

PERCEPTIONS OF HOMESCHOOLING FROM PUBLIC SCHOOL
EMPLOYEES AND HOME EDUCATORS

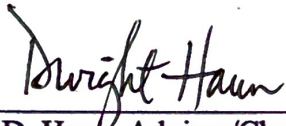
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2022

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**PERCEPTIONS OF HOMESCHOOLING FROM PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEES
AND HOME EDUCATORS**

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PERCEPTIONS OF HOMESCHOOLING FROM PUBLIC SCHOOL
EMPLOYEES AND HOME EDUCATORS

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the Graduate Education Department
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

By

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to identify and understand the differing perceptions of home education between public educators and home educators in Missouri. The perceptions of home education within these two groups of educators is unknown, however, the knowledge of these perceptions may be useful for future partnerships. The researcher wanted to discover current perceptions of homeschooling. The researcher used Wenger's social theory of learning. Communities of Practice is a major component of this theory. Interviews were used to discover the perceptions of home education from public and home educators. Public and home educators were asked about their perceptions on the quality of academics in home education, the home educators' ability to provide socialization and prepare students for the community, and the services that public education might provide home educators. Participants in the study also engaged in a Community of Practice through a focus group discussion to further elaborate on their perceptions.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The United States has a history of educating within the home starting in the Jamestown colony. Home education was by necessity, and it was the only form of education (Humason, 2012; Kerns, 2016; Yeager, 1999). The modern homeschooling movement started in the 1960s (Johnson, 2014; Moreau, 2012). The number of homeschooling students is on the rise, makes up a large population in the United States, and this number is rising every year (Berry, 2015; Maingano, 2016; McQueen, 2019; McSwain, 2020; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES]. 2021). Education is considered a hot topic in most societies and the ways of educating can be vast. The same is found in the realm of home education and public education. School effectiveness research has influenced public education since the 1970s and even when the research is not implemented it is still present for educators' benefit. Due to The National Commission on Excellence in Education's 1983 study, many areas of educational reform have raised questions about the effectiveness of American public schools (McFall, 2016; Yeager, 1999). Looking at the effectiveness of public education created unrest and one response to the unrest was home education (Ray, 2016). While school effectiveness has been studied in the public school and private school sectors, very few studies have examined homeschooling effectiveness.

In Chapter One, the reader will be introduced to the problem statement, rationale, and research questions created for this study. The problem statement

contains current statistics nationally in the area of homeschooling. The rationale and purpose of the study should help the reader see the need for this research and introduce the research questions involved in the study. This study intended to inform educational entities of the current state and perceptions of homeschooling in a southwest region of the United States. The demographics and perceptions may provide a unique understanding and potential bridge between homeschool and public school populations. Home education and public education have a perceived disagreement in philosophy (Feliciano, 2018; Kerns, 2016). The benefit of collaboration has started to become evident to educators in general (Feliciano, 2018).

In Missouri, young people between the ages of 5 to 18 are involved in some sort of schooling whether it is public, private, or home education (Bhamani et al., 2020; Duvall, 2021; Letzel, Pozas, & Schneider, 2020). Students may not always remain in the same educational system their whole lives and there is often a transition in either direction between home education and public education throughout a student's educational career (Bhamani et al., 2020). Public school systems and parents have experienced this transition due to COVID-19, being thrust into home education models by necessity, and more students are experiencing home education (Bhamani et al., 2020; Eggleston & Fields, 2021; DiPerna, Catt, & Shaw, 2020).

Problem Statement

The practice of homeschooling brings about robust emotional perceptions and feelings within the workforce of the public education system (Gray, 1998; Ray, 2021a). The number of students being homeschooled nationally has increased 61.8% from

1,100,000 to 1,800,000 between 2003 to 2012 according to Felso (2016) and the NCES (2021). In the spring of 2016, there were an estimated 2,300,000 homeschooled students, which was an increase from a 2011 study (Beck, 2018; DeRoos, 2018; Francis, 2018; Ray, 2019). According to a recent Gallup poll and the Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey, the number of home-schooled children, defined as students not enrolled in public school, went up 5% from 2019 to 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic (Eggleston & Fields, 2021). In relationship to the 5% increase from 2019 to 2020, this equates to a total of 3,721,000 school-aged (k-12) homeschooled students (Ray, 2021a). NCES (2014) projected a 6% increase in enrollment of public school students from 2011 to 2022. NCES (2014) projection from the NCES estimated an increase of 2,750,000 students in public schools, while they estimated private school enrolment decreasing 6%. The final number of students enrolled in home education in 2019-2020 during the pandemic spike is greater than the 10-year projection made by the NCES. According to Duvall (2021), this is a significant number as the U.S. Census from 2020 reported the number of students' homeschooling as 3 times more than the last census, however, this number could easily decline due to the reopening of schools. Carpenter and Dunn (2020) also found a spike of interest in home education due to the pandemic from homeschooling organizations, yet they have predicted in their research of virtual learning that only 2% of the increase in new home educators would continue after the pandemic. According to Ray (2022) the most recent number of homeschoolers in the United States as of September 2022 was 3,135,000. This is a decline from the 2021 numbers. The change in numbers was due to schools reopening after COVID -19. Ray (2022) does establish that there is still a significant increase from 2,650,000, before

the pandemic. The uptick in homeschooling brings the percentage of students being home educated in the United States to 10% of the population (Brenan, 2020). Families are being thrust into a home education model due to global circumstances (COVID-19 pandemic); questions and relationships must be formulated to grant a more symbiotic and interrelated existence between public and home education (Bhamani et al., 2020; Duvall, 2021; Letzel et al., 2020).

Those who are choosing to homeschool are doing so for reasons of religion, morals, finances, time, concern over school environment, academics, and physical or mental health (Maingano, 2016). According to Shaw (2020) safety has become the Number 1 incentive for families who home educate. The number of students involved in this increase is equivalent to the population of Washington, D.C., and can be seen throughout the 50 states (Berry, 2015). With this increase in students making an alternative educational choice nationally, the increase is also visibly present within each of the individual states where a large number of homeschooling families are represented (Berry, 2015; Duvall, 2021; Ray, 2019).

