

**Examining the Relationships among Parents' Perceptions of their Children's Special
Educational Needs, Their Beliefs about Parental Involvement,
and Their Decision to Homeschool**

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Steve,
and to my sons, Evans and Chance.
You are my inspiration, my motivation, and my joy.

Acknowledgements

- First and above all I want to thank my family and friends for their patience, support, motivation and love. You have all helped so much in making this accomplishment possible.
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- This accomplishment absolutely would not have been possible without my husband, Dr. Steve Morse. Thank you... *for everything*.

Abstract

The school choice option of homeschooling has grown rapidly over the past two decades. An estimated 1.77 million K-12 students in the United States (3.4% of the total school-age population) were being homeschooled during the 2011-2012 school year. The purpose of this study was to gather data from homeschooling parents that would contribute to the understanding of parental involvement with school choice and of parental involvement with educational organizations. More specifically, this study determined the proportion of families in the sample ($N = 333$) who had children enrolled in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool and the proportion who reported homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN). Additionally, parents' perceptions about their participation in homeschool support groups and factors important to their decision to homeschool were explored.

This quantitative study used descriptive and inferential methodologies. School choice history (whether or not the family had a child in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool) and special educational needs (SEN) status (whether or not the family reported homeschooling a child with SEN) were used as independent variables. Data analysis consisted of an examination of correlations between the independent variables and parents' perceptions of (a) homeschool support group participation, (b) opportunities for parental involvement with the homeschool support group, and (c) factors important to parents' decision to homeschool.

The results of the study indicated that 50.8% of participating families had a child who attended public or private school before the family decided to homeschool. In the group of families who had a child who attended public or private before the family decided to homeschool, 60.6% of the families indicated they were currently homeschooling a child with

SEN. Overall, the special educational needs of a child was rated as the least important factor in parents' decision to homeschool. However, for families who were currently homeschooling a child with SEN, this factor was significantly more important. The desire to be more involved with their children's education was rated as the most important factor in the decision to homeschool.

Preface

I began homeschooling my oldest son in 1990, in the “early days” of the modern homeschool movement. He was homeschooled from pre-school through high school graduation. During this time, we were very involved with an active homeschool support group. My son participated in social activities and enrichment classes. I was an active volunteer and held a variety of leadership roles. After he graduated, I remained active with the homeschool support group and my second son participated in pre-school activities. I planned to also homeschool him, but by the time he was ready for kindergarten, I had to return to work outside of the home. He attended public school from kindergarten through fourth grade. We recognized that he was intellectually gifted even before he started school, but were able to work with his early teachers to keep him challenged and progressing academically. A few weeks into second grade, school specialists recommended accelerating him to third grade. This helped briefly, but by fourth grade he began showing signs of some of the common vulnerabilities of gifted children (depression, underachievement and perfectionism) and we made the decision to homeschool.

When we began homeschooling for the second time in 2011, a lot had changed. We rejoined the same homeschool support group and I was very surprised how much the group had grown and changed in just a few years. The same month that we started homeschooling again, I was accepted into a Ph.D. program at the University of Tennessee. Throughout my doctorate coursework, I focused class projects on my passions: homeschooling, gifted education, instructional design and learning environments. As I studied the intersections of these passions from many different angles, I began to have questions about how the growth and changes I was seeing in homeschooling might be associated with current trends in education. This research grew from my experiences on all sides of the issues: I homeschooled one child who never went

to public school; public school was not able to meet my second son's special educational needs, so I am currently homeschooling him; and I am completing work on a doctorate in education and plan to work in the field of education.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Homeschooling, as a school choice option for American children, has seen a 74% increase in the 8-year period from 1999 to 2007 and the growth rate has been increasing annually (Planty, Hussar, Snyder, Kena, Kewal Ramani, Kemp, Bianco, & Dinkes, 2009). Isenberg (2007) provides perspective on the prevalence of homeschooling when he states that the number of homeschooled children is “roughly equal to the total in charter schools and voucher schools combined” and that there is “approximately one homeschooled child for every five children enrolled in private school” (p. 387). The continued growth rate of homeschooling is evidenced in the data reported from the 2012 National Household Education Survey Program (NHES) estimating that 1.77 million K-12 students in the United States were homeschooled for the 2011-2012 school year (Noel, Stark, & Redford, 2013). This number represented about 3.4% of the total school-age population in the United States in 2012.

The parallel timelines of historic policy changes in public education and the growth of homeschooling evoke questions that have not been sufficiently explored in the current research literature. The separation of religion from public education has been associated with the beginning of the modern homeschool movement (Basham, 2007). But, what relationship, if any, exists between the implementation in public education of mandates of the 1990, 1997 and 2004 reauthorizations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the 2001 reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the current, increased rate of growth in the choice of homeschooling? Have the mandates of these policies affected the ability of traditional public and private schools to meet the individual needs of all students? Has the grassroots and national organization of homeschool support groups contributed to the rapid

growth by positioning homeschooling as a legitimate educational option? The focus of this study was to gather data that would contribute to understanding these issues through a current and in-depth study of parents' decision to homeschool and of parental involvement with homeschool support groups.

The target population for this study was families who were homeschooling at least one child. A sample ($N = 333$) was obtained from an accessible population of homeschool families in eastern Tennessee. The purpose of this study was to gather data from homeschooling parents that would contribute to the understanding of parental involvement with school choice and of parental involvement with educational organizations. More specifically, the purpose of this study was to determine the proportion of homeschooling families in the sample who had children enrolled in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool and to determine the proportion of homeschooling families in the sample who reported homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN). The relationship among school choice history (whether or not the family had a child enrolled in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool), SEN status (whether or not the family reported homeschooling a child with SEN), and parents' decision to homeschool their children was examined. Additionally, parents' perceptions about their involvement with a homeschool support group and the influence that access to a homeschool support group might have had on their decision to choose the educational option of homeschooling were explored. Lastly, the categories of support offered by the homeschool support groups were examined through the lens of Epstein's (2001) parental involvement model.

Background

A look at the parallel histories of public, private and home schooling in the United States provides a context for answering the question of what influences a family to choose to homeschool their children. Gaining an understanding of parents' decision to homeschool in today's educational setting was a focus of this study. Thus, the discussion of educational history and trends concentrates primarily on the years from the early 1960s to present. This timeframe provides a focus on major contemporary trends in education including the growth and development of the modern homeschooling movement and the effect of major education legislation on school choice.

Public schools.

Two legislative acts, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) have significantly impacted education in the latter part of 20th century in the United States. The 2001 reauthorization of ESEA is commonly known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), so future references to this act will refer to NCLB. Both IDEA and NCLB are very broad in scope and have undergone many revisions over the years since their inception. The discussion of NCLB and IDEA for this study was limited to issues that have been associated with factors identified as reasons for parents' choice of homeschooling for their children (Planty et al., 2009). Issues and trends discussed in relation to NCLB include the effects of high-stakes testing on classroom instruction, the effects of changes in how select populations of students are served, and the effects of increased support of school choice options. The main issue discussed in connection to IDEA is inclusion and the trend of serving students with disabilities in the general classroom.

Private schools.

While private schools have historically always been an alternative to public education, the option to choose this alternative has long been limited to those who could afford private school tuition. Nobel Prize winning economist Milton Friedman (1955) is credited with introducing the concept of school vouchers as a way to make school choice more attainable for all families. A variety of voucher programs and tax credits and deductions were tried by many states during the 1970s and 1980s, but the issue of school choice finally gained national attention during the Reagan administration (Carpenter & Kafer, 2012). In 1981, President Reagan's administration created the National Commission on Excellence in Education for the purpose of examining the quality of education (Gardner, 1983). The resulting report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (Gardner, 1983) was written as an open letter to the American public. The report's findings, which were quite critical of the quality of America's schools, provided the impetus for many educational reform efforts including school choice. President Reagan supported legislation for vouchers and tuition tax credits for private schools throughout his presidency (Carpenter & Kafer, 2012).

Educational reform efforts to improve education through school choice are also evident in NCLB's support of charter schools. The concept of charter schools is to create schools that have more freedom to innovate and to be responsive to the students, parents, and community they serve (Bailey & Cooper, 2009). Bailey and Cooper describe charter schools as providing a, "small, private school-feel environment for students, but without costly tuition (p. 275)" and as serving a variety of special interest needs including religious, cultural, and academic.

However, efforts to improve schools by offering more school choice options seem to have been affected by efforts to improve education through standardization. NCLB mandates for

schools to demonstrate that their students are making adequate yearly progress based on students' performance on standardized achievement tests may actually be narrowing the academic differences between public, private and charter school choice options. Bidwell and Dreeben (2003) conceptualize the distinction between public and private education through a sociological analysis. Using organizational theory, they explain that private schools and charter schools are more selective of faculty and students, thus they have a more homogenous system with greater ability to innovate in ways necessary to meet the needs of the individuals they serve. However, Bidwell and Dreeben (2003) contend that NCLB mandates are encouraging a dependence on textbooks and a standardization of curriculum to prepare students for standardized achievement tests. This inhibits the ability of charter and private schools to innovate, thus inhibiting their ability to meet students' individual needs. Bidwell and Dreeben express concern that the pressure to comply with standardized testing mandates will result in a dependency on textbook instruction rather than innovative teaching that addresses individual student needs.

Homeschool.

The modern homeschooling movement has developed during the same timeframe (latter part of 20th century), and in response to many of the same factors, as the concept of school choice through vouchers and charter schools. The modern homeschooling movement is generally considered to have begun its revival during the late 1960s and 1970s (Basham, Merrifield, & Hepburn, 2007). The Supreme Court decision in *Engel v. Vitale* (1962) that affected prayer in public schools coincides with this revival of homeschooling.

In a public policy review report for the Cato Institute, Lyman (1998) situates John Holt and Raymond Moore, both professional educators, as voices in the public school reform efforts

of the 1960s and 1970s centered on debates of decentralizing schools. Lyman characterizes the works of Holt and Moore as seeds that grew into the foundation of the modern homeschool movement. Raymond and Dorothy Moore's research (1975, 1981) on childhood development and learning promoted homeschooling as a legitimate educational option and provided parents with support for their decision to homeschool. Likewise, John Holt's (1982) writings about pedagogy supporting what is commonly known as "unschooling" and his newsletter, *Growing without Schooling* (1977), served to stimulate and support interest in this alternative educational option. Summarizing this early development of homeschooling, Van Galen (1988) categorizes parents' reasons for homeschooling as either based on ideology (religious or moral) or on pedagogy (curriculum content or educational needs of the child).

During the 1980s, states began enacting legislation that legalized homeschooling. Governor Lamar Alexander signed the legislation to make homeschooling legal in Tennessee in 1985. Homeschooling did not become legal in all 50 states until 1993 and requirements and regulations still vary from state-to-state (Colfax & Colfax, 1988). The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) was a catalyst in advancing the legal status of homeschooling by defending and advocating for the rights of parents to direct the education of their children (HSLDA, 1998). The struggle to gain the legal freedom to homeschool their children united homeschooling families and resulted in the organization of numerous homeschool support networks (Cibulka, 1991).

The extent of the organization of homeschool networks was made visible in 1994 when a proposed amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was thought to pose a threat to homeschooling (Stevens, 2009). According to Stevens, HSLDA interpreted wording concerning teacher certification requirements in the H.R. 6 amendment as a threat to

homeschooling freedom and alerted homeschool networks. This alert mobilized individual homeschool families to call and write their congressmen. This effort resulted in hundreds of thousands of calls that jammed congressmen's phone lines and made national headlines. The homeschooling movement's political power became apparent in the fact that legislation pertaining to homeschooling was "obviously and purposefully" excluded from NCLB (Cooper & Sureau, 2007, p. 125). Cooper and Sureau (2007) describe how the public perception and approval of homeschooling has changed from a very negative, almost abusive, portrayal in the 1970s to being featured in mainstream, family magazines in the 1990s.

As homeschooling has grown, homeschool families have organized for support and to share resources. I was a member of a homeschool support group that is typical of the larger homeschool support groups included in the study sample. A main objective our homeschool support group was to provide social and enrichment activities for our children. We organized enrichment classes that were held one day a week at a local church. Parents taught most of these classes. Social activities such as park days, field trips, parties, and clubs were also very important. Resources and experience were shared through curriculum swaps and educational programs. An online e-mail group was a very popular source of support for parents. This homeschool support group, as it exists today, serves over 300 families. It is organized and administered very much like a private school. This brief historical timeline of the parallel development of homeschooling and private school options as they relate to developments in the public school sector provides a context for the study of parental motivation for school choice.

Statement of the Problem

An estimated 1.77 million K-12 students in the United States were homeschooled during the 2011-2012 school year (Noel, Stark, & Redford, 2013). This number represented about

3.4% of the total school-age population in the United States at that time. Yet, there is much we do not know about why parents' are making the educational choice of homeschooling for their children. The parallel timelines of historic policy changes in public education and the growth of homeschooling evoke questions that have not been sufficiently explored in the current research literature. Have the mandates of education policies affected the ability of traditional public and private schools to meet the individual needs of all students? Has the grassroots and national organization of homeschool support groups contributed to the rapid growth by positioning homeschooling as a legitimate educational option? The focus of this study was to gather data that would contribute to understanding these issues through a current and in-depth study of parents' decision to homeschool and of parental involvement with homeschool support groups.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gather data from homeschooling parents that would contribute to the understanding of parental involvement with school choice and of parental involvement with educational organizations. More specifically, the purpose of this study was to determine the proportion of homeschooling families in the sample who had children enrolled in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool and to determine the proportion of homeschooling families in the sample who reported homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN). The relationship among school choice history (whether or not the family had a child enrolled in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool), SEN status (whether or not the family reported homeschooling a child with SEN), and parents' decision to homeschool their children was examined. Additionally, parents' perceptions about their involvement with a homeschool support group and the influence that access to a homeschool support group might have on the decision to choose the educational

option of homeschooling were explored. Lastly, the categories of support offered by the homeschool support groups were examined through the lens of Epstein's (2001) parental involvement model.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Is there a difference in the percentage of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) between the group of homeschooling families who had children that attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled?
2. Is there a difference in parents' reported participation in homeschool support group activities between the group of families who had children that attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled?
3. Is there a difference in parents' reported participation in homeschool support group activities between the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) and the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN?
4. Is there a difference in parents' perceptions of the importance of types of support and activities offered by a homeschool support group between the group of families who have a child who has attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled?

5. Is there a difference in parents' perceptions of the importance of types of support and activities offered by a homeschool support group between the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) and the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN?
6. Is there a difference in parents' perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with their homeschool support group between the group of families who have a child who has attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled?
7. Is there a difference in parents' perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with their homeschool support group between the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) and the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN?
8. Is there a difference in parents' perceptions towards the importance of different types of parental involvement with their homeschool support group between the group of families who have a child who has attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled?
9. Is there a difference in parents' perceptions towards the importance of different types of parental involvement with their homeschool support group between the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) and the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN?

10. Is there a difference in parents' perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool between the group of families who have a child who has attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled?
11. Is there a difference in parents' perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool between the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) and the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN?

Importance of the Study

Homeschooling is clearly a growing option in the school choice arena (Noel, Stark, & Redford, 2013). The results of this study provide data that inform trends in parents' participation in school choice, specifically the choice of homeschooling, which should be of interest to school administrators. The results of this study should also provide valuable data for school administrators as they work to evaluate resource allocation for developing and supporting parental involvement. Learning about the types of parental involvement that parents set up for an organization they create, run and use should be of value to those interested in maximizing parental involvement with their educational organization.

While there is a considerable body of literature on parental involvement and school choice in the United States, there appears to be a gap in the literature concerning the influence that having a child with special educational needs (SEN) might have on the decision to homeschool and on how parents of a child with SEN might participate with a homeschool support group. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) identified a child's special needs as a potential barrier to parental involvement in public or private school settings. This study builds on Hornby and

Lafaele's research by studying the influence of a child's special educational needs on parental involvement, both in terms of the decision to homeschool and on parents' membership and participation in a homeschool support group.

The literature on homeschooling children with special educational needs is limited, but in the studies reviewed, a high percentage of parents who were currently homeschooling children with SEN had initially placed their child in traditional public or private school environment (Arora, 2006; Parsons & Lewis, 2010; Reilly, Chapman, & O'Donoghue, 2002). In this study, the percentage of families in the sample population whose children attended public or private schools before making the decision to homeschool was determined. Aspects of parental involvement with homeschool support groups were compared between families that had a child in public/private school before homeschooling and those who never had a child in public/private school.

The homeschooling movement in the United States has developed a network of local, state and national organizations that support homeschooling families in their educational efforts. There has been very little research on the role these organizations play in parents' decision to homeschool or on how parents use these organizations. This study adds to the literature on homeschool support groups by building on Collum and Mitchel's (2005) contention that, for the purpose of their research, the homeschooling movement should be considered an educational organization, the same as public or private school systems. Studying homeschool support groups as educational organizations provides the opportunity to gain unique perspectives on parental involvement with education. Prior studies, including those by Lamb (2009) and Barlow and Humphries (2012) document the variation in the perceptions of parents of children with special educational needs concerning the opportunities for parental involvement with their child's

school. Goldring and Phillips (2008) focused on the parents' choice between public magnet schools and private schools. Goldring and Phillips' findings suggested that parents were "not necessarily 'pushed' out of public schools because of dissatisfaction" (p.227) but rather 'pulled' to choose a school that allowed for a higher level of collaboration between teachers and parents. Building on these prior studies, this study focuses on homeschooling parents and their involvement with homeschool support groups, which are created, run and used by parents.

Delimitations

This study examined only families who were currently homeschooling at least one child. Because homeschool laws vary from state-to-state, it was decided to limit invitations for participation to a relatively homogenous geographical area. E-mail lists of homeschool support groups in eastern Tennessee were used to invite participation in the study. Thus, the results of the study may not be generalizable to other geographical areas.

In an effort to simplify the survey, the information on special educational needs was based on the total family, not each individual child. Participants were asked to indicate if any of the children they were currently homeschooling had ever been diagnosed with any of the special educational needs listed (13 IDEA categories plus Intellectually Gifted). They were asked to check all that applied and to indicate the method of diagnosis for each SEN. Thus, these data related to the total incidence of each category of SEN and the method of diagnosis for each category of SEN, not the number of children with a specific SEN. Since a focus of this study was to explore the relationship between a family homeschooling a child (or children) with SEN and the family's decision to homeschool, the decision was made to delimit the study of incidence of SEN to the family rather than to individual children. A further delimitation related to special educational needs was that the data was self-reported by participating parents.

Definition of Terms

Homeschool - Because homeschool laws vary considerably from state-to-state and the researcher had access to homeschool groups in eastern Tennessee, the decision was made to limit the study to the regional area of eastern Tennessee. Thus, for the purpose of this study, the term homeschool is defined by Tennessee law. In Tennessee, there are three different ways that a parent can legally register to homeschool: (1) register with the local education agency (LEA) which is the county or city school board for the school district where the child would normally attend public school (Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-6-3050), (2) register with a church related school (CRS) (Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-50-801), or (3) register with a private school that offers a homeschool “satellite” or “umbrella” program. For this third option, the child is technically considered a student of the private school. Requirements vary, but the parent still teaches the child at home and has control over the child’s education. For this discussion, all three options are considered homeschools.

Educational Organization - For the purpose of this study, homeschooling is considered to be an organized, legitimate educational organization. Homeschooling, public schools, and private schools are all discussed as educational organizations. These three educational options will also be discussed in relation to school choice.

Parental Involvement and Parental Engagement - These terms are used somewhat interchangeably in the literature reviewed. For this study, the interpretation and intentionality is to use the term parental involvement to refer to the parents’ perceptions of how they want to be involved with the educational organization (homeschool support group) and with their child(ren)’s education.

Special Educational Needs - IDEA categories of special needs were used to identify special educational needs (SEN) for this study. The category of “Intellectually Gifted” was also included because intellectual gifted is a state-specific disability in the state of Tennessee that is served by the Division of Special Education (Tennessee Department of Education, 2010). Participating parents were asked if they believed their child had any of the listed categories of special educational needs. Participants were asked to classify their children as to perceived category(s) of SEN and also asked to indicate how the SEN(s) were identified (school, private doctor or psychologist, parent observation, or other).

SEN Status - This term refers to whether or not a participating family has a child with any special educational need (as defined above). If the parent indicated that they were homeschooling at least one child who they believed had any category of SEN, the family SEN Status was coded as “Yes.” For the purpose of statistical analysis, participants were divided into two groups, families who had a child with SEN (SEN status coded Yes) and families who had no children with SEN (SEN status coded NO). SEN status (Yes or No) was used as an independent variable in statistical analysis.

School Choice History - This term refers to a family’s history with school choice, specifically whether or not they have a child who attended public or private school before the parents made the decision to homeschool. Families who had at least one child enrolled in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool were coded as “Yes” and families who have always homeschooled were coded as “No.” School Choice History (Yes or No) was used as an independent variable in statistical analysis.

Homeschool Support Group - A membership based group of homeschool families that exists for the purpose of supporting the needs of homeschooling families. Homeschool support groups

commonly provide opportunities for socialization, cooperative teaching, curriculum enrichment activities, field trips, parental support and networking, and sharing of resources.

Organization of the Study

Four chapters follow this introductory chapter. References and appendices are included at the end. A review of the literature that provides a theoretical and conceptual foundation for the study is presented in Chapter 2. The methodology used to collect and analyze the data is detailed in Chapter 3. The results of the survey data collected and the analysis of these data are presented in Chapter 4. A discussion of the research findings and their implications to theory and practice, as well as the limitations of the study and opportunities for future research are included in Chapter 5. The Appendices include the survey invitation letter and the survey instrument.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This study builds on research that seeks to understand the factors that influence parents' choice of homeschooling as an educational option for their children. It specifically looks at the influence of having a child with special needs and at the influence of access to a homeschool support group on the decision to homeschool. This chapter reviews the literature, including (a) the social learning theories that influence and inform the role of parental involvement in a child's education, (b) the role of parental involvement in school choice, (c) the positioning of homeschooling as an educational organization, and (d) parents' motivations for the educational choice of homeschooling. The review of literature supports the need to study the relationship that having a child with special needs might have with parental involvement and school choice, specifically the choice to homeschool. Homeschooling is clearly a growing option in the school choice arena (Noel, Stark, & Redford, 2013). This study provides data that will help inform trends in the school choice of homeschooling that should be important to school administrators. The results of this study should also provide valuable data for school administrators as they work to evaluate the allocation of resources to develop and support parental involvement in their schools.

