Agency*, Mrs. B’s welfare benefits were going to be reduced because the agency said her daughter was not attending high school. The judge ruled that the agency was in violation as it had not defined “attendance at school.” In Kansas, a public school district refused to accept a family’s right to homeschool despite the state acknowledging their right in the case, *Mr. & Mrs. T*, where the parents filed the required "Non-accredited Private School Report" with the state. The school district then had the assistant district attorney file a petition to have the children removed from the home and tried to have the parents pay for their foster care while they were in the system. The public school demonstrated prejudice against the parents and neglected to follow their own truancy policy; the case was dismissed. “An appellate court decision in California in February 2008 essentially marked as illegitimate the educational practices of the parents of an estimated 166,000 homeschool students” (Egelko & Tucker, 2008; *In re Rachel L.*, 2008; Maxwell, 2008; Ray & Eagleson, 2008).

Within these cases are attempts to limit or remove parents’ rights to teach their children in lieu of public schools. In the case of *Mr. & Mrs. T*, the parents did what was required of them in filing the Non-accredited Private School Report. Again, legislatures seek to take actions against parents who seem to be exercising their liberty and right. There are certainly cases where local schools create barriers to the rights and liberties afforded to all citizens. While there are instances where a homeschooling family is not doing all that it claims to do, many of the homeschooling families are successfully teaching their children according to the studies

conducted and published by NCES in 1999 and 2003. All homeschooling families should not be subjected to increased restrictions because some families take advantage of the current systems.

Homeschooling as an Educational Alternative

Parents who choose to homeschool their children must weigh the benefits of home education and the consequences of alternative educational institutions. “Despite increasing trends toward home education, empirical research on the benefits and challenges of homeschooling remains limited” (Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009, p. 370). Many homeschooling parents are skeptical about the quality of education in schools outside the home. However, some African American families who home school obtain services or utilize some aspects of conventional schools’ curricula. Other parents do not believe that public, private, parochial, or charter school educators will not competently prepare their children to be fully-productive citizens who can participate in our society. For example, an African American homeschooling mom, Lisa Peyton-Caire, stated the following in an online response to a blog:

Though many Americans don’t want to acknowledge what Black parents know intimately well, the fact remains that America’s public schools do not serve all children well. Black students, particularly Black boys, get the shortest end of the stick it seems regardless of the class or income of their parents or their innate abilities. (April, 25, 2008)

For some homeschooling parents, religion is the motivator behind homeschooling. For example, Paula Penn-Nabrit, an African- American homeschooling mother, states, “I absolutely believed that homeschooling was something God wanted us to do and, consequently, I believed, that our faith in pursuing it would be more than adequately rewarded in the final analysis”(Penn-Nabrit, 2003, p. 63). “Certainly, we know homeschooling is not the exclusive pathway to a life well lived...But in our instance, the freedom to form a holistic educational environment helped to create a life that was well lived” (Penn-Nabrit, 2003, p.50). Other homeschooling parents have opted to teach their own children due to continuous disappointments with other educational

institutions, where they felt the instruction was substandard. In an essay, homeschooling mother Detra Rose Hood stated, “There is a way to keep our children on track. They do not have to become lost souls. We can help them become productive, caring human beings” (as cited in Llewellyn, 1996, p.232). In many cases, these sentiments persist among many homeschooling families regardless of the federal, state, or local school reform.

In the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*, the bells and whistles blew to awaken our society from the educational coma that had existed far too long in public education in the United States of America, ostensibly the world’s superpower. Our country has had great challenges with preparing our children with the skills needed since then. Subsequent to this 1983 report, we have created many educational reform programs to correct our shortcomings. However, our educational system has been inept with empowering our children with literacy and other skills needed for the 21st century particularly African American children (Gosa & Alexander, 2007).

Historical Comparisons of Black and White Homeschoolers

Scant empirical or even anecdotal research has been conducted on African American homeschoolers. Thus, any historical comparison between the Black and White homeschooling movements or individual homeschoolers will be inevitably limited. The meager literature on African American homeschoolers that does exist is quite recent. In comparison, literature on Caucasian homeschoolers dates back to the 1800s and is written exclusively through the lens of Caucasian researchers about Caucasian homeschoolers. To understand the current state of the homeschooling in the United States and how African American homeschoolers fit into this history, however, it is important to trace the origins of the movement.

Early evidence of homeschooling dates back to the mid-17th century. For example, Linsenbach (2006) found that, “in 1642, the Massachusetts Bay Colony passed a law that

required parents to make sure their children could read.” From the early 1800s to the present, homeschooling has been a common way of educating children in the United States. Many families farmed for a living during the early 1800s, which made regular attendance at a formal school difficult for many children. During that period, there were few professional educators, particularly in rural areas. Educators with anything other than a European heritage were inconceivable; in particular, educators of African lineage were scarce. Homeschooling, as a way of educating children, was commonplace in agrarian cultures during the early 1800s (Gatto, 2000); however, because of the lack of formal education during that time period, it is likely that homeschooling was not a traditional method for educating African American children.

Today, homeschooling has become an atypical way to educate one’s children in the United States, regardless of location: rural, suburban, or urban. Despite the momentum of the historical 1954 case, *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* and the antagonistic fallout from the Little Rock Central High School in 1957, African American families still were expected to utilize public schools as the primary means to educate their children (Bankston, 2007; O’Brien, 2005). These historical events facilitated an expectation and pressure to send one’s children to a public school from within the Black community. There was a feeling that the struggles and the loss of life to attain the rights and access to attend these institutions must be respected. Paula Penn-Nabrit, an African American homeschooling mother and attorney states in her book, *Morning by Morning: How We Home-Schooled Our African American Sons to the Ivy League*:

Providing one’s children with the very best possible education has never been an option within our families’ worldview it’s an obligation. For generations, our families, like many other African American families, endured enormous sacrifices and hardships in order to meet that obligation.... Our families were convinced that this [*in reference to homeschooling*] was probably a mistake, a big mistake, the kind of mistake with long-term and seriously negative consequences. (p. 60)

Now in the 21st century and after the Civil Rights Movement, we find more African American families employing an educational method once associated with agrarian culture: homeschooling. For Penn-Nabrit, this choice does not represent a break from the past:

We were and continue to be grateful for the inroads of access to education exemplified by *Brown v. Board of Education*....While it may have appeared so on the surface, we weren't criticizing *Brown v. Board of Education* any more than we were criticizing our parents' decision to educate us in predominately white schools. Every generation has an inherent obligation to determine, independently, what is best for its children. (p. 66)

Although the majority of our society has embraced and accepted changes in the fields of transportation, technology, and banking, we have been less willing to accept changes in the field of education at the same pace as other industries. Changes in education have often lagged behind other fields in the areas of technology and leadership. Our society has embraced substitutions like the automobile for the horse and carriage, the laptop computer for the typewriter, and the automated teller machine (ATM) for a human banking teller. In contrast, many are still reluctant to view and accept the way children are educated in the same regard as other industries. We have refused to accept that students are different and learn differently than in years past. Today's students belong to Generation Y.

Generation Y (as well as X, to a lesser degree) is also the first to grow up with computers and the Internet as a significant part of their lives. Constant experience in the networked world has had a profound impact on their style in approaching problem-solving situations. (UN.org, n.d.)

For children who are not successful in the traditional school setting, parents are willing to use non-traditional ways to educate their children. The majority of families in this country will assert that pedagogy is best when it takes place outside the home and is performed by compensated pedagogues. Homeschooling, as an educational alternative in the 21st Century, is perceived as an educational method from the past and not of the present. Despite this perception and according to

NCES 1999 and 2003 studies, although it may not be the most effective means for educating the majority of today's students, it has been an effective option for many students and their families.

However, the choice of educational options should ultimately be determined by parents.

Meighan (2001) states:

One of the great supporters of school as socialisation was the USA educationalist John Dewey, but he wanted schools to be democratic in style, with high levels of participation and power-sharing, not the totalitarian style based on domination and imposition. The domination model of most of our schools was not part of his plan....Yet, there is still surprise when a family decides to opt out into home-based education! (p. 78–79)

Some members of the African- American community embrace this educational alternative; the exact reasons are undetermined (NCES, 1999, 2003). Apple (2006) provided a broad overview of the predominant reasons that parents choose to homeschool their children:

Their reasons are varied and understandable: the tragic rates at which black children are miseducated in or pushed out of public schools; the stereotyping that goes on; the loss of one's cultural and political heritage; and yes, for some, religious motivations are also there. (para. 8)

Neither prior to nor subsequent to my dissertation proposal defense, have there been any large-scale longitudinal studies with in-depth empirical data published that are exclusively framed around African American homeschoolers. Some small studies have centered specifically on African American homeschoolers. For example, Fields-Smith and Williams conducted a two-year longitudinal study of Black homeschoolers (2009, p. 373). These 24 participants' demographic background varied widely and their rationales for homeschooling also varied.

While a review of the literature discloses the lives of African American homeschooling families, more scholarly research is needed to inform the field of education of this recent trend within the homeschooling community.

Statement of the Problem

Homeschooling is not an aberration but it is a phenomenon that many scholars associate with the most idiosyncratic individuals. As unconventional an educational alternative as this method may appear, for an increasing number of African American families, the practice of educating children at home is a viable alternative to charter, public, private or parochial schools. In recent years, homeschooling has crossed racial, political, and religious lines. Homeschooling is increasing in appeal among racial-minority communities, among political conservatives as well as liberals and within several religious dominations, including Christian, Protestant, Jewish, and Atheist populations. In the South, most homeschoolers are evangelical-to-fundamentalist Protestant (Cullum, 2005). The homeschooling phenomenon of the 1970s was an easily identifiable bi-product of the rising opposition to government and a dichotomy of political and religious ideologies. However, Van Galen (1991) classified home schooling parents into two categories: pedagogues and ideologues. Pedagogues are, according to Van Galen, those parents whose children were in public schools but opted for homeschooling because their primary concern was academic achievement; their children were not being challenged. In comparison, ideologues opt for homeschooling to teach values and to enhance family relationships.

Today, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), the homeschooling movement has increased by phenomenal rates in the African American community, going from nearly 84,000 in 1999 to over 103,000 in 2003 (NCES, 1999, 2003) without any conclusive links to ideological influences. As the number of African American homeschoolers rise, there is a subsequent reduction in public school enrollment. However, in the limited body of literature published over the last three decades, there have been no large-scale longitudinal, empirical, or qualitative studies that have researched the thousands of African

Americans who are homeschooling. Very few researchers have targeted this population of homeschoolers to examine their reasons for homeschooling. In this study, two overall questions informed this research: (a) Who are these African- American families? And, (b) why have they opted to homeschool their children? A sub question is, do their reasons for homeschooling differ from those of the larger population of families who homeschool? In this research, case studies of four African American families were conducted to learn the answers to these questions.

This post-Civil Rights increase in African American homeschoolers is subsequent to legislative initiatives and reform efforts designed to correct the problems that have permeated the public school systems for decades. African American children have continued to lag behind Whites in academic achievement (JBHE, 2000). Although the gap in reading has closed, there is still a gap in some areas (Carrington, 2005). However when examining the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading assessment scores for fourth-and eighth-grade public school students, Blacks scored, on average, 27 points lower than Whites. African American parents have taken great measures to provide the best possible educational opportunities for their children. As a community and from a historical perspective, many African Americans families have, for generations, encountered volatile protests, bussing to communities outside their own, and have made financial sacrifices by paying tuition for private and parochial schools for a kindergarten through twelfth grade education. Penn-Nabrit (2003) states,

As self-employed parents with three kids and no financial aid, coming up with twenty thousand dollars a year was an ongoing struggle!C. Madison felt we should shoulder the financial responsibility of our children's education. Our parents had made enormous financial sacrifices to educate us, and C. Madison felt we could no less for our own children. (p. 9)

Despite the efforts of parents like Penn-Nabrit, the achievement gap between the majority of White and Black children persists across the country. For the participants of this study, they

are too knowledgeable about this gap and have chosen, for various reasons, to execute the option of homeschooling. This study seeks to understand the reasons which prompted their decisions.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to research reasons why more African American families are selecting homeschooling as the means to educate their children. According to the findings of the previous studies by NCES (1999, 2003), African American families who are homeschooling do so for various reasons, including morals, religion, low teacher expectations, and so forth.

However, there is at least one critical theorist of educational systems, Michael Apple, who believes homeschooling decreases the ability to form coalitions needed for changing the system.

He state:

If we do not continue and expand our engagement in such organized and long term struggles for a system of public schooling that is worthy of its name, more and more black parents will seek alternatives, be they vouchers or homeschooling. The way to demonstrate our respect for such parents is to make it more likely that they will not have to leave public schools. (Apple, 2006, para. 11)

According to the participants of this study; public schools have failed their children for various reasons resulting in their decisions to begin homeschooling. More African American families than ever before are choosing a nonconventional alternative to public, private, parochial, or charter school education: homeschooling. In an effort to gain a more comprehensive understanding of why these families are leaving conventional schools at an average rate of 4,000 per year (NCES 1999; 2003), the research questions must be answered.

As a former public school teacher, I noticed that my colleagues were curious whenever a homeschooling student of African lineage enrolled in the school where I taught. This K–8 school, located in the heart of the cultural area in Detroit, had approximately 60 students per grade level. Many of the students were driven to school and the student population was mostly middle to upper-middle class. Many politicians such as the deputy mayor, city council members,

and the attorney general for the state enrolled their children in this school. This K-8 school was a feeder to the top three high schools in the Detroit Public School system, and admittance to this school was by lottery and a wait list. There were very few students who qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. The small, intimate setting provided a strong sense of community and family. Many of these students began the kindergarten experience together and remained in the school until eighth grade. While the student population was approximately 90% African American, the Caucasian and Asian students felt very comfortable in this close-knit environment and many of their best friends were African American. Because of the solid bonds that were already formed, it was difficult for outsiders to be accepted, regardless of whether they had been homeschooled or not. Moreover, if students came in with an antagonistic or arrogant disposition, they were outcasts almost immediately.

On occasion, African American students would transfer into the school for a year, perhaps two years. Homeschooled students did not remain there for more than two years. It was not due to a lack of rigorous programs and extracurricular activities. The school would be open until at least 7:00 p.m. nightly due to all the extra activities. However, when a student who had formerly been homeschooled enrolled in the school, teachers—Black and White alike—would focus specifically on that student, looking for some type of academic or character flaw in order to link it to homeschooling. If a flaw was found, it was almost always linked to “a lack of socialization.” It was common to hear teachers criticize the student’s behavior because he or she had been isolated from daily interaction with other students for a period of time. The transferred-in homeschooled children never had an academic performance problem.

From my experience as a teacher in that school, without exception, the African American homeschooling students who attended the school were outstanding academically, but they did

experience conflict with their peers. It appeared many of the difficulties were because of a level of arrogance and superiority brought into an already established clique. The homeschooled students were straight A students. Yet, as a staff, we never understood exactly why these families and students left the school and no one really, to my knowledge, ever extended themselves to find out why they chose to leave a seemingly desirable learning environment. We need to learn who these families are and how can we keep families and students satisfied with conventional schools. Thus, I attempt to answer the question: Who are they?

The secondary purpose of this research study is to contribute to the general body of literature concerning the fundamental ideologies of homeschooling families. Specifically, this study will add to the limited body of literature framed around the African American homeschooling families. The families' reasons for homeschooling may or may not prove to be different from the ideologies of families from other racial groups who home school. Moreover, the ideologies of today's homeschooling families may or may not differ from the families who homeschooled during the 1960s and 1970s. However, given all the investment in educational reform, the numbers of homeschooling students is continuing to grow at phenomenal rates. Regardless of the measures taken by Congress, states, and local districts to reform and to correct problems experienced by conventional schools, unresolved issues permeate to a level that many African Americans are choosing to educate their own children.

Research Questions

In this study, two main questions informed this research:

- (a) Who are these African American families?
- (b) Why have they opted to home school?

- (c) Subordinate Question 1: Do their reasons for homeschooling differ from those of the larger population of families who homeschool?
- (d) Subordinate Question 2: Were the families' decisions to home school a direct result of shortcomings in public education.

In this research, case studies of four African American families were conducted to learn the answers to these research questions. According the NCES studies, the number of African American homeschoolers increased by at least 19, 000 between 1999 to 2003 (NCES, 1999; 2003). Yet, there remains a large gap in the literature of research studies around African American homeschoolers. This study addresses this need for additional research that transparently informs the ideologies, descriptors, and reasons for selecting this method for learning. To date, there have not been any significant and in-depth case studies of African-American homeschooling families to learn why they have chosen this option and what circumstances prompted this decision.

Conceptual Framework

To be transparent in our understanding of what constitutes homeschooling, I will examine the definitions synthesized from the literature beginning with Dr. Brian D. Ray (1999), a prolific researcher and author on homeschooling. According to Ray, homeschooling is:

....a learning and teaching situation wherein children spend the majority of the conventional school day in or near their home or within the community in lieu of attendance at a school or conventional institution of education while the parents or guardians are the principal educators of their children. (p.2)

Reich's (2002) simpler definition of homeschooling is "...the education of children under the supervision of their parents within the home, apart from any campus based school" (p.276).

Reich's definition is partly true, as some homeschoolers actually attend a school on campus for

part of the day, usually for the arts or for athletic programs. From an ideological perspective of home schools, it can be said that:

The contemporary emergence of this alternative teaching mode represents a growing trend that can, in its modern inception, be viewed as an outcome of a direct reaction to the many shortcomings of public education that were commonly raised by educational reformers of the 1960s and early 1970s. Early home schools reflected the alternative views and practices of these reformers (Knowles, Marlow, & Muchmore, 1992, p. 195)

Dr. Ray's (1989) study provides a comprehensive definition that is most meaningful for this study. I want to understand the circumstances and rationale that prompted these African American families to educate their children at home. I want to learn if their decisions to homeschool were "an outcome of a direct reaction to many shortcomings of public education" (Knowles, Marlow, & Muchmore, 1992, p. 8). Research-based organizations such as the Department of Education, the American Educational Research Association (AERA), and the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) have not initiated studies with a large sample of African American homeschoolers in years past or present. The NCES, endorsed by the Department of Education, published the findings of two studies conducted in 1999 and 2003 framed around the general population of homeschoolers. The NCES broke down the enrollment number of homeschoolers by race. However, these two NCES studies did not conduct analyses of ideologies or reasons for homeschooling by racial groups. After reviewing the nominal amount of literature framed exclusively around the African American community of homeschoolers, these two questions remained unanswered:

1. Who are these families?
2. What circumstances lead to the decision to homeschool?

With the majority of literature framed around Caucasian homeschoolers, it is impossible to compare, contrast, and analyze data from previous studies on African American homeschoolers. The purpose of this study is to gain better understanding of the driving force that has fueled the

African American families' decisions to opt for homeschooling as their alternative to conventional schools.

Background and Rationale

Public education in recent decades has experienced what this researcher calls the “see-saw effect” of fads. Fads are not static. They reflect temporary shifts in style and appeal. This effect has indoctrinated educators across the nation to a particular conceptual model of faddish reforms and initiatives. Typical of many new leaders at local, state, and federal levels, are the inception of new agendas and more fads. Although many of these faddish reforms may not be unique works of art or major paradigm shifters, they often are previously accepted concepts that have been tweaked to reflect society's current needs and trends in the field of education. For many educators, the “just wait and see what happens next” attitude becomes norm as the next proposition for reforming education emerges.

Homeschooling, in general, is an atypical fad. *Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary* (2009) defines a fad as “a practice or interest followed for a time with exaggerated zeal.” The concept of teaching your own children has been around for nearly 200 years, as previously discussed. The 1999 and 2003 studies conducted by NCES reveal an apparent resurgence in home schools going from 850,000 in 1999 to over 1.1 million in 2003. Like the popularity of bell-bottom jeans in the 21st century, homeschooling has hibernated in the last decade and is beginning to awaken with a rage. There was an increased number of documented African American homeschoolers from 1999 to 2003. The notion of parents educating their children at home in lieu of conventional schools has increasingly appealed to different populations, particularly African Americans. Homeschooling is a nontraditional method of education that has

crossed educational, racial, cultural, religious and socio-economical lines. Although homeschooling has been around for decades, its popularity seems to go and come as do society's sentiments on education at any given point and time, giving it the "see-saw effect." Even in the 21st century, however, the idea of African Americans educating their children at home is perplexing to many, including well-educated individuals within the African American community, because it lacks the historical origins that those of the Caucasian community have. When speaking to colleagues in the field of education, this research topic has been met with bewilderment and enthusiasm. Educational researchers know very little about homeschooling relative to African Americans. Naturally, the first two inquiries that colleagues make are:

1. What events are prompting African American families to transition to homeschooling?
2. What does this family look like?

The latter question would encompass religious ideologies, cultural practices, and socioeconomic and demographic data. Large-scale studies of African American homeschoolers with descriptors such as religious affiliations, number of students in the family, supporting organizations and reasons for homeschooling are non-existent. Therefore, a synthesis of African American homeschoolers literature does not inform researchers about the phenomenon. These unanswered questions drive this study.

Ostensibly, some African American families are electing a nontraditional method such as homeschooling as a way to shun the pitfalls of illiteracy and disenfranchisement. According to the U.S. Department of Education's (DOE) aforementioned statement, "A high level of shared education is essential to a free democratic society and to the fostering a common culture especially in a country that prides itself on *pluralism and individual freedom*" (1983). If African

American families are selecting homeschooling as their educational alternative, as part of this democratic society, then they are, in fact, exercising their individual freedoms to educate their own children in order to have "...the chance to participate fully in our national life" (U.S. Department of Education, 1983).

While homeschooling is an alternative approach to education and although it may not be the chosen method by a majority of American families (97.8 % of students are educated by other means, according to the NCES 2003 data), it is important to learn what has caused the paradigm to shift in the African American community. Since homeschooling is a nontraditional educational alternative for African American families, a logical presupposition would be that this method would hinder possible disenfranchisement in public, private, charter, or parochial schools. Seemingly, this community aspires to homeschool as a way of exercising their individual freedom collectively as a family by selecting homeschooling as their preferred method of instruction. Many parents in our country are frustrated with failing public schools. African American parents are frustrated with a system that their ancestors fought so hard to have equal opportunity and access to; this system has disenfranchised many Black families. "In addition, African American students continue to face racism and discrimination from elementary school to college" (Mickey, 2008, p.21). Challenges to a good education persist for African American students through U.S. school systems. It is unlikely that their child will be recommended for honors, advanced placement, or gifted programs.

Starting with Jenkins's (1936) study, which found that despite high intelligence test scores African American students were not formally identified as gifted. For over 70 years, then, educators have been concerned about the paucity of Black students being identified as gifted. (Ford, Grantham & Whiting (2008, para. 1)

The reality for the participants in this study was there was little hope that their child would be prepared for and admitted into honors or gifted programs. These types of programs are a preface to college and the work force.

According to Ladson-Billings (1996):

Ultimately, the work of education in a democracy is to provide opportunities for all citizens to participate fully in the formation of the nation and its ideals. These ideals can never be fully realized if significant portions of our society are excluded from high quality education and the opportunity to play public roles in society. African American students are suffering in our schools at an alarming rate. They continue to experience high-drop out, suspension, and expulsion rates. While possessing a high school diploma is no guarantee of success in U.S. society, not having one spells certain economic and social failure. (p. 16)

Ladson-Billings (1996) suggests that the negative outcomes of many African American students stem from disparity in access and opportunity. Her description of failing students is a harsh reality for Americans who have not themselves faced these situations in their daily educational experiences. However, for some African American families, these outcomes could have been candid snapshots of their child's future if they had chosen to remain enrolled in conventional educational programs or institutions. From the increased numbers of African American homeschooling families, more parents seem to be taking preventative measures to combat the high dropout rates that Ladson-Billings described. According to a NCES (2001) report, dropout rates for African American students (12.6 percent) were nearly double compared to the rate of European American students (7.3). Many educational institutions have taken measures to correct lagging achievement and disparity issues. Obviously, initiatives like NCLB, which requires states to assess students and school districts' Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) toward the ultimate goal of academic proficiency, have, indeed, left some students behind. This initiative and countless school reform efforts have not produced substantial positive outcomes as intended.

Academically, U.S. schools are still leaving students behind particularly in the African American community.

Beginning at the introduction of this paper, the U.S. Department of Education refers to “this report.” This document refers to “*A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*” (*A Nation at Risk*). Nearly 27 years ago in 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education released an analysis of our schools that prompted reform initiatives throughout the United States. The culmination of this report was the catalyst for massive changes and accountability measures at many levels. It was the mechanism used to enlighten the general public of the need for massive reform and school restructuring. It exposed weaknesses in our school systems and provided the leverage that local and state educational agencies needed to implement these reforms. *A Nation at Risk*’s primary purpose was to inform citizens that students’ academic skills must improve in order for our country to be globally competitive. President Ronald Regan, in his State of the Union address, gave highlights from that report, which exposed public schools’ strengths and weaknesses when compared to global educational systems like Japan and Korea. According to Rebecca Herman et al. (2008, p.10):

In 1994 the Improving America’s Schools Act introduced the concept of holding schools accountable for student performance on state assessments. Although the act encouraged states to assess whether schools were making progress and imposing sanctions on those that did not, it lacked much force.

The Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 also was instrumental in providing funding for Title I (U. S. Metric Association, 2003). In March of 1994, Goals 2000: Educate America Act was signed and subsequently led to the passage of the Improving America’s Schools Act in October of that year. The purpose of this law was to make U.S. students competitive across the globe. As a result, states enacted laws that opened the minds of citizens to consider nonconventional schools such as charter schools and vouchers as alternatives to traditional public

schools. These laws encouraged competition through the formation of themed charter schools, the distribution of vouchers, and even the creation of virtual schools that used the Internet.

Ladson-Billings (1996) concurred with the *A Nation at Risk* report, stating that in a democratic society, everyone must have access to education and fully participate by being contributing members of this society. But if students become unmotivated and disenchanted with educational systems, they will not be positive contributors to our nation's society and economy.

A truly democratic society does not sanction actions that absolutely or remotely exclude its members during the educational process. In addition, a democratic society does not condone indirect dismissal of those who drop out of school. Today, despite documents and laws such as *A Nation at Risk* and No Child Left Behind (NCLB), two reform initiatives enacted in years past to correct the problems with the way we educate and assess our nation's students, many families in the African American community continue to feel compelled to seek nonconventional educational alternatives such as homeschooling. For these families, this educational option affords parents a way to prepare their children to become viable and educated members of U.S. society.

Summary

The homeschooling movement has evolved to an educational alternative that is no longer exclusive to one culture or religious group. African American parents are making sacrifices and are willing to educate their children at home in lieu of other alternatives such as charter, virtual private, parochial, or voucher programs. In the past, homeschooling was an option chosen by agrarian families—mainly Caucasians living in rural communities who did not have many choices or alternatives for education. Today, there are many educational alternatives other than homeschooling. Parents can choose public, private, parochial, virtual, or charter schools in lieu

of a homeschool. The government does not make homeschooling barrier free; there are, in some states, many regulations to which a family must comply. Homeschooling and the documentation of this phenomenon have been traditionally associated with the White or Caucasian community. Examination of their purposes has been determined to be primarily social change, ideology, religion, or issues of immorality in public schools. According to Knowles, Marlow & Muchmore (1992), contemporary home schools are no linked to the liberal roots of home education. With the increasing numbers of African American homeschoolers, research is needed to identify reasons for this increase within this community and to learn African American families' values and beliefs. In addition, at present it is unclear whether certain traits, ideologies, or beliefs can be generalized to the majority of African American homeschoolers.

Research-based organizations and institutions need to conduct large-scale studies focused on African American homeschoolers, similar to those conducted on the general homeschooling population by the NCES. When comparing data from studies on homeschooling, there are inconsistencies in reported numbers of homeschoolers in general and the number of African American homeschoolers in particular (Princiotta & Bielick, 2003; Ray, 2005, 2006). Because the regulations and laws requiring homeschoolers to register with a local school district or state agency vary from state to state, the numbers are not clear. It is difficult to determine the precise reasons why the majority of African Americans are selecting this option rather than simply changing schools because only small-sized populations have been the subjects of this research. These parents are essentially taking active roles in their child's education. However, parents who value education and have concluded that there is a problem with the way their child is being education cannot afford to be passive. Taking a passive role will cause their children to be left behind in this society and, as a result, they will not have a place in it.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Definition of Homeschooler

A homeschooler is defined in many ways. It can be a public school student who is temporarily given home instruction while on a temporary leave of absence. However, for the purposes of this study, we will use a different framework of homeschooler. Berg Olsen (2007) defines homeschoolers as follows:

...a person can be considered as being homeschooled if they fall into any one of the following categories: 1.) their mother, father, or another family member teaches them at home; 2.) a private tutor or a governess is hired to instruct them in the home; 3.) they are self-educated or unschooled and learned on their own; 4.) they are in a traveling show-business family and use homeschool curriculum while on the road.

Dr. Brian D. Ray, a notable researcher on home school education and President of the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI) stated (2011):

Homeschooling, by definition, is family-based, home-based, and usually parent-led—with parents in charge of the child's education. If a parent wants another parent to do all the teaching and be in charge of the child, then it is probably not homeschooling.... In homeschooling, parents recognize their own responsibility and right to direct the education and upbringing of their child....Often classes for a specific subject are taught by someone other than the child's parent. ...This is a common, legitimate, and philosophically agreeable. (p. 1)

Other researchers have definitions of homeschoolers (e.g., Holt, 1986; 1989, & Reich, 2002).

Toppin (1967) provides a simplistic, ideological, and legal definition: a homeschooler is when a parent or guardian takes part in the homeschooling process. For the purposes of this study, we will use Dr. Ray's definition of a homeschooler.

The Homeschooling Movement

The review of literature suggests the origins of homeschooling in the United States date back to 1852, when agrarian communities in Massachusetts invoked the first compulsory attendance law (National Conference of State Legislators, 2008). Subsequent to 1852, little is

known about homeschooling until the 1960s when authors began to document interest in this educational alternative. During this span of time, there was no incentive to report the homeschool, so many did not bother to report their status. A review of literature does show that home schools of the 1960s and 1970s reflected a liberal, humanistic and pedagogical orientation that was compatible with the alternative views promulgated by Reformers; they did so as advocates of social change more so than reflecting educational innovation (Knowles, Marlow, & Muchmore, 1992). Acceptance of home schools as a way of educating children has progressed slowly in the United States.

As late as 1989, only Michigan, North Dakota, and Iowa still outlawed home education (Somerville, n.d.). By 1993, home education was legal in all 50 states. Today, “some form of homeschooling is now legal in every state, though the rules and regulations vary widely” (Bennett, Finn & Cribb, 1999, p. 605).

“By the mid-1980s, the successes and benefits of homeschooling had become more apparent” (Linsenbach, 2006, p. 3). Most of the homeschooling population fell into one of two categories: fundamentalist Christians or socially alternative pedagogues. The literature on African American homeschoolers, though limited, does not seem to show the ideological dichotomy of fundamentalist Christians and socially alternative pedagogues that is prevalent in the homeschooling population as a whole. No conclusive evidence has shown that African-American homeschooling families are social alternative pedagogues like homeschoolers in the Caucasian community. According to Fields-Smith and Williams (2009) “African American families that home school do not necessarily represent the ‘Conservative Right’, ideologue, or pedagogue images typically associated with home schooling in the literature” (as cited in Pedroni, 2007). Additionally, although the roots of homeschooling began in rural agrarian

communities in the past, not all homeschooling takes place in rural communities. Fields-Smith and Williams (2009) found no evidence that African American homeschoolers live in rural areas. Llewellyn (1996) contextualized 15 African Americans within the home-educating community; these individuals reside in urban and suburban areas, not in rural communities.

The religion-homeschooling connection. Parochial or religious-based schools can openly use faith as part of the educational curriculum. Given the variety of educational structures in place today, much of American society is surprised when parents decide to educate their children on their own instead of entrusting them to a traditional type of school with trained educators (Meighan, 2001). Data from the 2003 Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey (PFI), part of the National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES), shows that nearly 30% of the 239 homeschooling families surveyed cited religious or moral instructions as the primary ideological reason for selecting this alternative to compulsory education.

Religion is an integral part of the majority in the African American community. The relationship between religion and the African American community was very evident during the Civil Rights Era, whose notable leaders included Dr. Martin L. King, Jr., Rev. Jesse Jackson, Sr., Rev. Ralph Abernathy, and Rev. Joseph Lowery. The impact of religion on African-American homeschooling families' decisions to opt to learn at home will be discussed subsequently in the findings section of this study.

Homeschooling Disparities Among States

Each state, and sometimes even individual school districts, sets its own rules regarding homeschooling requirements. As a result, accurate data about the number of homeschoolers in America is not currently available. A contributing factor to this delimitation is erratic reporting of homeschoolers to local school districts in each state. No federally regulated reporting system

is currently in place for homeschooling families to follow. Each state has its own set of regulations and standards, which can vary immensely. According to the Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HLDA), 10 states do not require a notice of intent or “to initiate contact”; 15 low-regulatory states require only parental notification of intent to homeschool; 19 states have “moderate regulations” such as test scores and local evaluation of student progress in addition to initial notification of intent; and the remaining six states have “high regulations.” In addition to the moderate regulations, the six high-regulation states—Rhode Island, Vermont, Massachusetts, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, and New York—require “curriculum approval by the state, teacher qualification of parents, or home visits by state officials.” Indiana and Illinois do not require homeschooling families to obtain licenses or to report their option to homeschool.

The courts have played a key role in the homeschooling movement. Indiana’s landmark 1904 case, *State v. Peterman* (32 Ind. App. 665, 70 N.E. 550), legitimized home schools as a viable educational option by stating that a school is “a place where instruction is imparted to the young..... the number of persons, whether one or many, [do not] make a place where instruction is imparted any less or any more a school.”

The 1950 historic Illinois case, *People v. Levisen*, 404 Ill. 574, 90 N. E. 2d 213, cited part of the Indiana case and stated the following:

This landmark case held that a "private school" is "a place where instruction is imparted to the young ... the number of persons being taught does not determine whether a place is a school." (404 Ill. at 576, 90 N. E. 2d at 215.)

The Illinois Supreme Court emphasized the right of parents to control their children's education: "Compulsory education laws are enacted to enforce the natural obligations of parents to provide an education for their young, an obligation which corresponds to the parents' right of control over the child. (*Meyer v. Nebraska*, 262 U.S. 390, 400.) The object is that all shall be

educated, not that they shall be educated in any particular manner or place." *Levisen*, 404 Ill. at 577, 90 N. E. 2d at 215.

Michigan homeschooling requirements. Michigan, the setting for this study, is one of 10 states that do not require prospective homeschoolers to register their intent to homeschool (HSLD, 2009). Although Michigan does not require reporting, parents have the option to do so. Despite the non-reporting requirement, the state has set legal precedents by contesting homeschooling. The state has brought suit against a number of parents who have sought to educate their own children: for example, *Michigan v. Nobel* 57th Dist. Ct., Allegan County, Mich. 1979, *People v. DeJonge*, 442 Mich.266 1993, and *Clonlara, Inc. v. State Bd. of Educ.*, 442 Mich. 230 1993, (Somerville, n.d.). Michigan was the last state to allow homeschooling by parents. The resulting aftermath has created a level of anxiety with exposing themselves. "No one knows how many "underground homeschoolers" there were in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but in many states, the only way to homeschool was to hide" (Somerville). This appears to be the sentiment today by many homeschooling families-not just African American homeschoolers.

For example, the DeJonge family had spent eight years in court, and had lost every single hearing before they reached the Michigan Supreme Court. By a 5-4 decision, that court held that the Michigan compulsory attendance law violated the rights of parents who had a sincere religious objection to using certified teachers (*People v. DeJonge*, 442 Mich. 266,1993). In a companion case, the court ruled in favor of the Clonlara School, which used certified teachers as required by law, but only for a few hours each school year. The rest of the instruction was provided by parents (*Clonlara, Inc. v. State Bd. of Educ.*, 442 Mich. 230, 1993). Currently, the state of Michigan's legal description for homeschooling is:

A child is not required to attend a public school...

(3) (a) The child is attending regularly and is being taught in a state approved nonpublic school, which teaches subjects comparable to those taught in the public schools to children of corresponding age and grade, as determined by the course of study for the public schools of the district within which the nonpublic school is located.

(3) (f) The child is being educated at the child's home by his or her parent or legal guardian in an organized educational program in the subject areas of reading, spelling, mathematics, science, history, civics, literature, writing, and English grammar.

(4) For a child being educated at the child's home by his or her parent or legal guardian, exemption from the requirement to attend public school may exist under either subsection (3)(a) or (3)(f), or both.

A homeschool family operating under 380.1561(3)(a) as described above is considered a nonpublic school if in compliance with the Private, Denominational and Parochial Schools Act, 1921 PA 302. If a homeschool family chooses to operate under exemption (3) (a), it may report to the Michigan Department of Education.

After deciding to homeschool, parents have the option to report their intent to homeschool at the Michigan Department of Education. In the aforementioned cases, none of the plaintiffs or defendants was African American. "It is riskier for African Americans to start homeschooling than it is for other families" (Somerville, n.d.).

African American homeschoolers need to really be strategic in how they document courses of study and student progress should they opt to homeschool. Because there is scant research on African American homeschoolers in particular, there may be increased risks for those who engage in this educational alternative. According to Llewellyn (1996), Michael's sentiments reflect some of the challenges African American homeschoolers may experience.

...He told me his name was Michael. "I totally see what you're saying about school, how it's a waste of time," he said," And I know there's a lot more I could learn and do on my own. But I can't do it, because I'm black. I walk into some business to get a job, they want to see my diploma. I tell them I educated myself according to my own interests, and it's over. They say, 'Right. Another dropped out-nigger.'" (Llewellyn, 1996, p. 12)

Llewellyn, a former teacher, author, and *unschooling* (different than homeschooling) advocate states (1996, p.13), “Later I thought back to the conversation, and I wished that I had also been able to say, simply, Well, Michael, black people homeschool too.” But at the time I didn’t know whether that was even true. Llewellyn is Caucasian. Llewellyn also stated:

Now I know it is true, and that many black people homeschool to save themselves from a system which limits and destroys them, to reclaim their own lives, families, and culture, *to create for themselves something very different from conventional schooling.* (p. 13)

Michael recognized the need for validity by “the system” if he wanted to get a good job or to go to college. He realized, as a high school student, that he already had an obstacle, his skin color. If he chose to homeschool or unschool, this would be another strike against him.

Some states require reporting not only the intent to homeschool but also, require families in these states to work with local school districts for monitoring, evaluation or assessment. In Michael’s case, if he and his family had worked with local school districts, the documents needed in his job hunting experience could have provided ample proof that he fulfilled state requirements. In contrast, if families choose not to report their intent to homeschool, perhaps they should utilize ways to create a transcript to persuade others of its rigor and legitimacy to alleviate levels of frustration like Michael’s.

Deciding to Homeschool

Despite the legalization of homeschooling, many citizens, regardless of race, have mixed reactions to the notion of schooling a child at home instead of in a more conventional school setting. Although this approach to education is not a new concept to many Caucasians, the concept of educating children at home continues to be novel idea for many African Americans. As an illustration, one African American homeschooling mother, Sandra, explained her experience like this: “...people seemed to resent the fact that she has chosen to home educate. I think that people know sometimes what they should be doing and they’re not doing it” (as cited

in Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009, p. 381). Hence, the decision to homeschool is not an easy decision for some families to make. These families must consider changes in family structure and income earnings that might result from homeschooling. Fields-Smith & Williams (2009) found that “parents’ decisions to homeschool led to challenges characterized as systemic issues, lifestyle changes, logistical issues, and home educator praxis.” For this research study, it was imperative to examine and observe the African American family who chose to homeschool and equally important was to learn why this method of education was their preference. The findings of this study will add to the nominal body of literature exclusive to African American homeschoolers.

Laws impact identification. Since 1993, when homeschooling became legal in all 50 states, restrictions have been placed on parents’ rights to homeschool, such as occurred in the California 2nd District Court of Appeal’s decision in 2008 case of *Jonathan L. v. The Superior Court of Los Angeles County*. The president of the HSLD, J. Michael Smith, summarized the decision as follows:

On February 28, 2008, the California Court of Appeals issued a ruling in a juvenile court proceeding that declared that almost all forms of homeschooling in California are in violation of state law. (Private tutoring by certified teachers remains an option.) Moreover, the court ruled that parents possess no constitutional right to homeschool their children.

The prolific education advocate, John Dewey, would most likely be frustrated with the six high-regulation states as well as with California, which is actually considered a low-regulation state. Such restrictions on parental rights to homeschool do not support the democratic style of schools, but it does give the dominant control to those in power to make laws such as congressmen. Meighan (2001) states:

One of the great supporters of school as socialization was the USA educationalist John Dewey, but he wanted schools to be democratic in style, with high levels of participation

and power-sharing, not the totalitarian style based on domination and imposition. The domination model of most of our schools was not part of his plan.... Yet, there is still a surprise when a family decides to opt out into home-based education! (pp. 78-79)

As Meighan points out, Dewey would not be pleased with the legislative restrictions placed on parents' rights to homeschool if this society truly is democratic. According to homeschooling proponents, government is essentially dominating the educational system by restricting parents' rights to teach their own children. Legislators are facilitating the placement of homeschoolers in government-based schools by hindering the process to homeschool. Many homeschooling families face obstacles in their pursuit to educate their own children. The HSLD is an organization that offers membership to homeschooling families in the event there is a need for legal counsel. They represent homeschooling families in all kinds of matters, from alleged truancy charges to accreditation cases.

It is an arduous task to locate homeschooling in the African American community. Two reasons for this challenge are, first, the disparity in reporting procedures across the United States and, second, the antagonistic systems currently in place that have been invoked by state legislative bodies and local school districts like those in—but not limited to—California. Many families would opt to hide in their homes rather than face scrutiny by state educational institutions. There continues to be a disparity in the reporting systems nationwide, which makes collecting data problematic. With homeschooling's rise in popularity, legislators are enacting laws to increase parents' qualifications to homeschool their own children.

Historical Overview: Blacks and Education

Pre-Civil War. African Americans have had a long and, at times, adversarial relationship with the U.S. public education system. Before the abolition of slavery in the South, violence often ensued when Blacks attempted to learn to read or attain an education. If someone like a

slave master discovered that a slave could read or write, he or she likely would have been sentenced to death, particularly in the South. Sambol-Tosco (2004) stated the following:

Concerned that literate slaves would forge passes or convince other slaves to revolt, Southern slaveholders generally opposed slave literacy. In 1740 South Carolina enacted ... one of the earliest laws prohibiting teaching a slave to read or write. In other parts of the South the mid-eighteenth century saw an expansion of earlier laws forbidding the education of slaves. (p. 2)

Horace Mann Bond (1950) explained:

In 1700 Negro slavery was well established in North America; the plantation system had emerged in the South, the family type in the North. The “Black codes” earlier developed by Spanish and Portuguese, began to be adopted in the Northern English plantations. These codes prescribed education of Blacks, as dangerous to a slave system. (p.103)

According to Bond (1950), things began to change for Negroes around the 1800s.

“Schools were established for Negroes, North and South; the Black codes, especially in their educational proscriptions, lapsed in enforcement” (p. 103). The 1850s saw further changes in the education of African Americans: “The ‘Black codes’ were severely revived and enforced.... Fear of slave revolts and disturbance of the South’s ‘peculiar institution’ by Northern agitators led to the imposition of heavy punishment for the crime of educating Negroes in the South” (Bond, p. 103).

Throughout this period, no official record of Blacks homeschooling their children exists. Because of possible negative and violent repercussions, homeschooling could not have been documented even when it did occur. Thus, accounts of homeschooling prior to the Civil War are anecdotal. For example, in a 2004 PBS interview, former slave Bob Ledbetter described his educational experience as follows:

BL: I, I say, he can tell you, I never went to school a hour in my life.

[interviewer]: Uh huh.

BL: Not a hour.

[interviewer]: Well, you, you, then could you read and write?

BL: I could read and write too. I do, I can send a letter all over this world if I just knowed where to send it. Course I can't write it pretty like people do, but anywhere I know where

to send it, I can send it.

[interviewer]: Well, uh, how did you learn to write?

BL: Well my daddy just taught me how to spell a little at night. Well after that then he kept, uh, copies, and I take copies and just learn myself.

[interviewer]: And how you learn to read?

BL: Well he learn me at night. He said he, he wasn't no educated man. He could just read printing. And he set up at night and teach his children. That's the way we learned.

Ledbetter was taught at home by his father; thus, according to various definitions of homeschooling, he would qualify as a homeschooler.

After the Civil War, for many Blacks, learning took place in one-room schoolhouses, a stark contrast to the more creatively designed schools known today. Whites often underestimated both the desire for and ability of Blacks to seek an education. For example, in Richardson's (1986) paper on Southern Blacks and the American Missionary from 1861-1890, he documented some teachers' accounts of teaching Blacks during the post-Civil War period:

Teachers constantly wrote in their reports of the enthusiasm that Blacks exhibited for learning. One teacher of Black soldiers reported, "I am sure that I have never witnessed greater eagerness to study ... a majority of the men seemed to regard their books an indispensable portion of their equipment, and the cartridge-box and spelling book are attached to the same belt," while missionaries reported a desire for learning more than food by the freemen. (p. 25)

Though Richardson did not mention the teachers' race, during the 1860s-1890s most missionaries were White. The teachers, as described by Richardson, appeared to be amazed by the soldiers' eagerness to learn.

This amazement, though likely widespread, has no historical underpinning. W.E.B. Dubois reported in his 1901 study of the Negro Common School that two years after Emancipation (1865), fewer than 100,000 Black students were in schools in the South. By 1900, more than 1.5 million Black students were enrolled in schools.

Some would be surprised at the list of those who have helped to create and shape our society cannot credit our public school system with shaping their educational experiences:

Famous people throughout history were homeschooled as children. They include: Thomas Edison, Orville and Wilbur Wright, Abe Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Robert E. Lee, Douglas MacArthur, George Patton, Mark Twain, and many more. (Olsen, 2007)

As this list suggests, the research on homeschooling has always been more closely associated with White families than Black families. Absent from this list are names of individuals of racially diverse, African, or African American backgrounds. Cogent arguments cannot be made to identify or substantiate if there are any prominent African Americans of the past who were homeschooled. An exception, George Washington Carver was a homeschooler, according to both definitions of Ray (2011) and Toppin (1967). Most of the literature about George Washington Carver states he was educated by his adopted mother (Boerer, 2010; Phillips, n.d.).

Born into slavery in Missouri, Carver set out to learn despite prejudice and hostility. Taking in laundry to support himself, he attended schools in Missouri, Kansas, and Iowa, alternating periods of working and schooling so that he was over twenty when he entered high school (Toppin, 1967, p. 267)

David Guterson alleges that Fredrick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, and George Washington Carver should be added to the list of notable homeschoolers (1992, p. 5). However, evidence does not support this.

Booker T. Washington was cited in various sources as having been homeschooled, but the literature does not support these allegations. Susanna Ashton in the *Southern Literary Journal* states:

For Booker, the next few years of his childhood were marked by periods as a domestic servant to local families, interrupted by stints of hard labor in the salt mines and farm labor at home, all the while attending school whenever he could. (2007, p. 3)

Similarly, Frederick Douglass's homeschooling experience was not confirmed through a synthesis of literature. There was no literature to credit homeschooling as the means for his scholarly notoriety. A list of successful African American homeschoolers could not be located

during the course of literature review. Therefore, there are discrepancies in reports of African Americans like Booker T. Washington and Frederick Douglass being homeschooled. Similarly, there are inequities in the data, today, with the number of African American homeschoolers.

Although many African American children realize that doing well in school will facilitate entry to secondary education, gaining the support of teachers and overcoming the obstacles to attain the skill set needed to get to college is not always easy. According to the *Enquirer*, 85,000 African American children learned at home in 2003. These students' families have concluded that public school systems are not the best way to educate their children. Few studies on homeschooling have centered on Negro, Colored, Black or in today's terms, African American culture. It is not to say that Blacks did not homeschool, rather it was not very common for Blacks to report being educated in the 1600-1800s.

Blacks sustained a zest for learning and education for a long time until after the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. However in recent years, the enthusiasm and the eagerness to learn by many Black students have been squashed by failing public schools systems that often employ unqualified and inexperienced teachers who have low expectations and biased belief systems. Schools are often inferior and unsafe; they experience racism and prejudice in schools that are inadequately led and funded (NCES 2003, 1999; Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009).

Aronson (2004) states:

For many students and parents of African ancestry, "even when students start out matched-in terms of parental income and education and the quality of schools the students attended—a significant achievement gap remains between black and white students" (e.g., Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Massey, Charles, Lundy, & Fischer, 2003). (p. 15)

Education as Liberation. The emphasis on attaining a good education through the public school system has always been a tenet of the Black community. According to Anderson (1988), the larger African American community has long believed that education has the power

to liberate. Research studies have corroborated the notion of education being an asset to families: “African American parents value the educational success of their children,” according to the Bradley, Johnson, and Rawls’ study (as cited in Abrams & Gibbs, 2002; Danby & Alford, 1996; Gardner & Miranda, 2001; Troutman, 2001).

First-hand anecdotal accounts also demonstrate this view of education as liberation. For example, Paula Penn-Nabrit (2003) described her and her three sons’ investigation of their ancestry:

We tracked the paternal line back five generations: the boys, their dad; their granddad Dr. Henry Clarke Nabrit; their great-granddad Dr. James Madison Nabrit; and their great-great-granddad Henry, the Well Digger, born a slave... Their great -granddad James, born during Reconstruction, saw education as the cornerstone of freedom. He and his wife had eight children, all of whom earned advanced degrees in the 1930s and 1940s.

The Nabrit lineage was more atypical for a Black family during these decades. Paula Nabrit wrote about her family’s decision to homeschool after her sons’ experiences at a predominately White private school.

For the African American homeschoolers, today, there has been a significant change in the willingness to enroll in many public schools. According to Scott-Jones (2002), a 1994 Cairns and Cairns study states:

African American males and females had lower drop-out rates than Caucasian American students because jobs may have been less available to them than to Caucasian American drop-outs and African Americans may have seen education as an avenue for upward mobility.

For generations, African Americans have fought to have a good public school education. Despite their efforts, African Americans are mindful that their children remain behind the achievement of White children (Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Massey, Charles, Lundy, & Fischer, 2003). Many families have begun to use homeschooling as a means to close the achievement gaps. Parents in the African American community are using their rights as parents to do what

schools are not doing. “Black families’ perceived that institutional norms and structures within schools created destructive, rather than supportive, learning environments for children of African descent” (Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009). “Yet, there is still a surprise when a family decides to opt out into home-based education” (Meighan, 2001).