Strong emotions and responses are garnered by educators about homeschooling in the public education domain (Dennison, Lasser, Awtry, & Lerma, 2020; Feliciano, 2018; Gray, 1998). The choice to educate at home tends to be viewed as a rejection of public school, thus reinforcing strong perceptions and or feelings about home education (Dennison et al., 2020). Exploration of the perceptions of Missouri educators on homeschooling could provide a baseline to creating a more effective partnership. Educators should be interested in understanding why and what is done in education instead of ignoring contrasting ideas and opinions (Romanowski, 2006). Home and

public educators could gain insight from this perceptual study and begin to understand this growing population of homeschool students. Understanding current perceptions of homeschooling from home and public educators will allow both groups to make educational decisions. More importantly, further questions could be created from this study. Taking the possibly contrasting ideas of home education and public education and comparing the perceptions of home education from both groups creates a baseline for understanding.

This study will add to the literature that exists in terms of home education perceptions. Depending on the perception one has on the type of education being received by a home-educated child, a home-educated student could experience limitations or barriers as to how they are treated and also may predict what opportunities are given to the student, especially students within marginalized groups (Dennison et al., 2020; McSwain, 2020). A clearer picture of where partnerships or potential partnerships in education are and how they could be strengthened by the two groups of educators could be garnered through this study. Students do not initially choose the type of education they experience; this is a decision made by adult caregivers (Dennison et al., 2020; Neuman & Guterman, 2016; Pannone, 2017; Shaw, 2020). More information on how the two groups view home education will help educators who experience students from a home education background.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to identify and understand the differing perceptions of home education between public educators and home educators in Missouri. The perceptions of home education within these two groups of educators is

unknown, however, the knowledge of these perceptions may be useful for future partnership. The researcher wanted to discover current perceptions of homeschooling.

This study was intended to help public educators and home educators understand perceptions of those homeschooling in hopes of bridging the gaps between the two educational philosophies. A base of understanding and/or misunderstandings of families who homeschool will be recognized through research, interviews, a focus group, and documents. Public educators might gain insights into the perceptions of the education quality perceived by families in a Midwestern state who are choosing to homeschool. This study also provides homeschool families the perceptions of homeschooling based on public educators in a Midwestern state. The study examined perceptions on education characteristics and education quality and explored the sources of these perceptions in both populations. Qualitative methods often help to discover questions, processes, and themes (McSwain, 2020). This study identified perceptions of public school employees when it comes to home education and also identified perceptions of home education by those immersed in the practice and discovered questions and themes between the two perceptions. Furthermore, future studies could be conducted based on the information found from the study. Due to the gap in research regarding perceptions of home education, this qualitative narrative study helped identify perceptions held by home educators and public educators.

Some students will transition from public school to home education and from home education to public school or higher education (Dennison et al., 2020). This constant transition creates a need for a perception study. Senge (1990) insisted that organizations must be in a constant state of creative tension, always being grounded in

the current reality so the energy built up from the knowledge of where things are and where an organization wants to be can be used to create positive changes. Positive changes in any organized structure can be improved through a creative tension model (Senge, 1990).

In reviewing the literature, the number of homeschool families nationally is increasing from 850,000 in 2000 to 1,700,000 in 2016 (Martin, 2016; NCES, 2021). A current number provided by the National Home Education Research Institute provides an estimate based on Census, EducationData.org, and NCES data estimated 3,721,000 million homeschool students (kindergarten to 12th grade) in the United States during the school year of 2021-2021 (Ray, 2021b). There is a growing population of homeschooling families and it would be very timely and helpful for public school districts to see reasons and factors that apply to families making the educational decision to homeschool. Several studies on the national population suggest an increase in families deciding to homeschool (Berry, 2015; Brennan, 2020; Eggleston & Fields 2021; Geary, 2011; Jumaludin, Alias, & DeWitt, 2015; Martin, 2016; Neuman & Guterman, 2016; Ray, 2019). Within the current COVID-19 pandemic, an increase in students being homeschooled by choice or necessity has increased and a drop in satisfaction with public schooling has been documented (Brennan, 2020). A study of a Southwest region specifically has not been orchestrated to provide families and public schools with accurate information upon which to base future educational decisions. This study will provide valuable information for public schools and also homeschool families.

In all school systems, it is important to share best practices (Reaves, 2018). This

study will provide a clear picture of how to help this growing number of students who are currently involved in home education. As stated previously, students transitioning to or from either model should have a clear understanding of the perceptions of home education in terms of education (Kerns, 2016). The information found in this study can be used to better understand the perceptions of home educators and how home educators are perceived within the public education sector.

Three researchers, Clark (2010), Gray (1998), and Johnson (2014), have done perceptual studies from very different perspectives involving homeschooling. The three researchers agree more understanding in terms of perceptions of home education would benefit students in a homeschooling model and increase cooperation of home and public education. Clark and Johnson came to this understanding through looking at the perceptions of home educators. Gray gained this understanding by surveying public educators.

Research Questions

Through this study the following questions were addressed:

The Central question was: What are the perceptions of home education held by public educators and home educators?

1. What perceptions are held by public school employees (teachers, staff, and administrators) and homeschool educators about the quality of academics in home education?
2. What perceptions are held by public school employees (teachers, staff, and administrators) and homeschool educators about the home educators' ability (homeschooled children you have observed) to socialize and prepare their

children for success in the community?

3. What suggested services might public schools provide to homeschool children and their families and what information should home educators provide to local public schools?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework within this study was based on the conceptual framework that has stated home education is an alternative method of education in the United States. Wenger (1998), a researcher for the Institute for Research on Learning, worked together with Lave in developing a social theory of learning. The overarching concept within the theory is that learning is a highly social experience. Communities of practice CoP is a major component of this theory. CoP place the collective learning from different perspectives into the context of one's lived experience (Wenger, 2017). Learning is looked at as an individualized process and it is often set apart from normal activities. The social theory of learning, CoP assumes the contrary and views learning as a social phenomenon (Wenger, 2017). Community of practice is a construct where learning takes place through the participation of those with a different perspective and the outcome from the participation results in learning (Virban, 2017). Within the theory, people in a community of practice learn from others' experiences; learning is not separate from the practice (Paus, 2015). "(CoP) are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger, 2017, p.1). In the current study, the shared "something" of passion is education. (CoP) can be geographically or ideologically separate as long as there is a shared experience (Paus, 2015). In terms of this study, the two seemingly differing sides

of education, home versus public schooling, will establish a community in practice through the narrative sharing of their experiences and in turn be exposed to possibly different perceptions of home education. Once the shared experience is processed through a narrative lens the concept of understanding or empathy can further the amount of retained knowledge (Riess, 2017).