Organization of Literature Review

This literature review was begun with a very broad review of the literature pertaining to homeschooling. The following search terms (*homeschool, home school, and home education*) were used in multiple databases including *Academic Search Premier, Education Source, Eric* and *PsychInfo via ProQuest*, and *Google Scholar*. This initial review of the literature related to homeschooling allowed for the development of research questions and the identification of

parameters to focus the literature review in a very large body of research. The research questions were used as a framework to guide the review of literature. Seminal works in each area related to the research questions, were used to focus searches more narrowly. For example, several seminal works in the area of parental involvement with educational organizations were identified and reviewed. More specific terms were identified in these works and then used to better focus the search of literature. In this instance, search terms such as: parental involvement and academic achievement, parental involvement and school choice, and parental involvement and special educational needs were used. Additional details on inclusion or exclusion of literature is detailed throughout this review of literature. The literature that provides the theoretical foundation for the study is presented first. An extensive review of literature related to the conceptual foundations follows.

Theoretical Foundation: Social Learning Theories

Mediated learning and cultural-historical activity theory.

Vygotsky's (1978) work in developmental psychology and his theory of mediated activity provides the theoretical foundation of understanding the importance of parental involvement in a child's development and academic achievement. Vygotsky (1978) explains human's conscious behavior with the concept of the use of tools (signs) to exert influence on the object of an activity. This concept is often illustrated as a basic triangle with subject, mediated action (use of tool/sign), and object as the points of the triangle. Applying Vygotsky's theory of mediated activity to the triad of parent-school-child positions the parent and/or the school as the mediators that help the child create understanding in his or her social environment. Vygotsky places great importance on the social context of learning. The cultural values inherent in the family and in the school are critical factors in the mediation of learning. While mediated activity

supports the importance of the parent and/or the school as mediators in the child's learning, cultural-historical activity theory supports the necessity of understanding this relationship holistically, as a dynamic and changing system.

Cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978) provides a set of concepts for understanding the relationship between parent, school, and the child's development and academic achievement. CHAT provides a way to look at the big picture that also allows a focus on small details. Studying the parent-school-child relationship as an activity system illustrates the sources of power and/or tensions within the relationship. Historical and cultural contexts of the individuals and organizations are an important part of the picture. Using the activity systems model (Engeström, 1987), the contradictions or tensions within the activities of the system can be identified and analyzed to illustrate sources of problems and opportunities for change. The theory that informs the study of each component of the parent-school-child relationship provides additional strength to the theoretical framework for this proposed study.

Social cognitive theory and motivation.

Learning through social interactions with others is at the heart of social cognitive theory. Bandura (1986) discussed an individual's response to social interactions as the way that one makes sense of their world and develops cognitions about their own self in relation to self-efficacy, self-regulation and self-evaluation. Motivational theory, especially self-efficacy, self-regulatory, and goal theories relate to both the parent and the child in the research on parental involvement. For example, a parent's sense of self-efficacy to influence their child's academic success increases their motivation for involvement. A child's sense of self-efficacy concerning their ability to learn increases his/her motivation to learn. Schunk (2012) makes several generalizations about motivation that make it clear why motivation is so intimately linked with

learning. He states that “most learning is motivated,” “motivated students expend greater effort,” and that “motivation engages students in activities that facilitate learning” (p. 346). Motivation is also a key link between parental involvement and a student’s academic achievement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). In fact, Ice and Hoover-Dempsey (2011) use academic self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation to learn, and self-regulatory strategy use as measurements of learning outcomes in their study of the influence of parental involvement on academic achievement. Parental self-efficacy was positively related to parental involvement, which in turn is positively linked to the student’s academic self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation to learn.

When discussing parental involvement in relation to homeschooling, parents are considered in the role of teacher. Research in psychology and education identified teachers’ confidence and feelings of self-efficacy as being crucial to their success in how they teach and how their students learn (Poulou, 2007). The theoretical framework of self-efficacy developed by Bandura, provides the basis for these conceptions of teacher efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Bandura related two types of expectancy to self-efficacy: (a) outcome expectancy, which is a measure of a person’s belief that a given behavior will lead to a given outcome; and (b) efficacy expectancy, which is a measure of the conviction that one can successfully perform the behavior required to achieve the outcome. In summary, one’s level of self-efficacy is dependent on the belief that doing a certain action will produce a given result and on the belief that one can do the action that is required to produce the result. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s (1997) work suggested that parents with a high sense of self-efficacy towards helping their children with school work exhibited a higher level of parental involvement in their child’s education. A child’s sense of self-efficacy is also directly attributed to his/her motivation for academic achievement (Bandura, 1977).

The literature reviewed related to social learning theories supports the importance of parental involvement in a child's education. However, the dynamics of the parent – child – educational organization relationship determines how a parent is able to be involved in their child's education. The conceptual foundation for this study is provided by a review of the literature related to this parent – child – educational organization relationship.

Conceptual Foundation

Special educational needs.

In 1975, Congress passed Public Law 94-142 which was known as the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA). The original purpose of this law was to provide a free and appropriate public education to children with disabilities. Prior to this legislation, most children with disabilities were not mainstreamed in general education classrooms and often did not receive appropriate services to meet their special educational needs (Katsiyannis, Yell, & Bradley, 2001). EAHCA has been amended many times since 1975 and was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990. This legislation is responsible for drastically changing the way that schools serve students with special educational needs. Hussar and Bailey (2011) in *Projections of Education Statistics to 2020* summarized the following trends related to how students with special needs are served in public schools. In 1980, 10.1% of the total public school enrollment received special education services. In 2009 this percentage rose to 13.1% of total students. But, a more dramatic change can be seen in the amount of time children with special educational needs spend in the regular classroom. In 1980, students with special educational needs spent only 33% of their time in the regular classroom. By 2009, children with special educational needs averaged spending 59% of their school day in the regular

classroom. The effects of changes related to how students with special needs are served in public schools been the focus of many studies.

There is a very large body of literature on the effect of inclusion of students with special educational needs in the regular classroom on student learning. The review of literature related to inclusion and meeting the needs of students with special educational needs (SEN) was limited to the study's focus on specifically trying to understand situations where parents believed their child's special educational needs (SEN) were not being met in the regular classroom and understanding if this issue influenced the decision to homeschool. The literature focused on homeschooling children with special educational needs is very limited. Two studies conducted in the United Kingdom (Arora, 2006; Parsons & Lewis, 2010) and one in Western Australia (Reilly, Chapman, & O'Donoghue, 2002) focused on populations that were homeschooling children with SEN. The study populations for all three studies were much too small (populations ranged from $N = 6$ to $N = 65$) to make any type of generalization. However, one interesting aspect is that the authors of all three studies reported that a high incidence of parents who were currently homeschooling children with SEN had initially placed their child in traditional public or private school environment. The population for the Arora (2006) study was obtained from data collected from families of 65 children who had been withdrawn from public school to be homeschooled during the time period from 1998 to 2001. These 65 families were surveyed when they withdrew their child from public school and began homeschooling and 17% (11 families) indicated the reason for withdrawal was that the child's SEN were not being met. The research further focused on families that were still homeschooling 18 months after withdrawal from public school and these families ($n=17$) were invited to participate in the study via in-depth interviews. Almost half ($n=8$) reported the child's SEN not being met as their reason for

homeschooling. In the United Kingdom, a Statement of SEN is comparable to an Individual Education Plan in the United States. Interestingly, for this sample of 17 families, none of these children had a Statement of SEN in the school they previously attended, yet almost half reported that their child's SEN not being met was their reason for homeschooling.

The population for the study by Reilly et al (2002) was six families with children who had disabilities and/or SEN. This was a case study that used grounded theory methodology to understand how families managed the homeschooling of their children with disabilities and/or SEN. All of these families had removed their children with disabilities and/or SEN from public schools to better meet their needs. The Parsons and Lewis (2010) study focused on "parents who stated explicitly that they were home-educating their children with disabilities/SEN" (p. 70). Over two-thirds of these parents (*20 out of 27*) identified factors that they felt pushed them into choosing another educational option for their child due to their perceptions that their child's needs were not being adequately met in the regular classroom (p. 76). At the same time as trends of inclusion were being implemented in America's classrooms, trends towards improving academic performance were being mandated by changes in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act / No Child Left Behind Act (ESEA/NCLB) has been reauthorized numerous times since its inception. The recent reauthorizations known as Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (IAS) and No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) have focused on improving student achievement and teacher accountability. Current public debate about education issues includes discussion on the effect of high stakes testing on both students and teachers. Linda Darling-Hammon (2004) contends, "A growing body of research has found unintended consequences of high-stakes tests. Some studies have found that high-

stakes tests can narrow the curriculum, pushing instruction toward lower order cognitive skills, and can distort scores” (p. 1049). The increased focus on evaluation through standardized testing that resulted from NCLB has changed curriculum focus and teaching strategies.

While teaching strategies such as the increased alignment of curriculum and the use of test data to differentiate instruction appear to have helped to narrow the achievement gap, there are still many questions about the impact of NCLB on teaching and learning (Jennings & Rentner, 2006). For example, NCLB’s focus on achieving universal minimal proficiency in literacy and math for all students has been shown to be detrimental to high-ability and gifted students (Jolly & Makel, 2010; Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2008; Wyner, Bridgeland & Dilulio, 2007). Jolly and Makel (2010) contend that NCLB focuses on improving the academic performance of low achieving students at the expense of high-ability and gifted students. Jolly and Makel’s statement that, “In other words, NCLB’s expectation for many high-ability and gifted children was underachievement” (p. 36) is further supported by McKinsey’s (2009) report on the decline in test scores of top performing students as they age. McKinsey (2009) compared reading, math and science scores of American students with students in other countries. In 4th grade, American students ranked in the top 25 to 50% of students worldwide. By age 15, American students’ scores in these subjects were in the bottom 50% worldwide. Furthermore, America ranked very low compared to other nations for the proportion of 15 year olds performing at the highest proficiency levels in math.

The inclusion of students with learning disabilities in the assessments that measure a school’s adequate yearly progress (AYP), as defined by NCLB mandates, has also had consequences on how the needs of these students with learning disabilities are met (King-Seers, 2008). King-Seers states, “General educators feeling pressure to cover so much content with so

many students' learning levels and at a swift pace are understandably overwhelmed" (p.61). She questions the benefits of focusing on instruction to achieve success on standardized tests at the expense of instruction that addresses a student's individual needs.

Parental involvement and school choice.

Tedin and Weiher (2011) summarize a large body of research when they state that, "both scholars and practitioners agree that one of the most important factors promoting student success is the active involvement of parents in a child's education" (p.609). This assertion is supported by the very foundation of social learning theory. Research seeking to understand parental motivation for school choice commonly focuses on factors that influence parents' motivation for involvement in their child's education. Goldring and Phillips (2008) explain that "one of the most important ways in which parents are involved in their children's education is through choosing the school they attend" (p. 209). In a seminal study, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) present a model for predicting parental involvement in their child's education that has been used to study the effect of parental involvement on both academic achievement and school choice. Their model outlines a linear process of five levels of parental involvement in the education process. The first level is most often used to predict parental involvement in school choice. The first level uses measures for three constructs that predict parent's decision to become involved in their child's education. These three constructs are: (a) parental role construction, (b) sense of efficacy for helping the child succeed, and (c) perceptions of invitations for involvement from the child and the educational organization. The second level focuses on ways that the parent might become involved based on skills, interests, and abilities; demands on time and energy; and perceptions of invitations to participate from the child and educational organization. Level three focuses on mechanisms for the parent's involvement such as modeling, reinforcement, and

instruction. Level four involves the appropriateness of the parent's strategies for involvement and the fit of these strategies with the schools expectations. The fifth and final level is the influence of the parent's involvement on the child's academic success. The first level of predicting parental involvement is most applicable to this study and is discussed in more depth in relation to predicting participation in school choice.

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) approached the issue of parental involvement from a different angle. The parental beliefs and societal factors identified in the Hornby and Lafaele (2011) model were based on the same factors as those included in the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model. However, Hornby and Lafaele also included factors related to the child and to the parent-teacher relationship as additional areas of influence. This allowed for the identification of factors in the parent-school-child relationship that were barriers to parental involvement. Hornby and Lafaele contend that parental involvement is increased when a child has learning difficulties/disabilities, gifts and talents, or behavioral problems. However, differences of opinions about the child's needs between the teacher and the parents commonly create barriers to parental involvement. Additional barriers to parental involvement may arise when the parents and teachers have differences in goals, attitudes towards professional knowledge, and use of academic language.

A study by Barlow and Humphrey (2012) focused specifically on parental involvement among parents of students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). They sought to measure parental involvement through parents' perceptions of "how well the school engages with them (i.e. listens, involves and communicates) and their confidence in the school to meet the needs of their child" (p.449). This study builds on a large body of prior research related to parental involvement among parents of students with SEND. The survey instrument was based

on the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model of parental involvement, specifically on their construct of the parent's perception of invitations or opportunities for involvement initiated by the school and the child as an explanation for why parents become involved with their child's education. The potential population for this study was 25,217 students with SEND in 431 schools across England. From this population, parents of 2123 students (8.4%) from 373 schools returned survey data. Parental involvement was examined at both the school level and the student level. Results indicated that 89.7% of the variation in parental engagement and confidence was accounted for by the variables associated with the individual student. Only 10.3% was attributed to factors associated with variables at the school level. However, 80% of the variation in parental engagement and confidence at the school level was attributed to academic achievement and the proportion of students with SEND that were receiving services in the regular classroom.

At the school level, larger schools and those with high incidences of bullying, behavior problems and absenteeism were associated with lower parental engagement. Schools with high proportions of students eligible for free school meals, higher student achievement, and positive student relationships were associated with higher parental engagement. The association of schools with a high proportion of low socioeconomic status (SES) (operationalized in this study by eligibility for free school meals) with higher parental engagement was explained by the study population having a high proportion of elementary schools which traditionally have higher parental involvement. It was also explained that this variable did not account for a statistically significant variance in parental involvement at the school level. At the student level, this statistic was reversed with low SES being associated with low parental engagement. At the student level, parental involvement was highest for elementary age students and lowest for high school students. A child's participation in extra curricula activities increased parental involvement.

Ethnicity affected parental involvement, with minorities reporting lower levels of parental engagement and confidence. The severity of a child's special educational needs and disabilities increased the level of parental engagement and confidence in the school to meet the needs of their child.

Barlow and Humphrey (2012) acknowledge that their study used a very specific definition of parental involvement that focused on parents' perceptions of access and communication with the school and with their confidence that the school was meeting the needs of their child. While their findings were generally consistent with prior research, they concluded that engagement and confidence among parents of learners with SEND is not homogenous and these differences must be understood in order to plan effective initiatives to promote parental involvement.

Lai and Vadeboncoeur's (2012) study focused on a common theme in the parental involvement literature – the discrepancy between the emphasis in the literature about the importance of parental involvement and schools' narrowed definitions of parental involvement. Lai and Vadenboncoeur used critical discourse analysis to examine the discourse of parental involvement in special education in educational policy and from interviews with parents. Their analysis illustrated how schools' definitions of parental involvement and partnership frequently subjugated parents' beliefs about how they should be involved with their child's education.

Parental involvement and educational organizations.

Researching school choice from the perspective of parental involvement assesses parents' reasons for becoming involved with their child's education and for becoming involved with a particular educational organization. Many researchers have sought to understand parental involvement from the perspective of a deficit model, largely in terms of whether or not parents

participate in school defined activities like parent-teacher conferences, or helping with homework (Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis, & George, 2004). Alternatively, Barton et al. (2004) expand the concept of parental involvement and use the term parental engagement. They define parental engagement as “a dynamic, interactive process in which parents draw on multiple experiences and resources to define their interactions with schools and among school actors” (p. 3). This construct considers the educational organization a central component of predicting parental involvement. In order to study homeschooling in this context, it is important to consider how homeschooling is positioned as a social movement and alternative educational organization by several researchers (Collom & Mitchell, 2005; Stevens, 2009).

It is somewhat ironic to discuss homeschooling in the context of an educational organization, since it has often been perceived as the ultimate withdrawal from the traditional structures of education. However, the historical development of homeschooling as a social movement positions it to be discussed as an educational organization. Collom and Mitchell (2005) chronicle how independent homeschool families have organized to effect political action to protect their freedom to homeschool and to share resources and provide social learning experiences for their children. By sharing curriculum resources and experiences, organizing co-op classes, and creating opportunities for educational and social activities for their children, homeschool families build supportive communities. Collom and Mitchell contend that homeschooling is “both a means of educating children according to parental standards and an alternative social movement embracing a unique set of cultural norms and values” (p. 274). The foundation for Collom and Mitchell’s positioning of homeschooling as an alternative institution or organization is based on Rothschild-Whitt’s (1979) definition:

Alternative institutions may be defined in terms of their members' resolve to build organizations which are parallel to, but outside of, established institutions and which fulfill social needs (for education, food, medical aid, etc.) without recourse to bureaucratic authority. (p. 510)

Rothschild-Whitt uses this definition to describe the structure of cooperative efforts such as free medical clinics, food cooperatives, and communes. Collom and Mitchell's study provides the rationale for studying homeschooling as an educational organization, especially for studying parental involvement with homeschool support groups.

This review of literature shows that parental involvement has been defined and studied in many different ways. However, the consensus is that parental involvement in a child's education is beneficial to the child's academic success. NCLB even mandates that schools develop programs to support and increase parental involvement. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model of parental involvement, discussed earlier, is generally used to predict why parents become involved in their child's education and to predict participation in school choice. Another model, developed by Epstein (2001), is one of the most widely used and referenced frameworks for studying and evaluating how parents are involved with their child's education (Bower and Griffin, 2011). Epstein's (2001) model of parental involvement provides a framework for developing and measuring efforts to support parental involvement. Epstein outlines six categories of parental involvement that encompass factors included in the various definitions of the parent-school partnership. The first category relates to meeting the child's basic needs including health, nutrition and age appropriate child development information. The second category stresses the importance of communication between the school and parent, especially related to school programs and the child's academic progress. The third category is opportunity

for parents to volunteer at the school. Parents' perception of opportunity for involvement in the form of invitations from school and child is also an important predictor of parental involvement in the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model of parental involvement. Epstein's fourth category supports learning at home and ways that parents can help their child learn outside of school. The fifth category concerns parental participation in leadership, governance and advocacy roles. The sixth category provides for the engagement of the community in providing resources and support to meet the needs of the students and to enhance their learning experience. These six categories are commonly used by schools as a framework for developing and evaluating efforts to increase parental involvement. (Allen, 2011; Barlow & Humphrey, 2012; Bower & Griffin, 2011).

Parental motivation for the choice to homeschool.

The growth of what is considered the modern homeschooling movement has led to numerous attempts to study this movement and its impact on public education (Bielick, S., Chandler K., and Broughman, S. P., 2001). Understanding the parental motivation for making this educational choice for their children has been a central focus of many of these studies. The literature on parental motivation to homeschool can be divided into three main categories: (a) quantitative studies of survey data mainly focused on descriptive analysis of single factor explanations for the decision to homeschool, (b) studies based on parental involvement theory, and (c) case studies of individual homeschooling families. How homeschooling has been studied has evolved along with the growth of this educational option.

Quantitative studies of motivations to homeschool.

The first national data collected on homeschooling that used household sampling methodology, rather than estimates from sampling frameworks such as curriculum sales, was

conducted and reported by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) in 1999 (Bielick et al., 2001). The NCES data for homeschooling are updated every three to five years. The most current data available as of May 2013 are from the 2007 National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES). Using these data, Planty et al. (2009) in the *Condition of Education 2009* reported a list of reasons why parents choose to homeschool. This list included: (a) the desire to provide religious or moral instruction, (b) concern about school environment (safety, drugs, negative peer pressure), (c) dissatisfaction with academic instruction, (d) other family specific reasons (travel, finances, family time), (e) the desire to provide a non-traditional educational approach, and (f) the special needs of a child. Isenberg (2007) conducted a review and analysis of the existing body of quantitative research on homeschooling. His findings generally corroborated the reasons presented by Planty et al. (2009). Isenberg also suggested that the reasons commonly expressed for homeschooling closely parallel reasons given by parents for choosing a private school education for their child. Goldring and Phillips (2008) review school choice literature related to the public and private school sectors and conclude that “parents exercise choice in accordance with the priorities they place on academics, convenience, school characteristics and safety” (p. 213).

Parental involvement theory and the choice of homeschooling.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s (1997) theoretical model of parental involvement outlines a linear process of five levels of parental involvement. The first level is most often used to predict parental involvement in school choice. It uses three constructs to predict parental involvement in a child’s education and participation in school choice. Their measures focus on assessing parent’s motivational beliefs, parent’s perceived life context, and perceptions of invitations for involvement. Factors relating to parent’s motivational beliefs include parent’s

beliefs about the role they should play in influencing and participating in their child's education and beliefs about their self-efficacy for doing so. Factors relating to parent's perceived life context focus on the resources that they have to invest in their involvement in their child's education: the skills and knowledge they can contribute, the time and energy they can contribute, and their economic status. Factors relating to parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement include their perceptions about how welcome they are to participate in influencing their child's education. These include invitations for involvement from the school, teacher, and child.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) theoretical model of parental involvement has been tested empirically (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007) and demonstrated ability to significantly predict portions of variance in parent's home-school involvement. The measures relating to parent's role construction and self-efficacy have been used to predict the role of parental involvement in the decision to homeschool (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007). However, the construct that measures parent's perception of invitations to involvement is not applicable to parents who are homeschooling. Green and Hoover-Dempsey (2007) base their measures for role construction, self-efficacy, and life contexts on the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model, but they develop new measures based on homeschool literature to take the place of the construct related to perceptions of invitations to involvement. Instead, they seek to measure parents' beliefs about the values and teaching approaches important to their child's education.