The value that the African American community put on their right to a quality public education was evident in the Civil Rights Movement, the landmark court cases of the 1950s such as *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), and the subsequent violent desegregation of schools epitomized by the Little Rock Nine (1957) in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Notwithstanding all of the fights for equal opportunity and access to public education from slavery to the Civil Rights Movement until the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, a paradigm shift in sentiments and cultural allegiance surrounding the value of public education by the African American community has taken place. Two National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) studies (1997, 2007), found the number of African Americans who dropped out of high school decreased from 13% in 1997 to 8% in 2007, this number remains high for a population who fought and died to have equal access to the same quality schools as Caucasians. The most recent scientific study of the homeschooling population conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2003) is limited in scope. This study fails to segregate determinants or descriptors based on race. The African American homeschooled population has expanded from .08 percent of nearly 1.1 million families in 1998 to 9.2 percent in 2003, according to NCES (Princiotta & Bielick, 2003). There are inconsistencies in data, which report both the actual number of homeschoolers in general and the number of African American homeschoolers in particular (Princiotta & Bielick, 2003; Ray, 2005; Ray 2006). The most recent scientific study of the homeschooling population conducted by NCES (2003) is limited in scope.

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Statistical data on homeschoolers. The *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (JBHE) states that African American parents do not homeschool as often as White parents (“Bad News,” 2000). While Caucasian families have been the primary and largest population to homeschool for over a century, a statistically significant number of African Americans and other racial populations have embraced this method of education (NCES, 2003, 1999). In the 1990s, the homeschooling phenomenon began to gain in popularity (Reich, 2002). While there has been a decline in the Hispanic subgroup, dropping from 1.1% in 1999 to 0.7% in 2003, this approach to education has resurged in popularity once again like a fad in the Caucasian community (NCES, 2003). Since 1999, the number of Caucasian families who have begun to homeschool increased from 2.0% in 1999 to 2.7% in the 2003 study (NCES, 2003). Homeschooling has increased in the African American community at a phenomenal rate, 1.0% in 1999 with 84, 000 students to 1.3% or 103,000 in 2003. Within the various studies on homeschooling in general, there are inconsistencies in data that report the overall number of homeschoolers and the number of African American homeschoolers in particular (Princiotta & Bielick, 2003; Ray, 2005, 2006). The NCES study shows that more often households who homeschool have only one parent participating in the labor force, 5.6%. Only 1.1 percent of homeschooling families have both parents in the labor force (NCES, 2003). However, according to the *Journal of Blacks in Higher*

Education, Black homeschooling families are more likely to have both spouses in the labor force than White homeschooling families (“Bad News,” 2000). In a 1999 study of 20,760 student homeschoolers, Rudner found that of the study participants, 94% were non-Hispanic Whites and the majority of them were fundamentalist Christians (JBHE, 2000). Only 6% were minorities; less than 1% were Black. Carrington (2005) found that the homeschooling phenomenon has “grown at the astounding rate of 4000% in the past 20 years.... Although African Americans only represent about 3% of all homeschoolers, Black children are 5 times more likely to be homeschooled than they were just 5 years ago.” Therefore, the exact number of African Americans who are homeschooling is unclear, and little to no data is available on parents’ educational levels, because of the lack of research on the African American group specifically.

However, what we do know is that parents in the African American community appear to be taking their children’s education into their own hands because of experiences cited by Ladson-Billings and other researchers about issues of high drop-out, suspension, expulsion, and retention rates of students (1996). Jean Anyon (1997) states, “Research has shown that instruction in inner-city schools is often based on cognitively low-level, unchallenging, rote material” (p. 7). Parents’ educational attainment levels do not seem to be a determinant in whether or not parents opt to homeschool. According to NCES (2003), the amalgamation of data collected about the homeschooling population in general, 30.8% of parents had at least a bachelor’s degree, 19.6% had graduate degrees, and 24.5% had a high school diploma or less. Again, no subgroup data is available about African American parents and their educational attainment. However, the JBHE states that 56.7% of mothers and 66.7% of fathers who homeschool have at least a bachelor’s degree (Summer 2000). JBHE goes on to say only 15% of Black adults have a bachelor’s degree, without citing the educational attainment of an exact

number of Black adults who homeschool. The African-American homeschooling population is diverse. Celebrities, Will and Jada Pinkett-Smith support homeschooling. In a 2006 interview, rapper and actor, Will Smith, states:

The things that have been most valuable to me I did not learn in school. Traditional education is based on facts and figures and passing tests—not on a comprehension of the material and its application to your life. Jada and I homeschool our children, because the date of the Boston Tea Party does not matter (Grant, 2006)

When the interviewer, Grant, asks Smith does he actually teach them, Smith states, “No, we have hired teachers who teach what we feel is important. For example, Plato's *Republic*—kids need to know that. Why is that not taught in first grade?” Smith is part of an economically diverse group that believes that neither public nor private schooling is the best method of education for their children, and he seeks to have some control of what his children learn. Because the number of the African American homeschoolers is on the rise, more in-depth studies are needed to gain a better understanding of the plights of this community.

A parent who teaches in the homeschool, generally teaches on a full-time basis and does not usually work outside of the home; one can infer that the working spouse has a high enough income to support the family. In the study of African American homeschoolers, Fields-Smith and Williams (2009) reported, “Participants explained while their family income would be considered middle class, it took creative and strategic budgeting to live on one income instead of two.” “At times the decision to stay at home fed negative reactions from family members and friends” as some of the homeschooling mothers left fields like law, accounting, and real estate. In many cases, the one working spouse is college educated. For example, Beatrice Woods-Cooper, an African American mother, holds a degree in biology and was on her way to medical school prior to learning of her pregnancy (Henderson, 2005). Woods-Cooper was an entrepreneur and operated a day care center from home. Another African American couple studied included Paula

Penn-Nabrit, who graduated from Wellesley College, and her husband C. Madison Nabrit, who graduated from Dartmouth. The Nabrits worked at home while homeschooling (Henderson, 2005). In each of these examples, parents generated income not outside the home, but from within the home. Pamela and Keith Sparks are both educated; he is an attorney who works outside the home and Pamela, the homeschooling parent, completed her degree from Stanford and is the full-time teacher (Sparks, 1996). Cherie Pogue, a high school graduate took charge of homeschooling her four children on a full-time basis. Michael, her husband, not only was a captain in the military, but he went on to earn his Master's degree (Pogue, 1996). Both the Sparks and Pogues are African American homeschooling parents. Each of these families had at least one person who attained a bachelor's degree. In the former example, Will and Jada Pinkett Smith, African American actors, neither of them are college educated, but they have the financial means to hire teachers to teach their children at home.

The popularity of homeschooling among single parents is increasing. Kevin Brooks, a divorced African-American father in Arlington, Virginia, and a researcher for Motorola, pulled his 14-year old son, Kristoff, out of public school when Brooks realized he was spending hours teaching skills that Kristoff should have already mastered (Coleman, 2002, p. 24). Some African American families, like many of the Caucasian homeschooling families, decide to homeschool for religious reasons. Michelle and Allan Shaw expressed that "home was the best place to teach their children strong academics, religious values, and instill their own sense of ethnic pride" (Coleman, 2002). Another homeschooler, Penn-Nabrit (2003), stated, "Our desire for a holistic educational experience where their spiritual, intellectual, and physical development would receive equal attention was an extension of what we wanted for our family." Case studies conducted during the course of this research attempt to determine if there are any differences in

the African American families who indicate religious and ethnic values versus academic reasons were their primary motivations for homeschooling .

A decision to homeschool. According to the NCES, factors leading to the decision to homeschool appear to be based on teachers' low expectations of Black male children, low-overall performance of schools, and safety (including drugs and negative peer pressure) and environmental issues (NCES, 2003). The "teachers' low expectations of black male children" factor is one of a few findings specifically related to African American homeschoolers. Therefore, when pondering the reasons why African American families have opted to homeschool, issues involving race may be a contributing factor. However, according to Smith Amos (2005), an African American, "large class sizes, low academic achievement, peer pressures and the high cost of private education" are the primary reasons why African Americans decide to homeschool. If the cost of private education is indeed one reason for homeschooling in the African American community, then the NCES does not address the high cost of private education nor does it examine large class sizes. Demographically, the African American homeschooling population seems to mirror a collage of the African American community as a whole. There are not any apparent common descriptors within this population of homeschooling families; there are various reasons for selecting this educational alternative.

Attempts to close the achievement gap. Problems with the education system persist for many African Americans, regardless of reform initiatives such as A Nation at Risk and No Child Left Behind, which were designed to correct the problems of our nation's schools by eliminating the disparity in the quality of schools and increasing the number of highly qualified educators working in disadvantaged schools. African American youth from higher-income households and/or with more highly educated parents do much better in school than African American youth

who lack these advantages, but not nearly as well as Whites in similar family circumstances. Indeed, the school performance of affluent African American children often is closer to that of poor White children than that of affluent Whites (Gosa & Alexander, 2007, p. 286).

Eight years after *A Nation at Risk*, our government increased the number of federal regulations to improve schools and to help students succeed in public schools. President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 in conjunction with the re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Once authorized and implemented, ESEA compelled public school educators and school districts nationwide to be accountable for student achievement or the lack of it. A passage taken from the White House's web page states:

The purpose of Title IV is to promote parental choice and to increase the amount of flexible funds available to states and school districts for innovative education programs...For that reason, the Administration seeks to increase parental options and influence. Parents, armed with data, are the best forces of accountability in education. And parents, armed with options and choice, can assure that their children get the best, most effective education possible. (White House.com)

Increasing parental options, as stated on the White House's web site, implies that parents are given the tools to anatomize the educational options available. It does not state that parental choices are limited to public, charter, or private school options. This passage does state that "[parents] can assure that their children get the best, most effective education possible." Providing parents the choice of schools and funding to support that choice is part of the No Child Left Behind Act, Title IV. When taking into account the intent of both the *A Nation at Risk* report and the NCLB, these two initiatives were designed to do, at minimum these three things:

1. To reform our public schools by restructuring the size of its high schools;
2. To improve curricula by making them more rigorous and to make stakeholders accountable;

3. To create vouchers and charter schools to promote direct competition between those institutions and public schools that will ultimately increase the quantity and quality of schools to provide parents with more options.

If these initiatives succeed, three main changes are likely to occur. First, failing schools would improve as a direct result of both initiatives. If this is true, it would eliminate the need for students to leave public schools as a consequence of poor performance on Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) reports and state assessment exams. Second, mandatory state assessment exams, federally-funded tutorial programs, and educational initiatives would rectify the problems leading to low student performance; students who need the additional tutoring would be able to get the help needed to perform better on more rigorous curricula and close their personal achievement gap. Third, student failure and dropout rates would be at nominal levels given the regulation of state exams, implementation of tutoring programs, creation of new initiatives aimed at increasing academic achievement, and other innovative educational options. Last, if parents are still not content with either their child's academic performance or the school's performance as indicated on AYP reports, they can elect to withdraw their child from that failing school and enroll him or her in another educational institution or a school of choice. Former U.S. Secretary of Education, Rod Paige stated, "For too long, many of our schools did a good job educating some of our children. With this new law [NCLB], we'll make sure we're providing *all* of our children with access to a high-quality education" (Smith, 2002). While NCLB has taken steps to give all children access to a quality education, it cannot regulate teachers' beliefs and biases, or negative stereotypes regarding students of African American heritage. Neither NCLB nor A Nation at Risk has addressed shortfalls such as some teachers' ineptness and lack of expertise in

regard to working with students of African lineage or students living in impoverished communities.

According to NCLB, parents should expect financial support to elect schools of choice, even homeschooling if that is an option. Both Title IV of the ESEA and NCLB were to include provisions “to increase the amount of flexible funds available to states and school districts for innovative education programs” (White House). I would think “innovative education programs” would also include homeschools. If the three aforementioned posits are true, a child who is not successful in their public school, would be supported by both the local school district and by the state even when the desired “choice” is that of a homeschool. However, that is not necessarily the case given the disparity in laws in each state, specifically with notifying authorities of the intent to homeschool. For example, in recent months as indicated in the case of *Jonathan L. v. Superior Court* (2008), the state of California has attempted to prevent parents from homeschooling their child unless the parent is a certified teacher. This, however, was not California’s first attempt at discouraging entry into homeschooling. The following passage published in 2004 states:

Two years ago in California, panic erupted in many homeschool households after former state Superintendent of Instruction Delaine Eastin issued a letter to superintendents, attendance officials and private school coordinators stating that “In California, ‘homeschooling’—a situation where non-credentialed parents teach their own children, exclusively, at home, whether using a correspondence course or other types of courses—is not an authorized exemption from mandatory public school attendance.” (“Homeschooling Increases,” 2004)

Legislators in several states like California are beginning to rethink the qualifications and regulations of homeschools, as in the case of *Jonathan L. v. Superior Court* (2008). These deterrents are not limited to California. Actions like those in California would deter some parents who are interested in homeschools. Efforts like those in California have led to the need of a Homeschool Legal Defense Association to provide legal support to homeschooling families

across the country. Many state superintendents like Delaine Eastin and state legislatures have created obstacles for parents who desire to educate their own children at home. Although this paper is not intended to highlight the increasing number legal restrictions state agencies have implemented over the years, a question for future research, if data supports the academic gap between White and Black homeschoolers has been closed, why do states want to prohibit parents' rights to homeschool (NCES, 2003)?

The number of African-American homeschooling families has increased. A presumption is that the right to homeschool will become more of a challenge and will face more regulations in future years. According to the 1999 and 2003 homeschooling studies by the NCES, parents of all racial groups have increased selection of homeschools as a viable alternative to conventional private, public and charter schools in the United States. This demonstrates that additional research is needed in the area of cross-racial homeschoolers. Parents who choose to homeschool often encounter financial disparate treatment when compared to parents who opt for charter schools or vouchers as their educational "choice" option. These families do not have the same financial incentives as those who choose other educational alternative like vouchers, for example, and they do not have the same support of governmental agencies as those who opt for charter schools or vouchers, so why is homeschooling an attractive approach for African American families?

This study attempts to offer insight into the homeschooling phenomenon with particular emphasis on the African American family. It complements the limited but increasing body of work that suggests that African American homeschoolers have closed the achievement gap with Caucasian homeschoolers (Ray, 1997). Additionally, this study adds to the literature about the ideological reasons why African American families have chosen to homeschool. The reasons

why these families have opted to educate their own children may or may not coincide with reasons of Caucasian-homeschooling families. This research study uses case studies to understand the African Americans who are opting to home school by providing thick descriptions of their culture, values, and ideologies (Gertz, 1973) and to learn why they have selected this educational option above all others.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter provides a case study and presents a transparent and in-depth description of how this study was designed and how data were collected. Schwandt states (1997, 1993), that *methodology* refers to the “theory of how inquiry should proceed. It involves analysis of the principles and procedures in a particular field of inquiry” (as cited by Glesne, 2006, 8). As such, in this chapter, five sections are devoted to methodology: (a) Problem and Purposes Overview (b) Rationale and Assumption for Research Design; (c) Research Questions; (d) Data Collection; and (e) Validity and Trustworthiness.

Problem and Purposes Overview

Research by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has shown that in increasing numbers African American families are turning to homeschooling as an option for educating their children. According to an NCES survey, in 1999 approximately 1% or 84,000 of all homeschoolers in the United States were African American (Bielick, Chandler, & Broughman, 1999). Just four years later, in 2003, that percentage had risen to 1.3 percent or 103,000 homeschoolers (Princiotta & Bielick, 2003). Though these NCES studies represent the most reliable and trustworthy figures available, many researchers believe that these figures likely underestimate the actual number of homeschoolers in the nation, including the number of African American homeschoolers (Princiotta & Bielick, 2003; Ray, 2005, 2006).

Despite this growing population of African American homeschoolers, scant research has been done to document and understand the reasons behind these families decision to turn to homeschooling as an option. The NCES studies in 1999 and 2003 did not have any significant emphasis on racial demographics to determine why there has been such a rapid increase of

African American homeschoolers in comparison to the general community of homeschoolers. In addition, the data in those studies did not determine if the reasons for homeschooling varied by racial groups. The reasons why these students are leaving urban and suburban educational institutions and the impact such a change might have are being ignored. Instead, much of the current education research of African American students appears to be centered on increased enrollment in charter schools in urban areas. Although the U.S. Department of Education has financially supported extensive research about the homeschooling population, no research on African American homeschoolers has been supported by the Department of Education.

Using a case study methodology, this research study attempts to fill this gap in the literature by exploring why four African American families have chosen homeschooling as the best option for educating their children and detailing how that homeschooling occurs. This study seeks to understand why this option was selected over other educational alternatives such as public, private, or charter schools.

Homeschooling is not a clear concept in many individuals' minds. Homeschooling is an enigma. In general, there is skepticism about the whether or not someone can truly homeschool their children, and the general population knows very little about homeschooling. According to Green & Hoover-Dempsey (2007), "although homeschooling is growing in popularity in the United States, little systematic research has focused on this population" (p. 267). Many people simply do not comprehend how homeschooling is done, why families want to or choose to do it, or what types of people are engaging in this educational alternative. The words "homeschool" appear to provoke a level of curiosity in the minds of many individuals. Cizek stated educational researchers have failed to spend much time or money informing the general public about this option to traditional schooling (as cited in Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007, p. 267). Researchers

in education, even those in urban education, have ignored this population of students. Society, in general, remains skeptical and curious when considering the effectiveness of parents as primary educators to their own children.

Research Questions

Two questions that were left unanswered by previous research have guided this study—African American homeschoolers: (1) Who are they? and (2) Why do they opt to homeschool?

Rationale and Assumption for Qualitative Design

Prior to commencing the research, I made assumptions about the families who chose this educational alternative. I will admit, I knew very little about this community. These assumptions were made even prior to reading the literature about African American homeschoolers. Like many outsiders, my perceptions about African American homeschoolers were:

1. The relationship between a child and a parent would facilitate trust; thus, the child is more receptive to learning from the parent, the first teacher; the parent cares for the child's welfare.
2. The primary reasons African American families homeschooled were in alignment with Caucasian homeschoolers as suggested by NCES (2003): religious/moral reasons and school safety/environment;
3. Homeschooled students lacked socialization skills because families taught in isolation;
4. Parents cannot be more effective teaching their children than pedagogical practitioners; and
5. Locating and extracting data from research participants would prove to be unsuccessful.

Taken together, the 1999 and 2003 NCES studies provide a general overview of the reasons families chose to homeschool. While these studies included some data on racial groups—Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, and Asian—descriptors by racial groups were not provided. Additionally, to date, the homeschooling literature does not address issues specific to African American homeschoolers.

With the research goal of understanding who African American homeschoolers are and why they choose to homeschool, a qualitative research design made the most sense. Yin (2003) suggests that in choosing between qualitative and quantitative methodology, the research questions determine the type of methods to be used during the course of research. Qualitative methods allow the researcher to produce thick descriptions through the experiences and stories of the research participants in the unique context or natural settings (Glesne, 2006; Merriam, 1988).

This research includes case studies of four different African American homeschooling families. Case study methodology proved to be the best means to understand why African-American families are opting to homeschool. The advantage of using case study is “its observations—beyond what might be available in a conventional historical study” (Yin, 2003, p. 8). Case study addresses the “how and why” questions that focuses on contemporary events (COSMOS Corporation, n.d., cited in Yin, 2003). Using more than one case study allowed me to compare and contrast the cases of each family. Multiple observations of each family strengthened the validity of the findings. The research sites were the four families’ homes, an authentic setting in each case as described by Creswell (1998, 2003). By conducting observations of the families’ natural environments, I was able to document and understand the authentic way homeschooling took place for each family. To capture the authentic or natural setting, I observed them in their instructional environment. As a result, I came to understand each family as a

collective unit and not in chunks; I gained a holistic interpretation of each family's unique context.

Multiple qualitative methods were used to answer my second research question—Who are African American homeschoolers? The case studies were useful in answering this question because they provided thick descriptions of the families' cultures, values, and ideologies. In addition, observations, field notes, and interviews were used to triangulate data. As the researcher, I conducted an introspective analysis of personal biases, values, and interests in order to capture the most authentic observations of each family possible. Self-examinations of my prospective biases were needed because my professional training as an educator could have clouded my lens during data collection. I conducted self-analysis continually whenever I experienced inner thoughts during the observations because I wanted to offer suggestions for improvement but could not.

Researcher's Roles

Prior to undertaking this research project, I had taught in a large urban public school district in grades K–12 for nearly 14 years. During the participant recruitment process, I disclosed my professional experience to prospective participant families to maintain transparency and to facilitate gaining their trust. My role as researcher was emphasized. It was not to critique the manner in which families homeschooled. Rather, I sought to understand who they were as a family unit and collective group and why they ultimately opted to homeschool. My challenge was to keep my expertise and my fundamental role in proper perspective in relation to the research. As Glesne (1999) stated, it is not only important to recognize and to acknowledge the researcher's expertise in relation to the scope of the study, but it is also imperative to recognize the "subjective relationship to the research topic" (p. 17). The researcher assumes two roles in a

qualitative study: researcher as researcher and researcher as learner (Glesne, 1999). It was within the researcher-as-researcher role that the online contacts, the semi-structured the interviews, the observations, and the data analysis occurred.

I strived to be objective throughout the data collection process; however, the final data analysis was inevitably limited by subjectivity. The interpretation of qualitative research was conducted through my lens as a human being; thus, my limitations, biases, and perceptions inevitably impacted the data analysis. To lessen the impact of my subjectivity, I kept in mind Glesne's advice: "When you monitor your subjectivity, you increase your awareness of the ways it might distort, but you also increase your awareness of its virtuous capacity.... Seen as virtuous, subjectivity is something to capitalize on rather than exorcise" (p. 109). Because the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1988), I self-examined my training and biases to ensure that subjectivity did not impact the data collected.

While wearing the hat of researcher as learner, I became aware of *self* from the beginning of study by a continuous awareness of the biases and predispositions that made me curious "to learn from and with research participants" (Glesne, 1999, p. 41). Using a semi-structured interviewing method, I gained clarification through subsequent follow-up questions and conversations. As researcher as learner, I needed to facilitate a rapport with participants, thereby generating open communications with the families.

Participant Selection

A total of four families were used as case studies in this project. Locating and recruiting families to participate in the research was more challenging than expected. Because participants for this research were very difficult to locate, the purposive sampling method was used to select participants (Patton, 1990). This approach was decidedly the best method because it allowed a

specific group of people to be targeted. The ability to make a link to groups of African American homeschoolers was the most critical step in the research process; without African American families, there would be no research study.

Participant recruitment began with the snowball technique. In this sampling method, the researcher contacts key informants about the project and ask those informants to contact other potential participants. Those participants contacted others, and so on. This sampling method, however, proved to be ineffective, most likely because of the reluctance and mistrust that many homeschoolers have of researchers. I received no legitimate contacts or leads for prospective participants using the snowball sampling method.

As I searched for prospective families to participate in this study, I learned that many homeschooling families are reluctant to participate in research because there is a level of distrust in the process. Some homeschooling families fear that the researcher will criticize the way they homeschool. Other families are fearful that the state educational agency will become intrusive in their homeschool experience. Some states require mandated reporting, but other states do not require notification of the intent to homeschool. The fear of many families is that researchers will notify enforcement entities such as local school districts or state agencies that families are homeschooling and as a result, their lives will be complicated. In several cases, law-abiding parents have been fined, prosecuted, or falsely arrested for actions taken within the scope of homeschooling rights. Conversely, in some cases parents have violated laws regarding homeschooling in their respective states. The purpose of the Homeschool Legal Defense Association is to defend subscribing members in prospective legal interactions with school districts and other law enforcement agencies.

Optimistically, I turned to in the Internet to recruit families through on-line networks for African American homeschoolers. Using the Internet search engine Google, I entered the key phrase “African American homeschoolers.” This search yielded more organizations than expected.

I electronically mailed (email) the owners or creators of several of these targeted Internet groups through their networks, explaining my research project and asking how I could join their networks to gain access to African American homeschooling families. These networks include interracial families and are thus not racially exclusive to African Americans. Though many of the groups were originally designed for African American families, the network facilitators generally allowed White parents access to the network if they homeschooled their biracial children. Because the focus of this study is African American homeschooling families, I was very clear in my online discussions about the type of participants I sought.

Gaining access to these members depended on the rules of each particular network or group but was generally comparable to acquiring a password to get into a secured community. For example, many Ning or Yahoo groups require a level of screening by the owners to assess the applicant’s qualifications or purpose for wanting membership to that group. To earn acceptance to these group, the prerequisite was to apply for membership and to complete the enrollment process. Some groups asked screening questions such as, “Do you homeschool your children?” or “Why do you want to become a member of this group?” For other groups, applicants have only to hit the “Join This Group” button to become full members who can openly communicate with other members without moderation by the group’s owner.

As a result of the initial request for membership and completion of the screening process, two organizations for African American homeschooling families agreed to allow a formal

solicitation for research participants to be posted within the online message center. Five organizations permitted access to their networks or groups: National African American Homeschoolers Alliance (NAAHA), Black Homeschoolers (Ning), Culture at Home (Yahoo), African American Homeschoolers Network (AAHNET), and Families of Color Using Homeschooling (FOCUHS). Conversely, other group owners asked about the reason for the research and the need for membership without granting access and without subsequent contact with me to grant access. The majority of participants for the dissertation study came from two groups: Culture at Home and NAAHA.