The social theory of learning was used as a connection point throughout this study. DuFour and Eaker (2021) referred to the process of education as one that works best when collaborating with others. Wenger (2017) established (CoP), which like DuFour and Eaker's (2021) Professional learning communities, established the process of collaboration to improve performance. Wenger's (2017) social theory of learning is immersed in perspective and perception; it does not tell one what to do but informs people on what to look for. The social theory of learning points the reader to what is important, what difficulties are present, and how to approach difficulties.

Wenger (2017) established four distinct components involved within social theory of learning, which are meaning, practice, community, and identity. Meaning is established as a way of talking individually or collectively to experience our life as having meaning (Wenger, 2017). Practice is considered a way of talking about the shared social and historic elements and perspectives of concepts and viewpoints that promote mutual engagement (Wenger, 2017). Community is considered a way of discussing the social structures of groups and how they are defined (Wenger, 2017). Identity is a way of talking about how learning changes people and established personal and group history within the community (Wenger, 2017). Meaning, practice, community, and identity are important components to the entirety of this study as each

provided a depth of understanding of the perceptions uncovered.

In addition to the social theory of learning, the simulation theory of empathy, which is also considered a theory of mind, is where a person can understand another person's view based on how one should feel or think (Wenger, 2017). Gordon is credited with developing simulation theory or empathy theory in which one can predict or understand behaviors by knowing a person's situation and conditions (Layman, 2017). Piaget's (1928) earliest studies looked at the understanding of one's mind (Layman, 2017). People make sense of behaviors and actions based on an understanding of others' actions (Goldman, 1992; Shanton & Goldman, 2010). This understanding, empathy, can produce similar behavior in situations in which there are opposing viewpoints. Empathy is what humans use to bridge the gap of emotion when perceiving what another person is encountering cognitively or emotionally when seeking to understand their world (Dreyer, 2017; Riess, 2017). In the current study, the viewpoint or perception of a public educator's understanding of home education and the viewpoint of a home educator can be studied so an understanding can be gathered through social theory of learning, (CoP). The gathering of empathy and understanding helps one make decisions. This theory provides a basis for linking one's intentional actions in education. When a person sees another person's intentional action, empathy is a common response (Whitlow-Spurlock, 2019). To experience understanding, the understanding party must experience a viewpoint exactly or very similarly and they should be able to imaginatively experience the other's point of view (Coplan, 2004). This is closely related to Glasser's choice theory. Choice theory was originally called control theory and then changed in 1996. Choice theory states people cannot control other people's

behavior, but they can control their behaviors (Whitlow-Spurlock, 2019). Thus, understanding one's perception and the perceptions of others, via perception theory, allows one to control their outward response.

Empathy is thought of as a mentally tasking endeavor meaning when one is attempting to understand or have empathy, there is a cognitive cost. The act of empathizing has been proven to be a deterrent due to the effort involved in experiencing the phenomena (Cameron et al., 2019). According to Cameron et al. (2019), empathy can also become a very difficult act due to five tasks. The first is understanding that a person's desires may be different from yours. Second, people have different belief systems. Third, the knowledge that something is true may not be understood or comprehended. Fourth, people have false beliefs. Fifth, people may act one way but feel another way. This leads to the usefulness of this study as it reports the perceptions of two different populations through interviews. The reader will experience the perceptions of two viewpoints and in turn exhibit a less taxing response to empathizing as related (Cameron et al., 2019). The understanding of a public educator's perception of home education and the home educator's perception of home education is presented for the reader. In this context, one will seek to understand before being understood (Covey, 2020). Using social theory of learning, (CoP), the reader and the two populations whose perceptions are being gathered will be able to experience understanding of what the possible opposing viewpoints are, thus assembling resulting learning. Future research models could allow for a more symbiotic relationship in education.

The use of these theories provided perception information generated from both education populations. The premise was to determine what the perceptions are. The

focus of this study was not to provide reasons for why the two populations have certain perceptions. Reasons why perception are held and how they may change could be looked at in future studies. People must have some stimuli or building blocks to understand perception and raw data that are produced shows that it exists. The existence of the produced data allows for perception to be organized and then understood (Cameron et al., 2019).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework found in the structure of homeschool models of the modern-day is Mason's educational philosophy (de Bellaigue, 2015; Mason, 2018). Mason is accredited for breaking socioeconomic and gender barriers within education during the late 1800s and the early 1900s. Mason (2018) contended that education is more than just academics; it is an atmosphere, a discipline, and a life. Mason advocated for children to be schooled at home until the age of 9 and found the public system to be more beneficial for older students (de Bellaigue, 2015; Mason, 2018; Whitlow-Spurlock, 2019). As mentioned in the problem statement, an uptick in students homeschooling by choice or by necessity due to public health concerns with the global COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrates both home education and public education are viable options (Brenan, 2020). This study was based on the concept of homeschooling being an alternative method of education within the United States. Home education families, for hundreds of years, have not depended on a national institution of education and taken on the role of education within the home (Yeager, 1999). Mason was immersed in both sectors of education and found value in both methods. Compulsory education law was established in 1789 mainly to help those without parents so they too

could receive a quality education. Conceptually, compulsory education driven by the government had convinced the vast majority of parents that public schooling was superior to home education (Mason, 2018; Salvo, 2018). By the 1960s Holt and Moore touted the harmful effects of formal education, such as the focus on rote learning and how it created an oppressive classroom environment, and they began promoting homeschooling as an alternative to public education (Humason, 2012; Salvo, 2018; Swenson, 2016; Van Der Weide, 2019).