Green and Hoover-Dempsey's (2007) work explored links between parental involvement literature and the homeschool literature and suggested that parents decide to homeschool because "psychological motivators (parental role construction, parental sense of efficacy for helping the child to learn, and parental beliefs regarding homeschooling) suggest the necessity of

homeschooling, and life context variables suggest the feasibility of doing so” (p. 266). They adapted parental role construction scales and parental belief scales from prior studies with public schools to reflect beliefs about homeschooling. Their work expanded the understanding of parental motivations for homeschooling and demonstrated “that the personal beliefs variables previously emphasized in the homeschooling literature should not continue to be studied in isolation” (p.281). They found that parents who felt that they were responsible for their child’s education (parent-focused role construction) appeared to be motivated to homeschool “more by their strong beliefs about their parental role, their efficacy for helping their child learn, and their beliefs about the personal resources available to help them educate their children” (p. 282). However, parents with a partnership-focused role construction (reflecting values of partnership with homeschool community or umbrella school for the responsibility of educating the child) “appeared to be motivated by their value beliefs regarding moral and religious issues, appropriate curricular content for their child, appropriate teaching practices for their child, and beliefs about public school abilities to deal with their child’s individual needs” (p. 281). While the results of their study indicated that both groups of homeschooling parents shared the value beliefs related to the importance of moral and religious issues, appropriate curricular content and teaching practices, and beliefs about public school’s abilities to meet their child’s individual needs; the parent-focused group did not feel these were motivating factors in their decision to homeschool. The study results also suggested that parents with a partnership-focused role construction were motivated to homeschool “in part because they believe that the public school system has not met their beliefs and values related to their children’s education” (p.278).

In a qualitative study, Barton et al. (2004) expand Green and Hoover-Dempsey’s work by seeking to understand how parents define engagement, specifically how and why they become

involved based on their child's needs. Barton and colleagues use cultural-historical activity theory to examine the relationships and interactions between parents, teachers and children and how these relationships and activities are mediated by the cultural, community and school setting where they take place. Three conjectures from the results of the Barton et al. (2004) study contribute to the conceptual framework for studying parental engagement:

(a) that parental engagement is the mediation between space and capital by parents in relation to others in school settings; (b) that mediation must be understood as both an action and an orientation to action; and (c) that the differences in parental engagement across different kinds of spaces in urban schools (i.e., academic spaces versus non academic spaces) are both a micro and macro phenomenon (p. 5).

These conjectures provide a means for an expanded understanding of parental motivations for involvement in school choice and for involvement with their child's education.

Homeschooling children with special needs.

Much of the literature on parents' motivations to homeschool their children are case studies or studies with sample sizes too small to allow generalization. Understanding parents' motivations for homeschooling their children who may have special educational needs (SEN) was a specific focus of this study, so a review of the literature was conducted to identify areas of special needs education where homeschooling has been used. Combinations of the following search terms (*homeschool, home education, home school, special needs education, special educational needs, and SEN*) were used in multiple databases including *Academic Search Premier, Education Source, Eric and PsychInfo via ProQuest, and Google Scholar*. Three main special needs populations where homeschooling is being used were identified: high ability and gifted students, students with ADHD, and students with Asperger's Syndrome (AS) or autism.

While very limited, the literature on the use of homeschooling in these three special needs populations provides a foundation for understanding parents' choice of homeschooling to meet their children's educational needs.

A recent study by Jolly, Matthews, and Nester (2012) used a phenomenological approach to gain an understanding of families that are homeschooling gifted children. Four themes emerged from the data collected through interviews with 13 families. Three of these themes related to parents' experiences after the decision to homeschool had been made. The fourth theme, *parents know best*, described "parents' interpretation of their child's giftedness, the decision to homeschool, and programming and curricular choices" (p. 126). Only one of the 13 families interviewed chose to homeschool their child without first attending public and/or private schools. The authors conclude their discussion of the families' decisions to homeschool with this statement, "The decision to homeschool resulted from these parents' recognition that their child/children's progress in school had stagnated or in some cases even regressed, in relation to the potential and learning expectations that their gifted identification status had implied" (p. 127). While this study on homeschooling gifted students focused on understanding parents' choice of homeschooling to meet the educational needs of their children, another study on homeschooling students with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) focused on determining if parents could meet the educational needs of their child with ADHD without specialized training.

A very small, but thorough, preliminary investigation study found that homeschooled students with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) were academically engaged almost twice as often as public school students with ADHD (Duvall, Delquadri, & Ward, 2004). The homeschooled students also exhibited greater gains in reading and math during the period of

the study. Academic engagement of participants was assessed using the Mainstream Version of the Code for Instructional Structure and Student Academic Response (MS-CISSAR) (Carta, Greenwood, Schulte, Arreaga-Mayer, & Terry, 1988). Students were observed and assessed once a month for a total of five observations. Academic gains in reading and math were assessed with pre- and post tests using the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement – Revised (Woodcock & Johnson, 1989). Rate-based measures derived from the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement (Kaufman & Kaufman, 1985) were used to compare gains between students. The authors explained the higher levels of engagement and academic achievement realized by the homeschooled students by saying, “the low student-teacher ratio in homeschools, and not specialized training, apparently enabled the parents to create effective instructional environments (p. 153).” While results showed some advantage to homeschooling children with ADHD, authors also acknowledged that results could not be generalized due to the small numbers and further research was warranted.

The strongest support for homeschooling children with special needs was found in the literature on homeschooling children with autism and Asperger’s Syndrome. Karen Hurlbutt (2011) conducted interviews with nine families that were homeschooling children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). The overarching theme that emerged from the study was “Parents who homeschool their children with ASD feel as though they have found a treatment plan that works and their perception has been that the school has been either (a) not willing and/or (b) unable to provide that treatment effectively” (p. 247). Interestingly, two of the nine children were twice-exceptional – they had ASD and were gifted academically. In *Choosing Home: Deciding to Homeschool with Asperger’s Syndrome* (Hartnett & Shore, 2003), Martha Hartnett shares her family’s experience homeschooling their son who has Asperger’s syndrome. She discusses how

dangerous an unresponsive educational environment can be to a child with ASD and claims that homeschooling literally saved her son's life.

Homeschooling and academic achievement.

The studies reviewed related to parents' experiences homeschooling children with SEN suggest that homeschooling can be an effective means of educating children with SEN. In a recent nationwide study on homeschooling, Ray (2010) confirmed on a much more comprehensive level, past studies that had suggested homeschooled students scored well above average on standardized achievement tests. Using companies across the United States that offer standardized testing services to homeschooled students to distribute his survey; Ray obtained demographic and test score data for a sample of 11,739 homeschooled students. The results of Ray's study reported homeschooled students' average scores to be at or above the 84% percentile on all subtests of a variety of standardized tests (including California Achievement Test, Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, Stanford Achievement Test, and other commonly used tests).

However, Lubienski, Puckett, and Brewer (2013) question whether there is sufficient empirical evidence to support claims of the academic success attributed to homeschooling. While they do not dispute the higher test scores reported for homeschooled students, Lubienski et al. attribute the cause to the advantages (higher family income, higher level of parental education, etc) that homeschool parents bring to their children. They contend that these children would have achieved the same results had they been in public school. Ray (2013) counters these arguments with the contention that there is no empirical evidence link homeschooling to any negative impacts on learning or development.

Taking a different approach, Barwegen, Falciani, Putnam, Reamer and Stair (2004) evaluated the effect of public school students' perceived level of parental involvement on their

ACT scores. Students who perceived a high level of parental involvement had a mean ACT score of 23.15 while students who perceived a low level of parental involvement had a mean ACT score of 20.64. There was no significant difference ($t(83) = 1.338, p > .05$) in the ACT scores of public school students who perceived a high level of parental involvement from their family ($M = 23.15$) and the national average of ACT scores for homeschooled students ($M = 22.5$). There was, however a significant difference ($t(111) = 3.891, p < .01$) between the public school students who perceived a high level of parental involvement ($M = 23.15$) and the national average ACT score for all students ($M = 20.8$). Still, as evidenced in Ray's (2013) research, whether or not a causal effect can be claimed, homeschooled students are, in fact, achieving a high level of academic success.

Chapter Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter supports both the theoretical foundation and the conceptual framework for this study. Vygotsky's (1978) mediated activity theory supports the importance of the parent and/or the school as mediators in the child's learning. Cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978) supports the necessity of understanding the relationship between parent, school and the child's development and academic achievement holistically, as a dynamic and changing system. Learning through social interactions with others is at the heart of social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) and motivational theory, especially self-efficacy, self-regulatory, and goal theories relate to both the parent and the child in the research on parental involvement. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) work suggested that parents with a high sense of self-efficacy towards helping their children with school work exhibited a higher level of parental involvement

in their child's education. A child's self-efficacy is also directly attributed to his/her motivation for academic achievement (Bandura, 1977).

The conceptual framework for this proposed study is built on the literature basing parental involvement in a child's education as a key to understanding their choice of educational organization for their child. Social learning theory is supported in the large amount of literature reviewed that positions parental involvement in a child's education as one of the most important factors for academic success. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) theoretical model of parental involvement creates and uses measures of parental involvement to predict participation in school choice. These measures have also been used to predict the role of parental involvement in the decision to homeschool (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007). Collom and Mitchell (2005) further position homeschooling to be studied as an educational organization (comparable to public or private school options) by chronicling how independent homeschool families have organized to effect political action to protect their freedom to homeschool and to share resources and provide social learning experiences for their children. Epstein's (2011) model of parental involvement provides a framework for evaluating an educational organization's efforts to support and increase parental involvement.

The final focus of the literature reviewed was on homeschooling. Descriptive, quantitative studies provided a fairly consistent list of reasons that includes: (a) the desire to provide religious or moral instruction, (b) concern about school environment (safety, drugs, negative peer pressure), (c) dissatisfaction with academic instruction, (d) other family specific reasons (travel, finances, family time), (e) the desire to provide a non-traditional educational approach, and (f) the special needs of a child (Planty et al., 2009). More current research used parental involvement models to gain a deeper understanding of how the relationship between

parents' beliefs about how they should be involved with their child's education, the educational organization, and their child's educational needs influenced their decision to homeschool. There was limited literature related to homeschooling and special educational needs, but three main special needs populations where homeschooling is being used were identified: high ability and gifted students, students with ADHD, and students with Asperger's Syndrome (AS) or autism. While empirical evidence linking academic achievement to homeschooling may be lacking, homeschool students are scoring well above average on standardized achievement tests. This study builds on this research by studying the influence that having a child with special needs has on the decision to homeschool. It also studies the influence of access to a homeschool support group on the decision to homeschool and how parental involvement is supported by homeschool support groups. Homeschooling is clearly a growing option in the school choice arena. This study should provide data to inform trends in parental involvement in school choice, particularly for the choice of homeschooling and for parents of children with special educational needs. It also provides new data on parental involvement with homeschool support groups that contributes to the literature on parental involvement and school choice and provides direction for future research.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The target population for this study was families who were homeschooling at least one child for the 2013-2014 school year. A sample ($N = 333$) was obtained from an accessible population of homeschool families in eastern Tennessee. The purpose of this study was to gather data from homeschooling parents that would contribute to the understanding of parental involvement with school choice and of parental involvement with educational organizations. More specifically, the purpose of this study was to determine the proportion of homeschooling families in the sample who had children enrolled in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool and to determine the proportion of homeschooling families in the sample who reported homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN). The relationships between the study's two independent variables (***school choice history*** - whether or not the family had a child enrolled in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool and ***SEN status*** -whether or not the family reported homeschooling a child with SEN) and participants' homeschool support group use, parents' perceptions of parental involvement with homeschool support groups, and parents' decision to homeschool their children were examined. Additionally, parents' perceptions about their involvement with a homeschool support group and the influence that access to a homeschool support group might have on the decision to choose the educational option of homeschooling were explored. Lastly, the categories of support offered by the homeschool support groups were examined through the lens of Epstein's (2001) parental involvement model. The results of this study should contribute to better understanding the parental choice of homeschooling as an educational option and to better understanding the role of parental involvement in school choice.

The research questions and research hypotheses are outlined in this chapter. The target population for the study is defined and the process for obtaining the sample is discussed. The development of the survey instrument, the data collection process and the statistical tests that were used in data analysis are also described.

General Perspective

This quantitative study used descriptive and inferential methodologies. First, the proportion of homeschool families in the sample population who had children in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool (school choice history) was determined. The proportion of homeschool families in the sample population who were homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) was also determined. School choice history (whether or not the family had a child in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool) and SEN status (whether or not the family was homeschooling a child with special educational needs) are used as independent variables in the data analysis. Data analysis was conducted to look for correlations between the two independent variables and (a) how parents used homeschool support groups, (b) parents' perceptions of the importance of different types of support and activities offered by homeschool support groups, (c) parents' perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with the homeschool support group, (d) parents' perceptions towards the importance of different types of parental involvement with their homeschool support group and (e) parents' perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions (RQ):

- RQ1:** Is there a difference in the percentage of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) between the group of homeschooling families who had children that attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled?
- RQ2:** Is there a difference in parents' reported participation in homeschool support group activities between the group of families who had children that attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled?
- RQ3:** Is there a difference in parents' reported participation in homeschool support group activities between the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) and the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN?
- RQ4:** Is there a difference in parents' perceptions of the importance of types of support and activities offered by a homeschool support group between the group of families who have a child who has attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled?
- RQ5:** Is there a difference in parents' perceptions of the importance of types of support and activities offered by a homeschool support group between the group of

families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) and the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN?

RQ6: Is there a difference in parents' perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with their homeschool support group between the group of families who have a child who has attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled?

RQ7: Is there a difference in parents' perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with their homeschool support group between the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) and the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN?

RQ8: Is there a difference in parents' perceptions towards the importance of different types of parental involvement with their homeschool support group between the group of families who have a child who has attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled?

RQ9: Is there a difference in parents' perceptions towards the importance of different types of parental involvement with their homeschool support group between the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) and the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN?

RQ10: Is there a difference in parents' perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool between the group of families who have a child who has

attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled?

RQ11: Is there a difference in parents' perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool between the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) and the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN?

Study Population and Sample

The target population for this study was families that were homeschooling one or more children for the 2013-2014 school year. Because homeschool laws vary between states, the decision was made to limit the population for this study to a state or regional area where homeschool laws would be relatively consistent. I had knowledge of and access to homeschool support groups in the regional area of eastern Tennessee, so this area was chosen as the accessible population. An Internet search was done for homeschool support groups in the east Tennessee region. Four large, well established homeschool support groups (Blount Home Education Association, Chattanooga Southeast Tennessee Home Education Association, North East Tennessee Home Education Association, and Smoky Mountain Home Education Association) and 12 smaller, local groups were identified for inclusion in the accessible population. These membership-based groups provide support, information and encouragement to homeschooling families. Invitations (Appendix A) to participate in this study were emailed to leaders and/or contact person(s) for all 16 groups identified. The sixteen homeschool support groups from which the sample was obtained have an estimated total membership of approximately 1500 families. A sample ($N = 333$) was obtained from the accessible population

of homeschool families in eastern Tennessee. This represents an estimated response rate of approximately 22%.

Development of the Survey Instrument

The survey developed for this study was based on constructs from studies discussed in the literature review. The survey instrument (Appendix B) contains five sections of questions. In the paragraphs that follow, the rationale for the development of the survey instrument is discussed by section.

Section one.

Section one contains questions to collect qualifying and demographic data. Response to question number seven (Have any of the children that you are currently homeschooling ever attended a public or private (K-12) school full time?) was used as an independent variable to assess differences in parental perceptions of homeschool support group use, of opportunities for parental involvement, and of factors important to the decision to homeschool based on school choice history. This independent variable was identified as *School Choice History* and coded as *PPS* for the families who had a child that attended public or private school before they made the decision to homeschool and *No PPS* for families who had always homeschooled their children

Section two.

Section two contains questions to quantify the perceived incidence of special educational needs (SEN) within the study participant groups. These questions also provide background data concerning the methods of identification for a child's special educational needs. Special educational needs categories used to define SEN were based on IDEA categories of disability as reported by the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY) (2012). The category of "Intellectually Gifted" was also included because intellectual gifted is a state-

specific disability in the state of Tennessee that is served by the Division of Special Education (Tennessee Department of Education, 2010). If a participant indicated that he or she was homeschooling a child with a SEN in any of these categories, their SEN status was coded as *Yes*. If the participant indicated that he or she was not homeschooling a child with SEN, their SEN status was coded as *No*. SEN status was used as an independent variable to assess differences in parental perceptions of homeschool support group use, of opportunities for parental involvement, and of factors important to the decision to homeschool based on SEN status. This section also contains a question to assess parents' perceptions of the importance of having a child with SEN to the decision to homeschool.

Section three.

Section three contains questions to provide data for how the study participants use homeschool support groups. Types of activities and support included are based on activities assessed in Collom and Mitchell's (2005) study of homeschoolers' participation in a large homeschool charter organization and also on the types of activities and support often offered by public and private schools. This section also contains questions to assess parents' perceptions of the importance of membership in a homeschool support group to the decision to homeschool.

Section four.

The questions in section four assessed participants' perceptions of Epstein's (2001) six categories of parental involvement. Epstein's model of parental involvement is used by public and private schools to promote and develop parental involvement and to evaluate these efforts (Wanant, 2010). Collom and Mitchell (2005) provided rationale to study homeschooling as an educational organization in the same way that public and private schools are studied. Thus, this study was designed to use Epstein's six categories of parental involvement to evaluate the

support for parental involvement offered by homeschool support groups. Questions were developed to determine parents' perceptions as to whether or not a particular category of parental involvement was supported by the homeschool support group.

Follow-up questions allowed the participants to assess their perception of the importance of the category of involvement. The data collected in this section provide insights into how educational organizations that are developed, run, and used by parents support parental involvement. This section also contains a question to assess parents' perceptions of the importance of parental involvement with curriculum choice to their decision to homeschool. Another question assesses parents' perceptions of the importance of parental involvement with decisions about their child's learning environment to their decision to homeschool.

Section five.

The questions in section five assess parents' perceptions of factors important to their decision to homeschool. Participants are asked to rank the importance of a list of factors to their family's decision to homeschool. The list of factors was based on factors used in prior studies (Isenberg, 2007; Planty et al., 2009).

Validity and Reliability

The survey instrument was developed based on constructs that are supported by appropriate theoretical and conceptual foundations. The survey instrument was reviewed by a panel of experts who checked for clarity and face validity. This panel included experts in survey research, special educational needs and homeschool support group leadership. Based on feedback from this panel, adjustments were made to make scales consistent on all questions and wording on several questions was changed for clarity and consistency. To further test for clarity and validity, a pilot test was conducted using a sample of six homeschool families from North

Carolina. These families were chosen because they were not members of any of the homeschool support groups that were used in the study. No areas of concern regarding clarity and readability were reported from participants in the pilot test. No changes were made to the survey based on input from the pilot test group.

To test for survey reliability, a pilot test/re-test study was conducted. A support group that would not be included in the main study population was chosen for the pilot test/re-test study. A request for participation was posted on Yahoo Group site of a small North Carolina homeschool support group (31 members). The test/re-test protocol was explained in the request for participation. Ten participants completed the first test. A week later the survey was sent again, with a request for participants to complete it a second time. Only five participants completed both the first and second surveys. The five pairs of test/retest responses were reviewed for consistency. Responses were consistent (identical) between the test and retest for most questions. However, there was some variation in responses between the test and retest for the five groups of questions that related to homeschool support group use (Question 18), importance of homeschool support group activities (Question 19), satisfaction with homeschool support group opportunities (Question 25), importance of homeschool support group opportunities (Question 26), and reasons for homeschooling (Question 34). Questions 18, 19, 25, 26, and 34 asked participants to rate their perceptions on a scale of one to five. Each of these questions had six items that participants were rating and, while most of the test/re-test responses were identical, there were some with a two to three point difference (example: indicated a 2 on the first test and a 5 on the second test). The number of participants in this test was too small for the planned analyses of paired sample t-tests to be statistically meaningful. The data were reviewed and no cause for concern was noted in the data. It was decided to continue with the

survey without changes. The small sample size and inability to conduct meaningful reliability analysis of test/re-test data is noted as a limitation of the study.

Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses that correspond with the study's research questions are stated here. A discussion of expected findings based on prior studies reviewed is included for each hypothesis.

H1: The percentage of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) will be higher in the group of homeschooling families who had children that attended public or private school prior to homeschooling (PPS) than in the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled (No PPS).

The literature reviewed for this study documented changes in how special educational needs are met in public schools (Hussar, W.J. & Bailey, T.M., 2011) and suggested that parents of children with SEN may be choosing to homeschool when they feel their child's needs are not being met in the traditional classroom (Arora, 2006; Jolly, Matthews & Nester, 2012; Parsons & Lewis, 2010; Reilly, Chapman, & O'Donoghue, 2002). Thus, it is expected that the proportion of families who report homeschooling a child with SEN will be higher in the the group of families who had a child who attended public or private school before they made the decision to homeschool.

H2: Parents' reported participation in homeschool support group activities will be different for the group of families who had children who attended public or private school prior to homeschooling than for the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled.

H3: Parents' reported participation in homeschool support group activities will be different for the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) than for the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN?

The literature reviewed suggested that having a child with SEN has an influence on parental involvement, but that the degree and direction of influence is not homogenous among families of children with SEN (Barlow and Humphrey, 2012). Additionally, parental involvement has an influence on school choice (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997). Thus, it is expected that families that have had a child in public school before homeschooling and/or that have a child with SEN will report a high incidence of participation with the homeschool support group. However, there has been very little research on how homeschool families use homeschool support groups, so there is no specific basis for predicting the degree of difference in participation between the groups.

H4: Parents' perceptions of the importance of types of support and activities offered by a homeschool support group will be different for the group of families who have a child who has attended public or private school prior to homeschooling than for the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled.

H5: Parents' perceptions of the importance of types of support and activities offered by a homeschool support group will be different for the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) than for the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN.

Again, the literature reviewed suggested that having a child with SEN has an influence on parental involvement and parental involvement has an influence on school choice. Thus, it is expected that both these factors will have an effect on how parents want to be involved with a homeschool support group and on the types of support and activities that they consider important. It is expected that parents who are making the transition from having their children enrolled in public or private school to homeschooling or who have a child with SEN will have different perceptions of the importance of support and activities offered by a homeschool support group than families who have always homeschooled or who do not have a child with SEN. However, prior research does not support an expectation of the direction or degree of this difference.

H6: Parents' perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with their homeschool support group will be different for the group of families who have a child who has attended public or private school prior to homeschooling than for the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled.

H7: Parents' perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with their homeschool support group will be different for the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) than for the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN.

Goldring and Phillips (2008) suggested that parents were “pulled” to choose educational organizations that supported the type of parental involvement consistent with their beliefs. Thus it is expected that parents whose children attended public or private school before homeschooling may perceive opportunities for parental involvement with the homeschool

support group differently than those who have always homeschooled. Prior studies, including a recent study by Barlow and Humphrey (2012), suggest that having a child with SEN may affect parents' perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with an educational organization. Thus, it is expected that parents' perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with the homeschool support group will be different for the group of families who have a child with SEN than for those who do not have a child with SEN. However, prior research does not support an expectation of the direction or degree of this difference.