Once I was granted membership in the groups, I created an authentic profile and posted my photograph in the members section of the networks. The membership profiles asked questions about homeschooling that I could not answer. I completed the demographic data required by each network and posted a statement of purpose for desiring access, not as a homeschooling parent but as a researcher. To protect the integrity of data collection and the study, I disclosed my true purpose for wanting to become a member of the groups. In my profile I informed all participants that I was a researcher and former public school educator. In addition, I stated that the premise of this study was not to find fault in how the families homeschooled, but rather to gain insight into who was actually homeschooling and why they chose to homeschool. By joining these groups, I, in essence, became an “indigenous” insider, which allowed me to establish a good rapport with other members and gain a level of trust because of our overlapping links as educators, mothers, and African Americans.

Having the position as an “insider” facilitated a level of authenticity. Creating a profile in the network or group was equated with being in the natural setting and comparable to going to the site of the participant to conduct research. If I had not created a profile, the families would

have been suspicious of the authenticity of the study, my validity and trustworthiness would have been questioned. The profile facilitated establishing credibility with members.

In each online community, I posted a message in the message center stating the purpose of the study: to meet families who would be interested in participating in this dissertation study, *Case Studies: African American Homeschoolers: Who Are They and Why Do They Opt to Homeschool?* Eighteen families eventually responded to these postings, expressing interest in participating in the study. I performed initial screenings to determine eligibility to participate in the research via email. Once families appeared to fit the framework of this research, consent forms were mailed to each family. Upon receipt of signed forms, the researcher scheduled a telephone screening interview to ask the initial 10 questions from the protocol. The telephone screening was a second level of eligibility verification. Subsequent to the screening interview, I arranged an appointment for the initial observation.

After further communication and through screening, four of these 18 families were eventually selected for inclusion in the study. The 18 families were screened using the following three criteria:

- (1) Parents and children had to be African American;
- (2) Participants were required to be current not former homeschoolers;
- (3) Participants had to agree to be observed during the instructional day and consent to being observed in their normal homeschooling area.

These criteria allowed the researcher to select participants within the scope of the study, which included a focus on mono-racial families.

Two of the four families agreed to participate in the dissertation research on the first contact. The remaining two families responded to the second posting for participants and

subsequently consented to participate in this study. Participant families were located in Michigan, Washington D.C., Oklahoma, and Illinois. Pseudonyms are used throughout this dissertation to protect the identities of the homeschoolers. In two of the families, both parents had at least a bachelor's degree. In the other two families, the instructors were high school graduates; one was in pursuit of computer certification and the other was starting a business from home. Three families had fathers who were at home part time. One of these fathers worked in the private sector and the other two were working out of state due to a lack of employment where the family resided. Table 1 outlines this information for each family.

Table 1.

Family Units

Family	Urban	Ham-Ying	Dampare	Patterson
State/District of Residence	District of Columbia	Illinois	Michigan	Illinois
Agree to participate	2 nd contact	Initial contact	Initial contact	2 nd Contact
Parents Education	Bachelors- Both	Associate-Mom	Bachelors-Both	Bachelors- Both Masters- Dad

Data Collection

Data collection methods included participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and field notes. Triangulation of data among these various methods increased the validity of the research and study findings. Different researchers and authors suggest different combinations for methods triangulation. For example, Yin suggests “six sources of evidence...” for case studies that a researcher can provide to increase validity through use of triangulation of methods that can

be any combination of: "...archival records, direct observation, documents, interviews, participant observation and physical artifacts" (2003, p.85). In contrast, Glesne (2006) and Creswell (1998) propose a very different combination of triangulated methods to collect data: semi-structured interviews, and observations. Table 2 shows the methods used in the study.

Table 2.

Data Collection Methods Used in the Study: Limitations and Advantages

Method	Variation	Benefits of Method	Limitation of Method
Semi-structured interview	Face-to- face	Researcher prepares protocol questions in advance guided by research questions; Participants can freely answer open-ended questions; Researcher can hear responses and view body language to suggest if follow up probes are needed; Easier to establish a rapport with participants	Researcher's presence, may intimidate participant- may lead to biased responses; Participant may view Researcher's body language, appearance, and body cues to participant's responses; Difficult to detect if responses are true; May take more time-require travel costs
Observation	Researcher as observer	Observation-more in-depth; data collected via wider lens of natural setting, participant behaviors can be viewed and recorded	Respondents' actions may be unnatural because of researcher's presence
	Researcher as learner	Facilitates good listening & communication; open to new views of data	Self-bias could skew data collection
Field notes	Analytic notes Reflection of ideas, problems, interpretations, things to follow up	Can perform bias and self-reflection check	Can miss key observational data during note taking

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents. The interviewing instrument was designed for adults as the primary participant. The intent of the research protocol was not to engage children in the interviewing process. Instead, children were asked unscripted questions subsequent to the observation when prompted by a particular event for the purpose of gaining clarity. To ensure that I observed, heard, and interpreted that particular event correctly, I would, on occasion, ask a child a question. That question would not come from the original protocol. As required by IRB regulations, parents had to give consent to have the children participate in the interviews-they did. During the interviews and observations, questions were not directed to the children despite having the parents' approval by way of consent forms. The interview protocol was designed around the primary research questions and sought to gain insight into what each family did to homeschool their children. Children were observed as they interacted with the primary instructional parent, but the semi-structured questions on the protocol were designed to solicit in-depth descriptions of their experiences from the adult perspective.

The semi-structured interview was conducted each day at the conclusion of the observation; this would prevent the family from being overwhelmed. The interviews took place over a span of 12 weeks. However, due to relocation out of the area, it took nearly 5 months to conclude the interviews with one family. Only one father provided data in the first observation. The fathers worked and were not involved on a daily basis with the instruction. Fathers were not the primary instructional parent. Two of the fathers worked out of state. The other subsequent observations were only with the instructional parent, the mothers. Time was often limited for the

interviews because of the daily instruction schedules. During each observation, interview questions were taken from the protocol guide based on the research questions. There were a total of 85 questions on the research protocol.

The benefit of a semi-structured interview was that it permitted participants to engage in a conversation more than a structured interview would have (Baumann & Bason, 2004; Schostak, 2006). The semi-structured interview method allowed participants to elaborate in a conversational mode; in addition, this approach provided an opportunity to follow up with additional questions, as necessary. Through these interviews, each family provided thick description of their experiences with homeschooling.

Observations

Initially, I thought that it would be rather easy to observe each family for consecutive days. Based on my experience with public educational systems, I brought my pre-conceptions in to the research project expecting to arrive and leave at the same times each day. The observations did not take place in that manner. I conducted seven observations for each of the four families over the course of three months to learn how each family operated their homeschool. The observations were not for consecutive days because of family schedules, illnesses, and out of town travel. Observations took place at each family's home and the time of arrival and departure depended entirely on their agenda for that day. Families' instructional agenda and schedule varied from family to family. While one family had a very rigid schedule and took care to have a concrete regimen, two other families were less rigid but did have a typical schedule while the other family was far more liberated. In each case, the home was the primary research site. As Creswell suggested (2005), I went to the participant's site so I could better understand the phenomenon through an understanding of that site and its people (p. 204). I observed each

family unit. In each of these four cases, the mother was the primary instructor. Upon the first observation, I introduced myself to the children with the parent in the room and informed them that I just wanted to learn how their family homeschooled. I asked them to pretend like I was not watching them learn. I did not interact with the children during the observation and instructional time. Children were observed in the home environment during instruction and during their other activities such as music lessons or art. In some cases, educational activities were outside of the home. When I was observed the families and home instruction, I never interacted with the families. There was no reason for me to act in any other role other than as a non-participant researcher. Prior to the first observation, parents were informed that I was not there to participate in the instructional process. For this study, field notes and observational data were collected and used for data analysis. Field notes were written and data were collected each day for clarity.

Initial observations occurred wherever the children and instructors interacted whether it was in the instructional area, in the family room, or outside of the home. It was important to allow the parents to homeschool in the way they would normally instruct. All subsequent observations were made in the area for instruction unless the itinerary called for activities outside of the home. As researcher, it was critical to observe the families in their natural setting. A natural setting increased the likelihood of experiencing a typical instructional day for that family. Not only were the instructional strategies and interactions with the children observed, but also the manner in which parents negotiated instructional activities and transitioned instruction between content areas. Observations revealed the amount of planning involved, the interruptions that were typical for each home environment, and the amount of structure provided during the child's learning activities. The observations offered insight into some of the benefits and challenges of homeschooling for these families. They also allowed the researcher to view the

variety of strategies instructors used in homeschooling. The observations also focused on the teacher-student relationship and the “classroom management” strategies that were used in the homeschool. Classroom management was indicative of how the child behaved during instructional time.

Data Analysis

These instrumental case studies provide insight into an issue or redraw a generalization, according to Stake (as cited in Glesne, 2006, p. 12). I compiled data for analysis by reading all notes from field notes, observations, and interviews. I synthesized the data into chunks using a thematic analysis approach to coding data. The thematic analysis was done across all four case studies. I examined and organized the data for comparisons and contrasts between each family. As with most studies, as Glesne suggests, “you acquire even more data than originally envisioned” (2006, p. 151). I utilized spreadsheet software, Excel, to form and create the categories according to the themes that emerged from the collected data. I was able to gain a holistic interpretation of data after the synthesis of the clumps was broken into smaller clumps.

As a qualitative researcher without a pre-established goal or a hypothesis that was being tested, I was able to collect a significant amount of data that was useful in answering my research questions. Not until the synthesis of these various data sources was I actually able to determine which data were useful in relation to the two questions of this study. I quickly realized that I had far more data than I could use for this study. Yin (2003) says that much of the judgment in which data are useful is contingent upon the researcher’s interpretations and the presentation of evidence. Therefore, the data that answered the questions which were the framework for this study became the focus of the analysis. The participants provided thick descriptions of their feelings, thoughts, and concerns about their children’s education during the interviews and

observations. Through these descriptions themes emerged that formed the basis for the research findings discussed in the next chapter. In addition, I collected data that could be used in future research to learn about other aspects of homeschooling such as the use of best practices, curriculum, and record keeping. All data, including that not used in this study, is stored safely and securely per the IRB requirements.

Trustworthiness

Holloway and Jefferson (2000) provide a framework through which researchers can perform self-analysis. To promote trustworthiness of the research design and analysis, the authors suggest that the researcher ask him or herself four questions to ensure the checks and balances of research (Holloway and Jefferson, as cited in Glesne, 2006, p. 55):

1. What do you notice?
2. Why do you notice what you notice?
3. How can you interpret what you notice?
4. How can you know that your interpretation is the “right” one?

Essentially in the first question, the researcher is examining the opportunity cost of noticing one thing over another. I realized that when an obvious event or statement received my attention, something else either went unobserved or received less emphasis in my notes. Table 3 depicts the measures taken to ensure trustworthiness.

The second question initiates a reflection of biases to determine why a particular event or comment was noticeable to the researcher. Because I had nearly 19 years of experience as an educator, the materials, lesson plans, classroom management, and strategies used in instruction were of particular interest. I was naturally curious about the entire process of teaching your own

child (ren) and why a parent would opt to do it. With self-reflections conducted throughout the observations, I realized that I was drawn to taking notice of the organization of how and what was being taught; this was interesting to me because of my expertise in education and prior teaching experience. Table 3 demonstrates the process incurred throughout the study .

Table 3.

Strategies Implemented to Ensure General Trustworthiness of the Findings

Strategy	Description
Researcher as learner	Performed a self-analysis to check for biases which would hinder the objectivity; reflected upon subjectivity.
Checks and balances	Asked myself 4 critical questions to perform a self-analysis as a researcher: (1) What do you notice? (2) Why do you notice what you notice? (3) How can you interpret what you notice? (4) How can you know that your interpretation is the “right one?”
Triangulation	Performed semi-structured interviews with open-ended and general questions, recorded field notes, prolong engagement, and conducted a survey.

Through self-reflections conducted throughout the observations, I realized that I was drawn to observations of the organization of how and what was being taught; this was interesting to me because of my expertise in education and prior teaching experience. Therefore, it was imperative that I use a triangulation of methods and self-monitoring of subjectivity to ensure that data that would not be biased or that irrelevant data was not infused into the findings (Glesne, 2006).

Glesne (2006) states that a researcher needs to reflect upon their subjectivity in terms of what is heard and noticed on a continuous basis. I found myself self-checking continuously when I was in the position of researcher as learner to check for biases that would hinder objectivity and may be favorable to a particular family because of the rapport that has been established and

because of the researcher's expertise in teaching. There was a fine line between establishing and maintaining a rapport with a family when positioned as the researcher as researcher and when the position was as researcher as learner. When positioned as researcher as learner, it was easier to allow the educator in me to take a dominant position. A more critical point is to determine if these noticeable events or obvious comments were provoked to gain my attention.

Holloway and Jefferson's (2000) third question relates to how researchers interpret what they notice. During the course of the observation, I did not make a judgment of what was useful data and what was not useful. I recorded what I observed. When I compiled the data for analysis and synthesized the data based on what was useful in answering the research questions, I also interpreted what I noticed. I know my interpretation of a noticeable event was determined by the length of time spent observing the participants and the environment to determine if this event or comment was significant. Spending seven days with each family provided a basis for interpretation. The goal is of any research study is to provide credible and reliable analysis. To minimize this potential for errors in interpretation, I conducted more than one observation, thereby increasing the level of validity in interpretation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that a period of prolonged engagement is critical for establishing credibility. Prolonged engagement is necessary to ensure the researcher's interpretations are solid; I established a good rapport with participants over time to avoid misinterpretation of their responses, actions, and personalities. "If prolonged engagement provides scope, persistent observation provides depth" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304). For instance, if a participant repeatedly used an uncommon expression or referenced the same event continuously over the course of the observations or interviews, then I used follow-up questions to gain insight and ensure that I had correctly interpreted the event

during an observation. Some repetitions of key words by participants provided insight to why homeschooling was a preferred educational option.

Holloway and Jefferson's (2005) last question suggests knowing that the interpretation by the researcher is correct. The 'checks and balances' associated with doing research provided clarification of responses; I asked follow-up questions when there were doubts or ambiguities. This was a critical step that provided a form of checks and balances in establishing validity in research.

Limitations of this Study

The limitations of this study grew throughout the research period. Initially, the anticipated limitation was participant recruitment. Indeed, gaining access to potential participants was problematic. Because some states require reporting of the intent to homeschool, records of those families must exist. However, because many states protect the privacy of students, I could not contact the Michigan Department of Education, for example, for a list of homeschoolers to call to solicit participation in the study. I therefore had to turn to the Internet and online communities to target and recruit participants.

During this process, I encountered the second study limitation: a general lack of trust that many families had, stemming from numerous legal actions that have been taken against homeschooling families in the past. Some families were hesitant to trust me despite disclosing my experience as a former public school teacher. In fact, my past teaching experience may have deterred participants from engaging in the research once they read my true purpose for joining the homeschooling networks. Table 3 describes the methods used in the study for data collection.

A third limitation was retaining participants throughout the study period. Some participants discontinued the study because of challenges such as death of a family member, relocation of a spouse or the entire family, personal illness, or for other reasons which were not disclosed. Losing participants after commencing the interviews was the most devastating aspect of this research study because significant time had been spent with the families, in some cases travel expenses were incurred, and a lot of data had been collected. However, realizing these complications were not within my control as a researcher made them easier to accept. As a researcher, learning to deal with indirect rejection was challenging. When obstacles hindered a family's ability to complete the research, I realized that this type of rejection should not be taken personally unless it stemmed from a research design flaw, which was not the case.

Funding was also a limitation. As a private researcher without institutional funding, I faced additional obstacles in recruiting participants that well-funded researchers might be able to avoid. For example, increasing the number of case studies also would mean an increase in travel expenses—something I could not afford. Second, funding to advertise this research in print media and online media such as on websites that specialize in homeschooling curriculum and blogs might have increased the number of participants. Finally, a limited number of homeschoolers will find intrinsic value in their involvement in a research study without receiving any tangible goods. After speaking with homeschoolers, I believe many families would be interested in receiving a free gas card or discount coupons for books, educational materials, or school supplies in exchange for participation in a research study. Providing such incentives to participants, however, would be expensive.

Conclusion

Data was collected and analyzed with methods such as participant observation, field notes, semi-structured and in-depth interviews. The objective of these instrumental cases studies was to gain insight into African American homeschooling families. This curiosity was prompted by an article which stated that the number of African American homeschoolers had reached a phenomenal level. However, after reviewing the last study conducted by the NCES in 2003, I began to wonder if the primary reasons for homeschooling in that study were the same for the African American homeschooling population. Considering the limited amount of research on African American homeschoolers and fewer scholarly articles and studies published in the existing body of literature, these were questions which remained unanswered: (1) Who are they? and (2) Why do they opt to homeschool? Observational and interview data were collected by use of field notes and audio recordings. The audio recordings were part of the field notes and were transcribed using word processing software. All the data was broken into chunks and synthesized. Themes arose from the cross-case analysis and will be presented in the next chapter.

During the research study, I used guided conversations to gather clarity and to obtain an understanding of how the data were linked to and aligned to the research questions. Conversations allowed for clarity and an in-depth understanding. It is my recommendation that an ethnographic study is conducted in the future to understand if there are any cultural differences in the way African Americans homeschool in comparison to Caucasian homeschoolers. These are the 2 largest racial groups in the United States according to the NCES 1999 and 2003 studies. There are so many questions about the African American homeschooling family that remains unanswered.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS OF DATA

This research includes case studies of four African-American families who are currently homeschooling their children. These families belong to various homeschooling networks such as African American Homeschoolers Network, Black Homeschoolers, or African-American Home School all designed for the African American family; however, as a side note, membership in these networks is not racially exclusive to Blacks. The semi-structured interview allowed participants to engage in a conversation more than a structured interview. This approach provided an opportunity to follow-up with additional probes, as necessary. The interview protocol questions were not originally designed with the intent to engage children in the interviewing process despite having their approval by way of consent forms. The interview protocol was designed for adults as the primary respondents. However, as needed, children were asked questions to gain a better understanding of a comment or event that was not transparent during the observation. In addition, children were observed as they interacted with the primary instructional parent, but the questions were designed to solicit in-depth descriptions of their children's experiences from an adult perspective.

Participant Selection

I solicited participants from several online networks created for African-American homeschoolers because the snowball sampling method proved to be unsuccessful. When I used friends and acquaintances for referrals, I received no response from the prospective participant. I did not get many leads or referrals because the majority of my colleagues or friends do not know many African-American homeschoolers. As a result, I had to use another research method, purposive sampling, to locate families with links to homeschooling. Some of the online networks

and groups were no longer accessible via their published contact information found on the Internet search engine, Google. The telephone numbers for the contact person were not valid. Some groups published specific meeting places such as libraries and arts centers. When I called those locations, I was informed that those homeschooling groups no longer convened there.

Finally, newer groups like those created online in Yahoo and Ning networks were discovered. Online participation included blogs, pictures of families, and demographic profiles of African-American homeschooling families. There were 18 families who initially responded to the solicitation for participants posted in the message center within the online networks. The first email I posted in the Yahoo and Ning networks conveyed the purpose of the desired membership was to meet families who would be interested in participating in my dissertation study, *Case Studies: African American Homeschoolers: Who Are They and Why Do They Opt to Home School?*

The online networks created a safe environment giving these families a reasonable level of control over the inquiry process. Use of electronic mailing facilitated an initial sense of protection for parents who made inquiries. I believe these prospective families wanted to assess the risks associated with involvement in the study prior to electing to become an active participant. Email facilitated initial access to these prospective participants. It also served as the best way to appease members with an outsider who had gained access to this members-only society. The Internet and initial electronic correspondence generated a pool of prospective participants and a way to determine their preliminary eligibility for the research study.

Once the contact information was given, I followed up with a telephone call greeting to make a personal introduction and to provide legitimacy to the solicitation for research participants. I believe hearing a human voice, my voice, promoted a level of comfort for

participants rather than communication made solely by electronic means. Many people are reluctant to impart personal information to an unknown individual via the Internet without first establishing a rapport prior to that initial email contact. I believe the telephone contact with an actual person increased the level of trustworthiness.

A second telephone call was made to the prospective participants within a week to conduct an in-depth screening interview. The goal of the telephone screening appointment was twofold: first, it would inform prospective participants about the manner in which the interviews would take place and second, it would give me an opportunity to gather data to ascertain whether or not these families would fit the framework of the study. During the telephone screening, the families were asked the first 10 semi-structured questions from the protocol which were designed to collect demographic data. After the initial screening interview had concluded, the families' responses were analyzed. Two families were immediately excluded because their children were infant age. They were interested in homeschooling but they had not actually homeschooled a child. Given the purpose of this study was to understand the rationale behind selecting this educational alternative above all other options, those families did not consider other alternatives for educating their child because at least one of the parents had been homeschooled.

Subsequently, consent forms were mailed with pre-paid stamped envelopes to each of the remaining 16 families prior to the initial observation in accordance with the Institutional Review Board's requirements. Six of those 16 families gave immediate verbal approval of the study during the second screening interview and stated they wanted to participate. Ten of the 16 forms were never returned. Two follow-up calls were made to those 10 families to confirm receipt of the consent forms and to assess if there were unanswered questions that may have hindered returning the consent forms. I did not receive a response from those families. However, after

receiving consent forms for only six families, I was excited to have these families as participants. However, subsequent to the first observation, two of the families later withdrew participation in the research because of personal reasons. One of the instructing mother's father passed away and the other family was entering the divorce process. In the end, four families continued on to conclude the research study. These are the four families who will be presented in this chapter: the Dampare, Urban, Ham-Kyu, and Patterson family.

Data Collection

For this study, the field notes and observational data were collected and were used for data analysis. Subsequent to the initial telephone conversation, a screening interview was held to ascertain eligibility and to determine genuine interest in the research. The first observation was scheduled after consent forms were returned with a signature. The initial observation provided data about the actual edifice where instruction occurs in the family's home and it facilitated a level of comfort for both me as researcher and the family. As a researcher, I was a bit anxious about doing quality research and about making sure that I captured relevant data during the observation. I did reflect on Glesne's work on self-monitoring (2006) and Holloway and Jefferson's (2000) questions work for maintaining checks and balances during the data collection phase of the study so I would not get distracted by personal biases. Interview and observational data was collected at the participants' home. As researcher, I reviewed notes and compiled data collected each day for clarity. Interviews and observations did not occur simultaneously.

Data was collected through use of semi-structured interviews of each family. These interviews were with the instructor parent rather than the collective family. The mother was the primary instructor in each family. Children were observed in the home, during home school instruction, and during other activities which may have included their educational activities

outside of the home. In some cases, I asked children questions subsequent to an observation to clarify comments or to understand their actions. These follow-up questions were not part of the written protocol, but were necessary to ensure that an event or comment was interpreted correctly; questions were only directed to the children for clarification.

I conducted seven observations for each of the four families over the course of 12 weeks for three of the four families to learn how the families operated their home schools. One of the families relocated to another state for the last two observations which resulted in two additional months added to the data collection timeline. Each family had their own daily agenda. Therefore, an observational day varied in length according to what was planned for that day. The instructional approaches and schedules varied in each of the four cases. Based on the unique context of each family, observations began as early as 8:00 a.m. and concluded at 4:30 p.m. With another family, the day began at 11:30 and concluded at 2:00 p.m. One family had a make-up observation and instruction day on a Saturday when the instructional day was postponed because the instructional mom needed to take her mother to the doctor. There was one family maintained a very strict regimen with a consistent beginning and ending time. Also, this family had a pre-printed lesson plan ready for me upon my arrival. As the researcher, I observed participants in their natural settings and observed them when allowed according to their family's instructional and personal agendas not according to my schedule or my research agenda. Initially, I thought I would have a set schedule for all families. One of my preconceptions was that I expected each family to have a firm time for instruction but this was not always the case. Home schools do allow for flexibility in approach, scheduling, curriculum, and pacing. Parents can modify their schedules based on need and wants. For example, one mother stated her son was fascinated with

spiders and insects. If allowed this area of study would consume a lot of their instructional time but she has to make sure all other content are covered for that day.

The greatest challenge for me as the researcher was adapting and changing my projected data collection deadlines a few times. I had to be flexible. Observations had to be re-scheduled several times because of health challenges, family issues, doctors' appointments, and relocation. Initially, I was a bit irritated when a family had to cancel, but I had to evaluate my feelings. After realizing that these are people with lives of their own and they had no reason to value my research study like I did. I was allowed to observe them when it suited their schedule. The delays began with a son getting ill and then the entire family was sick with the flu. The observations were moved back two weeks for this family. Another family relocated out of state subsequent to the first five observations to give the non-homeschooling son a new opportunity to "get himself together and to get away from distractions." Again, I had to do a self-check realizing these are people-things do happen in all families. Life simply happened to them.