Ray (2021a) was the president of the National Home Education Research Institute at the time of the study and was often cited in the dissertations and articles used to research home education (M. Snyder, 2011; Walters, 2015). Ray is an advocate of home education and has written the book, *Worldwide Guide to Homeschooling*. This book is an educational resource for those considering home education or those wanting to explore the concept. Compulsory education is considered the norm in the United States and around the world (Humason, 2012; Moreau, 2012). Homeschool education has become more prevalent in the United States since the 1960s (Johnson, 2014; Moreau, 2012; Salvo, 2018).

Ray (2021a) asserted the population of home-educated students in the United States was increasing approximately 8% within the years between 2016 and 2019. In addition to growing numbers of families moving to home education the demographics of those making this educational choice is broadening. All socioeconomic levels, educational backgrounds, religious or nonreligious preferences, political party affiliation, and Black, White, and Hispanic groups are represented in the increased numbers (Jeffery, 2019; Johnson, 2014; Ray, 2016, 2019). Within the conceptual

framework, student success in terms of college acceptance and achievement is shown to be the same if not better when compared to public school educated students by homeschooled students (Martin, 2016; Ray, 2004; M. Snyder, 2011; SanClemente, 2016). As an alternative method of education, home education is becoming more common as myths about the practice are dismissed (Martin, 2016; Ray, 2019; Romanowski, 2006). Instead of putting value in only one system or the other, perceptions can garner understanding for all involved (Mason, 2018).

Limitations

This study had some limitations based on the subject and method of research. The limitations included the following:

1. The number of interviews (10) may not have given a clear description of the designated region. The researcher chose to conduct 10 in-depth interviews with participants. Baker, Edwards, and Doidge (2021), Bonde (2013), and Flick (2020) determined that in some cases only one interview is enough when conducting some narrative research. However, experts agree, the depth of the interview is what is most important in qualitative research (Baker et al., 2021; Bonde, 2013; Flick, 2020). Originally, the current researcher's committee suggested conducting two interviews with public school representatives and two with home educators. After determining criteria to make sure the information gathered was diverse, the researcher decided to conduct 10 interviews, five with public educators and five with home educators. In addition to the 10 in-depth interviews, a focus group with the same 10 participants was conducted with all 10 participants at the same time discussing responses and going deeper together.

Flick (2020) asserted that fewer participants are needed when in-depth interviews are conducted, and the participants are also asked to be a part of other portions of the study beyond the initial interview.

2. Sampled individuals were limited to voluntary response. Not everyone who received an invitation to interview agreed to participate. The researcher sought an alternative participant who met the interview criteria. This was especially true with the homeschool population due to difficulty researching this population based on privacy concerns held by many in the population (Jeffery, 2019; McQueen, 2019).
3. Questions asked during the interview were subject to interpretation by the respondent.
4. Self-reporting limits of this study were based on the respondent's accuracy. Some subjects might have chosen to respond incorrectly.
5. In the third leg of triangulation, the discussion focus group, all participants were unfamiliar with one another, and this might have hindered their true response. A quick introduction and reminder of confidentiality were given to provide a common understanding.

Delimitations

Some delimiting factors may have been controlled by the researcher. The delimiting factors in this study included the following:

1. The researcher chose to delimit the interview data based on the state of Missouri.
2. Interviews were held in person or virtually through Microsoft Teams to accommodate those being interviewed.

3. The study was narrative by design and nature.
4. Homeschooling families and professional educators were sampled and included in this study.

Assumptions

The research conducted was based on certain assumptions.

1. All participants answered the interview questions honestly to provide accurate data for the study.
2. The participants of the interviews provided truthful information due to the confidentiality statement given to them before they were interviewed.
3. The data collected from the study accurately helped address the research questions within the study.

Design Controls

The design of this study was quantitative and narrative. Ten in-depth interviews were performed to understand the perceptions of home education. Five public school administrators were interviewed, and five home educators were interviewed. Butina (2015) stated that qualitative sample size is ambiguous and completely depends on the study. Butina used 10 interviews as a minimum with the insight to increase if necessary, to reach redundancy. Peoples (2021) explained eight to 15 interviews were enough when conducting qualitative research. The interviews were transcribed in their entirety in Appendix B and responses to three major questions posed in the interview were additionally grouped by question. These questions revolved around the research questions.

Design controls were put into place to allow for greater depth and breadth of information. The researcher chose to have a total of 10 interviews. To help control this limitation and provide a clearer description of the perceptions of home education from this region, interviews were in-depth and as can be read in Chapter Three, allowed for follow-up questions. This permitted the study to be a more representative sample. Flick (2020) asserted that fewer participants are needed when in-depth interviews are conducted, and the participants should also be asked to be a part of other portions of the study beyond the initial interview. During the interviews, any clarification needed on a question from the participants was given during the interview. Another design control was choosing sampled individuals from different Regional Professional Development Centers (RPDCs) districts in Missouri to provide an accurate and diverse sampling of interviews. To alleviate any issues with self-reporting accuracy, member checking was used to give the individuals interviewed the opportunity to check their responses before they were published. The researcher also provided the participants with a disclosure of confidentiality to improve self-reporting accuracy. Each participant was given an abbreviation such as HS, indicating homeschool, or PS, indicating public school. Next, each participant was given a letter based on the RPDC they were from, N for Northern, C for Central, and SO for Southern. Finally, each participant was provided a letter after their number indicating district size. The capital letter S indicated a small school district of 1,000 or less students for public school employees or a family of one or two children for home educators. The capital letter M indicated a medium-sized school district of 1,001 to 4,999 students for public school employees or a family of three to five children for home educators. The capital letter L indicated a large-sized school district of 5,000

or more students for public school employees or a family of six or more children for home educators. For example, the label, PS-C-M-F, would indicate the person interviewed was a public educator from a RPDC area which is in Central Missouri, from a medium-sized school district, and F would indicate they are female. Another example would be HS-SO-SF-M, indicating the person interviewed is a home educator, from a RPDC area which is in Southern Missouri, from a small family, and they are a male. A control set to help the focus group Discussion was utilizing the concepts of community of practice. This allowed the participants to understand that there was a common goal to achieve and helped them have an enlightened discussion regarding students.