H8: Parents' perceptions towards the importance of different types of parental involvement with their homeschool support group will be different for the group of families who have a child who has attended public or private school prior to homeschooling than for the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled.

H9: Parents' perceptions towards the importance of different types of parental involvement with their homeschool support group will be different for the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) than for the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN.

Epstein's model of parental involvement (2001) identified the six categories of parental involvement assessed here. Since these six categories are commonly used by schools as a framework for developing and evaluating efforts to increase parental involvement (Allen, 2011; Barlow & Humphrey, 2012; Bower & Griffin, 2011) it is expected that the same categories will be important for parental involvement with a homeschool support group. Additionally, several studies suggested that both SEN status and parental role construction had an effect on parental

involvement (Barlow & Humphrey, 2012; Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007). Thus, it is expected that there will be some variation between groups on parents' perceptions towards the importance of different types of parental involvement with the homeschool support group. However, prior research does not support an expectation of the direction or degree of this variation.

H10: Parents' perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool will be different for the group of families who have a child who has attended public or private school prior to homeschooling than for the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled.

H11: Parents' perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool will be different for the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) than for the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN.

One consistency in the literature reviewed for this study was the importance of parental involvement to a student's academic success. Another was consensus on the complex nature of how and why parents choose to become involved in their child's education. Because parents who have made the choice to homeschool are obviously extremely involved in their child's education, it is expected that parents will perceive all of the factors assessed for Research Questions 10 and 11 to be important to the decision to homeschool. It is expected, however, that both school choice history and SEN status will have some effect on the strength of parents' perceptions as to the importance of various factors.

Data Collection

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the University of Tennessee was received on April 11, 2014 and permission to proceed with this research was given. Data for the study were collected via an online survey. The homeschool support groups included in the sample have active e-mail and social media networks and these networks were used to invite members to participate in the survey. Demographic data including state of residence, school system, and name of the support group were requested on the survey, but no personal identification data were collected.

Data collection took place near the end of the traditional school year. On May 1, 2014 leaders and/or contact person(s) for identified homeschool support groups in East Tennessee were asked, via e-mail, to forward an e-mail letter introducing the study and requesting participation in the survey to their members (Appendix A). Two additional requests for participation were sent, again by e-mail and through the homeschool support group leaders and/or contact person(s). These emails requested that the leaders and/or contact person(s) forward the participation request to their members. These requests were sent on May 5, 2014 (Appendix C) and May 13, 2014 (Appendix D). The survey was closed on May 20, 2014.

Data Analysis

The graphic in Figure 1 provides an overview of how data were analyzed. The independent variables are shown in the boxes under the symbol “●”. The first independent variable is school choice history (whether or not the family is currently homeschooling a child that has attended a public or private school (K-12) before being homeschooled – coded PPS and No PPS). The second independent variable is whether or not the family is currently homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN or No SEN). Appropriate descriptive

and inferential statistical analyses were run using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences 21 (SPSS) (IBM Corp., 2011) to answer the study's research questions. Descriptive analyses (frequencies, mean, etc.) are reported overall and by group (school choice history and SEN status) to provide an updated view of factors affecting the decision to homeschool. Chi-Square tests, *t*-tests, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were used to test for significant differences in groups based on the two independent variables (school choice history and SEN status) for the various dependent variables associated with use of homeschool support groups, with categories of parental involvement, and with factors important to the decision to homeschool.

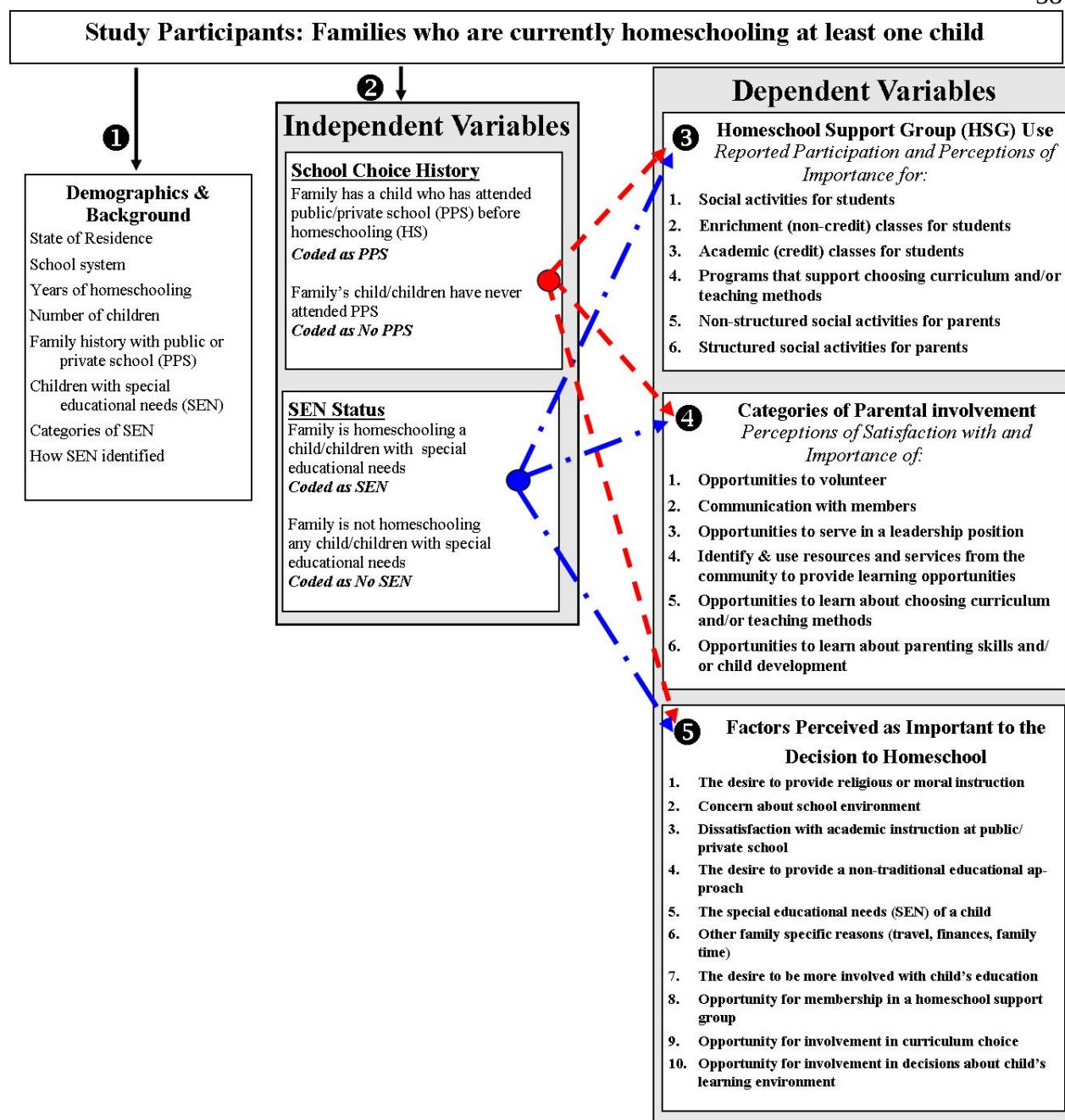


Figure 1: Overview of Data Analysis

Statistical Null Hypotheses

The statistical null hypothesis that tested the study's research hypotheses are stated below. The statistical tests used to test these hypotheses are outlined for each of the research hypotheses. For all statistical tests, the α level was set at .05.

H_{O1}: There is no difference in the percentage of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) between the group of homeschooling families who had children that attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled.

$$\text{H}_{O1}: f_a = f_b$$

$$\text{H}_{A1}: f_a > f_b$$

Note: a = families who had children who attended public or private school prior to homeschooling
b = families whose children have always been homeschooled

The percentage of families who reported homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) will be calculated for each School Choice History group (coded No PPS and PPS) (2 in Figure 1) and tested for significance using a Chi-Square test. SEN status (coded SEN and No SEN) (2 in Figure 1) will be determined from response to questions 9 and 10 (Special educational needs diagnoses).

H₀2: There will be no difference in parents' reported participation in homeschool support group activities between the group of families who had children that attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled.

$$\text{H}_{02}: \mu_a = \mu_b$$

$$\text{H}_{A2}: \mu_a \neq \mu_b$$

Note: a = families who had children that attended public or private school prior to homeschooling
b = families whose children have always been homeschooled

There are three support group activities related to support and activities for students and three support group activities related to support and activities for parents listed in survey question 18. Responses for the three support group activities for students were summed and averaged to obtain a measure for student participation. The same process was used to obtain a measure for parent participation. The process of summing and averaging, rather than just summing, was used since some homeschool groups did not offer all activities and thus the “n” varied by activity. A t-test was run to test for significant differences between the two groups based on school choice history (indicated as ③ in Figure 1). School choice history (PPS and No PPS) was determined from the participant's response to question 7 on the survey (Have any of the children that you are currently homeschooling ever attended a public or private (K-12) school full-time?).

H₀3: There will be no difference in parents' reported participation in homeschool support group activities between the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) and the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN.

$$\text{H}_{O3}: \mu_a = \mu_b$$

$$\text{H}_{A3}: \mu_a \neq \mu_b$$

Note: a = the group of families who are homeschooling a child with SEN

b = the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN

There are three support group activities related to support and activities for students and three support group activities related to support and activities for parents listed in survey question 18. Responses for the three support group activities for students were summed and averaged to obtain a measure for student participation. The same process was used to obtain a measure for parent participation. The process of summing and averaging, rather than just summing, was used since some homeschool groups did not offer all activities and thus the “n” varied by activity. A t-test was run to test for significant differences between the two groups based on SEN status (indicated as ③ in Figure 1). SEN status (SES and No SES) was determined from the participant's response to questions 9 and 10 (Special educational needs diagnoses).

H₀4: There will be no difference in parents' perceptions of the importance of types of support and activities offered by a homeschool support group between the group of families who have a child who has attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled.

$$\text{H}_{04}: \mu_a = \mu_b$$

$$\text{H}_{A4}: \mu_a \neq \mu_b$$

Note: a = families who had children that attended public or private school prior to homeschooling
b = families whose children have always been homeschooled

The overall means for parents' perceptions of the importance of types of support and activities offered by a homeschool support group (indicated as ③ in Figure 1) was calculated from survey question 19. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was then used to test for significant differences between groups based on school choice history (question 7). If the MANOVA showed significance, then an individual analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run on each activity to determine which were significant. For any individual activities that were significant, the means were compared to determine the strength and direction of the difference.

H₀5: There is no difference in parents' perceptions of the importance of types of support and activities offered by a homeschool support group between the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) and the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN.

$$\text{H}_{05}: \mu_a = \mu_b$$

$$\text{H}_{A5}: \mu_a \neq \mu_b$$

Note: a = the group of families who are homeschooling a child with SEN

b = the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN

The overall means for parents' perceptions of the importance of types of support and activities offered by a homeschool support group (indicated as ③ in Figure 1) was calculated from survey question 19. MANOVA was then used to test for significant differences between groups based on SEN status (questions 9 and 10). If the MANOVA showed significance, then an individual ANOVA was run on each activity to determine which were significant. For any individual activities that were significant, the means were compared to determine the strength and direction of the difference.

H₀6: There is no difference in parents' perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with their homeschool support group between the group of families who have a child who has attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled.

$$\text{H}_{06}: \mu_a = \mu_b$$

$$\text{H}_{A6}: \mu_a \neq \mu_b$$

Note: a = families who had children that attended public or private school prior to homeschooling
b = families whose children have always been homeschooled

The overall means for parents' perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with their homeschool support group (indicated as ④ in Figure 1) was calculated from survey question 25. MANOVA was then used to test for significant differences between groups based on school choice history (question 7). If the MANOVA showed significance, then an individual ANOVA was run on each activity to determine which were significant. For any individual activities that were significant, the means were compared to determine the strength and direction of the difference.

H₀7: There is no difference in parents' perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with their homeschool support group between the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) and the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN.

$$\mathbf{H_{O7}: \mu_a = \mu_b}$$

$$\mathbf{H_{A7}: \mu_a \neq \mu_b}$$

Note: a = the group of families who are homeschooling a child with SEN

b = the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN

The overall means for parents' perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with their homeschool support group (indicated as ④ in Figure 1) was calculated from survey question 25. MANOVA was then used to test for significant differences between groups based on SEN status (questions 9 and 10). If the MANOVA showed significance, then an individual ANOVA was run on each activity to determine which were significant. For any individual activities that were significant, the means were compared to determine the strength and direction of the difference.

H₀8: There is no difference in parents' perceptions towards the importance of different types of parental involvement with their homeschool support group between the group of families who have a child who has attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled.

$$\text{H}_{08}: \mu_a = \mu_b$$

$$\text{H}_{A8}: \mu_a \neq \mu_b$$

Note: a = families who had children that attended public or private school prior to homeschooling
b = families whose children have always been homeschooled

The overall means for parents' perceptions towards the importance of different types of parental involvement with their homeschool support group (indicated as ④ in Figure 1) was calculated from survey question 26. MANOVA was then used to test for significant differences between groups based on school choice history (question 7). If the MANOVA showed significance, then an individual ANOVA was run on each activity to determine which were significant. For any individual activities that were significant, the means were compared to determine the strength and direction of the difference.

H₀9: There is no difference in parents' perceptions towards the importance of different types of parental involvement with their homeschool support group between the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) and the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN.

$$\text{H}_{09}: \mu_a = \mu_b$$

$$\text{H}_{A9}: \mu_a \neq \mu_b$$

Note: a = the group of families who are homeschooling a child with SEN

b = the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN

The overall means for parents' perceptions towards the importance of different types of parental involvement with their homeschool support group (indicated as ④ in Figure 1) was calculated from survey question 26. MANOVA was then used to test for significant differences between groups based on SEN status (questions 9 and 10). If the MANOVA showed significance, then an individual ANOVA was run on each activity to determine which were significant. For any individual activities that were significant, the means were compared to determine the strength and direction of the difference.

H_O10: There is no difference in parents' perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool between the group of families who have a child who has attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled.

$$\text{H}_{O10}: \mu_a = \mu_b$$

$$\text{H}_{A10}: \mu_a \neq \mu_b$$

Note: a = families who had children that attended public or private school prior to homeschooling
b = families whose children have always been homeschooled

The overall means for parents' perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool (indicated as 5 in Figure 1) was calculated from survey question 33. MANOVA was then used to test for significant differences between groups based on school choice history (question 7). If the MANOVA showed significance, then an individual ANOVA was run on each activity to determine which were significant. For any individual activities that were significant, the means were compared to determine the strength and direction of the difference.

H_O11: There is no difference in parents' perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool between the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) and the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN.

$$\text{H}_{O11}: \mu_a = \mu_b$$

$$\text{H}_{A11}: \mu_a \neq \mu_b$$

Note: a = the group of families who are homeschooling a child with SEN
b = the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN

The overall means for parents' perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool (indicated as 5 in Figure 1) was calculated from survey question 33. MANOVA was then used to test for significant differences between groups based on SEN status (questions 9 and 10). If the MANOVA showed significance, then an individual ANOVA was run on each activity to determine which were significant. For any individual activities that were significant, the means were compared to determine the strength and direction of the difference.

Additional Analysis

Green and Hoover-Dempsey (2007) emphasized the complex nature of the decision to homeschool. This complexity was strongly considered in the design of the survey instrument. In addition to the questions designed to specifically answer the study's research questions, the survey instrument contained some additional questions designed to further examine and explain specific results. Descriptive analysis of these questions, where appropriate, is included to provide additional insights for the discussion of the study's results.

Chapter Summary

The methods used in this quantitative study have been explained in this chapter. The development and testing of the survey instrument was discussed. The research hypotheses were presented. The data collection process and plan for analyses was outlined. The results obtained with these methods are reported in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Results

The results of the study are reported in this chapter. The survey used for this study was designed to determine the proportion of homeschooling families in the sample that had children enrolled in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool and the proportion of families in the sample who were homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN). Data were also collected that allowed for the examination of parents' perceptions about (a) their participation and use of homeschool support groups and the importance of activities and support offered by homeschool support groups, (b) opportunities for parental involvement with homeschool support groups and the importance of different types of parental involvement, and (c) factors perceived as important to the decision to homeschool. Chapter 4 is organized in terms of the specific research questions posed in Chapter 1 as shown in Figure 2.

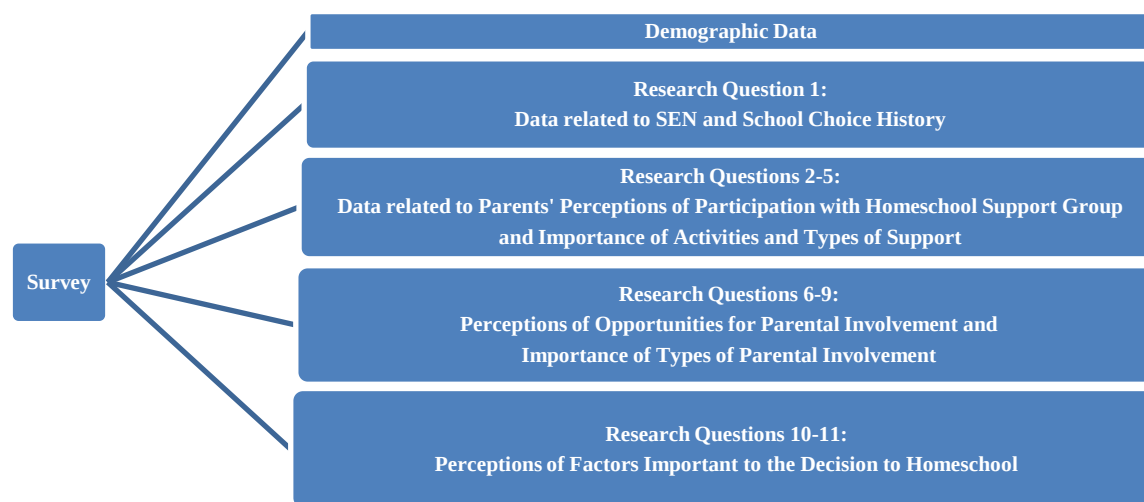


Figure 2: Organization of Survey Data Review

Demographic Data

The target population for this study was families that were homeschooling at least one child for the 2013-2014 school year. I had knowledge of and access to homeschool support groups in the regional area of eastern Tennessee, so this area was chosen as the accessible population. Four large, well established homeschool support groups (Blount Home Education Association, Chattanooga Southeast Tennessee Home Education Association, North East Tennessee Home Education Association, and Smoky Mountain Home Education Association) and 12 smaller, local groups were identified for inclusion in the accessible population. These membership-based groups provide support, information and encouragement to homeschooling families. Invitations (Appendix A) to participate in this study were emailed to leaders and/or contact person(s) for all 16 groups identified. The 16 homeschool support groups from which the sample was obtained have an estimated total membership of approximately 1500 families.

The survey was completed by 333 participants. An additional 35 participants were willing to complete the survey but answered “No” to the qualifying question of “Are you currently homeschooling at least one child for any grade from kindergarten through 12th grade?” Of the 333 participants, 15.3% (51) did not answer all of the questions. Additionally, some sections of the survey had qualifying questions, thus the sample size varies with question and statistical test.

Of the 331 participants who indicated their state of residence, 87.3% (289) were Tennessee residents, 10.9% (36) were Georgia residents and 1.8% (6) were from other states. Participants were asked to indicate what public school system that their child(ren) would attend, if they were enrolled in public school. The only school systems that represented more than 5% of

the total ($n = 328$) were Knox County School System in Tennessee with 30.8% (101) of the total and Blount County School System in Tennessee with 19.2% (63).

Participants' ($n = 306$) experience with homeschooling ranged from 0 years to 41 years, with a mean of 8.54 years. Several open-ended comment questions were included in the survey and through these, it was learned that at least one participant was a grandparent who had homeschooled his/her children and was now homeschooling grandchildren. This explained the outlier value of 41 years.

Slightly less than half (49.2%) of the participating families ($n = 329$) have always homeschooled their children. Slightly more than half (50.8%) of the participating families had a child who attended a public or private school prior to making the decision to homeschool. Of those families who had a child who attended a public or private school prior to making the decision to homeschool, 37.4% (123) had at least one child who first attended a public school and 13.4% (44) had at least one child who attended private school. A total of 693 children were being homeschooled by the families who participated in this study (Table 1). One-third (105) of participating families ($n = 318$) indicated that they had at least one child who the parent believed had a special educational need that would make learning in a traditional classroom setting difficult. Parents believed that 18% (125) of the children in the sample had special educational needs that would make learning in a traditional classroom setting difficult. However, 54% (167) of the families ($n = 309$) indicated that they were homeschooling a child that had a special educational need.

Table 1: Homeschooled Children and Special Educational Needs

	N	Min.	Max.	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev.
How many children are you currently homeschooling?	330	1.00	6.00	693.00	2.10	1.05141
How many of the children that you currently homeschool, do you believe have a special educational need that would make it difficult for them to learn in a traditional classroom setting?	105	.00	4.00	125.00	1.19	.66644

The special educational needs categories used to define SEN for this study were based on IDEA categories of disability as reported by the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY) (2012). The category of “Intellectually Gifted” was also included because intellectual gifted is a state-specific disability in the state of Tennessee that is served by the Division of Special Education (Tennessee Department of Education, 2010). Fourteen categories of SEN were listed. Over half (54%) of the participating families ($n = 309$) indicated that they were homeschooling a child who parents believed had at least one special educational need. The incidences of children with a diagnosis in each SEN category, as well as the method of diagnosis are reported in Table 2. It should be noted that participants were asked, “Have any of the children you are currently homeschooling ever been diagnosed with any of the following special educational needs?” Thus, the data reported in Table 2 represent the incidence of each category of SEN in the sample, not the number of children with a particular SEN. Four categories represented 73.87% of the SEN reported. These categories were (a) 22.26% ($n = 69$) reported diagnoses of Other Health Impaired (includes ADD/ADHD and other acute and chronic

conditions), (b) 21.29% ($n = 66$) reported diagnoses of Intellectually Gifted, (c) 15.16% ($n = 47$) reported diagnoses of Specific Learning Disability, and (d) 15.16% ($n = 47$) reported diagnoses of Speech or Language Impairment. Private doctors or psychologists diagnosed 48.07% (149 of 310) of the SENs reported. Parent observations accounted for 32.90% (102 of 310) of the SEN diagnoses, 12.58% (39 of 310) were diagnosed through school testing, and 6.45% (20 of 310) were diagnosed by other means.