In an effort not to overwhelm each family, I conducted the semi-structured interviews in stages as opposed to asking all the protocol questions in one or two observations. Time was often limited for the interviews because of the daily instructional schedules. Observations allowed the researcher to understand some of the benefits and challenges of a homeschooling family. One of the benefits of homeschooling is the potential involvement of the child and parent in collaboration with the planning and learning. Each family allowed the child to voice their likes and dislikes about the subject and in the planning. An additional benefit of learning at home is the discussion between parent and child about learning. For example, a decision can be made to spend more time on a topic or take a field trip to reinforce or provide more depth in learning. One family actually participated in an occasional co-op group. Outsiders may say this kind of

flexibility increases students' engagement and makes learning relevant while others may say this approach has non-scripted pacing and the child will not attain state standards. Because students were active participants in the planning process, I saw more of a level of enthusiasm than I would see if a child was doing as he was simply told to do. I did witness instances when that same child was not so enthusiastic about a particular content area, but he did the work just as most non-homeschooled students do. At times, I saw when the role of parent vs. teacher was at play. However, continuous challenges with homeschooling are avoiding the distractions at home such as temptations to answer the phone when it rings during instruction and to complete errands during instructional periods. Financial challenges with homeschooling are purchasing instructional materials or paying for memberships to museums or expenses for online homeschooling resources. Finally, another potential drawback for learning at home would be parents who have expectations of the child's ability which are too high, children not having support of professionals who specialize in cognitive impairments or special needs, and children who prefer to be taught by others. It was beneficial as a researcher to view the variety of strategies instructors used in homeschooling.

Interviews

As I begin this section of the chapter, I will reveal to you the four case study families: the Dampare, Urban, Ham-Kyu, and Patterson families. The interviews were conducted with parents and on occasion, children. Each family consented to children being interviewed. However, the purpose of the research protocol was to gain insight into each family's uniqueness in relation to the two guiding questions of the study: Who are they? and Why Do They Opt to Home School? While the protocol is quite lengthy, for the purposes of this section, I have composed compiled responses which are most indicative of each family's uniqueness. This is in relation to the first

research question: Who are they? After collecting the data, an analysis was conducted to assess themes. Each family conveyed a thick description of their own experiences and their rationale for selecting homeschooling as their preferred way of educating children. One of the benefits of observational data was viewing the teacher-student relationship and to view how “classroom management” occurred. Classroom management is as germane to instruction for a homeschooling family as it is for a traditional school classroom. In the case of one family, as stated by one of the homeschooling mothers, Monique Urban, it is difficult for her to teach or work with the oldest son when the youngest son is awake. If he was not asleep, she had to engage him first in an activity before attempting to instruct her eldest son, Zebulon.

Observations

It is in this section of the chapter that I will present the case study of each family within their real-life context and then link their responses to the primary research questions that shape this study:

1. Who are these African American families?
2. Why have they opted to home school?
3. Subordinate Question #1: Do their reasons for homeschooling differ from those of the larger population of families who homeschool?
4. Subordinate Question #2: Were the families’ decisions to home school a direct result of shortcomings in public education?

Homeschooling is not a clear concept in many individuals’ minds. However, it is through this thick description that a transparent depiction of these four African American families is provided. The purpose for conducting these case studies is not to find fault nor is it to create a movement for homeschooling, but it is to provide a realistic view of the families lives as

homeschoolers. The most interesting aspect about doing this study was learning that many of the pre-conceived notions relative to homeschoolers from a generalized perspective and the connections to Black homeschoolers were, in many instances, not true. Nor, were those pre-conceived notions able to be substantiated and linked to the African American homeschoolers.

Observations occurred wherever the contact was made whether it was in the instructional area, in the family room, outside of the home, or a combination of any of those areas. It was important to allow the parents to home school in the way they would normally instruct. With homeschooling, itineraries for the instructional day are not limited to activities in the classroom. I interpreted this flexibility in locale as another benefit of homeschooling. The classroom is mobile, wherever they go can be their classroom. The ability to observe the families in their natural setting increased the likelihood of experiencing a typical instructional day. These opportunities gave clarity to how learning takes place in the home. I observed not only the way in which parents instructed their children , but I also observed the manner in which parents negotiated instructional activities and the transition between content areas. Again, this process varied as did the culture within each family's home varied. For example, Rachel Dampare was so structured that there was almost no instructional time unaccounted for even as she transitioned from math and science in the kitchen to violin lessons in the living room. With the Urban family, all activities took place in the dining room which was adjacent to the living room area where the computer was located. For the Ham-Kyu family, all the instruction was in the adjacent dining and living room. However, there was sometimes difficulty in getting Brian to stop one assignment once he was engaged. Observations revealed the amount of planning involved the interruptions that are typical of a home environment, and the types of structure for the learning activities. In one observation with the Ham-Kyu family, the youngest son, Brian, was not in the

mood to learn that day. However, he wanted to paint and his mother allowed him to do what he wanted to do instead of the lesson that was planned. Rita Patterson did not seem to have any issues with transitioning her daughter from subject to subject. Similarly, the observations also disclosed some of the challenges that many parents experience when trying to teach your own children; they became frustrated when the child was not on task or when they had an interruption in instruction which mirrored the frustrations of many professional teachers. Classroom teachers also get frustrated when there is an unexpected fire drill or unplanned assembly. On occasion, the younger children played on the emotions of the parents. In most cases, it did not alter the tasks that were taking place.

In an effort to provide a description of each family, responses are provided to reflect who these families are and to provide a background of each family.

Case Study

Who Are They? The Dampare Family

The Dampare (pseudonym) family is from suburbia Michigan. The home's décor is accented with Kente Cloth and African-heritage accents throughout this three-leveled single-family ranch-styled home. They used most of the home for instruction: the kitchen breakfast bar and table are used while mom is in the kitchen, the living room area is used for music lessons, and there is a formal classroom set up in the basement that is used on occasion. The basement is covered with educational paraphernalia typical of many classrooms. As with all the families who participated in this research study, each had its own unique history and story. However, the Dampares informed this study on several levels. It was interesting to observe a family who is close to the television situation comedy, *The Cosby's* Huxtable family. The father, Eugene, is a certified engineer who has a real lineage of royalty; a dynasty in his homeland located in West

Africa. His grandfather is King of his village and he is a prince. His father and his children cannot be seated on the throne; it can be passed only through the mother or his aunt's side. He is indeed a Prince Ashston Fredua-Agyemang Dampare (pseudonym). The homeschooling mother, Rachel, has been homeschooling for nearly 12 years. She has a bachelor degree in education and she happens to operate an after-school tutorial business (see Table1). In addition, she is quite knowledgeable about African culture and history not solely because of her marriage to her African husband, but also because of her previous employment working in a museum and teaching students about Africa. Upon the initial meeting in person, Rachel and I realized that we had probably met once before when she was employed as an educational coordinator at the museum.

The Dampare children are multi-talented. The oldest child, Janice, is a young adult, 22 years old, who works part time out of the home. She is also in college; consequently, she was not around very often to participate in the study and to share her experiences with homeschooling. The youngest child, who shall be referred to as Ashton, is taking online classes from community college. Ashton was named to reflect his lineage of royalty. Ashton has spent a lot of summers in his father's homeland in West Africa to learn customs and traditions that are customary of the Rites of Passage. The Rites of Passage is a sacred ceremony symbolic of passage into manhood that he will experience as part of his lineage. Ashton has also visited Europe; his goal is to visit each continent. Although he is not sure about going to Antarctica because he stated, "only researchers go there." It seems that every detail about his life has been carefully planned.

The homeschooling day is thoroughly typed, printed, and kept in a binder once the day has concluded. Although Ashton gives some input in the planning, the day is primarily planned by mom. Instruction begins at 8:00 a.m. and the day does not conclude until after several

practices of both sports and music. Rachel’s lesson plans would make a teacher-in-training weep with the explicit details; every minute is accounted for. Included in the daily regimen are times allocated to Bible study and devotional, violin lessons, soccer practice, Boy Scouts, piano lessons, and Latin. Breakfast and lunch time are also accounted for daily. Monday through Friday is also planned in a weekly planner including the transportation time to take Ashton to his part-time public school activities. Ashton still likes to attend public school and usually leaves at 10:30 a.m. to interact with some of his former friends from the public school he formerly attended on a full-time basis. Table 4 reflects the typical day for Ashton:

Table 4.

Dampare Instructional Day

Instructional Day: Monday-Friday		
Beginning Time	Ending Time	Task
7:00 a.m.	7:29 a.m.	Breakfast and chores
8:00 a.m.	8:29 a.m.	Prayer and Bible Study
8:30 a.m.	9:59 a.m.	Language Arts /Grammar Reading, Writing, Spelling
10:00 a.m.	10:15 a.m.	Morning break
10:15 a.m.	11:30 a.m.	Math
11:30 a.m.	12:30 p.m.	Lunch and recess
12:30 p.m.	1:30 p.m.	History
1:45 p.m.	2:00 p.m.	Afternoon break
2:00 p.m.	3:00 p.m.	Science
3:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	Free time
5:30 p.m.	8:00 p.m.	Soccer/ Boy Scouts Homework/Online Classes
8:00 p.m.	9:30 p.m.	Free time
9:30 p.m.	6:59 a.m.	Bed time

On one of the observational days, Ashton sees a spider on the wall and captures it with a clear plastic box. Rachel gets an index card to help get the spider into the box. Ashton sat the spider near the book he was reading and began to observe it with a magnifying glass. Rachel stated, “Normally we keep it, observe it and then release it.” Ashton stated, “He (the spider) has a leg missing.”

Subsequent to the distraction of the spider, Ashton began to review his lesson from yesterday’s Bible study; he said, “I never pronounce their names correctly.” Religious freedom is one aspect of homeschooling that this family likes; homeschooling allows them to incorporate Bible study into the school day. In fact, his Boy Scout meetings are held at their United Methodist Church (name withheld). It was during this observation that I learned the family and I attend the same church. I contemplated whether or not I should reveal this detail but I believed transparency was important; therefore, I revealed this discovery at the end of the day as I was leaving. Mom addresses a question from the Bible lesson to Ashton, “Was there ever a time when you took the easy way out? He reflected and responded, “Yea, math.” They went over several examples of how he takes the easy way out; she also asked him to remember the coach making the comment at soccer practice. She said he was being lazy. Rachel then asks him, “Are you going to school today?” He says, “I don’t know I have gas.” She says, you better hurry up and get your socks and shoes on if you are going. He repeats, “I have gas and don’t like to do # 2 at school.” He reminds his mom that she (the teacher) yells when they are late. Ashton then gathers his belongings to get ready to go to school. We drive about 5 minutes to drop Ashton off to school. Upon return, they eat lunch and Rachel talks about how his violin teacher prepares a cassette for him to listen to and he repeats his favorite song over and over. After lunch, we then proceed to the front living room and his mom sets up everything for the violin practice. As an

observer, I thought he played wonderfully. His mom stated she is a bit nervous about the upcoming recital. The daily instructional lessons are a compilation of pre-printed materials, worksheets, workbooks from various sources and areas of interest that Ashton has. For example, they did a scrapbook to capture their trip to both Africa and Europe. Ashton really enjoyed this scrapbooking project as a culmination of his travel. His mother stated he is very interested in history; Ashton loves to study and read as much literature as possible about the Civil War.

This family was not as concerned about peer pressure or school violence as a reason for homeschooling this is in contrast to NCES data. However, the ability to teach religion, culture, and heritage were secondary reasons for homeschooling behind their primary reason for homeschooling: concerns about low expectations for him as student, an African American male, and a lack of academic stimulation were primary reasons for homeschooling. He was removed from public schools after his parents reached an impasse with the Caucasian second-grade teacher and the principal. "His classroom was 80% White, 10% Indian and Arabic and about 10% African American. The population is projected to be 25% African American by 2015. They are now trying to develop cultural sensitivity, but not from homeownership from renters, said Rachel. Rachel adds:

I have a vested interest-this is my child. This is my child- this is of mom...in the womb from mom and not even from dad; Dad don't have anything baby can latch on to. This will not supersede nature; it is something that teachers just have to have-non-measureable. Either you have it or don't. In the classroom, in cases of children-what person on this planet don't want to be loved or cared for?

It was because of Ashton's experience with his last public school in a Detroit suburb that he asked his mom to home school him. Rachel stated that Ashton has never been an average child. She said he read early, at 3 years old. He walked at 10 months and he could distinguish between upper and lower case letters of the ABCs and knew 100 sight words by the age of 4. An example of him not being average is Ashton is currently enrolled in Piedmont Valley

Community College located in Virginia where he is taking online courses. Some of Rachel's responses are below:

Why did you think it was worthwhile to participate in the study?

Rachel: I wanted to make sure that a Michigan State researcher had a participant from the area. I wanted to enlighten the study.

How did you hear about this research study?

Rachel: It was either through Unschoolers group or the African-American Homeschoolers group.

Do you believe your son is more academically successful at home than a traditional classroom?

Rachel: That's a loaded question, that is a yes & no question. I wasn't homeschooled, but the schools that I attended prepared me academically well. It is a personal choice in regard to what you may feel your child needs. Maybe in my case, schools in the 60s and 70s, teachers had no problems grouping based on ability. If students in the 2nd grade could perform at a 3rd grade level, they would allow that child to excel and push them outside of the box. Kids who could not handle the curriculum could be put in support services; special ed kids were not mainstreamed. Now there is a different approach that everyone is together or mainstreamed, but for kids who learn outside of that circle or box it has limitations.

Was cultural education a motive in your decision to home school?

Rachel: Probably in the beginning-no. Our primary decision to home school was about us having a male child who was "checking out of school." We wanted to put the safeguards in place to make sure he matured as an African American male and have the opportunities to be successful. When a male checks out of school, that is a warning sign. I was a dept head in charge of 22 people; I walked away. We did not want to take the chance to see what was up the pipe.

How is addressing culture at home school different than addressing it at a public school?

Rachel: Culturally, I don't feel he suffers from a lack of culture because of his neighborhood, the multitude of activities, and all his travel. Even though we live in a predominately White neighborhood- we live in a culturally diverse population. Most of his friends are Indian, Pakistani, Iranian, and Iraqi. It was mainly about their father who is Ghanaian. It is by nature that they are connected to their culture.

I was very candid with the principal regarding Ashton's White female teacher being insensitive with kids of color. I told the principal about the teacher not being connected to kids of color. I asked him (the principal) when is the last time she taught a class on Asian

culture or Indian culture? The teacher missed the mark when me and my husband told the teacher when working with this type of child (inquisitive); you need to be in control of the classroom. The one thing that hurt him (Ashton) was when the teacher asked him to do a report and go back as far as two generations (grandparents). He was so discouraged and bewildered by her grading on that assignment. He was so proud of his lineage.

Ashton heard his mom respond to the question and he interjected his comment:

When I did the family tree last year, I wanted to show the 7 generations and the king in my family. I knew a lot about my genealogy- I went back to slavery and I did not get to go present all of it.

Rachel: He got a very low grade and someone else who colored and put pictures on a tree received a better grade. The teacher gave him a lower grade than the student who colored. His father is a member of the Dampare dynasty. The dynasty can be passed only through the mother (paternal grandmother) or his aunt's side. His teacher would not allow him time to talk about the royalty in his family. She (the teacher) yelled to him, "I told you only to talk about 2 generations."

Another example, Hashir, Ashton's best friend from Pakistan, would write about write about Pakistan. But the teacher told both Hashir to stop writing about Pakistan and Ashton to stop writing about Ghana. She told the boys to stop writing about their countries. The teacher had very limited cultural connections to her students. If a teacher is culturally insensitive, the teacher should seek outside sources. Teachers should be open to learning about their students' backgrounds. In the case of Ashton's public school class, six kids were often singled out; they hung out together. There were 4 children of color and 2 Caucasian friends who had been friends for a couple of years. But only those who played together in this group were always getting in trouble.

Typically, what do you do when the doorbell rings?

Rachel: Normally, we don't have interruptions (door or phone). However, if I need to meet with someone during his school day, I plan meetings around our lunch hour or recess hour.

Since beginning this study, are there any changes to Ashton's academic program that you foresee in the near future?

Rachel: Yes, Ashton wants to continue his study of Latin but also wants to learn Russian and German.

Should values, cultural identities, and religions be reflected in the public school curriculum?

Rachel: No. Teachers are not-it could wind up...you mean as far as being taught? I guess I am a believer of separation of church and state. It would require an expert to teach these subjects. I think teachers are having issues now in Warren because of the number of African Americans going into that community. They are getting the lower SES African Americans in their district. I don't define you (Whites) by the folks in the trailer parks. So why are you judging those who are of lower SES status by all of us.

In one of our earlier interviews, you mentioned what child doesn't want to be cared for. How does caring and nurturing impact student achievement?

Rachel: From a psychological perspective-when they have limitations; they can shut down on you and won't go any further. If you have a special needs child- they got 2 words out of 10 and they feel that based on their abilities, they may be motivated to get 3-4 words correct. Children are reflections of little adults. Their feelings are bigger. Kids interpret differently and their spirits can be broken. In the current climate, there have been numerous studies, that in the African American community, we have to pay close attention to males from 8-about 12. Could nurturing have turned that around? For example, I have a 2nd grader who I tutor, he says that a White female teacher doesn't like him-I see the physical depression and it is articulated in the classroom. I see the 10-15 sheets of work a week; he is getting sad faces and "Fs" on his work. He tells me I want to do it with you because I know you like me. His mom is moving towards homeschooling- he has mentally checked out. As this young man's tutor, I am concerned because he has mentally checked out and that nurturing could have helped this child.

Do you think it is possible for teachers to bring caring and nurturing into instructional practices for 30-35 students?

Rachel: Yes, but it takes a teacher who has a natural ability and the desire to see each child succeed against extreme odds. It takes a well-organized teacher. But it creates a lot of pressure because of No Child Left Behind has taken the creativity away.

Do you think that these characteristics are lacking by instructors inside public classrooms?

Rachel: I don't want to do a broad brush and I think it would be unfair. It is hit or miss. I think standardized test data could help some awesome and great teachers. Poor school performance is not always to do with what happens in the classroom. Affluent districts don't have to deal with-momma shot up last night or momma got shot and that baby saw that or momma could not feed us last night. Sometimes teachers give all the nurturing and caring they can and that does not reflect upon that spelling test. I think all teachers should possess nurturing and caring or they should not teach. In 3rd grade, he was not feeling the love or interest in going to school.

What recommendations would you make to public school educators based on your previous experience as an instructor?

Teachers should be culturally sensitive. They should be conscientious of their actions. They should be nurturing and caring to the point that they do not cause a child to mentally check out (learning). Most teachers do the best they can.

Who Are They? The Urban Family

The Urban family resides in an apartment building in the midst of many different complexes and townhouses in the heart of the Washington, D.C. communities. This family of four resides in an apartment where the décor is like that of the Dampare family. It is also demonstrative of the African pride and heritage obviously celebrated in this family's home. There are African artifacts vividly displayed around their home including a large world map and a map specific to Africa. The family adorns locks and other natural hair styles symbolic of their pride and African heritage. For instruction, the family's dining table in the dining room is the primary place for instruction. The computer is located in the living room area but it is visible to the table where most of the instruction takes place. The very organized hall closet is full of books and instructional materials. There are labeled containers with arts and crafts materials that the boys use when it is art time. The homeschooling parent is the mother, Monique. She keeps a file cabinet of records, if needed. It is here that the containers contain the assignments that will be worked on for that day. There are 9 containers in the rack used in instruction. This is the system that Monique states she learned from another homeschooling family.

This is a busy household with two young boys, Aaron and Zebulon, wanting and demanding their mom's attention most of the time. The father, Earvin, is currently unemployed as he has had some physical challenges in the last few years and is wheel-chair bound. The mother works part-time as a writer. She attended one of the top Historically Black Colleges and

Universities on the east coast where she obtained her bachelor degree in journalism. The contact between the family and the researcher had been lost just after the telephone interviews and three observations due to the family's personal reasons, but upon browsing a Costco magazine just prior to tossing it into the garbage, an article and picture of Monique and her two boys captured my attention; the author was none other than Monique Urban. There was a level of excitement to see Costco highlighting an article on African American homeschoolers and how useful Costco was in helping them save money on school-related supplies in the home school.

Like many homeschooling families who have only one parent working, home-schooling is a very large sacrifice for the entire family and money sometimes become scarce. This family's employment situation is typical of many homeschooling families. Oftentimes, one parent stays home to homeschool and the other parent leaves home to work. However, Monique states she has no regrets and it is all worth the sacrifice. She states that "sometimes money is an issue because there are some programs and curriculum that I want to buy, but when those materials cost in the area of \$200 to \$250, we just can't afford that."

Admittedly, Monique stated that sometimes, the demand on her time is taxing with both boys wanting her undivided attention. Monique states that (demands on her time) is her biggest challenge. She is hoping to get Aaron, her youngest son at 3 years old, on a schedule where he will remain sleep while she works with the oldest son, Zebulon is 9 years old. Monique confessed that it is very difficult for her to teach her oldest son, Zebulon, and mother the youngest son, Aaron, at the same time. Monique seemed to want suggestions about what to do or how to handle Aaron while giving Zebulon the attention he needs when instruction is taking place. Like the other participants, as a researcher I did not offer any suggestions. Although as a

parent and a teacher, I wanted to do something to help her. I realized that if I did anything during this study, I would compromise the research.

During the observations, the day usually began around 9:00 a.m. after breakfast. The time was not precise but generally in the vicinity of 9:00 a.m. There was an aide who came in to help with the care of her husband and to assist with household chores. As the aide cleaned the kitchen and swept the floors, Monique began to instruct as best she could if Aaron did not demand her immediate attention. Initially, the youngest son, Aaron, was clearly distracted by having a stranger present in the house on the first day. He enjoyed performing and he was naturally curious about the purpose of having someone taping the conversations. Before we began on the first observation, I allowed Aaron to hold the tape cassette so he would understand the small device. I even allowed him to record his name so he had a better understanding of how it worked and why I needed it to be positioned close to the instruction at that time. I did not want Aaron to play with the tape recorder while it was running. It needed to capture the instruction. By the second observation, he did not seem to pay attention to the recorder at all. He was quite energetic and enjoyed receiving attention from anyone who was around. He even took off his underwear to get attention from the mother on the first day of observations. As the observations continued, Aaron began to be more comfortable with me being present and observing and he became calmer as time went on. As a researcher observing Monique's dilemma, it was critical to capture how she managed to navigate the learning environment and to proceed with instruction. At this point, remaining focused on instruction was a bit challenging as the observer. As an educator, it was so very tempting to try to offer help with Aaron. He needed an engaging activity while Monique divided her time and attention between the two students. On the first day of observations, Zebulon requested her permission to begin the day's work with a mathematics

lesson. Zebulon loves math. However, Monique did not allow Zebulon to start his day with his favorite subject every day because he would not get to the other areas that needed to be covered each day. Although he did give input about his daily assignments, he did begin 3 days with math. The schedule for each day fluctuated depending on what was accomplished the prior day. Initially, on the first day of observation, Zebulon did not need assistance with the assignment because he was completing the remaining boxes from the previous day. He worked for about 6 minutes then he came to a section where he needed Monique to explain the directions and to show him an example of how to do the problem. As the observational days continued, there seemed to be consistency with Monique introducing a new lesson or concept and Zebulon was continuing the assignment independently until there was a point where he either had difficulty with the work or needed clarification about the instructions.

On the first day, Monique took Aaron to the computer to work on a new phonics program while Zebulon worked on his math. Because of his small size and the size of the chair, Aaron had to sit on her lap while they explored the different aspects of the program. This new program seemed to be the perfect distraction that Aaron needed. They started with the tutorial. He was so excited that he was operating the mouse by himself. Monique had all of Aaron's attention as she demonstrated how and when to click his response and to wait to see if his answers were correct or not. He was totally excited about this new program. They sang the song together and then he was excited to get the answers right and wrong. He had another opportunity to operate the mouse. The lesson lasted about 40 minutes. Zebulon would watch the interaction between Monique and Aaron. Aaron asked to do another lesson and Monique allowed him to work independently while she went back to give Zebulon her attention. She checked over the mathematics while Zebulon went into the box and began a spelling assignment. Zebulon had

been working on the assignment for 7 minutes before the telephone rang. Zebulon's godfather had the violin repaired and he was delivering it. Zebulon was so excited to get the violin back so he could not wait play it. Aaron was equally excited that he left the computer to see the violin. Aaron then grabbed the violin and ran to the back to the bedroom so no one would take it from him. Zebulon had to chase Aaron to get the violin back. Aaron cried when Zebulon took it back. The godfather left. Aaron was so angry at that moment that he forgot all about the computer program. As the observations continued, Aaron was able to go through the computer program with little assistance from Monique.

To get them both focused again, Monique asked Aaron, "Do you want to do some art?" Aaron exclaimed, "Yeah"! Aaron proceeded to get the art supplies from the container located in the closet where all the instructional materials, records and lesson plans, books and art supplies were kept. Aaron got paper, colored cotton balls, glitter and glue and began to make his own craft without any assistance from Monique. Monique continued with Zebulon's language arts lesson. She cut the lesson short that day because she had to go run errands. Monique has a system of organization and record keeping that works for Zebulon because he is able to get started independent of her. According to Monique, their homeschool schedule is not concrete with definite start and stopping times. She stated this is the benefit of homeschooling is that it allows for flexibility. Table 5 depicts what the day usually looks like for this family:

Table 5.