The delimited factors of this study were to help make sure the data gathered could be done so realistically and thoroughly. Delimiting the interview subjects to the state of Missouri and possibly online due to concern for social distancing allowed the researcher access to the interview subjects. Utilizing the option of in-person or virtual interviews allowed for the participant to dictate their level of comfort, especially with concerns lingering from the ongoing pandemic (Green, 2021). The chosen qualitative research study was purposely chosen to be narrative to hear individuals' perceptions and their own stories of home education. The last delimiting factor that allowed for success in this study was the individuals chosen to be interviewed were known to be in the home education or professional education realm.

The assumptions of this study were items that were accepted as true based on the design controls set up by the researcher. Once the interview participants were selected, the participants answered the research questions honestly and provided accurate data. This was assumed because there were no external pressures upon the interview subjects

to benefit from false answers. The questions answered within this study were designed to provide the actual perceptions of home education in Missouri. The interview subjects also met the definition set up within the study to accurately portray their viewpoints. This study told the story and identified a person's perceptions on home education but was not able to uncover why the perception was there. The "why" will need to be examined in further studies.

In summary, the design control set up within this study provided for an accurate study. The researcher was aware of limitations and made an effort to control the limitations as much as possible. The delimited factors allowed for a successful study and provided valid and accurate responses. As the theoretical framework of the social theory of learning, (CoP) was also implemented by creating a common goal with the participants, accurate data would be provided. The following section provides a list of terms that allows the reader a better understanding of the comprehensive study.

Definition of Terms

Compulsory Education. Section 167.031, RSMo, states that any parent, guardian, or other person having custody or control of a child between the ages of seven (7) and the compulsory attendance age for the district, must ensure that the child is enrolled in and regularly attends public, private, parochial, homeschool or a combination of schools for the full term of the school year. The term "compulsory attendance age for the district" shall mean seventeen (17) years of age or having successfully completed sixteen (16) credits towards high school graduation in all other cases. Children between the ages of five (5) and seven (7) are not required to be enrolled in school. However, if they are enrolled in a public school their parent, guardian or

custodian must ensure that they regularly attend (Foster, 2015).

Homeschool. The process of educating a student from the home (typically taught by a parent or parents) and/or in conjunction with a network of homeschooling families within the confines of a homeschool co-op or shared services (de Beer, Vos & Myburgh, 2020; Moreau, 2012; Neuman & Guterman, 2018).

Home Education. This is a term that is used synonymously with homeschooled. It is the process in which a parent takes on the responsibility of educating their child where children learn and grow without attending a traditional school (Edwards, 2007).

Public School. Government-funded schools are operated by professional educators (Humason, 2012).

Summary

Perceptions of homeschooling from families who home educate and the perception of home education within public education circles are unknown due to a lack of research in this area. This qualitative study will provide information to public and home educators to assist in promoting collaboration occurring due to the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. This study can also serve as a baseline in the perceptions of educators and for use in future areas of study. As the body of literature is limited in terms of people's perceptions of home education, several strands of future studies could result from the research survey and conducted interviews. This qualitative study attempted to portray the current status of perceptions held by public educators and homeschool families in Missouri based on literature, interviews, and a virtual (online) focus group involving participants. The researcher found studies related to home education spanning 29 years (Adams, 1992; Beck, 2018; Berry, 2015; Bowens, 2020; Bradford, 2018; Carlson, 2020;

Cavan, 2017; Clark, 2010; S. Davis, 2000; de Beer et al., 2020; Dennison et al., 2020; Dreyer, 2017; DeRoos, 2018; Edwards, 2007; English, 2019; Felkins, 2018; Felso, 2016; Francis, 2018; Geary, 2011; Goode, 2009; Gray, 1998; Humason, 2012; Huseman, 2017; Holt, 2017; Jeffery, 2019; Johnson, 2014; Kerns, 2016; Kliewer, 2019; Koonce, 2007; Maingano, 2016; Marang, 2005; Martin, 2016; McDonald, 2020; McQueen, 2019; McSwain, 2020; Michaud, 2019; Moreau, 2012; Myers, 2017; Pannone, 2017; Pietersma, 2020; Ray, 2021a; Reese, 2006; Riegle, 1998; Ripperger-Suhler, 2016; Salvo, 2018; SanClemente, 2016; Shaw, 2020; M. Snyder, 2011; Sutton, 2002; Thomas, 2019; Tolentino, 2020; Van Der Weide, 2019; Virban, 2017; Walters, 2015; Whitlow-Spurlock, 2019; Williams, 2018; Windish, 2016; Yeager, 1999). The majority of the studies used from 2015 to 2021 showed an overlap in sources. With the overlap in sources, there was a gap in recent research on the current state of home education and especially understanding the perceptions of homeschooling. There has not been a study comparing the perceptions on home education between those who home educate and public educators. It was the researcher's finding that there was not a perception study based on home educators' perceptions of home education at all, yet there is a study from Gray (1998), in which perceptions of public educators on home education are harvested. The researcher discussed the methodology used within the study and the instrumentation used in Chapter Three. The researcher displayed the results of the study in Chapter Four. Chapter Five includes a summary of the study and conclusions gathered from the research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In 2020, more than 50,000,000 students attended public schools within the United States (NCES, 2021). Ray (2021a) found there were an estimated 5,000,000 students in home education in March of 2021. McDonald (2020) and Ray (2021a) attributed the number of home-educated students doubling from 5% to 10% of all educated students in the United States, to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Before the global pandemic, growth rates for home education were steadily growing between 2% and 8% annually (Ray, 2021b). Even with the forced increase of home education based on the COVID-19 pandemic these spikes in home education may move back to normal levels when schools are fully reopened (Carpenter & Dunn, 2021; Duvall, 2021). Some may wonder how many students will return to the public school classroom when schools fully open up without restrictions. Some may also wonder how many will stay in home education. There may also be the thought of whether there is a path that leads to public schools and homeschools working together. Carpenter and Dunn (2021) asserted that due to the increase in schools moving to virtual learning home education and public schools have begun the process of working more closely with students working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Several factors influence the decision for families to homeschool (DeRoos, 2018; Feliciano, 2018; Felkins, 2018; Maingano, 2016; Martin, 2016; Pietersma, 2020; Ray, 2016; Sanclemente, 2016). With the increase of home education through virtual learning cited by Carpenter and Dunn (2021) and the need for public schools and homeschools to better communicate practices cited in Gray (1998), there is a need to uncover the perceptions of public school employees and