Table 2 (Continued)

SEN	Method of Diagnosis									
	School Testing		Private Doctor Or Psychologist		Parent Observations		Other Means		SEN Total	
	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	% of Total
Speech or										
Language	12	25.5%	21	44.7%	13	27.7%	1	2.1%	47	15.16%
Impairment										
Traumatic Brain										
Injury			1	100%					1	0.32%
Visual										
Impairment			12	92.3%	1	7.7%			13	4.19%
Intellectually										
Gifted	14	21.2%	8	12.1%	37	56.1%	7	10.6%	66	21.29%
Totals for each										
method of	39	12.58%	149	48.07%	102	32.90%	20	6.45%	310	100%
diagnosis										

Data related to SEN and School Choice History

Research Question 1.

Research Question 1 asked if there is a difference in the percentage of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) between the group of homeschooling families who had children that attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled. To answer this question, the following statistical analysis was performed. If a family reported that they were currently homeschooling a child with any SEN (as reported in Table 2), their SEN

Status was coded as Yes. If they did not report any SEN, their SEN Status was coded as No.

School Choice History was coded as PPS (the family had a child that attended public or private school before making the decision to homeschool) and No PPS (the family has always homeschooled their children). A crosstabulation was conducted using School Choice History and SEN Status with results reported in Table 3.

The null hypothesis was rejected (Table 4) because there was a significant difference ($\chi^2 = 5.720$, $df = 1$, $p = .011$, one-tailed) in the percentage of families who reported they were homeschooling a child with SEN between the group of families that had a child who attended public or private school before homeschooling and the group of families who had always homeschooled. In the group of families that had a child who attended public or private school before homeschooling, 60.6% of the families reported they were homeschooling a child with SEN. In the group that had always homeschooled, only 43.4% of the families reported they were homeschooling a child with SEN. These findings supported the alternative hypothesis that the percentage of families who were homeschooling a child with SEN would be higher in the group of families who had a child who had attended public or private school before homeschooling than in the group of families who had always homeschooled.

Table 3: School Choice History and SEN Status Analyses Summary

		SEN Status		Total
		Yes	No	
Yes, public or private (PPS)	Count	94	61	155
	%	60.6%	39.4%	100.0%
No, Always homeschooled (No PPS)	Count	72	81	153
	%	43.4%	57.0%	49.7%
Total	Count	166	142	308
	% within SEN	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 4: Chi-Square Tests for Difference between Groups

School Choice History and SEN Status					
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.720 ^a	1	.017		
Continuity Correction ^b	5.186	1	.023		
Likelihood Ratio	5.738	1	.017		
Fisher's Exact Test				.022	.011
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.701	1	.017		
N of Valid Cases	308				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 70.54.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Data related to Homeschool Support Group Use

Research questions 2 – 5 related to parents' perceptions of their family's participation in homeschool support group activities and their perceptions of the importance of these activities to their family's homeschooling efforts. Participants' membership in a homeschool support group was first determined. If participants were members of a homeschool support group, they were asked to answer additional questions about their participation in homeschool support group activities. If they were not members, the questions on homeschool support groups were not displayed and they were moved to the final group of questions on the survey related to reasons for homeschooling. It should be noted that no definition of homeschool support group was offered to participants. It was intended for all types of groups that support homeschooling efforts including co-op class groups, special needs support groups, and general homeschool support groups to be considered as homeschool support groups. However, only 83.5% of participants indicated they were members of a homeschool support group, so participants' interpretations may have differed from the intent of the question.

Participation in homeschool support group activities.

Research Questions 2 and 3 focused on determining if there was a difference in how families participated in homeschool support group activities based on school choice history and SEN status. Research Question 2 asks if there is a difference in parents' reported participation in homeschool support group activities between the group of families who had children that attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled. Research Question 3 asks if there is a difference in parents' reported participation in homeschool support group activities between the group of

families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) and the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN.

A group of six questions was used to collect data on families' participation in homeschool support group activities. Three questions related to student participation and three questions related to parent participation. Scores for the three student questions were summed and averaged to obtain a student participation score. Scores for the three parent questions were summed and averaged to obtain a parent participation score. The decision was made to sum and average to obtain these scores because not all of the six activities were offered by all homeschool support groups. Overall participation data are presented in Table 5. The mean for parent participation was 2.36 and the mean for student participation was 3.04.

Research Question 2.

A *t*-test was conducted to determine if there was a difference in mean participation scores based on school choice history. There was no significant difference ($t = 1.194$, $df = 229$, $p = .234$) in parent participation scores between the group of families who had a child in public or private school before homeschooling ($M = 2.46$) and the group of families who have always homeschooled ($M = 2.29$). There was also no significant difference ($t = .378$, $df = 237$, $p = .706$) in student participation scores between the group of families who had a child in public or private school before homeschooling ($M = 3.07$) and the group of families who have always homeschooled ($M = 3.01$).

Table 5 : Participation in Homeschool Support Group Activities

Homeschool Support Group Participation Scores						
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Parent Participation Score	233	1.00	5.00	550.50	2.3627	1.08111
Student Participation Score	241	1.00	5.00	731.67	3.0360	1.17452
Valid N (listwise)	228					

Research Question 3.

A *t*-test was conducted to determine if there was a difference in mean participation scores based on SEN status. There was no significant difference ($t = .588$, $df = 216$, $p = .557$) in parent participation scores between the group of families who were homeschooling a child with SEN ($M = 2.39$) and the group of families who were not homeschooling any children with SEN ($M = 2.31$). There was also no significant difference ($t = -.459$, $df = 222$, $p = .646$) in student participation scores between the group of families who were homeschooling a child with SEN ($M = 3.00$) and the group of families who were not homeschooling any children with SEN ($M = 3.07$).

Importance of homeschool support group activities.

Research Questions 4 and 5 focused on determining if there was a difference in parents' perceptions of the importance of different types of activities and support offered by homeschool support groups based on school choice history and SEN status. Research Question 4 asks if there is a difference in parents' perceptions of the importance of types of support and activities offered by a homeschool support group between the group of families who have a child who has attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose

children have always been homeschooled. Research Question 5 asks if there is a difference in parents' perceptions of the importance of types of support and activities offered by a homeschool support group between the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) and the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN. The overall means for parents' perceptions of the importance of different types of activities and support offered by homeschool support groups is reported in Table 6.

Table 6: Importance of Homeschool Support Group Activities

Parents' Perceptions of Importance of Homeschool Support Group Activities

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Student Activities			
Social activities for students (parties, park days, clubs, field trips)	247	3.47	1.168
Enrichment (non-credit) classes for students	246	3.18	1.272
Academic (credit) classes for students	245	3.13	1.479
Parent Activities			
Programs that support choosing curriculum and/or teaching methods	247	2.74	1.225
Non-structured social activities for parents (free time at enrichment class programs, visiting at park days, etc)	246	2.70	1.226
Structured social activities for parents (mom's night out, clubs)	245	2.41	1.179
Valid N (listwise)	239		

Research Question 4.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was run to see if there was a difference in parents' perceptions of the importance of different types of homeschool support group activities based on school choice history. There was no significant difference ($F(6, 230) = .963, p = .451$) in parents' perceptions of the importance of different types of homeschool support group activities between the group of parents who had a child who attended public or private school before making the decision to homeschool and the group of parents who have always homeschooled.

Research Question 5.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was run to see if there was a difference in parents' perceptions of the importance of different types of homeschool support group activities based on SEN status. There was no significant difference ($F(6, 215) = .396, p = .881$) in parents' perceptions of the importance of different types of homeschool support group activities between the group of parents who were homeschooling a child with SEN and the group of parents who were not homeschooling any children with SEN.

Data related to Parental Involvement with the HSG

Opportunities for parental involvement.

Research Questions 6 and 7 focused on determining if there was a difference in parents' perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with their homeschool support group based on school choice history and SEN status. Research Question 6 asks if there is a difference in parents' perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with their homeschool support group between the group of families who have a child who has attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been

homeschooled. Research Question 7 asks if there is a difference in parents' perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with their homeschool support group between the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) and the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN. Participants were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with their homeschool support group in regards to opportunities for six categories of parental involvement. The overall means for parents' satisfaction with their homeschool support group in regards to opportunities for six categories of parental involvement is reported in Table 7.

Table 7: Satisfaction with Opportunities for Parental Involvement

For the homeschool group with which you are most active, please rate your satisfaction with how well the homeschool support group...

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
... provides opportunities for members to volunteer to help with support group activities, co-op classes, or other support group needs.	233	1	5	4.33	.839
... communicates with members.	233	1	5	4.31	.787
... provides opportunities for members to serve in a leadership position or on a committee.	232	1	5	3.96	.975
... identifies and uses resources and services from the community to provide learning opportunities for its members.	232	1	5	3.93	.902
... provides opportunities for members to learn about choosing curriculum and/or teaching methods.	231	1	5	3.82	.850
... provides opportunities for members to learn about parenting skills and/or child development.	230	1	5	3.40	.875
Valid N (listwise)	229				

Research Question 6.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was run to see if there was a difference in parents' perceptions of satisfaction with their homeschool support group in regards to opportunities for six categories of parental involvement between groups based on school choice history. There was no significant difference ($F(6, 220) = .592, p = .737$) in parents' perceptions of satisfaction with their homeschool support group in regards to opportunities for six categories of parental involvement between the group of parents who had a child who attended public or private school before making the decision to homeschool and the group of parents who have always homeschooled.

Research Question 7.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was run to see if there was a difference in parents' perceptions of satisfaction with their homeschool support group in regards to opportunities for six categories of parental involvement between groups based on SEN status. There was no significant difference ($F(6, 207) = .983, p = .438$) in parents' perceptions of satisfaction with their homeschool support group in regards to opportunities for six categories of parental involvement between the group of parents who were homeschooling a child with SEN and the group of parents who were not homeschooling any children with SEN.

Importance of categories of parental involvement.

Research Questions 8 and 9 focused on determining if there was a difference in parents' perceptions of the importance of opportunities for parental involvement with their homeschool support group based on school choice history and SEN status. Research Question 8 asks if there is a difference in parents' perceptions towards the importance of different types of parental involvement with their homeschool support group between the group of families who have a

child who has attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled. Research Question 9 asks if there is a difference in parents' perceptions towards the importance of different types of parental involvement with their homeschool support group between the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) and the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN. Participants were asked to indicate how important (Scale of 1 = Not at all Important to 5 = Extremely Important) it is to them that their homeschool support group provide opportunities for six categories of parental involvement. The overall means for parents' perceptions towards the importance of different types of parental involvement with their homeschool support group are reported in Table 8.

Table 8: Importance of Categories of Parental Involvement

<i>How important is it to you for your homeschool support group to...</i>	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
... provide a method for communication with members?	231	1	5	4.45	.827
... identify and use resources and services from the community to provide learning opportunities for its members?	230	1	5	3.98	.995
... provide opportunities for members to volunteer to help with support group activities, co-op classes, or other support group needs?	231	1	5	3.92	1.040
... provide opportunities for members to learn about choosing curriculum and/or teaching methods?	228	1	5	3.64	1.127
... provide opportunities for members to serve in a leadership position or on a committee?	231	1	5	3.61	1.061
... provide opportunities for members to learn about parenting skills and/or child development?	230	1	5	2.77	1.241
Valid N (listwise)	227				

Research Question 8.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was run to see if there was a difference in parents' perceptions towards the importance of different types of parental involvement with their homeschool support group between groups based on school choice history. There was no significant difference ($F(6, 218) = 1.658, p = .133$) in parents' perceptions towards the importance of different types of parental involvement with their homeschool support group between the group of parents who had a child who attended public or private school before making the decision to homeschool and the group of parents who have always homeschooled.

Research Question 9.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was run to see if there was a difference in parents' perceptions towards the importance of different types of parental involvement with their homeschool support group between groups based on SEN status. There was no significant difference ($F(6, 206) = 1.527, p = .171$) in parents' perceptions towards the importance of different types of parental involvement with their homeschool support group between the group of parents who were homeschooling a child with SEN and the group of parents who were not homeschooling any children with SEN.

Data Related to the Decision to Homeschool

Research Questions 10 and 11 focused on determining if there was a difference in parents' perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool between groups of participants based on school choice history and SEN status. Research Question 10 asks if there is a difference in parents' perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool between the group of families who have a child who has attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled.

Research Question 11 asks if there is a difference in parents' perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool between the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) and the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN. The overall means for parents' perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool are reported in Table 9.

Table 9: Factors Important to the Decision to Homeschool

Please indicate how important each of the factors listed below were to your family's decision to homeschool:

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The desire to be more involved with your child/children's education	278	1	5	4.49	.926
Concern about school environment (safety, drugs, negative peer pressure)	278	1	5	4.20	1.065
The desire to provide religious or moral instruction	278	1	5	4.19	1.243
Dissatisfaction with academic instruction at a public or private school	273	1	5	4.05	1.207
The desire to provide a non-traditional educational approach	275	1	5	3.68	1.269
Other family specific reasons (travel, finances, family time)	272	1	5	3.54	1.424
The special needs of a child	265	1	5	2.96	1.612
Valid N (listwise)	257				

Research Question 10.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was run to see if there was a difference in parents' perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool based on school choice history. The MANOVA indicated that there was a significant difference ($F(7, 247) = 4.933, p < .001$) in parents' perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool between the group of parents who had a child who attended public or private school before making the decision to homeschool and the group of parents who have always homeschooled. In order to determine which factors differed, individual analysis of variance (ANOVA) were run for each factor (Table 10).

A significant difference between the school choice history groups was found for three of the factors important to the decision to homeschool. These three factors were (a) the desire to provide religious or moral instruction, $p = .001$; (b) the special needs of a child, $p = .003$; and (c) the desire to be more involved with your child/children's education, $p < .001$. To determine the strength and direction of the difference, the means were calculated and compared for each factor (Table 11). Parents who have always homeschooled their children rated "the desire to provide religious or moral instruction" as more important ($M = 4.42$) than families who have had a child in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool ($M = 3.88$). Parents who have had a child in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool rated "the special needs of a child" as more important ($M = 3.28$) than parents who have always homeschooled their children ($M = 2.69$). Parents who have always homeschooled rated "the desire to be more involved with your child/children's education" as more important ($M = 4.71$) than families who have had a child in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool ($M = 4.22$).

Table 10: ANOVA – School Choice History and the Decision to Homeschool**Tests of Between-Subject Effects (Design: Intercept + School Choice History)**

Dependent Variable	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
The desire to provide religious or moral instruction	1	18.266	12.073	.001
Concern about school environment (safety, drugs, negative peer pressure)	1	.487	.410	.522
Dissatisfaction with academic instruction at a public or private school	1	.002	.002	.968
The desire to provide a non-traditional educational approach	1	3.919	2.456	.118
The special needs of a child	1	22.010	8.743	.003
Other family specific reasons (travel, finances, family time)	1	.813	.399	.528
The desire to be more involved with your child/children's education	1	14.909	17.575	.000

Table 11: Means - School Choice History and the Decision to Homeschool

Dependent Variable	School		95% Confidence Interval		
	Choice				
	History*				
		Mean	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
The desire to provide religious or moral instruction	PPS	3.880	.110	3.663	4.097
	HS	4.415	.108	4.203	4.628
Concern about school environment (safety, drugs, negative peer pressure)	PPS	4.128	.097	3.936	4.320
	HS	4.215	.095	4.027	4.403
Dissatisfaction with academic instruction at a public or private school	PPS	4.040	.109	3.825	4.255
	HS	4.046	.107	3.835	4.257
The desire to provide a non-traditional educational approach	PPS	3.552	.113	3.329	3.775
	HS	3.800	.111	3.582	4.018
The special needs of a child	PPS	3.280	.142	3.001	3.559
	HS	2.692	.139	2.418	2.966
Other family specific reasons (travel, finances, family time)	PPS	3.464	.128	3.213	3.715
	HS	3.577	.125	3.331	3.823
The desire to be more involved with your child/children's education	PPS	4.224	.082	4.062	4.386
	HS	4.708	.081	4.549	4.867

*PPS – family had a child enrolled in public/private school before homeschooling; HS – family has always homeschooled

Research Question 11.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was run to see if there was a difference in parents' perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool based on SEN status. The MANOVA indicated that there was a significant difference ($F(7, 236) = 8.716, p < .001$) in parents' perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool between

the group of parents who had a child with SEN and the group of parents who did not have a child with SEN. In order to determine which factors differed, individual analysis of variance (ANOVA) were run for each factor (Table 12).

Table 12: ANOVA - SEN Status and the Decision to Homeschool

Tests of Between-Subject Effects (Design: Intercept + SEN Status)

Dependent Variable	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
The desire to provide religious or moral instruction	1	14.369	9.195	.003
Concern about school environment (safety, drugs, negative peer pressure)	1	3.313	2.803	.095
Dissatisfaction with academic instruction at a public or private school	1	9.168E-005	.000	.994
The desire to provide a non-traditional educational approach	1	.003	.002	.964
The special needs of a child	1	82.160	36.427	.000
Other family specific reasons (travel, finances, family time)	1	.865	.425	.515
The desire to be more involved with your child/children's education	1	14.922	17.383	.000

A significant difference between the SEN status groups was found for three of the factors important to the decision to homeschool. These three factors were (1) the desire to provide religious or moral instruction, $p = .003$; (2) the special needs of a child, $p < .001$; and (3) the desire to be more involved with your child/children's education, $p < .001$. To determine the strength and direction of the difference, the means were calculated and compared for each factor (Table 13). Parents who were not homeschooling any children with SEN rated "the desire to provide religious or moral instruction" as more important ($M = 4.42$) than families who are homeschooling a child with SEN ($M = 3.93$). Parents who are homeschooling a child with SEN rated "the special needs of a child" as more important ($M = 3.50$) than parents who are not homeschooling any children with SEN ($M = 2.32$). Parents who are not homeschooling any children with SEN rated "the desire to be more involved with your child/children's education" as more important ($M = 4.76$) than families who are homeschooling a child with SEN ($M = 4.25$).

Table 13: Means - SEN Status and the Decision to Homeschool

Dependent Variable	SEN Status	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
				Bound	Bound
The desire to provide religious or moral instruction	Yes	3.930	.105	3.723	4.136
	No	4.422	.124	4.178	4.665
Concern about school environment (safety, drugs, negative peer pressure)	Yes	4.077	.091	3.898	4.257
	No	4.314	.108	4.102	4.526
Dissatisfaction with academic instruction at a public or private school	Yes	4.028	.102	3.827	4.229
	No	4.029	.121	3.792	4.267
The desire to provide a non-traditional educational approach	Yes	3.669	.106	3.460	3.878
	No	3.676	.125	3.430	3.923
The special needs of a child	Yes	3.500	.126	3.252	3.748
	No	2.324	.149	2.031	2.616
Other family specific reasons (travel, finances, family time)	Yes	3.458	.120	3.222	3.693
	No	3.578	.141	3.300	3.857
The desire to be more involved with your child/children's education	Yes	4.254	.078	4.100	4.407
	No	4.755	.092	4.574	4.936

Analysis of Additional Factors Related to the Decision to Homeschool

Additional data were collected related parents' decision to homeschool their children.

The importance of access to a homeschool support group to the decision to homeschool was

examined. Of the participants ($n = 249$) who answered this question, 61.8% were aware of the existence of local homeschool support group(s) before they made the decision to homeschool. For these families that were aware ($n = 155$) of local homeschool support groups, 48.4 % indicated that the availability of a homeschool support group had an effect on their decision to homeschool their children. Participants who said that the availability of a homeschool support group did have an effect on their decision to homeschool ($n = 73$) were asked to rate the importance of the opportunity for membership in a homeschool support group to their decision to homeschool. A mean score of 3.54 was reported using a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 = *not important at all* and 5 = *extremely important*.

Crosstabulations were run to see if there was a difference in parents' perceptions of the importance of the opportunity for membership in a homeschool support group between groups based on school choice history and SEN status. No significant difference ($\chi^2 = 1.691$, $df = 4$, $p = .792$) in mean scores was found between school choice history groups. No significant difference ($\chi^2 = 3.67$, $df = 4$, $p = .453$) in mean scores was found between SEN status groups.

Participants ($n = 279$) were asked to rate two additional questions concerning factors important to their decision to homeschool their children. Both questions used a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 = *not important at all* and 5 = *extremely important*. A mean score of 4.72 was reported for the question "How important is being involved in decisions about your child's learning environment to your decision to homeschool?" A mean score of 4.68 was reported for the question "How important is being able to be involved with choosing curriculum for your child to your decision to homeschool?"

Chapter Summary

The research results reported in this chapter reveal that 54% of the participating homeschooling families had a child with a special educational need. It was also found that there was a significant difference ($\chi^2 = 5.720$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.17$) in the percentage of families that were homeschooling a child with SEN between the group of families that had a child who attended public or private school before homeschooling and the group of families who had always homeschooled. For the group of families that had a child who attended public or private school before homeschooling, 60.6% of the families reported homeschooling a child with SEN. In the group that had always homeschooled, only 43.4% of the families reported homeschooling a child with SEN. A summary of the research results is presented in Table 14.

The implications of the research results are discussed in the next chapter. Chapter 5 also includes a discussion of the implications of the analyses of correlations between the two independent variables (School Choice History and SEN Status) and (a) how parents used homeschool support groups, (b) parents' perceptions of the importance of different types of support and activities offered by homeschool support groups, (c) parents' perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with the homeschool support group, (d) parents' perceptions towards the importance of different types of parental involvement with their homeschool support group and (e) parents' perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool.