Urban Instructional Day

Instructional Day: Monday-Friday		
Beginning Time	Ending Time	Task
8:30 a.m.	9:00 a.m.	Breakfast
9:00 a.m.	10:00 a.m.	Language Arts/ Math/ Reading [Zebulon]
9:00 a.m.	9:45 a.m.	Hooked on Phonics { Aaron}
9:45 a.m.	10:00	Morning Break { Aaron}
10:00 a.m.	10:15 a.m.	Arts & Crafts { Aaron}
10:00 a.m.	10:15 a.m.	Morning Break[Zebulon]
10:15 a.m.	11:00 a.m.	Science [Zebulon]
10:15 a.m.	11:00 a.m.	Free Time { Aaron}
11:00 a.m.	11:30 a.m.	Lunch
11:30 a.m.	12:30 p.m.	Language Arts/ Math/ Reading , Spelling [Zebulon]
11:30 a.m.	Until	Nap { Aaron}
12:30 p.m.	1:30 p.m.	Language Arts/ Math/ Reading , Spelling [Zebulon]
1:30 p.m.	2:30 p.m.	Language Arts/ Math/ Reading , Spelling [Zebulon]
2:30 p.m.	3:15 p.m.	History/Geography

This was the first day that the observations ended early. The only other day was Day 3 when Monique was called to run an errand for her mother.

Why did you think it was worthwhile to participate?

Monique: Because it is important that African American homeschoolers are studied as a relevant subject to study. It is important telling our story as oppose to others to telling our story.

Do you believe your child is more academically successful at home than a traditional classroom? If so, why do you think so?

Monique: Well I think he is more- (successful), in most cases. That would be the case - the mother is the first teacher, she has the child's interest at heart and will not make assumptions about the child. If something is not right, something needs to be changed, maybe the curriculum needs to change and not assume it is because the child is special ed.

How important is learning about African American Culture and heritage to you?

Monique: Absolutely-what is education if you are not learning the truth and you are not fitting it in the grand scheme of things? That is the biggest issue with schools that all children are taught from a European perspective. I think that history is important because it makes a child feel important about their history and their contributions. There is no mention of anyone other than a white person in most books. It is a lie, it is insulting and it is not right so that is one of the most important aspects of homeschooling is that you can empower your child with the truth. We went to the Potomac bookstore. Zebulon asked, "Mom, why is everything about Jesus and why is he White everywhere. For my child, the mother of civilization is a Black woman; there are black scientists, black doctors and black fathers in the home. For my children, it is important that I do a better job than the local public schools would have done.

Have you ever experienced any racist attitudes when affiliating w/non-African American homeschooling support groups?

Monique: Not really-no. I found most White homeschooling groups to be welcoming.

Once you took on the role of instructional leader, did the expectations for your child's academic performance change?

Monique: No, they were always high.

Is there a difference in the family structure or relationship because of homeschooling?

Monique: I think so. I think that a lot of children not really think of themselves as being close to their parents. I enjoy and like being around my child (Zebulon) and his brother. He is more mature (Zebulon). He gets to experience more real-life situations. Sometimes we have to run errands- we live school and we home school later or that is the activity. He is actively experiencing home school. He knows how to prepare meals. He can cook. He can pack lunches and gives his brother his breathing treatments.

Describe your process for planning instructional activities?

Monique: We are not completely ‘*unschooling*’ anymore. I use interest-learning. He likes to study history. He told me some interesting things over breakfast. We picked up a book on Washington D.C.; there was a poster from C-Span that listed the time lines and all the presidents. We went to the National Aquarium. He has to do a report on eels and stingrays. He can type it up and do it using the Internet. That is writing. We use Singapore math and Rod and Staff for grammar....For history, I use *Story of the World*. This was written by a White woman, but there isn’t a lot of talk about ancient Africa. Egypt is no where ancient. *The Well-Trained Mind*- is it very Eurocentric. I have taken some of her resources and have plugged some cultural aspects into it. *Core Knowledge Series*...I checked out a book called, *What Your Pre-Schooler Needs to Know*. *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Three Little Pigs*-that is cute, but where is the culture? I am like are you kidding me? We will learn the African American equivalent and the key concepts. When we out in the world, he will get those things (White culture) but at home, he will get more culturally relevant. With Zebulon, we did not read any books with any people other than African Americans. He thought he was from Africa. If all the books and pictures are White-what must that child think?

Typically, what do you do when the doorbell rings?

Monique: Normally, we answer the doorbell. It could be a delivery or something important.

Since beginning this study, are there any changes to Zebulon’s and Aaron’s academic program that you foresee in the near future?

Monique: Money is a factor. I hope to be able to get Zebulon into a football program. He really wants to play football. But, since we do not go to a public school, there are not any programs available to him that are affordable. That is why I am considering allowing him to go to a public high school so he can play football and, hopefully, get a scholarship to college. I also want him to take some online classes.

With Aaron, I want to be able to get him on a program where I can balance the two. Some days are better than others. Some days they both need all my attention.

Do you utilize any part of the public school system or resources?

Monique: No, we don’t.

Is your child academically successful at home?

- *How do you measure success?*
- *Do you use assessment exams, if so, which ones and how often are they given?*

If you had to name just one thing you believe has made the most impact on your child's success at home, what do you think that would be?

Monique: I would say that knowing that ...how do I put this? Knowing that I have high expectations for him and feeling that I believe he is smart and he can do it—having a mother who believes in you. It positively impacts his self-esteem. He will do his work and he misses things—my reaction is that he was rushing and not that he couldn't do it. My assumption is he is brilliant—period. That brings the best out of him. I am looking for things to challenge him. If there is a talented and gifted program, that is what I want.

What do you envision for your child once the high school requirements are satisfied?

Monique: College—definitely

Do you have transcripts for the college admissions process?

Monique: No, I will have to start some process of generating transcripts.

Do you ever plan to return your child to public schools for instruction in the future?

Monique: High school is a consideration— not a public school unless it is an absolutely fantastic. It must have advancement placement in math and science and sports. I am looking at a private school. Who knows, we may just start college classes when he gets 16. One of the Heisman trophy winners was homeschooled—he didn't do high school.

What are some of the challenges your family has had w/ homeschooling?

Monique: One of the challenges is financial— paying the bills and having the money to travel more. I haven't been able to do it. Sometimes there are classes I would like for Zebulon to take and sometimes not having an opportunity for a break once or twice a week. And the same for my little one—I would like for him to be able to do some things.

Who Are They? The Ham-Kyu Family

The Ham-Kyu family structure reflects that of many modern-day families. This family is a blended family that resided in a Chicago suburb. The parents and one of two sons lived in this apartment within a multi-unit building. The home has a very simple décor. The white walls are barren and decorated with only educational posters in addition to Brian, the youngest son's artwork. The classroom for instruction is a table in the eating area of the apartment. The computer is located close to the table. There is a food chart located on the wall and a color chart.

As with many families impacted by the state of the economy, the father, Rutherford, works seasonally as a construction manager and electrician. He has remained in the workforce while the mother, LaTrice, had to stay home to raise their youngest son. The eldest son was not in the home at the time of the observations; he was living in Oklahoma with his maternal grandparents. Subsequent to the first five observations, the mom and youngest son relocated to Oklahoma while the father continued to live in Illinois to make a living.

This blended family began when the parents met online. The home is a modest apartment. Upon the initial observation, I finally met LaTrice, a married mother of two sons, in response to the solicitations posted online in various homeschooling groups. She was one of the initial people to volunteer to participate in the research. The homeschooling groups that were chosen suggested that they specialized in African American homeschoolers by their names. LaTrice responded to the posting. Her initial response was, “Hello, I received a message in my one of my groups that you are doing a study on home school families and that you are seeking more African American home school families. I have been homeschooling for 5 years and would love to participate if you still need people.” The next response was framed specifically to see if she would fit the parameters of this study: being an African American homeschooling family. When looking at her signature, it was different and non-traditional for an African American family: LaTrice Ham-Kyu, a different combination with some kind of cultural influence.

When viewing the name, an assumption was made that she was married which prompted a curiosity about the origin of a surname like Ham-Kyu for an African American family. Like many people and as a researcher, I tried to figure out something about this person based on a name prior to the initial observation in an effort to make sense of her name to “put her in my own box.” The first name, *LaTrice*, is seemingly a name that an African American female would

have. The surname, *Ham-Kyu* appears to be Asian, but the country was unknown. LaTrice stated her eldest son, Alexander, who was 15 years old when we began, had been educated in public schools until 5 years ago. She and Rutherford also have a son together, Brain, who was 4 years old, was going to be homeschooled totally.

When I got to her apartment complex, it was 11:30a.m. I arrived 30 minutes late which really angered me because of the horrendous Chicago traffic. I was delayed in maneuvering through the city to get to the Chicago suburb. This was the time that she suggested I come to do the initial observation. I found a warm smile and a little person, immediately she introduced me to her son, Brian, the four-year old. I walked in and noticed a gentleman on the computer and the telephone and she said that was her husband. After returning from the restroom, I took off my coat and laid it across the chair as LaTrice and her husband were in the midst of having a discussion regarding her older son's teeth and dental expenses. It was someone from the dentist office that was on the phone with her husband, Rutherford.

Again, I began to introduce myself by providing her some background knowledge of myself and my interest for doing the research. It was important to reveal that my hometown is only about 30 minutes from her in an effort to ease any anxiety that she or her husband may have about participating in the study. She already knew that I lived in East Lansing, but hoped that a more familiar community would lend to a higher level of credibility. In addition, as researcher, it was important to explain what the purpose of the study. Her husband, Rutherford interjected a few comments about his knowledge of my hometown and its economic plight. We began to have a very open exchange about the city and schools in my hometown. Since I had never spoken with her husband online or on the telephone, I did not know much about him at all and to be honest, she never mentioned having a husband. Naturally, I then painted a picture of my professional

experiences in the public school system and tried to reassure both she and her husband, who was now listening, that I really wanted to contribute to the limited body of scholarly literature focused specifically on African American homeschoolers.

After a another 19 minute conversation ensued about Gary and his musical interests, he left and I was able to get to the purpose of this initial visit-homeschooling. There was a food chart above the dinner/work table. In addition there was a color chart. LaTrice began to tell me about her experiences with getting Brian into a pre-school program. After only a couple of days, LaTrice stated the day care director stated that her son was too immature for pre-school. She got excited and stated, “How are you too immature for preschool? Isn’t that the purpose of preschool to get prepare you for kindergarten?” She continued to describe her experience; I believe this was because Brian has mild speech impairment (more of a lisp) and “because he needed a speech therapist, the daycare didn’t want to work with him.” She continued to show me some of his artwork where he loves to finger paint. Her son, now 4 years old knew his colors and could count to 100. She stated she works with him every day but they do not have a rigid schedule. She stated because she was a single parent with Alexander and did not have time to homeschool. Her former career was in the banking industry where she worked in customer service.

How did you learn about homeschooling?

LaTrice: I learned about it from a group of kids at church. There were about 5 kids who were homeschooled. But I saw the kids and their attitudes and demeanor towards life and they had bad habits which reminded me of how I acted as a kid. But, my husband was homeschooled and had already been a part of it. The benefits of homeschooling are that it gives an opportunity for both the child and parent to connect.

How so?

“There is more openness; you are together all the time and we spend time together as a family. We do not have a scheduled dinner time like some people.”

If they are involved in a project, then she will wait to cook dinner. At the time of the observations, there was a ruling in California where parents' rights to homeschool were going to be restricted. She gave her opinion on that matter by stating:

LaTrice: That is ridiculous. It is kind of a double-edge sword. On one hand, I feel like a teacher who is credentialed can teach better. But it is really sad on the other hand because so many children have failed. She states, she wanted to know "What are they doing different? Why are so many families trying to home school now?"

Why did you think it was worthwhile to participate in this research?

LaTrice: I don't believe there is enough information African American homeschoolers. It is not known. And I thought that was very important for the African American community. Yes, we home school and it is nothing wrong with it. There are a lot of taboos. My mom didn't think it was a good idea-she was not for it. She was ignorant of the fact. I began to educate her. She didn't think there were African American homeschoolers. She was impressed when my son got accepted to the top Christian high schools (she is referring to Alexander) in Oklahoma.

Do you believe child is more academically successful at home than a traditional classroom? If so, why do you think so?

LaTrice: I would say, from my kids, yes. With Brian, he has benefitted with homeschooling because he is so active. A lot of districts are not supported of very active kids and he is not ADHD. I noticed the speech therapist would make comments and she would make a comment when he would get distracted. He is someone who works in the school system and if she is coming at me like this, who else? With A.J. (Alexander) he is more laid back. I learned so much with homeschooling, he noticed how much he learned.

How important is learning about African American culture and heritage to you?

LaTrice: I teach it. I am very strong with teaching it. I try to instill it in my kids. It is very important to me to understand where we come from and where we are. The information in history books does not match up to who we are.

Have you ever experience any racist attitudes when affiliating w/ non-African American homeschooling support groups?

LaTrice: No, not racism I would say more or less uncomfortableness...like "Wow, this is an African American homeschooling family? How do we deal with this? Some people did talk to you-some didn't. That was when I was in Chicago.

Which one do you believe is more important and more influential on a student's academic achievement: parents' expectations or teachers' expectations?

LaTrice: I think the parents' (expectations) more than the teachers. I think all kids want to gain their parents' approval. If they don't have a parent then they want the teachers' (approval).

Is there a difference in the family structure/ relationship because of homeschooling?

LaTrice: There is a difference in the way in the way I structure my day-definitely. There was a big difference coming home when I knew that I was going to be homeschooling. When I knew I was going to restructure day. There was a big difference. With the oldest one (Alexander), I was going to take more time with the oldest one. With Brian, I can let him work on his own. He is learning about continents and states and singing them. I can be playing the songs and I can be working with the client (social media). I can do a format of excel page and still be mom, cook clean etc.

Can you describe for me your homeschooling days?

LaTrice: We come together in the morning. 11-12:30 and Fridays is longer- we do a lot of games. I let him (Brian) know what he is going to do each day. We do our devotion. I let him get the workbook. Every day he does something.

Who makes the decision about what is going to be studied and how much time is spent on this particular activity or skill?

LaTrice: For the most part I do. This is the 1st year that my husband wanted to be actively involved. It is not that he didn't want to but he was working so much. In the past, I was. So, he calls every night so Brian can read a book to him.

Do you utilize any part of the public school system or resources?

No.

Is your child academically successful at home?

- *How do you measure success?*
- *Do you use assessment exams, if so which ones and how often are they given?*

LaTrice: A.J. (Alexander) - I did-twice a year through the Texas School Board District. With Brian, I assess by his activity and the interaction. I get it by his interaction with people. He is only 4 and I don't think he needs it on a piece of paper.

If you had to name just one thing that you believe has made the most impact on your child's success at home, what do you think that would be?

LaTrice: Probably, the belief that we work with them where they are- not put them where they are not ready. We put too much on putting our kids where everyone else is. I have to move with Brian. Alexander was not a jumper.

What do you envision for your child once the high school requirements are satisfied?

LaTrice: With A.J. (Alexander), I envision to go on the path that he is going-going forward to get the job done. Do what you have to do to do what you want to do. He made the choice- he wants to be a teacher.

LaTrice: Brian- it is funny because it is so far off. I pray a lot. I think he will take over the family business. He likes watching his dad doing electrical work or being an apprentice. I think he will take over the family business.

Do you have transcripts for the college admissions process?

LaTrice: Yes, when he went to high school (Alexander). There is a program that I found called T-scripts. You set up your structure. You give them the grade and they set up the G.P.A. You can PDF it- that is what I did. I have found a lot of free and resourceful programs.

What are some of the challenges your family has had with homeschooling?

LaTrice: Homeschooling a high schooler was the most challenging. It was a challenge because it was a whole new level. I had to train myself because I had to be ready. I found a course for high school homeschoolers when he was in the 10th grade and that took a lot of pressure off.

Do you collaborate with other African-American homeschooling families?

LaTrice: Yea, it is a group called FOCHUS. I collaborate with them a lot.

What kind of support did you get from homeschooling support organizations, if any?

LaTrice: Just support... being able to talk to someone and getting resource on how do I work with a preschooler.

Do you ever plan to return your child to public schools for instruction in the future? If yes, what are your reasons?

LaTrice: I do not know probably not.

What recommendations would you make to public school educators based on your previous experience as an instructor?

LaTrice: Because we had a niece we had to deal with. She didn't read as quickly as other kids did. Not all kids read at the same level. It doesn't mean that they are not learning or they are stupid. We had to fight all year for the school not to hold her back. I had to get blunt with the teacher. They are all not auditory and visual learners. I know it is hard but you have to try to find something to get to that kid just because they don't learn at the same rate.

Typically, what do you do when the doorbell rings?

I answer the door. We can always pick back up where we left off.

LaTrice Ham-Kyu was a very personable individual. She was more laid back in her approach to homeschooling. This is supported in her responses to the protocol. She was extremely interested in contributing to the research; she felt it more like an obligation to contribute to the limited publishing on African American homeschoolers. She is frequently visible online. Here is the typical instructional day for Brian as indicated in Table 6:

Table 6.

Ham-Kyu Instructional Day

Instructional Day: Tuesday-Friday		
Beginning Time	Ending Time	Task
9:00 a.m.	9:30 a.m.	Bible
9:30 a.m.	10:30 a.m.	Language Arts
10:30 a.m.	11:30 a.m.	Math and Science
11:30 a.m.	1:00 p.m.	Activity varies with the day (computer work, learning games, oral work)

When observing LaTrice Ham-Kyu's approach to homeschooling, I noted that her method is as unique as most households are individualized by its own culture. Brian starts his day and eats breakfast at various times. As a result, home school begins at various times of the day. While there may not be a systematic schedule or way for any family to home school, it is their way of doing it. Flexibility with scheduling and the types of instructional activities could be viewed as advantages or disadvantages of homeschooling. As researcher, it is difficult not to infuse biases when observing the various ways families homeschool and how they navigate through their days to teach their children. As an educator and researcher, it is somewhat difficult to observe silently when the study is about teaching children. However, LaTrice stated she has searched websites for free instructional materials, with success, because many of the programs designed for homeschoolers are very expensive. She has learned to be resourceful because of their limited budget. For some families, attaining inexpensive or free books and materials is very important because some families have a limited budget for homeschooling materials.

While locating resources for these home schools was an expressed and reiterated challenge for the families who participated in the study, it is understandable how assembling the materials, curriculum, and supplies can be a frustrating process. In public schools, usually there are individuals or teams who review or assemble instructional materials for teachers. As a researcher, it is interesting to note there are some free programs and software provided to homeschooling families via the Internet. In contrast, as an educator, I want to provide these supplemental resources to parents of students who are in public schools who also may desire to reinforce curricula. Free supplemental materials may be helpful to children in lower socio-economic brackets or those students who simply need extra support in certain content areas. At the conclusion of Day 7, LaTrice showed me a few websites used for tutorials and transcripts. As

researcher, I was intrigued about the resources that have become available for families who teach their own children. However, comparison and contrasts of these programs and resources is an area for future research.

Who Are They? The Patterson Family

This Illinois family is located in a suburb south of Chicago. The mother, Rita, has been homeschooling her 10-year old daughter, Kristian for a year. She began to home school when her family relocated from Georgia. Rita is the primary instructor. The father, Dennis, works full-time but only teaches on an as-needed basis in the area of mathematics. Rita has a Bachelor of Science degree in business from Northwestern University. Her husband is a graduate of both Northwestern and Purdue Universities. Both of his bachelors and masters degrees were earned in engineering. He travels frequently out-of-state for his job. Their residence is in an upper middle-class neighborhood where many homes average in excess of \$200, 000. The house has a more traditional décor, adorned in French Provincial décor. All the living and dining room areas are decorated in that style. Unlike the other three families, this one lacks ethnic symbols throughout the home with the exception of the den. The den is located next to the kitchen area that is used for homeschooling. However, in a bit of contradiction to the French period décor are Afro-centric accents throughout the den via artifacts such as authentic statues and headpieces from South Africa. There are many books on the shelves along with two desks and a computer on each. One of the computers belongs to Kristian and the other used by the adults. Rita stated that both she and Kristian will do research simultaneously. “That is the perfect area for working on social studies especially geography. We both will get on the computers when exploring new topics and doing research.” There is a world globe in the corner and several binders clearly

labeled for the different content areas. Rita states she is dissatisfied with the curriculum that is out there for African American homeschoolers. She stated:

It reflects nothing but White culture and I do not like it. Why even bother to home school if you are going to just accept what is being handed to you? The whole point of homeschooling is to be able to modify what is being taught to reflect your beliefs and culture.

In addition, she does not use textbooks but prefer to put lessons together based on Kristian's areas of interest. She admitted she did purchase one of the curriculum programs initially when she began to homeschool to get an idea of what to do. They read books together and travel to explore those areas. Rita stated that textbooks limit their creativity and thinking.

According to Rita, Kristian was a good student when they resided in a large urban city in Georgia. In terms of racial demographics, the majority of the staff and students in the former school were African American. Rita responded:

Kristian thrived in that environment; it was quite a nurturing school. This is a challenging task- to put lessons together. Parents do not know how tedious homeschooling can be especially if you want your child to know everything there is about a subject. I do not want parents to be fooled about the amount of work it takes. Sometimes, I spend about 2 hours a night, planning out the next day's lessons and sometimes, I have to research a topic to make sure I totally understand it.

She would like more of an Afro-centric curriculum and she does follow Dr. Jawanza Kujufu's theories about education.

Rita stated she felt compelled to home school Kristian when she relocated to Illinois. She stated the good feeling they had about public schools ended when they relocated to their Chicago suburb.

I thought this particular school was going to be good for her. Although, my neighbor was always talking about homeschooling, I thought she was just a bit strange. She is White. Initially, I just thought she just didn't have a life. Actually, I thought she was crazy for staying home to teach her kids. So after listening to her talk about it so much, we did our research and thought this was something to consider and thought it was conducive to raising a family. I was apprehensive about moving to a predominantly White

neighborhood though because of the community that we moved from in Georgia was just the opposite.

Rita's feelings mirror the stereotypes of homeschoolers in general. Many believe homeschooling families are eccentric. However, the need to home school was as a result of events in their new Illinois school district. Rita conveyed the problems her daughter experienced were not necessarily in relation to differences in race, but it was a matter of self-esteem.

The work load became overwhelming and that is all she could do (work). It was a matter of her spending all her time in school, come home, and do homework most of the evening, eat dinner, and then go to bed to only have this begin all over. This is not the life that she should have. Kristian should have a balanced life. That is why homeschooling works for us. She was not motivated at all to go to school. It was such a change in her disposition. I think the teachers just didn't seem to care about my child in the way they cared for the Caucasian children. The interaction was different. They could not relate to her at all. Their school district is small. Changing teachers within a grade level is limited because the district is small.

Their decision to home school was also spiritual. Rita exclaimed, "God laid it on my heart." She knew she had to do something but did not really investigate African American homeschoolers until she discovered a group online.

So, after my neighbor kept mentioning it to me, my husband and I started researching it and later on I came across African American homeschooling groups. In the beginning,

I just did a broad search on homeschooling after talking to my neighbor about it several times. I thought it was just kinda crazy to teach your own children. But then, I somehow came across these groups on the web and got really excited. I thought oh, wow, there are Black homeschooling groups too!

Typically, the instructional day for this family begins at 8:30 a.m. Knowing this, I arrived at 8:15 on the first observation day. Kristian came downstairs and introduced herself at 8:25 and then she sat down at the kitchen table. The mother and daughter had finished breakfast and had already cleaned the kitchen; the dishes were in the dishwasher. Rita prepared a copy of the day's agenda. Dennis was out of town and would be gone for the next couple of days. Rita reviewed the lessons that she and Kristian covered the day before. She asked Kristian if she had any

questions about the previous day's work. Today's first assignment was to learn the preterit tense conjugations for –er verbs. Kristian had been taking Spanish for about 8 weeks. Rita began the lesson by reviewing the rules for conjugations and asking Kristian to begin by conjugating an –ar verb (covered the day before). Kristian picked the verb, trabajar (to work). She went through all the pronouns beginning with 1st person, “trabajé and then showed her mom all the conjugations until she finished. “Trabajaron, very good!” said Rita. “Now I want you to use each of these pronouns and verbs to create a sentence.” Ironically, I was a Spanish teacher for many years so I really appreciated the lesson. Again, I had to contain my excitement because my observation was as researcher. They continued their lesson and began to practice with the irregular–er verbs in the preterit tense. The lesson continued for 45 minutes and then the telephone rang. Rita stopped and talked with the caller for nearly 10 minutes while Kristian continued with the irregular verbs (on her own). When Rita was off the telephone, she told her mom she was confused because the conjugations did not follow the normal pattern like the other verbs. “Encontrar and continuar is different,” said Kristian. Rita informed Kristian that “Spanish has stem-changing verbs.” They continued the explanation and exploration for another 30 minutes until Kristian and Rita did a verbal and written exchange for nearly 30 additional minutes. Normally, their day begins at 7:30 a.m. with breakfast. Instruction begins at 8:30 and continues to 11:30 a.m. The day usually begins with Spanish, math, and language arts. Rita stated she took Spanish classes for 3 years in high school and 2 years in college; however, by teaching Kristian, it has helped her renew an enthusiasm for the language. Rita stated, “This is the most practical language to learn based on the changing demographics of our nation and the large Hispanic population.” According to the 2010 Census Report entitled, The Hispanic Population 2010, Illinois has maintained its position since 2000 as having the fifth largest population of Spanish speakers in the United States.

Kristian will travel to Mexico in a couple of months with her parents where she can practice her language skills and see the country and its people in their native land. Rita stated, "It is important to be immersed in the culture." Rita also plans to make sure Kristian learns Mandarin Chinese. I know "some African American children who seem to do very well with this language." She stated that many urban schools are incorporating it into the curriculum.