homeschool educators. Gray's study in 1998 did not have the knowledge of a global pandemic, which would move students into a home education model, yet Gray felt the need to find perceptions of public educators due to the growth in the late 1990s. With even larger growth now cited by McDonald (2020) and Ray (2021a), the researcher can see a need to uncover perceptions of home education from home educators and public school employees to provide a better framework for future collaboration.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework, social theory of learning and (CoP) established the importance of perspectives. Perspectives do not tell one what to do but they tell a person what to look for (Wenger, 2017). The historical perspective of public education and the history of home education drives the researcher to look at characteristics of families who homeschool, reasons for homeschooling, types of homeschooling, myths, achievements, and regulations. Wenger (2017) asserted the social theory of learning and (CoP) creates a lens for viewing groups with competing ideas yet similar passions to learn from another perception. Literature from both the home education and public sectors has been researched to better describe the two differing viewpoints. Competing ideas according to Wenger (2017) can become ideas that merge to form learning.

In the review of literature, the reader is exposed to many facets of home education. The researcher was not able to uncover scholarly articles regarding home educators and public educators working together to educate students, showing a gap in research. Statistics are presented throughout the body of the review and provide some empirical background. Public schools and the history of home education is presented connecting several researchers' historical views. The topic of public education is taken

in a very general manner looks at education in a national context. It is understood by the researcher that all national data do not paint a specific picture of all public schools or public school experiences. The information and context of the research will provide a historical view of public education and some of the major issues faced in public education. This can also be dually noted for home education research as well. The researcher understands not all home education situations are the same and cannot be verified using the same data. Next, the reader will be presented with reasons for homeschooling and be given a vast rationale for this educational decision. The following section will address homeschool perceptions. In this section, misconceptions of socialization and achievement, along with common implications and controversies surrounding this topic will be explored. Achievement data of home-educated students will be addressed. Finally, the researcher will address perceptions in education.

Public Schools

From the very formation of the county, education has been an important aspect of its development (Kerns, 2016). Kerns (2016) explained public schools began in the 1600s. Compulsory or mandatory education was initially designed for those without parents. The general courts mandated schools that Puritan children would attend. The idea of being public was only due to the mandate, not public as in all children would attend. In 1789 a compulsory public education law was established for children who could not afford school. The first public high school was created and more United States territories made education a requirement in 1827. In 1852, Thomas Jefferson suggested public schools (Kerns, 2016; SanClemente, 2016). The 1700s were a time of church schools, town and charitable schools for the less fortunate, private schools for

the rich, private tutoring, and home education, which were funded via tuition, contributions, or taxes. Funding was much more of a barrier and there was more inequity in the quality of education and even access to education. Women and minorities did not have full access to formal schooling (Humbert, 2012). From 1865 to 1877 Black Americans encouraged the South to adopt a public education system and the United States Supreme Court case, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, mandated the “Separate but Equal” approach, and states were required by law to integrate classrooms.

Compulsory schooling became normal in the early 1900s and students who had access to public schools were to attend (SanClemente, 2016). Public schools were widely used by the general public as the main way to educate children. Public education uses taxpayers’ funding to create and maintain an educational program that fits the masses (Maingano, 2016). SanClemente (2016) and Delaney (2014) stated public education in the United States sought to create a more tailored model of education for learners across the curriculum. Typical class sizes varied from grade level to grade level and class sizes also varied based on the district’s philosophy and or funding. Public schools offered transportation in many districts and extracurricular activities such as sports and also offered many opportunities in the arts.

Delaney (2014) established that special education models were also offered for families who found their child had learning difficulties and by law schools must provide a free and appropriate education to all students regardless of disability and academic level. State by state, schools provided curriculum and content based on standards deemed important and or nonnegotiable (Delaney, 2014). Standards were written in areas of math, English, foreign language, social studies, science, physical education, and

other related arts. According to Marzano (2014) and Whitaker (2020), all schools are not able to provide the same education due to several variables. The teacher in the classroom is the main variable between satisfactory and unsatisfactory learning (Whitaker, 2020). Whitaker (2020) has deemed the teacher as the main difference-maker in the quality of education given to a student. Whittaker (2020) devoted an entire chapter in his book, *What Great Teachers Do Differently*, to the concept of people making the difference, not the programs we adopt. Guaranteed and viable curriculum is also a variable from state to state, district to district, and classroom to classroom (Marzano, 2014). As public schools strive to provide free and appropriate education to all students they must compete with funding. Not all schools are given the same per-pupil expenditures (Jeffery, 2019).

As the nation grew in the 1800s at a fast pace the public school system also grew quickly. The 1830s ushered in the office of the Secretary of Education in Massachusetts, held by Horace Mann. Common schools were regarded as free and accessible along with a set curriculum funded by taxes (Humbert, 2012; Jeffery, 2019; Koonce, 2007; Maingano, 2016). Common schools were created to “Americanize” immigrants and these common schools slowly lead to compulsory attendance laws. All states established attendance laws that were considered compulsory attendance laws in 1918. In 20 years, the spending on education in all states combined increased \$78,000,000 while enrollment in public (common) schools increased by 6,100,000 pupils (Humbert, 2012).

Booker T Washington described the state of education as follows.

An entire race was trying to go to school. There wasn't anybody too old or too young that didn't feel as though he or she couldn't benefit from some level of

schooling and it was seen as the most valuable undertaking- the notion of going to school. (Humbert, 2012, p.14)

In the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the Supreme Court found that public institutions could be segregated based on race as long as facilities were separate but equal. This ruling included public schools and the quality of public schools for many minorities became substandard as a result of the ruling (Humbert, 2012). The quality of public and homeschools and their effectiveness have been in question throughout the history of education. Findings in *The Coleman Report* in 1966 found that schools were not the major determining factor in the success of a student, family background was, thus demanding school reform (Bradford, 2018).

Bradford (2018) and Swenson (2016) explained how the 1950s ushered in more reform in the terms of abolishing segregated schools. The United States Supreme Court case of *Brown v. The Board of Education* in 1954 mandated integration. President Eisenhower sent in the Federal troops to Little Rock, Arkansas, to enforce this ruling in 1957. This was done in response to the governor of Arkansas having the National Guard in place to prevent the integration from happening. The use of military power against the United States Government was unlawful and this was not an indication of the president supporting desegregation. In the 1960s, due to social unrest, lack of trust in the government, and opposition to public school policies, confidence in the public school system was starting to erode.