Table 14: Summary of Research Results

RQ#	Summary of RQ & Variables Examined	Analysis	Results	Sig.
1	Percentage of SEN in School Choice History (SCH) Groups (SCH Groups: PPS = <i>public or private school before homeschool</i> NoPPS = <i>always homeschooled</i>)	Crosstabulation Chi-Square	60.6% in PPS 43.4% in No PPS $\chi^2 = 5.720, df = 1,$ $p = .011, 1\text{-sided}$	 Yes
2	Participation in Homeschool Support Group(HSG) activities based on SCH	t-tests	Parent: $t = 1.194,$ $df = 229, p = .234$ Student: $t = .378,$ $df = 237, p = .706$	No No
3	Participation in Homeschool Support Group (HSG) activities based on SEN Status	t-tests	Parent: $t = .588,$ $df = 216, p = .557$ Student: $t = .459,$ $df = 222, p = .646$	No No
4	Parents' perceptions of importance of HSG activities based on SCH	MANOVA	$F(6, 230) = .963,$ $p = .451$	No
5	Parents' perceptions of importance of HSG activities based on SEN status	MANOVA	$F(6, 215) = .396,$ $p = .881$	No
6	Parental involvement with HSG based on SCH	MANOVA	$F(6, 220) = .592,$ $p = .737$	No
7	Parental involvement with HSG based on SEN status	MANOVA	$F(6, 207) = .983,$ $p = .438$	No
8	Importance of categories of parental involvement based on SCH	MANOVA	$F(6, 218) = 1.658,$ $p = .133$	No
9	Importance of categories of parental involvement based on SEN status	MANOVA	$F(6, 206) = 1.527,$ $p = .171$	No

Table 14 (Continued)

RQ#	Summary of RQ & Variables Examined	Analysis	Results	Sig.
10	Factors important to the decision to homeschool based on SCH	MANOVA	$F(7, 247) = 4.933$, $p < .001$	Yes
		ANOVA	3 factors* significant:	Yes
		Means	Religion $p = .001$;	
		Determined**	$M_{PPS} < M_{Always HS}$ Special Needs $p = .003$; $M_{PPS} > M_{Always HS}$ Involvement $p < .001$; $M_{PPS} < M_{Always HS}$	
11	Factors important to the decision to homeschool based on SEN status	MANOVA	$F(7, 236) = 8.716$, $p < .001$	Yes
		ANOVA	3 factors* significant:	Yes
		Means	Religion $p = .003$;	
		Determined***	$M_{SEN} < M_{No SEN}$ Special Needs $p < .001$; $M_{SEN} > M_{No SEN}$ Involvement $p < .001$; $M_{SEN} < M_{No SEN}$	

*Factors important to the decision to homeschool: (a) Religion - The desire to provide religious or moral instruction; (b) Special Needs – The special needs of a child; (c) Involvement – The desire to be more involved with your child/children's education.

** M_{PPS} = Mean for families who had a child in public/private school before homeschooling and $M_{Always HS}$ = Mean for families who have always homeschooled

*** M_{SEN} = Mean for families with a child who has SEN and $M_{No SEN}$ = Mean for families with no children with SEN

Chapter 5

Summary and Discussion of Research Findings

This final chapter provides a summary of the study and a brief review of the methodology used. This summary provides the foundation for a discussion of the study results and their implications. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study limitations and recommendations for future research.

Study Summary

The purpose of this study was to gather data from homeschooling parents that would contribute to the understanding of parental involvement with school choice and of parental involvement with educational organizations. More specifically, the purpose of this study was to determine the proportion of homeschooling families in the sample who had children enrolled in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool and to determine the proportion of homeschooling families in the sample who reported homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN). The relationship among school choice history (whether or not the family had a child enrolled in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool), SEN status (whether or not the family reported homeschooling a child with SEN), and parents' decision to homeschool their children was examined. Additionally, parents' perceptions about their involvement with a homeschool support group and the influence that access to a homeschool support group might have on the decision to choose the educational option of homeschooling were explored. Lastly, the categories of support offered by the homeschool support groups were examined through the lens of Epstein's (2001) parental involvement model.

The target population for this study was families that were homeschooling one or more children for the 2013-2014 school year. Because homeschool laws vary between states, the decision was made to limit the population for this study to a state or regional area where homeschool laws would be relatively consistent. I had knowledge of and access to homeschool support groups in the regional area of eastern Tennessee, so this area was chosen as the accessible population. Four large, well established homeschool support groups (Blount Home Education Association, Chattanooga Southeast Tennessee Home Education Association, North East Tennessee Home Education Association, and Smoky Mountain Home Education Association) and 12 smaller, local groups were identified for inclusion in the accessible population. The 16 homeschool support groups from which the sample was obtained have an estimated total membership of approximately 1500 families. A sample of 333 participants was obtained.

Data were collected via an online survey. This quantitative study used descriptive and inferential methodologies. First, the proportion of homeschool families in the sample population who had children in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool (school choice history) was determined. The proportion of homeschool families in the sample population who were homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) was also determined. School choice history (whether or not the family had a child in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool) and SEN status (whether or not the family is homeschooling a child with special educational needs) were used as independent variables in the data analysis. Data analysis was conducted to look for correlations between the two independent variables and (a) how parents used homeschool support groups, (b) their perceptions of the importance of different types of support and activities offered by homeschool support groups, (c) their

perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with the homeschool support group, (d) their perceptions towards the importance of different types of parental involvement with their homeschool support group and (e) their perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool. The results and implications of the study are discussed in this chapter in the same order and groupings (Figure 2) as results were presented in Chapter 4.

Discussion of Results

Demographic data.

The demographic data collected were chosen for the purpose of understanding parents' decision to homeschool and to provide a basis for comparison for future research. As expected, based on the homeschool support groups identified for inclusion in the accessible population, 87.3% of the participants ($n = 331$) were Tennessee residents, 10.9% were Georgia residents and 1.8% were from other states. Participants were asked to indicate which school system their child(ren) would attend if they were enrolled in public school. The only school systems which had more than 5% of the total ($n = 328$) were Knox County School System in Tennessee with 30.8% (101) of the total and Blount County School System in Tennessee with 19.2% (63).

Participants had been homeschooling for an average of 8.54 years. This finding is somewhat different than findings in a prior study by Isenberg (2007). Isenberg analyzed data from the National Household Education Surveys to conclude that only 48% of religious homeschoolers and 15% of secular homeschoolers are still homeschooling after six years. Slightly over half (50.8%) of the participants had at least one child who attended public or private school before the family made the decision to homeschool their children and 49.2% of participants have always homeschooled their children. A total of 693 children were being homeschooled by the families who participated in this study ($N = 333$). These data should be

important to school administrators as they seek to understand trends in school choice. The continued growth rate of homeschooling is evidenced in the data reported from the 2012 National Household Education Survey Program (NHES) that 1.77 million K-12 students in the United States were homeschooled during the 2011-2012 school year (Noel, Stark, & Redford, 2013). This number represented about 3.4% of the total school-age population in the United States at that time. In this study's sample, over half of the families had their child(ren) enrolled in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool.

Special educational needs (SEN).

The following two questions provided the foundation for this research study: (a) what relationship, if any, exists between the implementation in public education of mandates of the 1997 and 2004 reauthorizations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the 2001 reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the current, increased rate of growth in the choice of homeschooling and (b) have the mandates of these policies affected the ability of traditional public and private schools to meet the individual needs of all students? While this study was not designed to answer these questions directly, it was designed to gather data that would contribute to understanding the issues inherent in these questions. In this study, 54% (167) of the participating families ($n = 309$) indicated that they were homeschooling a child that had a special educational need. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that for the 2010-2011 school year, 13% of the total U.S. K-12 public school enrollment received services through federally supported special education programs (Snyder & Dillow, 2013). It should be noted that this national figure is included as a frame of reference only. A direct comparison of the incidence of SEN cannot be made between this study and the national data. The national data referenced is compiled from diagnoses for which a student has an Individual

Education Plan and a verified diagnosis. The SEN data for this study were obtained from parent reporting and may not have been diagnosed by the same standards. The categories of SEN and incidence in the study population are illustrated in Figure 3.

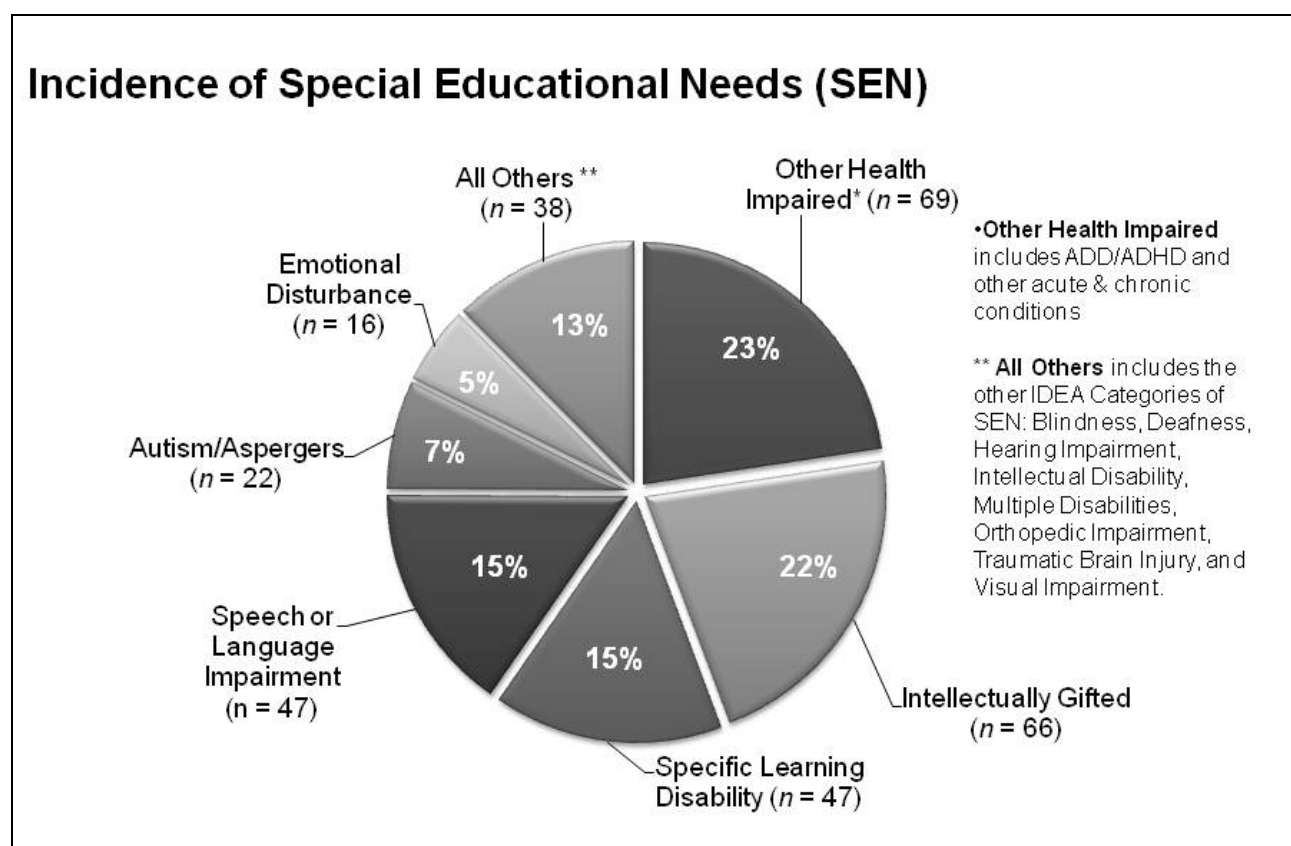


Figure 3: Incidence of SEN by Category

The methods of diagnosis of SEN overall for this study are illustrated in Figure 4 and the method of diagnosis for each category of SEN is illustrated in Figure 5. Figure 5 illustrates that the majority of all diagnoses, with the exception of Intellectually Gifted, were reported as being made by private doctors or psychologists or by school testing. The majority of diagnoses for Intellectually Gifted were made by parent observation. The National Association for Gifted

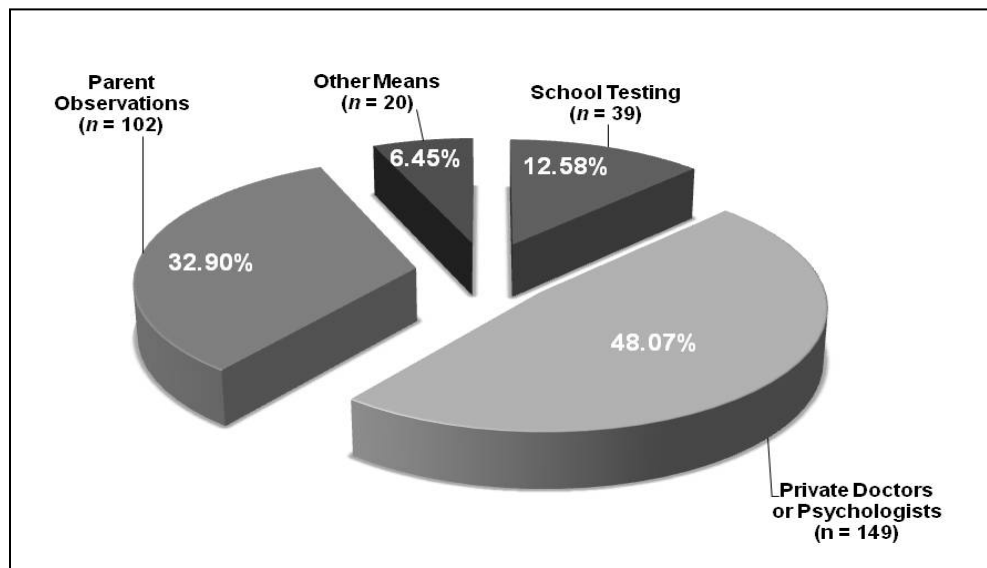


Figure 4: Method of Diagnosis

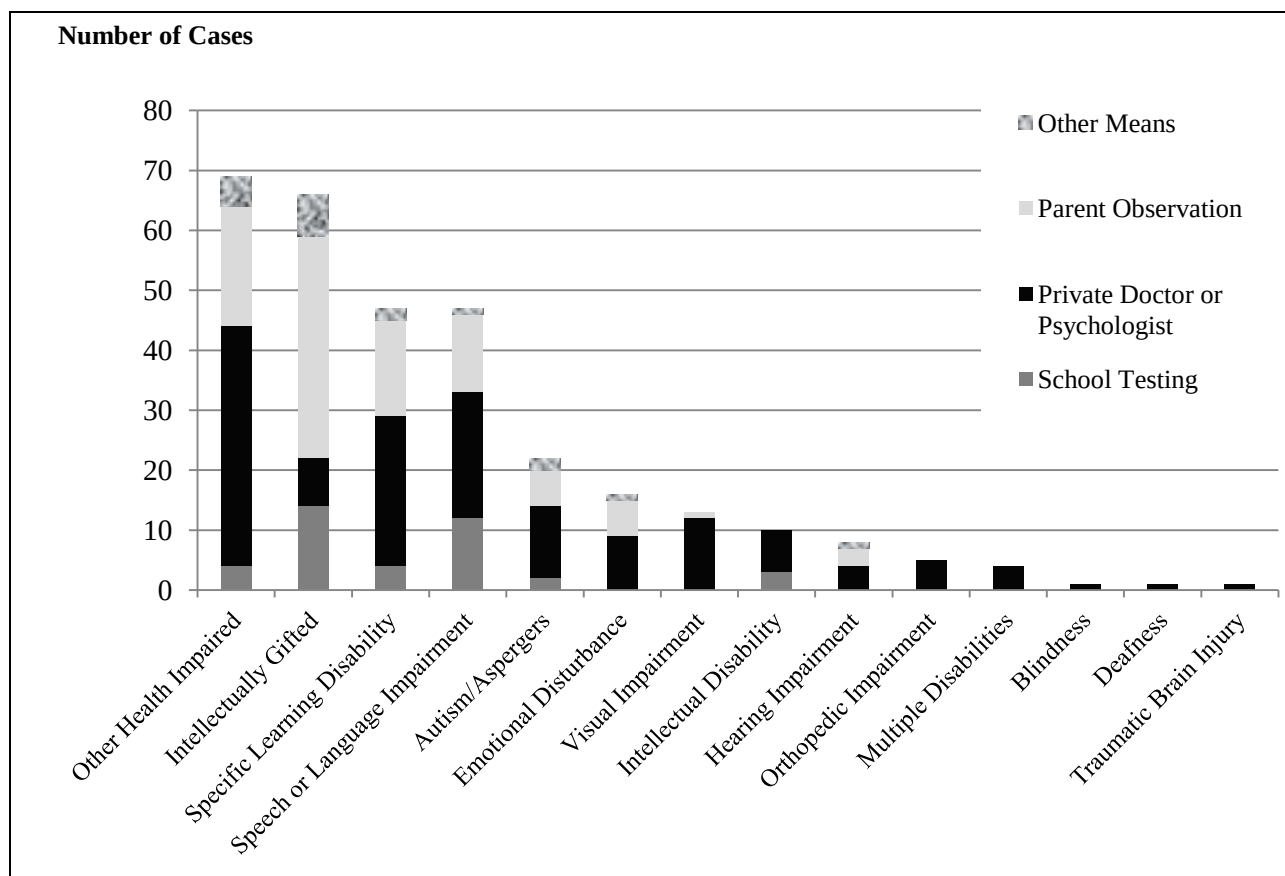


Figure 5: Number of Cases and Method of Diagnosis for Each SEN Category

Children (2014) estimates there are approximately 3 to 5 million academically gifted children in grades K-12 in the U.S. (approximately 6% - 10% of the student population). However, the LEA Comprehensive Applications for Special Education Services for the Tennessee counties most heavily represented in the sample used for this study report an extremely low incidence of Intellectually Gifted students. In their 2012-2013 LEA Comprehensive Applications for Special Education Services, both Blount County, TN (19.2% of this sample) and Knox County, TN (30.8% of this sample) reported serving only nine Intellectually Gifted students each (TN Dept. of Education, 2012). In this study of 333 families who were homeschooling a total of 693 students, parents reported that 66 students (9.5%) were identified as being intellectually gifted. These data provide support to the concern that the special educational needs of children are not being met in public school classrooms, especially for intellectually gifted students.

In an effort to expand the definition of SEN to include children who might be having difficulty learning in a traditional classroom, but who had not been diagnosed with any SEN, participants were asked if they were homeschooling at least one child who they believed would have difficulties learning in a traditional classroom. Even though 54% (167) of participating families ($n = 309$) indicated they were homeschooling a child with SEN, only 33% (105) of families ($n = 318$) indicated that they had at least one child who they believed had a special educational need that would make it difficult for them to learn in a traditional classroom setting. There were 693 children being homeschooled by participating families, and parents indicated they believed that 18% (125) of the children in the sample ($n = 693$) had special educational needs that would make it difficult for them to learn in a traditional classroom setting. The data related to the incidence of special educational needs in this sample of homeschooling families clearly indicates a higher incidence of SEN than what has been reported nationally for K-12

students in the United States. These data provide important information for understanding trends in school choice, especially for families who have a child with SEN.

Data Related to School Choice History and SEN (Research Question 1).

The null hypothesis that was tested to answer Research Question 1 stated that there is no difference in the percentage of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) between the group of homeschooling families who had children that attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled. The results support the alternate hypothesis which stated that the percentage of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) would be higher in the group of homeschooling families who had children that attended public or private school prior to homeschooling (PPS) than in the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled (No PPS). A significant difference ($\chi^2 = 5.720$, $df = 1$, $p = .011$, one-tailed) was found between the percentage of families that had a child with SEN between the group of families who attended public or private school before homeschooling and the group of families who had always homeschooled. For the group of families that had a child who attended public or private school before homeschooling, 60.6% had a child with SEN. In the group that had always homeschooled, 43.4% had a child with SEN. These findings are consistent with trends noted in prior studies.

The literature reviewed for this study documented changes in how special educational needs are met in public schools (Hussar, W.J. & Bailey, T.M., 2011) and suggested that parents of children with SEN may be choosing to homeschool when they believe their child's needs are not being met in the traditional classroom (Arora, 2006; Jolly, Matthews & Nester, 2012; Parsons & Lewis, 2010; Reilly, Chapman, & O'Donoghue, 2002). In the three studies focused

on families homeschooling children with SEN that were discussed in Chapter 2 (Arora, 2006; Parsons & Lewis, 2010; and Reilly, Chapman, & O'Donoghue, 2002), a high percentage of families homeschooling children with SEN had placed their child(ren) in a public or private school before they made the decision to homeschool. In this study, 54% (167) of the participating families ($n = 309$) indicated that they were homeschooling a child that had a special educational need. The surprisingly high incidence of families who are homeschooling children with SEN in the sample population strongly suggests an association between the growth of homeschooling and current trends in how public and private schools are meeting the needs of children with SEN.

Data Related to Homeschool Support Group Use (Research Questions 2 – 5).

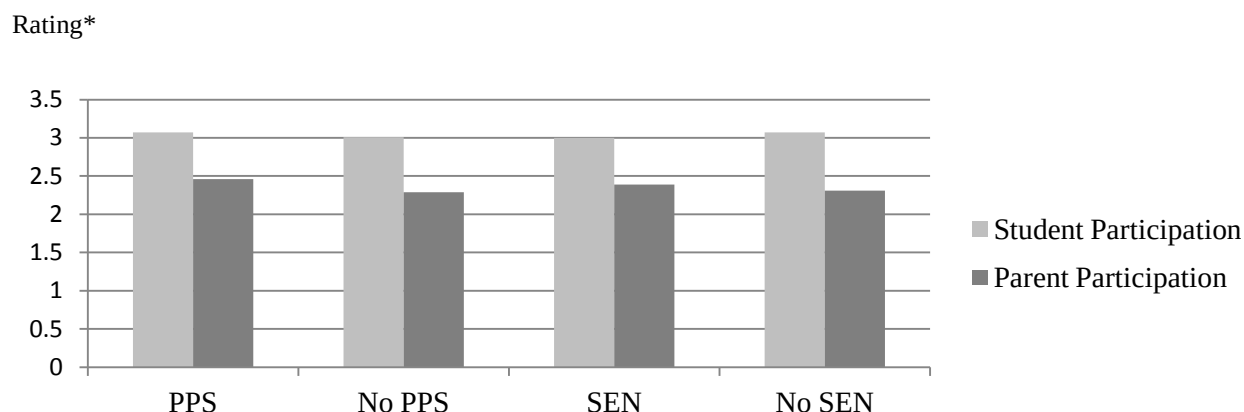
Research Questions 2 and 3 focused on determining if there was a difference in how families participated in homeschool support group activities based on school choice history and SEN status. Questions about homeschool support group participation were only answered by participants who indicated that they were members of a homeschool support group. If participants indicated they were not members of a homeschool support group, the questions on homeschool support groups were not displayed and they were moved to the final group of questions on the survey related to reasons for homeschooling.

Even though invitations to participate in this survey were distributed through homeschool support groups, only 83.5% of participants ($n = 315$) indicated that they were members of a homeschool support group. There was no significant difference in homeschool support group membership rates among families in the two school choice history groups. However, parents who were homeschooling a child with SEN were less likely to join a homeschool support group than those who were not homeschooling any children with SEN.