The Pattersons do science on alternate days and they get social studies in during the evening. "When we travel, it is not just for pleasure. We take advantage of the experience and link it to home school." After 11:30, they stopped for lunch for about 30 minutes and then they exercised for another 30 minutes. Rita stated they will sometimes put in a DVD with exercises. . She stated if the weather is nice, they may go outside and she will let Kristian ride her bike to get some fresh air and then they resume about 12:30 and do a couple of additional lessons until 2:30. Kristian practiced piano for an hour. On this day, Kristian decided to get her skates out of the garage for exercise. After 2:30, the mother and daughter team takes another break and run errands or go to piano lessons which they have twice a week on Mondays and Wednesday evenings for an hour. When they return in the evenings about 5 or 6 p.m., she cooks dinner and then she supervises Kristian on the computer for an hour to allow her to explore different countries on the computer or to read current events. It is during this time that Rita will start planning the instructional activities for the next day. Kristian is then allowed to read a novel for an hour before going to bed about 9 p.m. During a previous interview, the following questions were asked:

Why did you think it was worthwhile to participate in the study?

Rita: More families need to home school and not just Black families. The benefits are infinite. It is a way to unite the family and to give us additional time together that we didn't have when Kristian attended public school.

How did you hear about this research study?

Rita: I am a follower of two groups for African American homeschoolers: Culture at home and Black Homeschoolers on Ning.com.

Was cultural education a motive in your decision to home school?

Rita: No, culture was not a primary reason for homeschooling, but as I began to explore the curriculum, I noticed all the context was from a White perspective. I understand that we are not usually the ones writing curriculum, but why should we just teach the curriculum from the European perspective. One of the benefits of homeschooling is the ability to infuse our heritage when applicable and to use books that are the same or higher quality as those centered on Europeans. For instance, when we do science, I try to infuse literature about African American scientists, where applicable. I don't just sing *Kum Ba Yah* and that is it. It has to be totally relevant. But, I also want her to understand that there were educated Black folks who were contributors to who we are now from earlier periods. Yes, we had slavery, but as a people, we have accomplished and contributed a lot to this country. Not every Black person was working in the field, working in the kitchen or cleaning floors. Although, there was and still is nothing wrong with those skills, but we were and still are intellectual too.

How is addressing culture at home school different than addressing it at a public school?

Rita: I believe that teachers need to center their instruction around the students who are sitting in the classroom. You can't do that effectively if you never get to know your students. I know that it is not possible to know everything about the 30+ kids in the classroom but every effort should be made to know the parents before there is trouble. I believe that you should know that a child is motherless or fatherless before demanding a family tree. Perhaps, finding out after an assignment that the parent may have died in a tragic accident, or after a long illness is too late after the child fails the assignment because it brought up bad memories. In Kristian's case, the teacher failed to make any connection to her. She felt like an outsider.

No, I mean culture. How is addressing culture in home school different from in a public school?

Rita: Oh, I am sorry, I didn't listen. I can, as I stated before, tailor the lesson to meet our needs as a family. I can teach her the truth but from our perspective as African Americans. In public schools, you have to be careful and take into consideration not only ethnicity but also religious beliefs of everyone. However, I think if I were teaching a diverse group of students, I would take advantage of that opportunity to infuse everyone's culture into the lesson. So, take Thanksgiving- we don't need to focus only on the Native Americans, but also learn about the Pilgrims. This was not a great group of people who were sent away from Europe but a bunch of criminals who were undesirable over there. We can talk about that issue, but in public schools there would be protests and uproar, I'm sure, for teaching against the grain. But, you never hear the truth about them or see it written in textbooks just like it took decades before you saw anything positive about

African Americans in textbooks. I remember seeing in books, naked pictures of African women with their boobs exposed. Or, we were shown in chains as slaves.

Why do you think it was worthwhile to participate in this research study?

There has not been a lot of research on us at all; we are kinda hidden except for online. But, I think there should be larger research studies based on African American homeschoolers. I would be interested in reading and learning about the large group of homeschoolers in our community. I don't know if anyone cares or wants to invest the money in doing it. Maybe it will happen in 10 years (she laughs).

Do you believe your child is more academically successful at home than a traditional classroom? If so, why do you think so?

Rita: Yes, based on what I have seen since she has been home, definitely. She is more sure and more confident in what she is doing and she knows that she can continue to investigate and explore things that she is interested in doing. I know she didn't ask to continue on with a topic when she was in school-she just wanted to get the homework done.

How important is learning about African American culture and heritage to you?

Rita: It is important to know about where you come from. Unfortunately, for the majority of African Americans, that privilege was taken away from us when slave masters stripped our heritage, languages, and religions and more importantly, our identities were taken away. Think about it, the Italians, can still speak Italian, the Chinese can still speak Chinese, Arabs can still speak Arabic, and the Spanish-speaking community can still speak and practice their language customs. Only the African Americans have been stripped of our culture. I cannot celebrate the customs or speak the native tongue. From which country in the whole continent of Africa am I from? I don't know. Our family probably will never know our true heritage. So, yes, it is important to teach her what I know of our heritage. But because we are here in America, we have to learn and know about the cultural majority in order to survive-learning that is not an option.

Have you ever experience any racist attitudes when affiliating with non-African American homeschooling support groups?

Rita: No, we have not experienced any racist attitudes-not at all, because now we are affiliated with only the Afro-Centric groups. I don't think racism is a problem in the homeschooling community. In the beginning I tried a couple of the co-op groups for homeschoolers, but we were the only family of color. So, this was actually worse than staying in public schools. We stopped going. It was very comfortable and it was cliquish. Who knows if that was because of the established cliques or because of race.

Which one do you believe is more important and more influential on a student's academic achievement: parents' expectations or teachers' expectations?

Rita: Wow. I know that meeting my parents' expectations were very important. Actually, I wanted to exceed their expectations. I believe that children want positive affirmation from whomever they feel is vested in their learning. So, because I am the teacher and parent, I would say parents' expectations are more influential.

Is there a difference in the family structure/ relationship because of homeschooling?

Rita: Oh most definitely. We have a lot more time together. We are together all day and night especially when my husband is gone for work. But when he is not traveling and gets home, we still spend a lot of time together. We may go out together for dinner. Our relationship is definitely stronger because now I have a better understanding of what interests my child and I know things about her that I would not know if I was sending her off to school every day. My husband will review her work when he has time just to catch up on what have been doing.

Can you describe for me your homeschooling days?

Rita: Well, we awake at 7:30 and instruction begins promptly at 8:30. We continue until 11:30 then we take an hour break for lunch and exercise. Then we resume at 12:30 and go until 2:30. We take another break for errands and then I begin to cook dinner. We are usually done about 7 p.m. I allow Kristian to get on the computer which is her time to explore social studies topics. She is doing that while I am on our computer planning her next day's activities. She reads a novel before bed and then it is lights out for her.

Who makes the decision about what is going to be studied and how much time is spent on this particular activity or skill?

Rita: I do the majority of the planning but I do allow her to explore and to inform me about her areas of interest. I want her to buy into her learning. This way, it won't be a struggle to teach her because she is genuinely interested in the topic. But, at the same time, I understand that she will love to do what is fun and enjoyable but we also have to cover the material and courses needed for her to be prepared for college.

Do you utilize any part of the public school system or resources?

Rita: No.

Is your child academically successful at home?

- *How do you measure success?*
- *Do you use assessment exams, if so which ones and how often are they given?*

Rita: I look at the goals and objectives of the lesson and determine if she meet those goals. We are not required to give an assessment in Illinois but we will give her one this year.

If you had to name just one thing that you believe has made the most impact on your child's success at home, what do you think that would be?

Rita: I think showing her that I believe in her is the most important aspect of being home. I know she will be successful later in life.

What do you envision for your child once the high school requirements are satisfied?

Rita: Well, going to college is a must not an option. Both her dad and I have graduated from Big Ten Institutions so I know that she must go to a Big Ten or Ivy League school. It is up to her.

Do you have transcripts for the college admissions process?

Rita: We don't have transcripts yet. That is something we will do after this school year since I have only been at it for a year. We do keep records of her grades, lessons and samples of her work in case there is ever an issue.

What are some of the challenges your family has had with homeschooling?

Rita: We have not had any major issues with homeschooling except when I am sick with a cold or she is sick, we don't do as much as we normally would do but we do some learning that day. It has not been much of a problem at all for us.

Do you collaborate with other African-American homeschooling families?

Rita: Yes. That is the benefit of getting online and getting in groups for African American homeschoolers. Someone may post a question or ask for suggestions on what they are teaching and I will often share my lessons and vice-versa. I will ask for help or suggestions and they respond. There is no need to make this more complicated than what it already is.

What kind of support did you get from homeschooling support organizations, if any?

Rita: Being able to understand why anyone would want to venture out to teacher their own child. It does require patience but I first thought, why would someone want to do that? So, when others think of you as crazy, you know that you aren't the only crazy person.

Do you ever plan to return your child to public schools for instruction in the future? If yes, what are your reasons?

Rita: No, at least no time soon. Maybe in high school if she thinks about it or wants to do it. Or, if there comes a time when the material is too complicated and there are subjects I think she needs assistance with. But, I may just enroll her in a community college to take those subjects.

What recommendations would you make to public school educators based on your previous experience as an instructor?

Rita: The first recommendation would be for teachers to take time to know their student population. If they have students from different cultural groups, they need to examine their personal biases and then work on themselves. How effective can you be if you know you have issues with a group of people based on race or religion? I would also take it a step further by researching common stereotypes of a race and examine how much of those stereotypes you believe in. Then, you will know if you have issues that need to be resolved outside the classroom.

Rita asked Kristian what was the best thing about being homeschooled? Kristian stated, “I get to read a lot about all kind of animals. I love dogs, but I love horses more.” She also stated she wanted to develop her skills as an equestrian. Her mom stated that Kristian will own a horse when she hits the lottery. Rita then stated, “I don’t play the lottery.”

Data Analysis

After reading all the notes from observations, interviews, and after reviewing the data collected from the survey, data was then prepared for analysis. Thematic analysis was the method chosen to interpret the data collected in this study. The field notes data taken during observations and data from the semi-structured interviews were examined to categorize and to conduct a synthesis of the clumps using the thematic analysis approach (Glesne, 2006; Merriman, 1998; Patton, 1990; Rossman & Rallis, 1998). A holistic interpretation of data was then initiated. Afterwards, a synthesis of the clumps was broken into smaller clumps. The data was then examined for comparisons and contrasts between each family. However, it was not until after the synthesis of this data that it became apparent which of the collected data was useful in relation to answering the two questions that guided this study. Consequently, emergent

themes became transparent from across the cases studies of each family. These findings will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Conclusion

In this study, I paid close attention to the steps that promote trustworthiness according to Holloway and Jefferson (Glesne, 2006 as cited in Holloway and Jefferson 2000, p. 55). One of the things to look as a means of substantiating trustworthiness of research studies is the name of the author's research institution. For example, notable research institutions such as Stanford, University of Chicago, and Michigan State University lend to trustworthiness as these institutions have set a precedent with producing credible and noteworthy research scholars like Linda-Darling Hammond, Carol D. Lee, and Reitumetse Mabokela. However, another way a researcher can perform a self- analysis is by using Holloway's and Jefferson's 4 questions for making sure the checks and balances of research are in order to promote trustworthiness:

1. What do you notice?
2. Why do you notice what you notice?
3. How can you interpret what you notice?
4. How can you know that your interpretation is the 'right' one?

Essentially in the first question, the researcher is examining the opportunity cost of noticing one thing over another. I know my attention cannot be equally given to two events simultaneously. For example, if I notice an event to my left, I cannot possibly notice everything taking place to my right; my head will be turned in one direction or the other. As the researcher, when the obvious event or statement received attention, something else did not get that same attention at that particular time. There were many noticeable events that occurred during some of the observations which alerted me that I needed to conduct a self-check about why I noticed

some of the things that I did which were not always in alignment with instructional events. For example, when the telephone rang and the parent instructor stopped teaching to answer the call, I wondered if that could have waited until instruction was over or not. I had to ponder if I was being judgmental as a teacher or was I noticing this event because I was suppose to take everything into account as researcher.

The second question insinuates a reflection of biases to determine why a particular event or comment may be noticeable to the researcher. In doing a self-check, I had to suppress my background as a classroom teacher to determine if these events clouded my lens as the observer. Because this researcher has had nearly 19 years of experience as an educator, the lesson plans and the strategy used to decide what was being taught and when it was taught was interesting to me. As researcher, I was curious about this process and I had to take notice of myself to assess why certain details were more interesting data than other data. I had to determine if some data stood out to me if for no other reason than because of my background in pedagogy. Therefore, as the researcher, I used a triangulation of methods, self-monitoring of subjectivity and member checks to make sure that the wrong data was not infused into the findings (Glesne, 2006). As the researcher, I needed to reflect on the subjectivity in terms of what was heard and noticed on a continuous basis. While observing each family throughout the study, I realized I was monitoring myself. Because the families were made aware of my background as a teacher who taught K-12 as well as adult learners, a couple of parents wanted some input on instructional resources. I did not interpret the solicitation for resources as any deficiency by the parent. I viewed this solicitation from the lens of a novice instructor. Those parents were searching for the best resources for the least amount of expense as any conventional teacher would do.

Third, interpretation of a noticeable event should be determined by the length of time spent observing the participants and the environment to determine if this event or comment is significant. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that a period of prolonged engagement is critical for establishing credibility (as cited in Glesne, 2006, p.167). The question becomes, how long is ‘prolonged engagement’? For this study, prolonged engagement was in excess of 7 observations. The instructional day varied from family to family and in each family, the length of the day varied. Within the homeschooling community, there are families with very rigid schedules who are self-disciplined to home school 5-6 days per week, then there are those times when the family vacation is centered on instruction. For example, the Dampare family framed their trip to Africa around learning not only the family’s heritage, but also about the continent. Their son’s goal is to go to each continent with the exception of Antarctica. He stated, “There isn’t much there.”

Therefore, prolonged engagement was necessary to make sure the researcher’s interpretations were solid. As researcher, it was critical to develop and to establish rapport with participants over time to avoid misinterpretations of their responses, actions and personalities. After speaking with these families over time by phone and in person, I felt I had a ‘solid’ sense of their personalities and actions. “If prolonged engagement provides scope, persistent observation provides depth (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304 as cited in Glesne, 2006).” For instance, if a participant repeatedly uses an uncommon expression or references the same event continuously over the course of observations or interviews, then the correct interpretation or analysis of data would provide clarity by use of follow-up questions or the witnessing of events during an observation. I did not hear expressions or language that was unique to only one family throughout the study, but I did hear messages that were reinforced continuously by certain

families. For example with the Urban family, there were references to European influences such as physical characteristics and literature based on European culture. I realized that the reiterations of these types of comments as more important to this family than some of the other comments based on their frequency of use. However, this was not noted until the data was synthesized.

Four African-American families participated in this research. Each provided insight on their reasons for homeschooling their children. These families did not decide to home school simply to just try it out. For these African-American families, their decisions to home school was based on a prior experience or it was driven by an unwillingness to accept the alternative of going to public, private, or charter schools. I will discuss the themes that emerged in Chapter 5 through use of a cross-case analysis.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, ASSUMPTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The notion that African Americans homeschool their children remains a novelty within the African American community. Dialogues about African Americans homeschoolers are uniquely held among African Americans and educators. In the 1950s and 1960s, Negroes (known today as African Americans) struggled for equality which included a right to an equitably funded educational opportunity comparable to Whites. Today, many people within the African-American community are rather shocked to learn that African Americans are choosing to forego the public school systems in order to instruct their children at home in lieu of public schools. In the African-American community teaching your own children reflects a shift in the education paradigm. This shock is due to the well documented and, oftentimes, violent act that Negroes endured for this right to separate-but-equal educational opportunities which are forever embedded in United States' history. Given this historical data, many African Americans have difficulty rationalizing and embracing the notion of homeschooling. The expected norm within the African American community has been public school education. In the African American community, many still believe that it is important to take advantage of the opportunity afforded to them by their elders to go to good public schools to have the same opportunity as Whites in their quest to live the "American Dream." The opposition to homeschooling does exist for Caucasians; however, I argue that adverse sentiments by the Caucasian community are not for the same reasons as for the African American homeschoolers. The reasons for homeschooling are major points of distinction between the two racial groups.

In this chapter, I will present the findings of the research which reveal these African American parents' reasons for opting to homeschool their children using a non-traditional

approach to education. The findings of the research study will be presented in this chapter. In addition, the subsequent five sections will be (a) Overview the Study, (b) Findings, (c) Assumptions, (d) Recommendations, and (e) Conclusion. It is in this chapter that links to the existing body of literature are made.

Overview of Study

This dissertation study is composed of four case studies which present research of African American homeschooling families. From the existing body of literature, very little research, until recent years, has been conducted about this population of homeschoolers. When the word ‘homeschool’ is mentioned to many individuals, in many instances, the first image is of a Caucasian religious fundamentalist. However, I posit that these African American families’ primary reasons for opting to homeschool are in contrast to those expressed in the body of research about Caucasian homeschoolers. While the literature suggests that the majority of the homeschooling population falls into one of two categories: ideologues and pedagogues, I suggest that this is not true of the four families who participated in this research study.

In recent years, a number of small research studies have been conducted about African American homeschoolers. However, these scholarly studies were not executed on a national scale like those administered by NCES in 1999 or in 2003. Although the NCES studies did highlight all racial groups, the studies did not segregate reasons for homeschooling by race. The existing studies which centered on African American homeschoolers have been much smaller in sample size and in scope. When reviewing the demographics of the NCES studies of 1999 or 2003, all races were studied. Data was not analyzed specific by racial categories. Those participants who were involved in the 1999 or 2003 studies did so as part of a collective group of homeschoolers regardless of race and respective reasons for homeschooling.

One of the leading researchers in the area of homeschool education is Dr. Brian D. Ray. In as much as he has written and published numerous articles, studies, and blogs about homeschoolers, there is not one major study with emphasis on this growing segment of homeschoolers. Dr. Ray does state that the African American homeschooling population is increasing. According to a NPR radio interview, Dr. Ray stated that there had been nearly a 40,000 increase in African American homeschoolers in over the past 3 years (September 16, 2007, NPR). Despite the growth of African American homeschoolers, and regardless of Dr. Ray's acknowledgement of this fact, he has not devoted time and research to learning or addressing the reasons why this group is increasing at phenomenal rates.

The scholarly studies conducted by researchers at institutions of higher learning have been limited in both depth and scope. These sample sizes were small and were framed around a specific hypothesis in comparison to the larger studies conducted by NCES. According to the literature, there is an estimated population of African American homeschoolers of nearly 85,000 which makes this group of homeschoolers the second largest racial group. Considering this estimation, there have not been any large-scale studies on African American homeschoolers conducted by the Department of Education or National Center for Education Statistics like those in 1999 and 2003. Given the time that this number has been reported, over 10 years according to NCES, there does not appear to be any interest by large research institutions to really learn why the paradigm has shifted for this group of Americans. The rationale is unclear.

While gathering literature for this research study at an American Educational Research Association conference, a representative from the Department of Education laughed when I inquired about the existence of literature pertaining to research on African American homeschoolers. Sarcastically, she stated, "so how do you intend to collect your data?" I felt and

realized that regardless of the sample size of participants and its findings, the outcome would be viewed as insignificant. However this research is needed for several reasons: (1) to learn why African American families have decided to seek this unconventional method of educating their children; (2) to determine if there are ways to hinder African American students from leaving public schools; (3) to contribute to the limited body of literature on African American homeschoolers; and (4) to mitigate negative outcomes on public schools as a result of African Americans leaving, if any.

Paula Penn-Nabrit, attorney-at-law, businesswoman, homeschooling mother, and author of, *Morning by Morning: How We Homeschooled Our Sons to the Ivy League* (Penn-Nabrit, 2003) conveys how she and husband, Charles M. Nabrit, transitioned from a two-parent professional family to a one-income homeschooling family. While the book disclosed that Paula and Charles are religious practitioners and those religious-based values were critical determinants in opting to homeschool, religion was not their primary reason for opting for this viable educational alternative to private schools. A long family lineage of high expectations and college graduates were conspicuously discussed, however, the underpinnings of this book and the primary reason for considering this alternative to private schools was due to a conflict involving race and the challenges they posed to authority at their children's private school leadership. Consequently, these parents managed to get their sons, to Princeton University and Amherst College. This feat is viewed as successful; it is the ultimate goal of many parents, homeschoolers or not, to get their children to college; getting admitted to Ivy League status schools are a bonus for many parents.

Findings

Race, Culture, Self-Esteem, and Self-Identity

Upon review of the data collected, each family had some concern involving culture and self-identity. The Dampare, Urban, Ham-Kyu families' concerns were framed around race, culture, and self-identity for Black male children; this was one of their primary reasons for homeschooling. According to the 1999 and 2003 NCES studies on homeschooling, the second largest racial group of homeschoolers is African American. Issues involving racial concerns are not consistent with the findings of the aforementioned studies as a reason for homeschooling with the majority of homeschoolers.

The Dampares' lack of enthusiasm to remain in a public elementary school was prompted by what the parents and son felt as continuous disparate treatment by her son's Caucasian teacher. Meetings and discussions with the teacher and, subsequently, the administrators-principal and superintendent, centered on cultural insensitivity and race. All parties reached and remained at an impasse. According to Rachel Dampare, Ashton's teacher did not treat her students of color, including those of Middle Eastern descent, with the same care as the Caucasian students. She believed the teacher's disposition demonstrated insensitivity for racial diversity and cultural heritage that deviated from her own within her own classroom. The culminating event for this family was when the teacher gave Ashton a lower grade for his research project. His extended knowledge of his African lineage went back as far as 7 generations and he was excited to share his lineage with his classmates; today, many African Americans lack ancestral knowledge of this depth. In addition, Rachel stated, her son and "his group of friends in the class were subjected to discipline more often when comparable offenses were done by White

students.” With the last year, there have been numerous articles citing investigations into whether African American students are punished more severely for similar infractions by Caucasian students. According to Jim Bradshaw with the U.S. Department of Education, his department is launching their own investigation "Specifically, the review focuses on the disproportionality in suspension rates," he said (as cited by Giunca, 2011). According to Rachel, self-identity, heritage, and pride in culture needed to be protected and it could not be done if her son had remained in the public school setting.

The Urbans’ decision to homeschool was prompted by the lack of African American culture and heritage taught in the public schools. Monique stated, “the same people are discussed every year during Black History Month (i.e. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks etc.).” According to Monique, the curriculum used in most public schools is culturally and racially biased and written from the European perspective. She stated there is only European culture reflected in the reading materials and assignments. Developing and maintaining a strong self-identity and taking pride in heritage and culture were her primary reasons for homeschooling. She wanted her sons, who already knew their African heritage, to maintain that identity. She stated they are proud of coming from Africa and her son, Zebulon, talks about how proud he was of being Black and from Africa. According to Monique, that level of pride and self-identity would be destroyed if her sons went to public schools. Monique did not believe that her family will ever cease homeschooling. She would consider a “very good public school with an athletic department” when Zebulon gets to high school because he wants to play sports. Monique stated, “as of now, unless I am able and can afford a private school, I doubt I will ever stop homeschooling.” Their primary reason for homeschooling was to teach African heritage and to protect her sons’ self-identity as strong Black males.

The Ham-Kyu family's decision to homeschool was primarily prompted by the actions taken at Brian's initial visit to a public pre-school program. When Brian was screened, they wanted to label him as special needs because he has a lisp. LaTrice would not allow the label because of his mild speech impairment, the preschool claimed that Brian was "too immature for preschool" and that he should stay home a bit longer. According to LaTrice, she was infuriated with the teachers' response. LaTrice and her husband felt this label would affect his self-esteem as a child and there would be negative consequences with allowing him to be labeled at this young age. In addition, she stated, "it is very common for Black males, in particular, to be over-identified as special needs." "The purpose of preschool is to increase children's skills so they can be academically successful later. She stated, "How can you be too immature for preschool-isn't that the purpose of going to school at an early age- to get ready for kindergarten?" However, initially when she began to homeschool it was because of her eldest son, Andre. She remarked, "he needed to be more focused as a high school student." Her primary reason for opting to homeschool Brian was because of this pre-school experience. Her desire for him to have a strong self-esteem and not be another Black male overly identified as special needs.

Although the Pattersons were not concern with self-identity of a Black male child, they were concerned with their daughter's self-esteem and her pride in her culture. The Pattersons felt a sense of obligation to teach African American history and culture because of where they resided; however, it was not the primary reason for opting to homeschool. Initially, they were a part of their local school system. Instead, for the Pattersons, teaching culture and history was a benefit of homeschooling: the ability to teach whatever you want. Rita Patterson stated, "it should not be enough to simply accept a curriculum, as an African American and instructional parent, the curriculum should be modified to reflect what is important to the family." Despite not

having a male child, Rita Patterson that Kristian's self-esteem was important in their decision to homeschool.

Religion

Although, two of the families incorporated bible study into their daily lesson plans, religion was not the primary reason for selecting a non-conventional schooling method. For the Dampare and Ham-Kyu families, religion was important but it was not at the forefront of their decision making. These families did not exclusively use a Christian-based curriculum for instruction. The Dampare family used some materials that cited daily scriptures. The other family simply read the bible on their own. The Dampare, Ham-Kyu, and Patterson families had a source of validation from church members who were homeschooling. Consequently, they heard about the concept from other church members prior to engaging in homeschooling themselves. LaTrice had observed a homeschooling group at her former church. Teaching religious values and beliefs was important to each of these families, but it was not a primary reason for opting to homeschool. Because homeschooling allows families to plan lessons however they choose, incorporating religious study into their daily regimen is a part of the Dampare and Ham-Kyu families' educational study.