The public school system nationally has had an interest in school effectiveness since the 1970s due to negativity about the impact of schools on student performance (Bradford, 2018). A major issue public schools face is an inability

to keep up with the mass customizations of curriculum based on the large number of students who are a part of public education (Bradford, 2018). Carlson (2020) and Humbert (2012) discussed the noble work of the education system in the United States. The United States school system is very inclusive. A student in the United States can attend a public school no matter where they live. All students are entitled to free and appropriate education (Delaney, 2014). Students have the right to public education no matter what their background. Students from low socioeconomic family situations or students with disabilities have the access to education. The values of tuition-free education for all students—the promise of equal educational opportunities no matter race, religion, or ability; commitment to high standards; public accountability; and the benefit to society—are the foundational premises upon which the public school system is built (Carlson, 2020; Humbert, 2012; Resnick, 2006; T. D. Snyder, deBray, & Dillow 2016). T.D. Snyder et al. (2016) determined that children in America have the opportunity to attend public schools. In the 2014-2015 school year there were 3,323,000 expected graduates and 3,031,000 were public school students (T.D. Snyder et al., 2016). The United States has a noble history of educating the masses and giving opportunities to the less fortunate (Carlson, 2020; Humbert, 2012; Resnick, 2006; Snyder et al., 2016).

In summary, public schooling began to provide children with the opportunity to receive an education even if they did not have parents. Not all students were able to attend public schools until compulsory attendance laws were established (Kerns, 2016; SanClemente, 2016). Public schools intend to provide free and appropriate education

regardless of socioeconomic status, disability, family status, and race. Public education is funded through state taxes and is available to all (Carlson, 2020; Humbert, 2012; Resnick, 2006; Snyder et al., 2016). Public schools have been immersed in a form of (CoP) over the years. Professional learning communities and (CoP) have a very similar focus and many schools are immersed in these practices (DuFour & Eaker, 2021; Wenger, 2017). Public education has a history of advocacy and empowerment for all who seek education in the United States (Carlson, 2020; Humbert, 2012; Resnick, 2006; Snyder et al., 2016). Mason (2018) valued and viewed public and home education viable option for families.

History of Homeschooling

America's earliest schools were considered homeschools and they were thought of as a very effective way to produce literacy in children (Alston-Abel & Berninger, 2018; Bradford, 2018; Cavan, 2017; Edwards, 2007; Koonce, 2007; Yeager, 1999). Social theory of learning would consider this an element of identity through the historical origins and community practice. Long before public schools were created, even the concept of public schools, home education was viewed as the primary way to educate children on the early American frontier and has existed for centuries (Edwards, 2007; Feliciano, 2018; Felkins, 2018; Gray, 1998; McFall, 2016; Riley, 2015; Williams, 2018). Without the state providing a system of education, families would be the main educators for children. Mark Twain, Andrew Carnegie, General MacArthur, F.D.R., presidents Lincoln and Wilson, William Penn, and Agatha Christie are all early Americans who were taught using home education (Edwards, 2007; Koonce, 2007). John Adams and Pierre Samuel Du Pont are other examples who have documented literacy in early America before the institution of compulsory attendance laws and

parents were a child's primary teacher (Kliwer, 2019; Swenson, 2016; Yeager, 1999).

For the colonists and the pioneers, home learning was commonly the only education received. This was the norm for Americans during the first half of the 19th. The home was considered the main form of education as well as the main center of influence and guidance until just after World War I (Edwards, 2007). In 1918, states began a push for compulsory attendance laws and promoted that each state was responsible for offering education to all children. The early 1900s marked the creation of public schools and compulsory attendance laws (Humbert, 2012; SanClemente, 2016). This could be viewed as an opposing view to home education and a passionate decision for education that encompasses the element of practice in the social theory of learning (Wenger, 2017). In contrast, most religious groups were the main population choosing to home educate (Clark, 2010; Edwards, 2007; Williams, 2018).

Holt is widely considered the father of the modern homeschool movement (Clark, 2010; Felkins, 2018; Goode, 2009; Humason, 2012; Johnson, 2014; Koonce, 2007; Martin, 2016; McFall, 2016; Myers, 2017; Reese, 2006; Salvo, 2018; Snyder, 2011; Swenson, 2016; Van Der Weide, 2019). Holt (1995) wrote *How Children Fail* (1982), in which the process of compulsory education was attached to disrupting student learning. The public compensatory attendance school was viewed in Holt's eyes as a commodity that was selling a product and the alternative to an ineffective product was to teach your child at home. Holt had ambitions to help public and private school systems reform and not be a class system of winners and losers (Bradford, 2018; Francis, 2018; Johnson, 2014; Myers, 2017; Snyder, 2011; Van Der Weide, 2019). Holt (2017) wrote,

People, even children, are educated much more by the whole society around them and the general quality of life in it than they are by what happens in schools. The dream of many school people, that schools can be places where virtue is preserved and passed on in a world otherwise empty of it, now seems to be a sad and dangerous illusion. It might have worked in the Middle Ages; it can't work in a world of cars, jets, TV, and the mass media... The beyond in the title *Freedom and Beyond* means, therefore, that we must look beyond the question of reforming schools and at the larger question of schools and schooling itself. Can they do all the things we ask them to do? Are they the best means of doing it? What might be other or better ways? (p. 4)

Holt (2017) presented ideas about schools and the class or factor system in hopes to reform modern education. Literacy has declined with the development of the public education system when compared to literacy rates before this time. It is estimated that close to 90% of the White population in the mid-19th century was literate and the quest for compulsory education has been a push of politics as opposed to education (Yeager, 1999). Holt began to focus on home education and pushed for states to make pathways for families to immerse themselves in homeschooling. Holt (2004) compared the system of home education to that of the underground railroad system for slaves, stating that the compulsory attendance laws bound children to education that may not be what they needed. Slaves sometimes could not escape slavery and people would not dare suggest they should not escape yet students were encouraged to stay in a system even if the system was not working correctly. This did not instantly empower any families who homeschooled as they took offense to the comparison as the underground railroad was

considered illegal and what they were doing, in-home education, was legal. Holt wrote, a new Underground Railroad to help children escape from S-schools (slave schools). Some may say that such a railroad would be unfair since only a few children could get on it. But most slaves could not escape from slavery, either, yet no one suggested or would suggest that because all the slaves could not be freed, none should be. Besides, we have to blaze a new trail if only so that others may follow. The Children's Underground Railroad, like all movements of social protest and change, must begin small; it will grow larger as more children ride it. (2004)