Families that indicated that they were members of a homeschool support group were asked to answer additional questions about their participation with and perceptions of homeschool support groups. A group of six questions was used to collect data on families' participation in homeschool support group activities. There were three questions related to student participation and three questions related to parent participation. Scores for the three student questions were summed and averaged to obtain a student participation score. Scores for the three parent questions were summed and averaged to obtain a parent participation score. The decision was made to sum and average to obtain these scores because not all of the six activities were offered by all homeschool support groups.

There was not sufficient evidence to reject the null hypotheses for either Research Question 2 or Research Question 3. There was no significant difference in parents' perceptions of their family's participation with homeschool support groups (Figure 6) between groups based on school choice history or SEN status. For all participants, mean scores for student participation ($M = 3.04$) were higher than mean scores for parent participation ($M = 2.36$).

These results are somewhat inconsistent with findings in prior studies. The literature reviewed suggested that having a child with SEN has an influence on parental involvement (Barlow & Humphrey, 2012). Additionally, parental involvement has an influence on school choice (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997). Thus, it was thought that families that were moving their child(ren) from public or private school to homeschooling or those families that were homeschooling a child with SEN might participate differently in the activities and support offered by homeschool support groups than families who have always homeschooled. However, the fact that all homeschooling parents, by nature of the act of homeschooling, are very involved with their child's education most likely diminished any differences between groups.



* Rating scale: 1 to 5, with 5 being most important

PPS – family had a child in public/private school before homeschooling;

No PPS – the family has always homeschooled;

SEN – the family is currently homeschooling a child with SEN;

No SEN – the family is not homeschooling any children with SEN

Figure 6: Student and Parent Participation with Homeschool Support Groups

While Research Questions 2 and 3 focused on families' participation with homeschool support groups, Research Questions 4 and 5 focused on parents' perceptions of the importance of different types activities and support offered by homeschool support groups. Participants were asked to rate the importance of the same six activities used to answer Research Questions 2 and 3 (three related to students and three related to parents).

The null hypotheses that were tested to answer Research Question 4 and Research Question 5 were retained. There was no significant difference in parents' perceptions of the importance the importance of types of support and activities offered by a homeschool support group between groups based on school choice history or SEN status. The mean scores for parents' perceptions of the importance of each type of activity are illustrated in Figure 7. The

student activities were rated as more important than the parent activities, which is consistent with participants' reported participation with homeschool support group activities (Figure 6).

Again, it was thought that families that were moving their child(ren) from public or private school to homeschooling or those families that had a child with SEN might have different needs for support and thus rate certain types of activities as more or less important than the groups who had always homeschooled or who were not homeschooling any children with SEN. These findings provide baseline information on how families use homeschool support groups that will be useful for future research.

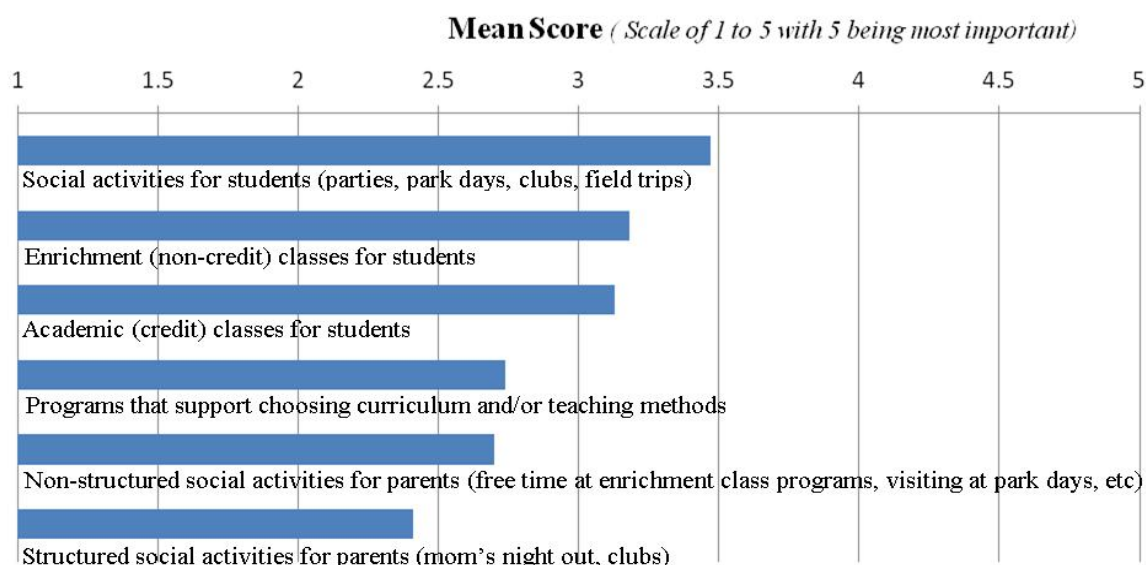


Figure 7: Importance of Homeschool Support Group Activities

Data related to Perceptions of Parental Involvement (Research Questions 6 – 9).

Research Questions 6 and 7 focused on determining if there was a difference in parents' perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with their homeschool support group based on school choice history and SEN status. The opportunities for involvement were based on Epstein's (2001) model of parental involvement which is commonly used by schools as a framework for developing and evaluating efforts to increase parental involvement. (Allen , 2011; Barlow & Humphrey, 2012; Bower & Griffin, 2011). The questions were structured to examine parental involvement with the homeschool support group in the same way as one would examine parental involvement with a public or private school.

The null hypotheses that were tested to answer Research Question 6 and Research Question 7 were retained. There was no significant difference in parents' perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with their homeschool support group between groups based on school choice history or SEN status. While no statistical difference in parental satisfaction with opportunities for involvement with the homeschool support group based on school choice or SEN status was found, a high level of satisfaction in all six categories of parental involvement was reported (Figure 8).

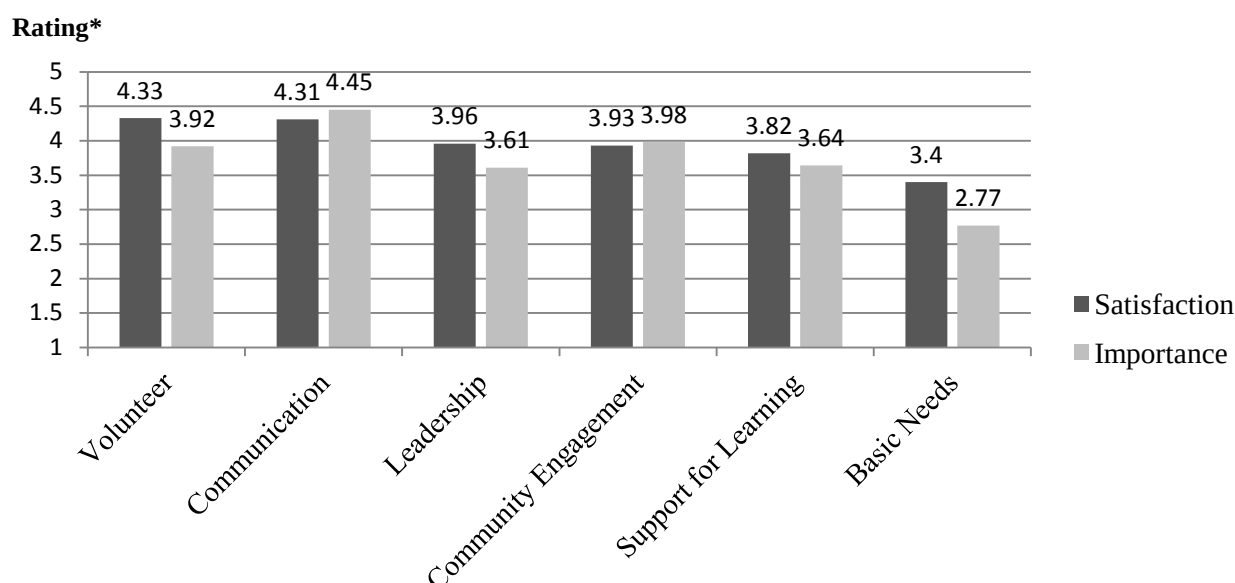
Goldring and Phillips (2008) suggested that parents were "pulled" to choose educational organizations that supported the type of parental involvement consistent with their beliefs. Thus it was expected that parents whose children attended public or private school before homeschooling may have different perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with the homeschool support group. Prior studies, including a recent study by Barlow and Humphrey (2012), suggest that having a child with SEN may affect parents' perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with an educational organization. Thus, it was also expected that SEN

status would affect parents' perceptions of opportunities for parental involvement with the homeschool support group, though there was no prior research to base a speculation for the direction or magnitude of the difference.

Research Questions 8 and 9 focused on determining if there was a difference in parents' perceptions of the importance of opportunities for parental involvement with their homeschool support group based on school choice history and SEN status. The same six categories, based on Epstein's (2001) model of parental involvement, that were used to collect data to answer Research Questions 6 and 7 were assessed. The null hypotheses that were tested to answer Research Questions 8 and 9 were retained. There was no significant difference in parents' perceptions towards the importance of different types of parental involvement with their homeschool support group between either school choice history groups or the SEN status groups. Data related to perceptions of satisfaction with opportunities for parental involvement with the homeschool support group and perceptions of importance of different categories of parental involvement were very closely correlated, as seen in Figure 8.

While no significant difference between groups based on school choice history or SEN status in parents' satisfaction with opportunities for parental involvement with their homeschool group or in parents' perceptions of the importance of six categories of parental involvement, the data related to Research Questions 6 – 9 still provide some important information. With a homeschool support group, parents are both the administrators for the educational organization and parents of the students attending the educational organization. The mean scores for parents' satisfaction with opportunities for parental involvement with their homeschool group suggest a high level of satisfaction. This would suggest that the homeschool parents in the study's sample have joined homeschool support groups that effectively support parental involvement. The mean

scores for parents' perceptions of the importance of six categories of parental involvement suggest that parental involvement in their child's education is very important to parents. As shown in Figure 8, parents' satisfaction with each category of parental involvement was very closely aligned with their perceptions towards the importance of the category of parental involvement.



* Rating scale: The scale for *Satisfaction* was 1 = Very Dissatisfied, 3 = Neutral, and 5 = Very Satisfied. The scale for *Importance* was 1 = Not at all Important to 5 = Extremely Important.

Figure 8: Overall Satisfaction and Importance - Parental Involvement

The questions used to assess the six categories of parental involvement shown in Figure 8 were:

Volunteer: (a) Please rate your satisfaction with how well the homeschool support group provides opportunities for members to volunteer to help with support group activities, co-op classes, or other support group needs; and (b) How important is it to you for your homeschool support group to provide opportunities for members to volunteer to help with support group activities, co-op classes, or other support group needs?

Communication: (a) Please rate your satisfaction with how well the homeschool support group provides a method for communication with members; and (b) How important is it to you for your homeschool support group to provide a method for communication with members?

Leadership: (a) Please rate your satisfaction with how well the homeschool support group provides opportunities for members to serve in a leadership position or on a committee; and (b) How important is it to you for your homeschool support group to provide opportunities for members to serve in a leadership position or on a committee?

Community Engagement: (a) Please rate your satisfaction with how well the homeschool support group identifies and uses resources and services from the community to provide learning opportunities for its members; and (b) How important is it to you for your homeschool support group to identify and use resources and services from the community to provide learning opportunities for its members?

Support for Learning: (a) Please rate your satisfaction with how well the homeschool support group provides opportunities for members to learn about choosing curriculum and/or teaching methods; (b) How important is it to you for your homeschool support group to provide opportunities for members to learn about choosing curriculum and/or teaching methods?

Basic Needs: (a) Please rate your satisfaction with how well the homeschool support group provides opportunities for members to learn about parenting skills and/or child development; and (b) How important is it to you for your homeschool support group to provide opportunities for members to learn about parenting skills and/or child development?

Data Related to the Decision to Homeschool (Research Questions 10 and 11).

An important focus of this study was to better understand why parents' are deciding to homeschool their children. Green and Hoover-Dempsey's (2007) work expanded the

understanding of parental motivations for homeschooling and demonstrated “that the personal beliefs variables previously emphasized in the homeschooling literature should not continue to be studied in isolation” (p.281). They found differences related to motivating factors for the decision to homeschool between groups of parents based on their beliefs about parents’ role construction related to responsibility for a child’s education (parent focused or partnership focused). Green and Hoover-Dempsey’s study indicated that while both groups of homeschooling parents shared the value beliefs related to the importance of moral and religious issues, appropriate curricular content and teaching practices, and beliefs about public school’s abilities to meet their child’s individual needs; the parent-focused group did not feel these were motivating factors in their decision to homeschool. However, these shared value beliefs were motivations to homeschool for the parents with a partnership-focused role construction. This study builds on these findings by examining the relationship between school choice history and SEN status and a family’s decision to homeschool their children. Research Questions 10 and 11 focused on determining if there was a difference in parents’ perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool between groups of participants based on school choice history and SEN status.

The null hypothesis that was tested to answer Research Question 10 stated that there is no difference in parents’ perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool between the group of families who have a child who has attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and the group of families whose children have always been homeschooled. The null hypothesis was rejected because a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) indicated there was a significant difference ($F(7, 247) = 4.933, p < .001$) in parents’ perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool between the group of families who

have a child who has attended public or private school prior to homeschooling and group of families whose children have always been homeschooled. An individual analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run for each factor. A significant difference between the school choice history groups was found for three of the factors important to the decision to homeschool. These three factors were (a) the desire to provide religious or moral instruction, $p = .001$; (b) the special needs of a child, $p = .003$; and (c) the desire to be more involved with your child/children's education, $p < .001$. Parents who have always homeschooled their children rated "the desire to provide religious or moral instruction" as more important ($M = 4.42$) than families who have had a child in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool ($M = 3.88$). Parents who have had a child in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool rated "the special needs of a child" as more important ($M = 3.28$) than parents who have always homeschooled their children ($M = 2.69$). Parents who have always homeschooled rated "the desire to be more involved with your child/children's education" as more important ($M = 4.71$) than families who have had a child in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool ($M = 4.22$).

The null hypothesis that was tested to answer Research Question 11 stated that there is no difference in parents' perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool between the group of families who are homeschooling a child with special educational needs (SEN) and the group of families who are not homeschooling any children with SEN. The null hypothesis was rejected because a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) indicated there was a significant difference ($F(7, 236) = 8.716, p < .001$) in parents' perceptions towards factors important to their decision to homeschool between the group of parents who are homeschooling a child with SEN and the group of parents who are not homeschooling any children with SEN. A

significant difference between the SEN status groups was found for three of the factors important to the decision to homeschool. These three factors were (a) the desire to provide religious or moral instruction, $p = .003$; (b) the special needs of a child, $p < .001$; and (c) the desire to be more involved with your child/children's education, $p < .001$. Parents who are not homeschooling any children with SEN rated "the desire to provide religious or moral instruction" as more important ($M = 4.42$) than families who are homeschooling a child with SEN ($M = 3.93$). Parents who are homeschooling a child with SEN rated "the special needs of a child" as more important ($M = 3.50$) than parents who are not homeschooling any children with SEN ($M = 2.32$). Parents who are not homeschooling any children with SEN rated "the desire to be more involved with your child/children's education" as more important ($M = 4.76$) than who are homeschooling a child with SEN ($M = 4.25$).

One consistency in the literature reviewed for this study was the importance of parental involvement to a student's academic success. Another consistency was consensus on the complex nature of how and why parents choose to become involved in their child's education. Because parents who have made the choice to homeschool are obviously extremely involved in their child's education, it was expected that parents would perceive all of the factors assessed for Research Questions 10 and 11 to be important to the decision to homeschool. It was also expected that both school choice history and SEN status would be associated with differences in the strength of parents' perceptions as to the importance of various factors. The differences associated with school choice history are illustrated in Figure 9, with significant differences circled. The differences associated with SEN status are illustrated in Figure 10, with significant differences circled.

The significant differences in parents' perceptions of factors important to the decision to homeschool between groups, based on school choice history and SEN status, provide data important to understanding school choice trends. The results of this study suggest that parents who have always homeschooled and who do not have a child with SEN rate the desire to be more involved in their child's education and the desire to provide religious or moral instruction as the most important factors in making the decision to homeschool. These same parents rated the importance of the special needs of a child to the decision to homeschool the lowest. However, for parents who have a child with SEN, the special educational needs of the child are rated as significantly more important to the decision to homeschool. Families who have had a child in public or private school before homeschooling also rated the importance of meeting the special educational needs of a child higher than families who have always homeschooled.

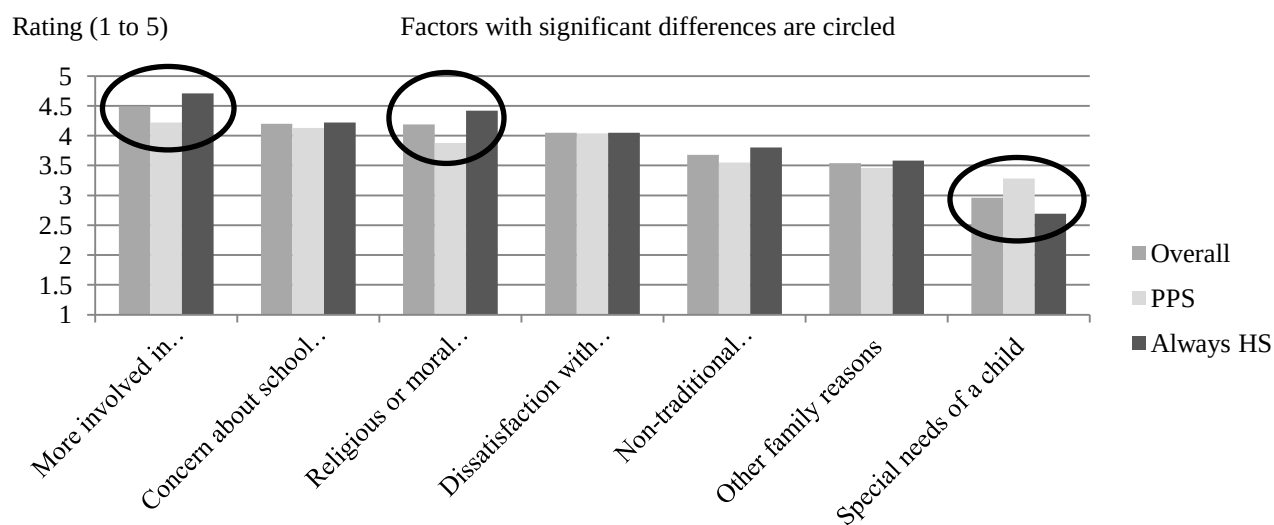


Figure 9: The Decision to Homeschool and School Choice History

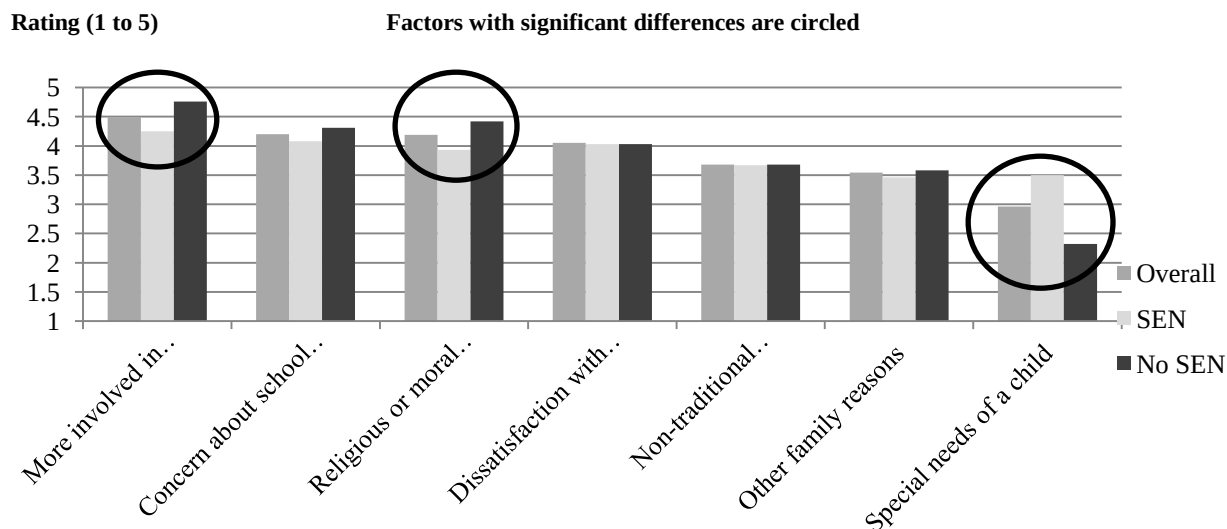


Figure 10: The Decision to Homeschool and SEN Status

Conclusions and Implications

For this sample of 333 homeschooling families, who reside primarily in eastern Tennessee, slightly more than half (50.8%) had a child enrolled in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool. In the group of families who had a child enrolled in public or private school before they decided to homeschool, 60.6% of the families indicated they were currently homeschooling a child with some type of special educational need. These findings are consistent with results of prior studies reviewed in Chapter 2 that suggested parents of children with SEN may be choosing to homeschool when they feel their child's needs are not being met in the traditional classroom (Arora, 2006; Jolly, Matthews & Nester, 2012; Parsons & Lewis, 2010; Reilly, Chapman, & O'Donoghue, 2002).

In studies focused on the reasons that parents make the decision to homeschool, "meeting the special educational needs of a child" has been rated as having low importance as a factor in parents' decision to homeschool (Planty et al., 2009; Isenberg, 2007). Overall, the findings of

this study were consistent with that of prior studies in that “meeting the special educational needs of a child” received the lowest rating as a factor important to the decision to homeschool for the total sample. However, there was a significant difference in the rating for the importance of “meeting the special educational needs of a child” to the decision to homeschool between families who had a child in public or private school before making the decision to homeschool ($M = 3.28$) and families who have always homeschooled ($M = 2.69$) and between families who were homeschooling a child with SEN ($M = 3.50$) and families who were not homeschooling any children with SEN ($M = 2.32$). These data suggest that when a parent perceives that the needs of a child with SEN are not being met in a public or private school, the child’s SEN is an important factor in their decision to homeschool.