Low Teacher Expectations

These three families, Dampare, Ham-Kyu, and Patterson, primarily became disenchanted with the public school system as a result of a classroom teacher. Interactions with teachers and the teachers' low expectations of their children were primary reasons for electing to homeschool. In each case, the teacher behaved in a way that their actions clearly communicated to these African American parents that their child was incapable or unable to perform on grade level. Teachers were unwilling to learn about the student's individual needs or unwilling to

differentiate instruction for that child. In the Dampare case, the mother and father tried to reason with the teacher, principal, and even the superintendent to resolve their concerns via several meetings. It was only after these meetings failed to resolve their concerns that the family separated from the public school systems. Rachel, as a former public school educator, executed due process beginning with the teacher before meeting with administrators. For the Dampares, “it was important for her to see how she was treating these children.” Low teacher expectations, racial bias, and lack of sensitivity were not indicated as primary reasons for homeschooling in the 1999 and 2003 NCES studies. Low self-identity was not the three most important reasons for opting to homeschool for White homeschooling families when reviewing the literature.

There are two questions and consequently two subordinate questions that have framed this research study of African American homeschooling families:

Research Question 1

Research Question 1, *Who are they (African-American homeschooling families)?*

1. Three of the four families have instructional parents with at least a bachelor degree.
2. In each family, the mother is the primary instructional parent. The dad is used for instructional purposes only as needed. In the Dampare, Ham-Kyu, and Patterson family, the dad travels or is stationed away from home for work.
3. Each family consists of a traditional family structure of mom and dad
4. Three of the four families were only educating black male children.

Table 7 shows the demographic information of all four families in this study. It also provides background information on their education levels, laws of their state, and other

pertinent information about their homeschooling experiences. This information will serve to inform in more detail the first research question: Who Are They?

TABLE 7

Case Study Demographic Data

Descriptors	MONIQUE Urban	LATRICE Ham-Kyu	RACHEL Dampare	RITA Patterson
Family Size	2 children, 2 parents	2 children, 2 adults	2 children, 2 adults	1 child, 2 adults
Gender of Children	2 boys	2 boys	1 boy, 1 girl	1 girl
Ages of Children	3 yrs. & 9 yrs.	4 yrs. & 16 yrs.	9 yrs. & 20 yrs.	10 yrs.
Number of years Homeschooling	6 years	8 years	10 years	1 year
Primary Parent Instructor	Mother	Mother	Mother	Mother
Father as Second Parent Instructor	No	As Needed	As Needed	As Needed
Connected via Support Group	African American Homeschoolers	FOCUHS	African American Homeschoolers & Unschoolers	Ning Group: Blackhomeschoolers
Residential State	Washington D.C.	IL & OK	MI	IL
Compulsory Attendance { www.hsld.org }	Ages 5-18 [D.C.]	Ages 7-17 [IL] Ages 6-16 [OK]	Ages 6-16 [MI] <i>If 11 years or in grade 6 prior to 12/1/09 or Ages 6-18 [MI] <i>If not in grade 6 or 11 years before 12/1/09</i></i>	Ages 7-17 years[IL]
Mandatory Reporting of Intent	New as of March 2008	IL- Voluntary	MI-Voluntary	IL-Voluntary
Reported Intent with State Agency	No (initially) Mandatory-Yes	No	No	No
Conducts Formal Assessment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Utilizes Coop	No	No	Yes	No

Table 7 (cont'd)

Attended Other Educational Institutions	1-Child, Yes 1-Child, No	1-Child, Yes 1-Child, No	Both Children, Yes	Yes
If Yes, Type of School	Public	Public	Public	Public
Receives Support from Public School	No	1-Child, Yes 1-Child, No	Both Children, Yes	No
African Heritage Curriculum	No	No	No	No
Supplements Curriculum with African History	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Child has Input in Planning	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Parents Work	1-Yes	2-Yes	2-Yes	1-Yes
Parents Work Outside of Home	No Mom-Entrepreneur	Dad-Yes Mom-Entrepreneur	Both-Yes Mom-Entrepreneur	Dad-Yes Mom-No
Parents' Education	Bachelor-Both	Associate - Mom	Bachelor-Mom Bachelor-Dad	Bachelor-Both Masters-Dad

Research Question 2

Research Question 2, *Why have they opted to homeschool?*

1. Race, culture, self-identity and low teacher expectations were the primary reasons for opting to homeschool these black male students. This was inconsistent with the NCES 1999 and 2003 studies.
2. The Patterson, Dampare and Ham-Kyu families were homeschooling as a result of actions by a public school teacher. This was inconsistent with the NCES 1999 and 2003 studies.
3. Incorporating religious values were important to each family; however, only two families made it apart of daily practice in the homeschool: Dampare and Ham-Kyu.

Unlike the 1999 and 2003 NCES studies, it was not a primary reason for homeschooling.

Subordinate Question 1

Subordinate Question 1 asked, *Do their reasons for homeschooling differ from those of the larger population of families who homeschool?*

When compared to the 1999 and 2003 studies conducted by NCES, the top three reasons why families opt to homeschool are different than those cited by participants in this study. According to the 1999 study, three primary reasons for homeschooling indicated by the frequency rate of respondents are: “49 percent of homeschooled students had parents who believed they could give their child a better education, 38 percent had parents who homeschooled for religious reasons, and 26 percent had parents reported a poor learning environment at school” (Bielick, Chandler, & Broughman 2001). In this study, parents did not cite their ability to do a better job and a poor learning environment as their top three reasons for opting to homeschool. Although, an inference could be made that the learning environments for both Kristian Patterson and Ashton Dampare were poor learning environments.

While teaching religious content was a benefit of homeschooling in this study, it was not a primary reason in the decision to homeschool. Of the 4 families, two of the families incorporated religious study in their daily curriculum. Even though the study of religion is important to the Dampare and Ham-Kyu families, it was not the primary reason for opting to homeschool. Instead, it was one of the benefits allowed by this educational alternative. Teaching religious and moral values is often cited by homeschoolers. These findings are inconsistent with the findings of this study.

Subordinate Question 2

Subordinate Question 2: *Were the families' decisions to homeschool a direct result of shortcomings in public education.*

As Question 2 is written, the Urban family's concern about what is typically taught in the public schools was a factor in deciding to homeschool. For the other three families, their decisions to homeschool was not a "direct result of shortcomings in public education" but it was a result of actions by representatives of public education, teachers. Teachers and administrators did not resolve the parents' concerns. The Dampare family's issue was brought to the teacher's attention but not resolved. The concern for the way Ashton's teacher treated students of color and the way she interacted with Ashton escalated to the principal and ultimately to the superintendent where it became apparent that there was an impasse with these public school educators. Therefore, unresolved conflicts were the primary reasons why these families chose to homeschool. It was after attempts for resolution for the Patterson, Ham-Kyu and Dampare families. More important, it was the realization that these educators, comments and actions was not apparently apart of their consciousness; they maintained a nonchalant disposition. It became apparent to these families that their concerns were not taken seriously. This facilitated a high level of dissatisfaction which lead these families to opt to homeschool.

Teachers' low expectations evolved as the most common theme that made the greatest impact on their decision to homeschool. In the case of the Dampare family, according to Rachel, Ashton's teacher treated kids of color different than Caucasian students. According to Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968), the Pygmalion effect is more commonly known as *self-fulfilling prophecy* would be damaging to these students in the long-term (as cited in Bothamly, 2002). Teachers' low and negative expectations and internal thoughts would affect their treatment of students

which would ultimately lead to students' negative responses. Consequently, some students' behavior with various teachers is somewhat based on how the teacher perceives or interacts with students. With each family, it was low teacher expectations by a Caucasian teacher of a Black student. This is not to imply that it is impossible for Black teachers to have low expectations of Black students; however, this is a finding of this study. For the Pattersons, Rita stated that her teachers did not seem to care about her daughter. She believed that lack of caring in her new Illinois school district/ was because of the differences in race and culture in comparison to the culture and the treatment her daughter received in Georgia.

Prior to homeschooling, three of four families', the Urbans, Ham-Kyu, and Dampares' children were enrolled in public schools. These families were opposed to subjecting their child to another public, private or charter school. A secondary reason was self-identity and self-image was important for each family. Third, for two of the four families, money was an issue; consideration of private schools was not an option. Consequently, private school was ruled out as an alternative to public school. None of the families considered a charter school. Each family's homeschool operated in a totally unique style. Their instructional approaches varied as with the way in which navigated content areas and the daily agenda.

Assumptions

Caring and Education

Although the families did not directly state, "they cared" about their childrens' futures, it was implied not only through what was stated in the interviews, but it was also implied by the parents' actions. Noddings (2002, p.1) stated:

...the origins of care may be domain specific-that they lie in the small group setting that we have come to call 'home', and probably, in parental love. If this is true-if, that is, our sense of caring and being cared for starts at home... starting at home does not suggest that we remain there.

Although Noddings was suggesting that the level “caring” starts at home, she advocates for caring to transition outside of the home. Rita Patterson stated in Chapter 4, “I think the teachers just didn’t seem to ‘care’ about my child in the way they cared for the Caucasian children. The interaction was different. They could not relate to her at all.” The care that Nodding implies is demonstrated by many public school teachers. Many teachers demonstrate caring beyond what is required of an educator in relation to his or her job description. Yet, other teachers have biases which negatively impact certain groups of students. It is important to most parents whether or not their child learns to best of his or her ability. These families decision to homeschool is a reflection of caring about their child’s education. Also, three of the families cared about the social injustice these students experienced by educators. I do not suggest that teachers should demonstrate caring as much as a parent should. However, based upon the interviews conducted in this study, parents felt that there was a lack of care by teachers, and in the Dampare case, by the administrators.

The outcomes of these homeschoolers’ experiences with home education remain to be seen in future years. However, parents were willing to do high-stakes risk- their child’s future based on their beliefs that they could do a better job teaching their own children. This was not articulated by parents as their primary reasons for opting to homeschool but, these African American parents were unsuccessful with conventional educational institutions. Ultimately, they believed their children could have more success at home than in a public school classroom.

For some parents, being the educator at home required a level of sacrifice. To use an economic term, there were “opportunity costs” for the parent to remain home and to work as the instructional parent. According to Business Dictionary, the definition of opportunity cost is:

A benefit, profit, or value of something that must be given up to acquire or achieve something else. Since every resource (land, money, time, etc.) can be put to alternative uses, every action, choice, or decision has an associated opportunity cost.

For some families, the opportunity costs of homeschooling are sacrificing the alternative: a second income, development of a career, and time to devote to other things.

Assumption 1

The primary reasons African-American families homeschooled were in alignment with Caucasian homeschoolers as suggested by NCES (2003): religious/moral reasons and school safety/environment.

I have learned through this study that while religious/moral studies were important for the Dampare, Ham-Kyu, and Patterson families. It was not the primary reason for deciding to homeschool. Dampare and Ham-Kyu families embed religious studies in their daily homeschooling regimen. The Patterson family believes the ability to study religion is a benefit of homeschooling.

Assumption 2

Homeschooled students lacked socialization skills because families taught in isolation.

Homeschooling families, particularly the participants in this study, created unique approaches to this non-conventional educational alternative. Each of the four families has membership(s) in African American homeschooling networks; these networks allow families to collaborate online and at real-time events. The Dampare family participates with a small, multicultural cooperative group. Ashton Dampare goes to public school for integrated arts, is a boy scout, and plays on a soccer team. The Urban family is part of several African American homeschooling networks which incorporate activities for the entire family. The Ham-Kyu family participates with church groups. The Patterson family is involved with online homeschooling groups but not with any social groups.

Assumption 3

Parents cannot be more effective teaching their children than pedagogical practitioners.

To determine whether or not parents in this study are more effective than trained educators would require careful and long-term analysis beyond the scope of this study. It would be difficult to reach this conclusion. The way each family chose to create their instructional program was uniquely structured; the delivery of content and instruction also varied. At this time, I cannot make a determination whether or not a parent is more effective than pedagogical practitioners. What I can conclude is that children who are homeschooled are just like children in public schools- they are different and respond to learning in different ways. Some students, regardless of environment, learn by listening, seeing, doing; differentiated instruction works. Rachel Dampare was the most structured and appeared to be the most effective instructor. Her son, Ashton, knew the schedule for the day. Rita Patterson created her own agenda and it seemed effective with Kristian. Like Ashton, Kristian appeared to like the way she learned; Rita implemented a rather strict guideline for instruction. Monique Urban used a published system and curriculum which her oldest son, Zebulon. He was knowledgeable about how the system worked and complied with the system. Monique's biggest challenge was "classroom management." She was trying to master teaching more than one child at the same time; this challenge is not much different than that of public school teachers who, in many cases, have more than 30 students in a class. LaTrice Ham-Kyu has the least rigorous schedule of the four families who participated in this study. However, a determination cannot be made at this time whether or not Brian will master standards required of other homeschooled students at the same grade level.

Assumption 4

Locating and extracting data from research participants would prove to be unsuccessful.

I began this research study with an optimistic perspective: the snowball sampling method would yield a large sample size of participants for the study. According to the NCES data, there are nearly 85,000 African American homeschoolers; therefore, as a researcher, I made an assumption that most of those 85, 000 African American homeschoolers would be as interested as I was in the research. I made another assumption was there would be at least 85-100 people willing to participate in the study. It did not take very long for me to realize that using this method to locate participants was not going to be successful. Use of the Internet was the most critical part in identifying prospective participants for this study. I commenced the study with a non-realistic perspective about the practitioners of this non-conventional education alternative. I believed that many African American homeschoolers would be as receptive to contribute to the limited research as I would. However, once I read and analyzed the existing research and literature, I realized that many prospective participants, depending on the state laws, would put be putting their homeschools at risk of governmental interference. Given the number of participants who initially inquired and began the research participant process, I believe there is great potential of conducting a larger study to better informed the public about this population of homeschoolers. This study did not prove to be unsuccessful; it provides a general understanding that not all African American homeschoolers conduct their schools the same way. Each family operates their homeschool in a unique way. The way in which African American families homeschool is configured based on its belief systems, individual student goals, and the reasons opting to homeschool.

Recommendations

The literature on African American homeschoolers is very limited. There are several areas that need to be studied:

1. Longitudinal studies are needed to analyze longevity of African American homeschoolers and to assess how effective homeschooling parents' instruction is on student achievement;
2. Large sample sizes of African American homeschoolers are needed. With an estimated population of 85,000, there needs to be sample size that could inform the public of the plights of this community as a collective group.
3. If most of these 85,000 African American homeschoolers are former public school students, what are the implications of these families' withdrawal from public school districts and what, if anything, can be improved to deter the withdrawal? Is there a negative impact on public schools?
4. Since 1999, it has been noted that the 2nd largest population of homeschoolers are African Americans, why the lack of interest by notable researchers?
5. Since many for-profit educational companies are now creating more charter schools and receiving local funding via public schools to do so, should parents be entitled to a portion of the local school district's tax dollars to educate their children at home.

Conclusion

Today, the majority of African American students are educated by means other than homeschooling: public, private, parochial, and charter schools. However, interest in homeschooling continues to increase in a phenomenal way in the African American community.

There is information to be learned from those who have opted to home school instead of selecting a conventional educational program and institution.

As a public school educator, I learned through this study that I had a level of ignorance comparable to many of my colleagues who never bothered to ask questions of any homeschooling family who enrolled in my previous K-8 school. I have witnessed and even been a part of side-bar discussions speculating what occurred in a homeschooling environment. Educators should, in a non-judgmental way, learn about this population and learn why this population is opposed to taking part of the conventional educational system opted for by the majority of families in this country. Educators should learn about it from the source, homeschoolers and in this case the African American homeschoolers. The most difficult aspect of studying “what went wrong” is that many educators would not actively listen to what is being articulated. Rhetorically, would the effort be made to repair the damages and perceptions of those who have opted to leave the public school systems especially when those issues are addressed by a minority of students and parents.

The fear of the unknown is almost always a threat. Paradigm shifts have been the topic of many books; ways to convince people to change their way of thinking have been best selling publications. Kuhn states, a paradigm shift is when "one conceptual world view is replaced by another" (1970, p.10). People especially educators have to work at accepting what is not familiar to them; usually this practice is done on a gradual basis. Acceptance of homeschoolers is no different than learning to live without a landline telephone. It takes time and practice. For the majority population, homeschooling is a non-traditional way to educate children. There are three critical questions many educators need to ask themselves: (1) What actions prompted their sentiments about public schools? (2) Are their concerns, perceptions, or issues valid to them?

And (3) How could we (educators) have resolve their issues or concerns sooner? These three questions are not exclusively important to solely African American homeschoolers, but they are equally important to many families who have decided to seek an alternative way of educating their children. Although many educators mentor their students and demonstrate extraordinary care for them, others simply do not think of every student in their classroom as if he or she is important as their own son, daughter, niece, or nephew. We should care for these students and do everything in our power to let them know we care. For homeschoolers, these students have an alternative option for care and for learning. Some of our students have parents who are absent from the home and they count on us- we are obligated to keep the embers flaring in these children. They need to dream, hope, and more importantly, to want to learn.

The majority of educators have never had the opportunity to listen to homeschooling families' sentiments to learn why they decided to teach their own children. For years, we have made assumptions about the entire community of homeschoolers. There was an appearance, from the outside, that the homeschooled students who enrolled in schools experienced difficulties in a school environment due to a lack of socialization skills as a result of being confined and isolated to the home school. Several teachers were dismayed to learn there were African Americans who were homeschooling their children when these students enrolled in our school. Frankly, the consensus was that these families probably were just religious radicals similar to the Caucasian-religious fundamentalist homeschoolers. This experience with these now transitioned homeschoolers facilitated a curiosity about the African American homeschooling population; this curiosity prompted the first research question: Who are They? It is because of these experiences, I did this research.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL – i034006

- Opening: How many children do you homeschool?
- How old are they?
- What are their grade levels?
- How long have you been homeschooling?
- Were you employed prior to instructing your child?
- Who is the teacher in this family?
- How did you learn about this study?
- Why did you think it was worthwhile to participate?

1. Tell me about your educational experience as a child (parent). (purpose: to gain understanding of their sentiments regarding schooling-possible bias)
2. Do you have any formal training in teaching/instruction?

If not trained as an educator: Are you concerned that your lack of training in teaching will hinder their child's academic achievement at some point? If no, how do you make adjustments or compensate for areas that you lack sufficient knowledge? (i.e. cooperative groups, software etc.)

If no advance college degree: Do you believe that because of the lack of formal college degree that you will reach a point where you can no longer instruct your child?

If yes, then, how do you plan to eliminate/ address this problem?

If no, then what will assist you in continuing the instructional process?

3. Are there any areas where you feel like you are lacking expertise?

If yes, then what will you or have you done to increase your knowledge or professional development as an instructor?

In 2001, Bush signed into law, an Act, No Child Left Behind Act, are you familiar with this act? If yes, continue w/ questioning and do they believe they are highly qualified? ; If no, tell a bit about the act and move on.

4. What attracted you to homeschooling?
5. Why did you choose this alternative over some of the other alternatives such as private education or even charter schools?
6. What were some of the areas such as academic, social or other, did you specifically need to correct and address to assist your child?
7. As a follow up to the previous question, why do you feel these areas were not properly addressed in the public schools?
 - To whom were these concerns addressed or what measures were taken to address your issue(s)?
8. Do you believe your child was “left behind” under NCLB? If yes, could you describe this sentiment?
9. Since the implementation of NCLB, did you see any changes in your child’s school to improve performance or to improve your child’s specific needs?
10. As a follow up to the last question, did you see any changes in your child’s teacher’s instruction in your child’s core classes?
11. Under the criteria of NCLB, do you believe your instructional practices and outcomes make you highly qualified to teach?
12. Do you believe children more academically successful at home than a traditional classroom? If so, why do you think this is?
13. Do you feel the intimate connection, for example, nurturing and caring makes a difference in terms of your child’s academic success?
 - How do these components, nurturing and caring, make a difference?
14. Do you think that these characteristics are lacking by instructors inside public classrooms?
15. How do you recommend teachers incorporate caring and nurturing into the instructional process without crossing the lines of the teacher-student relationship?
 - How does caring and nurturing impact student achievement?
 - How is this approach different than public school environments?

- Do you think it is possible for teachers to bring caring and nurturing into instructional practices for 30-35 students?

CULTURE

16. Was cultural education a motive in your decision to homeschool?
17. How are you able to address cultural needs at home?
18. How is this different from the public school classroom?
19. Describe the demographics of your child's school.
20. Given the demographics of your child's school and classroom, were your cultural needs addressed?
21. Should values, cultural identities and religions be reflected in the public school curriculum?
 - If yes, how these things be taught or incorporated in public schools? If no, why not and to what degree should it be addressed ?
22. How could schools better address culturally diverse populations?
23. Have you ever solicited help/support from non-Af. Am. Homeschooling support groups?
24. Did you ever experience any racist attitudes when affiliating w/ non-Af. Am. support groups?
25. Do you think race matters as much in homeschooling environments as it does in public school environments?
26. In your opinion, do you think mono-racial classrooms are more conducive to learning? Please explain your feelings.
27. Do you believe this has made a difference in terms of the classroom setting and focus of curriculum you've selected for instruction?
28. Is your culture reflected in the curriculum you use?
29. How can schools meet the needs of all students of racially diverse backgrounds?
30. Do you believe parent expectations affect their child's performance?

31. Do you believe teacher expectations affect their child's performance?
32. Did the expectations of your child change as a result of you taking on the instructional leader role?
33. Which one do you believe is more important and more influential on a student's academic achievement, parent(s) or teacher(s) expectations?
34. Is there a noticeable difference in family structure or relationship as a result of homeschooling?
35. Do you believe a familiar home environment supports the learning process?
36. Do you believe it is possible to reproduce the environment in a public school setting?

Instruction/Learning

37. How does, in your opinion, real-life/real world experiences impact student learning?
38. Do you bring realia into your homeschool classroom?
 - If so, how do you do this?
 - If you don't, why do you chose not to incorporate real- world experiences into your instruction?
39. Describe for me how you plan your instructional activities?
40. Who makes the decision about what is learned and how much time is spent on this particular activity or skill?
41. Do you utilize any part of the public school system or resources?
42. Do you copy of mimic any part of the public schools usual procedures (i.e. minutes per subject, school hours, courses taken)
43. On average, how much time do you spend in preparing for the next day's lessons?
44. If you teach more than one child, how do you divide your time to preparing and instructing each student?
45. Do you think this is a reasonable amount of time for teachers to do on a daily basis given the size of most classrooms?
46. Do you think classroom size is a factor in public schools?

47. What should be the maximum size, in your opinion, that teachers should have in a classroom?(elementary vs. high school)
48. Do you spend the same amount of time on each subject?
49. Is your child academically successful at home?
- How do you measure success?
 - Do you use any assessment exams to measure progress, if so which ones?
50. Do you believe your child is more successful at home than when he/she was attending public schools?
51. If you had to name just one thing that you believe has made the most impact on your child's success at home, what do you think that would be?
52. If you give assessment examinations, how often do you administer these exams?
53. Have there been any noticeable changes/ in your child's progress?

Future Plans

54. What do you envision for your child once the high school requirements are satisfied?
55. Has your child communicated any plans of their own for the future?
56. Have these plans for the future been influenced in any way by homeschool instruction?
57. Have the plans for the future changed from previous plans while attending public school?
58. Does your child plan to go to college?
59. Do you have transcripts for the admissions process?
- Are you required to report grades and/test scores ?
60. Do you think your child has learned skills that are transferable to a collegiate setting, if so which ones?

Public School Perceptions

61. What was the financial situation of your child's public school & district?
- **If limited/bad:** Did that impact programs and instruction?

- **If good**: Were the resources in the district distributed fairly to all schools and classrooms?
62. Do you believe your child was given the basic level of care in school?
(*ex. free lunch app, counseling, if spec. ed, accomoda., trans, psy, soc wkr, for. lang., arts*)
- If not, why do you think was the problem?
63. Did you child have any social concerns when attending public schools?

Support for Homeschoolers

64. What are some of the challenges for your family with homeschooling?
65. If so, what is your biggest adjustment?
66. Do you think there are enough resources available to homeschoolers in general?
- African Americans in particular?
67. Do you attend any conventions/conferences for homeschoolers?
68. Is there intra-collaboration with homeschoolers (i.e. Black & Hispanic , Black & White, etc)
69. Do you collaborate with other African American families?
70. Is there sufficient support for homeschoolers?
71. Did you get any support from the school district or state department of education?
72. What kind of support did you get from homeschooling support organizations, if any?
73. Which organization/agency was the most supportive?
- How did they help you the most?
74. Which was the least supportive?
75. Describe the process you took to get started with this initiative.
76. Do you report your intention to homeschool to the state DOE? Why or why not?
77. Do you belong to any online homeschooling networks? If so, which ones?

Reflection

78. Do you think your child has been more successful at home and not in a public school? Why is that?

79. If you considered other alternatives other than public schools prior to choosing homeschooling as an alternative, what were those other choices?

80. What convinced you to home school ?

81. Do you ever plan to return your child to public schools for instruction in the future?
If yes, what are your reasons?

82. Do you believe your child will be more successful now if he/she ever returned to public schools?

83. What tools do you think your child could take back to public schools if they returned to public education?

84. What recommendations would you make to public school educators based on your previous experience as a public school parent?

85. What recommendations would you make to public school educators based on your previous experience as an instructor?

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