For all participating parents ($n = 278$), the desire to be more involved in their child(ren)’s education was rated as the most important factor in the decision to homeschool ($M = 4.49$). This finding has extremely important implications for public and private school administrators and policy makers. The importance of parental involvement is supported by the very foundation of social learning theory. Tedin and Weiher (2011) summarize a large body of research when they state that, “both scholars and practitioners agree that one of the most important factors promoting student success is the active involvement of parents in a child’s education” (p.609). Yet, Lai and Vadeboncoeur’s (2012) found a discrepancy between the emphasis in the literature about the importance of parental involvement and schools’ narrowed definitions of parental involvement. Their analysis illustrated how schools’ definitions of parental involvement and partnership frequently subjugated parents’ beliefs about how they should be involved with their child’s education. The results of this study provide public and private school administrators and policy

makers with strong data that contributes to understanding how parents want to be involved with an educational organization.

Based on the rationale of studying homeschool support groups as educational organizations put forth by Collum and Mitchell (2005), I examined how parents use homeschool support groups and evaluated how these organizations support parental involvement. There was no difference based on school choice history or SEN status in how families participated with homeschool groups or with their perceptions of the importance of different types of homeschool support group activities. Overall, families participated in student activities more than in parent focused activities. Student activities were also rated as more important than parent focused activities. These results provide a baseline of knowledge concerning how homeschooling families are using homeschool support groups and what types of activities and support are important to them.

Epstein's (2011) model of parental involvement is commonly used by schools as a framework for developing and evaluating efforts to increase parental involvement (Allen, 2011; Barlow & Humphrey, 2012; Bower & Griffin, 2011). The questions used to evaluate satisfaction with opportunities for parental involvement with a homeschool support group and perceptions of importance of each category of parental involvement were based on Epstein's model of parental involvement. Results indicated no significant differences based on school choice history or SEN status in parents' perceptions of satisfaction with opportunities for parental involvement with the homeschool support group or with their perceptions of the importance of different categories of parental involvement with the homeschool support group. However, parents reported an above average level of satisfaction for all six categories of parental involvement. Likewise, all categories of parental involvement were reported as being important to parents. Findings also

support a high level of satisfaction with how the homeschool support group is supporting parental involvement. The six categories of parental involvement from Epstein's model of parental involvement are related to types of parental involvement that require a partnership between the parent, teacher, and educational organization. They integrally involve the parent and the community in the education process. This is a much different type of parental involvement than helping with school fundraisers, class parties, or activities such as painting the teachers' lounge and working on the school landscape.

Limitations

The definitions for the two independent variables were purposely kept very broad. However, this decision creates some limitations on interpretation of the study's findings. The independent variable of School Choice History was based only on whether or not the family had a child that had ever attended a public or private school. Participants were not asked how long the child attended or how long ago this occurred. The variable of SEN Status was based only on whether or not a family reported that they were currently homeschooling a child who they believed had a special educational need (SEN). The method of diagnosis was asked, but no details were requested, nor was data about the severity of the SEN collected. This limits the ability to compare findings with results of other studies.

The term "homeschool support group" was used in a very general way. A homeschool support group was defined as a membership based group of homeschool families that exists for the purpose of supporting the needs of homeschooling families. Homeschool support groups commonly provide opportunities for socialization, cooperative teaching, curriculum enrichment activities, field trips, parental support and networking, and sharing of resources. In some areas, homeschool support groups have become quite specialized and may be organized specifically to

offer co-op enrichment and for credit classes or to serve other specific needs. Some organizations are mainly lobbying and political action groups. This variation in types of organizations may limit the generalizability of the study in terms of comparing data about homeschool support groups.

To test for survey reliability, a pilot test/re-test study was conducted. A limitation of the study is inherent in the fact that the number of paired test completions ($n = 5$) was too small to have the planned analyses of paired sample t-tests be meaningful. The data were reviewed and found to be consistent with no significant differences or discrepancies found. Because no cause for concern was noted in the data it was decided to continue with the survey without changes.

Recommendations for Future Research

Homeschooling continues to grow as a legitimate educational option. This continued growth rate of homeschooling is evidenced in the data reported from the 2012 National Household Education Survey Program (NHES) that 1.77 million K-12 students in the United States were homeschooled for the 2011-2012 school year (Noel, Stark, & Redford, 2013). This number represented about 3.4% of the total school-age population in the United States in 2012. The results of this study provide a foundation for at least three main streams of future research using homeschooling populations. Recommendations for future research could contribute in the following areas: (a) meeting the needs of students with special educational needs, (b) the effect of learning environments on a child's academic success, and (c) parental and community involvement in education process.

In this study, 54% of the participating families indicated they were currently homeschooling a child with a special educational need. The percentage of families' homeschooling a child with a special educational need was significantly higher (60.6%) in the

group of families who had had a child enrolled in public or private school before homeschooling. While these figures cannot be compared directly to the National Center for Education Statistics' (Snyder & Dillow, 2013) report that 13% of U.S. students have special educational needs which are being served by federally supported programs, this apparent difference in the incidence of SEN between homeschooled and public school populations deserves further study.

A study of how the learning environment contributes to, or detracts from, a child's academic success would be important. How is teaching a child with SEN at home different than teaching that child in a traditional classroom? How is the learning environment different at a homeschool co-op than in a traditional school? The answers to these questions might provide insights into how learning environments might be adapted to best meet the needs of individual students both at home and in a traditional school setting.

The fact that parental involvement in a child's education contributes significantly to the child's academic success is widely accepted in the area of educational research (Tedin & Weiher, 2011). When parents make the decision to homeschool their children, they are taking complete responsibility for their children's education. Theoretically, they are 100% involved with their child's education and 100% responsible for the educational process at the point of deciding to homeschool. However, when they enroll in an umbrella school, participate in co-op classes, or participate in a dual enrollment program at a community college, they are theoretically giving up some involvement and sharing some responsibility. Studying when and why these parents are willing to give up some responsibility (or control) would provide important contributions to the literature on parental involvement in education.

Studying how and when homeschooling parents give up control in the realm of homeschooling might include studying how families choose to register to homeschool. There are

different levels of control and structure with different registration options. Some closely mimic public/private school structure and some are virtually unstructured. Participation with homeschool support groups and co-op class organizations would also be included in this area of study. The results of this study provided some baseline information on how homeschooling families were participating with homeschool support groups. However, these groups are growing and becoming more structured and, in some ways, more like traditional schools. Again, learning more about when and why, homeschooling parents are willing to give up a level of parental involvement and control to participate in these organizations would contribute to the understanding of how parents want to be involved with educational organizations and the educational process.

There are two trends in the area of public school education that may offer opportunities for homeschooling families to be involved with public schools. The concept of community schools would appear to offer a level of parental and community involvement that may appeal to some homeschooling parents. The new trend in some states towards offering competency-based credit could essentially allow homeschooled students to be enrolled in public school and receive all of the benefits of a public school education, such as a high school diploma, while being homeschooled. Studying homeschool parents' perceptions about how and when they might participate enroll their child in a community school or school system that offered competency-based credit would also contribute to the understanding of how educational organizations can develop and support parental involvement in the education process.

While this study used a sample from a regional area, the sample size ($N = 333$) was larger than samples used in most prior studies related to homeschooling and there is no reason to believe that results would not be generalizable outside of Tennessee. In conclusion, the results of

this study suggest that when a parent perceives that the needs of a child with SEN are not being met in a public or private school, the child's SEN is an important factor in their decision to homeschool. Also, for all participating homeschooling parents in this sample, the desire to be more involved in their children's education was rated as the most important factor in the decision to homeschool. Finally, parents in this sample reported a high level of satisfaction with how their homeschool support group was supporting parental involvement and they attributed importance to all six categories of parental involvement. These data provide good opportunities for further research in the areas of (a) meeting the needs of students with special educational needs, (b) the effect of learning environments on a child's academic success, and (c) parental and community involvement in education process.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Invitation to Participation Letter

Hello,

Can you please help me by sharing this letter and the link for my [Homeschool Survey](#) with your members and homeschooling friends?

I am a homeschooling mom from Knoxville, TN who has been a member of Blount Home Education Association (BHEA) since 1990. This study is for my dissertation research. I am trying to get as many homeschool families in the East Tennessee area as possible to complete the survey. This survey will contribute to a better understanding of the parental choice of homeschooling as an educational option.

[Homeschool Survey](#)

My name is Mary Morse and I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling at the University of Tennessee. I have been a member of Blount Home Education Association since 1990. It has been amazing to watch this organization grow and change as I have homeschooled my two sons (now 28 and 12). In fact, the changes that I have seen in homeschooling over the last 25 years motivated me to study homeschooling for my dissertation research.

This research project will specifically study the role that homeschool support groups play in the decision to homeschool and will also seek to understand how homeschool families use homeschool support groups. Additionally, it will seek to understand how factors such as prior public school attendance, having a child with special educational needs, or the desire for more involvement in your child's education might relate to the decision to homeschool.

I would like to ask you to participate in this study by completing a short survey. The survey is anonymous (your identity will not be known by the researcher or anyone else) and will take about 10 minutes to complete. There is no compensation for responding, nor is there any known risk. Participation is completely voluntary and if you decide while filling out the survey that you do not wish to participate, you may exit at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the study after completing the survey, or if you have any questions about the survey, please contact Mary Morse at mmorse@utk.edu or (865) 924-8478 or my Faculty Advisor, Michael Waugh at (865) 974-6157.

Please click the following link to complete the survey:

[Homeschool Survey](#)

Thank you so much for your time.

Mary Morse

Doctoral Candidate & Graduate Research Assistant
The University of Tennessee
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Learning Environments and Educational Studies (LEEDS)
(865) 924-8478 mmorse@utk.edu

Appendix B: Survey Instrument

1. I would like to ask you to participate in this study by completing this short survey. The survey is anonymous (your identity will not be known by the researcher or anyone else) and will take about 10 minutes to complete. There is no compensation for responding, nor is there any known risk. Participation is completely voluntary and if you decide while filling out the survey that you do not wish to participate, you may exit at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the study after completing the survey, or if you have any questions about the survey, please contact Mary Morse at mmorse@utk.edu or (865) 924-8478 or my Faculty Advisor, Dr. Michael Waugh at (865) 974-6157.

Thank you so much for your time.

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2. Are you currently homeschooling at least one child for any grade from kindergarten through 12th grade?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

3. Please indicate your state of residence:

- ☐ TN (1)
- ☐ GA (2)
- ☐ NC (3)
- ☐ VA (4)
- ☐ Other (5) _____

4. Based on your current residence, what public school system would your child(ren) attend, if they were enrolled in public school?

- ☐ Alcoa (1)
- ☐ Blount County (2)
- ☐ Bristol Tennessee City (3)
- ☐ Carter County (4)
- ☐ Elizabethton Tennessee City (5)
- ☐ Hamilton County (6)
- ☐ Johnson County (7)
- ☐ Kingsport City (8)
- ☐ Knox County (9)
- ☐ Maryville City (10)
- ☐ Sullivan County (11)
- ☐ Other: (12) _____

5. What year did you first start homeschooling any of your children?

6. How many children are you currently homeschooling? _____ Children

7. Have any of the children that you are currently homeschooling ever attended a public or private (K – 12) school full-time?

- ☐ Yes, Public (1)
- ☐ Yes, Private (2)
- ☐ No, Always homeschooled (3)

8. Please share: Why did your family decide to homeschool? If you prefer not to share, please just continue to the next question.

9. Have any of the children you are currently homeschooling ever been diagnosed with any of the following special educational needs? *(For all that apply, please indicate how the special educational need was diagnosed)*

	School testing (1)	Private doctor or psychologist (2)	Parent Observations (3)	Other means (4)
Autism or Aspergers Syndrome (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Blindness (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Deafness (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Emotional Disturbance (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hearing Impairment (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Intellectual Disability (6)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Multiple Disabilities (7)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Orthopedic Impairment (8)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other Health Impaired (Includes ADD/ADHD and other acute & chronic conditions) (9)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Specific Learning Disability (10)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Speech or Language Impairment (11)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Traumatic Brain Injury (12)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Visual Impairment (13)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Intellectually Gifted (14)	☐	☐	☐	☐

10. Do you believe that any of the children you are currently homeschooling have any of the following special educational needs, even though they have not been formally diagnosed? (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ Autism or Aspergers Syndrome (1)
- ☐ Blindness (2)
- ☐ Deafness (3)
- ☐ Emotional Disturbance (4)
- ☐ Hearing Impairment (5)
- ☐ Intellectual Disability (6)
- ☐ Multiple Disabilities (7)
- ☐ Orthopedic Impairment (8)
- ☐ Other Health Impaired (Includes ADD/ADHD and other acute & chronic conditions) (9)
- ☐ _____
- ☐ Specific Learning Disability (10)
- ☐ Speech or Language Impairment (11)
- ☐ Traumatic Brain Injury (12)
- ☐ Visual Impairment (13)
- ☐ Intellectually Gifted (14)
- ☐ Other (Please identify) (15) _____

11. Do you believe that any of the children you are currently homeschooling have any special educational needs that would make it difficult for them to learn in a traditional classroom setting?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To Are you currently a member of a homes...

12. How many of the children that you currently homeschool, do you believe have a special educational need that would make it difficult for them to learn in a traditional classroom setting?

_____ child(ren) have special educational needs (1)

13. Please describe your child(ren)'s special educational needs:

14. If you believe that any of your children have special educational needs, how important (on a scale of 1 to 5) were these special educational needs to your decision to homeschool?

_____ 1 = not important at all; 5 = Extremely important (1)

15. Please Share: How does your child's learning environment (classroom, home, etc) affect his/her learning? If you prefer not to share, please just continue to the next question.

16. Are you currently a member of a homeschool support group?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To Please briefly describe your family's...

17. Please indicate the group with which you are most active:

☐ Blount Home Education Association (1)

☐ Chattanooga Southeast Tennessee Home Education Association (2)

☐ North East Tennessee Home Education Association (3)

☐ Other (4) _____

[illegible]

19. How important is it to you that a homeschool support group offers the following activities and types of support?

	Not important (1)	Somewhat important (2)	Important (3)	Very important (4)	Essential (5)
Enrichment (non-credit) classes for students (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Academic (credit) classes for students (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social activities for students (parties, park days, clubs, field trips) (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Structured social activities for parents (mom's night out, clubs) (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Non-structured social activities for parents (free time at enrichment class programs, visiting at park days, etc) (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Programs that support choosing curriculum and/or teaching methods (6)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

20. Were you aware of the existence of local homeschool support group(s) before you made the decision to homeschool?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To How important (on a scale from 0 to 1...

21. Did knowing about the availability of homeschool support groups have any effect on your decision to homeschool your child(ren)?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To How important (on a scale from 0 to 1...

22. How important (on a scale from 1 to 5) was the opportunity for membership in a homeschool support group to your decision to homeschool your children?

_____ 1 = not important at all; 5 = Extremely important (1)

23. How important (on a scale from 1 to 5) is your membership in a homeschool support group(s) to your continuing to homeschool your children?

_____ 1 = not important at all; 5 = Extremely important (1)

24. Please share: How does your participation with homeschool support group(s) contribute or detract from your homeschooling efforts? If you prefer not to share, please just continue to the next question.

25. For the homeschool group with which you are most active, ***please rate your satisfaction with how well the homeschool support group...***

	Very Dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Neutral (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very Satisfied (5)
... provides opportunities for members to learn about parenting skills and/or child development. (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
... communicates with members. (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
... provides opportunities for members to volunteer to help with support group activities, co-op classes, or other support group needs. (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
... provides opportunities for members to serve in a leadership position or on a committee. (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
... provides opportunities for members to learn about choosing curriculum and/or teaching methods. (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
... identifies and uses resources and services from the community to	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

provide learning opportunities for its members. (6)					
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26. How important is it to you for your homeschool support group to...

	Not at all Important (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Extremely Important (5)
... provide opportunities for members to learn about parenting skills and/or child development? (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
... provide a method for communication with members? (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
... provide opportunities for members to volunteer to help with support group activities, co-op classes, or other support group needs? (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
... provide opportunities for members to serve in a leadership position or on a committee? (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
... provide opportunities for members to learn about choosing curriculum and/or teaching methods? (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
... identify and use resources and services from the community to provide learning opportunities for its members? (6)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

27. How does your homeschool support group communicate with members? (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ Printed newsletter (1)
- ☐ Website (2)
- ☐ E-mail (3)
- ☐ Yahoo group, blog or other type of online interactive communication group (4)
- ☐ Facebook page (5)
- ☐ Other (6) _____

28. Which method do you prefer for communications with your homeschool support group?

- ☐ Printed newsletter (1)
- ☐ Website (2)
- ☐ E-mail (3)
- ☐ Yahoo group, blog or other type of online interactive communication group (4)
- ☐ Facebook page (5)
- ☐ Other (6) _____

29. Which of the following best describes your participation with your homeschool support group's online communities such as Facebook, a Yahoo Group, or Blog?

- ☐ My homeschool support group does not have any online communities (1)
- ☐ I do not participate at all (2)
- ☐ Very Little (I occasionally read member posts, but rarely post or respond to the group) (3)
- ☐ Moderately Active (I often read member posts and occasionally post or respond to the group) (4)
- ☐ Very Active (I read member posts almost every day and post or respond to the group at least once a week) (5)
- ☐ Extremely Active (I read member posts daily and post or usually respond at least 3 to 4 times a week) (6)

30. Please share: Any additional information about the organization and administration of your homeschool support group that is, or has been, important to your homeschooling efforts. If you prefer not to share, please just continue to the next question.

31. Please briefly describe your family's main reasons for deciding to homeschool your child(ren).

32. How important (on a scale of 1 to 5) is being able to be involved with choosing curriculum for your child to your decision to homeschool?

_____ 1 = not important at all; 5 = Extremely important (1)

33. How important (on a scale of 1 to 5) is being involved in decisions about your child's learning environment to your decision to homeschool?

_____ 1 = not important at all; 5 = Extremely important (1)

34. Please indicate how important each of the factors listed below were to your family's decision to homeschool:

	Not at all Important (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Extremely Important (5)
The desire to provide religious or moral instruction (1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Concern about school environment (safety, drugs, negative peer pressure) (2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dissatisfaction with academic instruction at a public or private school (3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The desire to provide a non-traditional educational approach (4)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The special needs of a child (5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other family specific reasons (travel, finances, family time) (6)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The desire to be more involved with your child/children's education (7)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix C: First Reminder Sent on May 5, 2014

Hello,

I emailed you last week about sharing this letter and the link for my [Homeschool Survey](#) with your members and homeschooling friends. Getting a good response rate to this survey is critical to the success of my research. I really appreciate your help. Would it be possible for you to repost/re-distribute this email again as a reminder for homeschoolers to participate?

I am a homeschooling mom from Knoxville, TN who has been a member of Blount Home Education Association (BHEA) since 1990. This study is for my dissertation research. I am trying to get as many homeschool families as possible to complete the survey. This survey will contribute to a better understanding of the parental choice of homeschooling as an educational option.

[Homeschool Survey](#)

My name is Mary Morse and I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling at the University of Tennessee. I have been a member of Blount Home Education Association since 1990. It has been amazing to watch this organization grow and change as I have homeschooled my two sons (now 28 and 12). In fact, the changes that I have seen in homeschooling over the last 25 years motivated me to study homeschooling for my dissertation research.

This research project will specifically study the role that homeschool support groups play in the decision to homeschool and will also seek to understand how homeschool families use homeschool support groups. Additionally, it will seek to understand how factors such as prior public school attendance, having a child with special educational needs, or the desire for more involvement in your child's education might relate to the decision to homeschool.

I would like to ask you to participate in this study by completing a short survey. The survey is anonymous (your identity will not be known by the researcher or anyone else) and will take about 10 minutes to complete. There is no compensation for responding, nor is there any known risk. Participation is completely voluntary and if you decide while filling out the survey that you do not wish to participate, you may exit at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the study after completing the survey, or if you have any questions about the survey, please contact Mary Morse at mmorse@utk.edu or (865) 924-8478 or my Faculty Advisor, Michael Waugh at (865) 974-6157.

Please click the following link to complete the survey:

[Homeschool Survey](#)

Thank you so much for your time.

Mary Morse

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Appendix D: Final Reminder Sent on May 13, 2014

Hello,

I want to thank all of you who have completed my [Homeschool Survey](#). Your support and help has been amazing!

Because I am so close to having enough completed surveys to make this **one of the largest studies on homeschooling ever**, I am going to leave the survey open another week – until Monday, 5/19/2014. If you have not already completed the survey, or if you started but did not complete it, will you please take a few minutes now to do it?

Please click the following link to complete the survey: [Homeschool Survey](#)

Thank you so much for your time.

Mary Morse
Doctoral Candidate & Graduate Research Assistant
The University of Tennessee
Department of Educational Psychology & Counseling
Learning Environments and Educational Studies (LEEDS)
(865) 924-8478
mmorse@utk.edu

More info....

My name is Mary Morse and I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling at the University of Tennessee. I have been a member of Blount Home Education Association since 1990. It has been amazing to watch this organization grow and change as I have homeschooled my two sons (now 28 and 12). In fact, the changes that I have seen in homeschooling over the last 25 years motivated me to study homeschooling for my dissertation research.

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Vita

Mary Lee Morse was born in West Palm Beach, Florida. After graduating from Palm Beach Gardens High School in 1974, she began college at The University of Georgia. Morse earned her Bachelor of Science with a major in Animal Science from the University of Georgia in 1978. She then started a career in the pharmaceutical industry and worked for over twenty years as a representative for both veterinary and human pharmaceutical companies.

In 2005, Morse started work with the University of Tennessee Extension Service in Blount County, Tennessee. She worked with the Tennessee Nutrition and Consumer Education Program to provide nutrition education in fifteen Blount County elementary and secondary schools. In 2009, while working in this position, she earned her Master of Science in Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications from the University of Tennessee. Morse's graduate studies focused on adult learning, program planning and evaluation, and instructional design. She continued her professional development by participating in a curriculum writing cohort at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee to develop curriculum products for gifted students. She also completed thirty-one hours of professional development credit in differentiating instruction and curriculum design for gifted students through workshops offered by Vanderbilt University.

Morse was accepted into a doctoral program in the Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling at the University of Tennessee in August of 2011. Her doctoral work was in the concentration of Learning Environments and Educational Studies (LEEDS). The LEEDS doctoral concentration links the fields of cultural studies (e.g., philosophy, history, and

sociology of education), human learning and development, and instructional design and technology. Morse received her Doctor of Philosophy in Education degree from the University of Tennessee in 2014. Morse plans to work in higher education and to pursue research interests in the areas of parental involvement in education, learning environments, and instructional technology and design.