The modern homeschool movement started to grow in the 1970s (Gray, 1998; Johnson, 2014; McQueen, 2019; Pietersma, 2020), with the 1972 U.S. Supreme Court's decision in favor of homeschooling in *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972). This case set a standard and many states affirmed homeschooling to be legal as a result of the decision (Gray, 1998; Johnson, 2014; Maingano, 2016; Pietersma, 2020; SanClemente, 2016). *Wisconsin v. Yoder* consisted of an Amish family who wanted to educate their child at home after the eighth grade. The court system established, using the 14th Amendment and the free exercise clause of the first Amendment, that parents had the protection of educational choice (Gray, 1998).

Families currently congregate together to educate at home, based on constitutional rights (Apple, 2020; Moreau, 2012). In 1977, Holt created a newsletter about homeschooling called *Growing Without Schools*. This publication provided information and resources on current home education models and reflected upon the current state of compulsory education in the United States. This newsletter started to

bring together and make homeschool families aware of one another. Homeschooling started to be more visible in communities due to this publication (Clark, 2010). Holt's positions on student learning became very controversial and branched out to form its own form of homeschooling. His theory asserted children do not learn due to authority but rather they learn best based on their interests. The controversial movement in home education that is associated with Holt is unschooling (English, 2019; Martin, 2016; T.D. Snyder et al., 2016). Unschooling is a philosophy of home education in stark contrast to compulsory education. Students are not given direction or curriculum; they choose what they want to learn (Jeffery, 2019; Kerns, 2016; Maingano, 2016; Michaud, 2019; Williams, 2018).

This was not the only thought and idea within homeschooling communities. In the 1970s homeschool families were categorized in two ways. They were highly religious or of high academic philosophy (Clark, 2010; Geary, 2011; Williams, 2018). Walters identified these groups as ideologues and pedagogues (Maingano, 2016; McFall, 2016; Walters, 2015). Ideologues are families who may have decided to educate at home due to a religious stance or convictions (McFall, 2016; Salvo, 2018). Pedagogues have decided to educate at home because they do not agree with the practices of public compulsory education and prefer to have more choice and control of educational decisions (McFall, 2016; T.D. Snyder et al., 2016). The concepts of ideologues and pedagogues connect to the theoretical framework of (CoP). Both views are heavily passionate about home education even as their rationales conflict. Organizations or those in an organized setting can benefit from sharing views via a CoP (Pyrko, Dörfler, & Eden, 2017).

In the 1970s Moore, an employee of the U.S. Department of Education, began research on education for young children. Moore focused on the timing for starting school and whether the institutional school is educationally sound for young children (Jeffery, 2019; Maingano, 2016; McFall, 2016; Riley, 2015; M. Snyder, 2011). This view agreed with the conceptual framework from Mason (2018) as she found home education to be best for younger children. Moore found attending school too early created uncertainty in the child's environment, confusion from the new classroom, frustration within the regimented program, hyperactivity, failure, and delinquency. Moore's study recommended students stay home longer before attending school (Davis, 2000; Maingano, 2016; McFall, 2016; McQueen, 2019). Moore spoke with over 100 specialists in family development who also concluded students become bored and tired of school before they leave the third and fourth grades (Snyder, 2016). A movement of home educators was influenced by Moore and engaged in a more contemporary home educational design that was considered more planned and related to curriculum.

The 1980s marked a time of transition as to who was homeschooling and why. Several Supreme Court cases began eliminating prayer in schools, Bible reading, and the teaching of intelligent design or creationism science (Koonce, 2007). By taking a stance on such issues, many families who had strong religious beliefs became concerned about the overall school environment public schools were providing. Homeschooling became an avenue for a large number of Christian families to take hold of home education as a way of establishing religious education (Jeffery, 2019; Kliever, 2019; Koonce, 2007). Families take the content of the curriculum they approve and disseminate it to their students. The worldview and content will not have a questionable

nature if the family unit creates and or approves it. In 1986 all states made provisions for homeschooling to be a choice or option that was different from public schooling and in 1989 it became a completely legal option (Maingano, 2016).

Home education has shown a large per-pupil growth in recent years according to numerous researchers (Beck, 2018; Felkins, 2018; McDonald, 2020; Ray 2021a). According to Ray (2021b), the president of the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI), there are currently 2,300,000 home-educated students in America and the population has grown anywhere from 2% to 8% annually since 2010 (Beck, 2018; Felkins, 2018; Kliewer, 2019; Ray, 2016). Salvo (2018) estimated a growth rate in homeschooling as high as 12%. Another estimate on the growth of the homeschool movement states the number of home educated families in the United States in 1994 was 356,000, which grew to 1,770,000 million in 2011 (Carlson, 2020; Efford & Becker, 2017; Gann & Carpenter, 2019; Ripperger-Suhler, 2016; Salvo, 2018). Home education has been a practice within the United States since its conception.

In summary, many people who helped form the United States have educational backgrounds that are grounded in homeschooling (Edwards, 2007; Feliciano, 2018; Felkins, 2018; Gray, 1998; McFall, 2016; Riley, 2015; Williams, 2018). Although the original movement to home educate stemmed from necessity, once compulsory education laws were established, many families continued to home educate due to religious beliefs (Clark, 2010; Edwards, 2007; Williams, 2018). Holt and Moore were two of the most influential minds in home education during the modern movement (Clark, 2010; Felkins, 2018; Goode, 2009; Humason, 2012; Johnson, 2014; Koonce, 2007; Maingano, 2016; Martin, 2016; McFall, 2016; McQueen, 2019; Myers, 2017;

Reese, 2006; Salvo, 2018; Snyder, 2011; Swenson, 2016; Van Der Weide, 2019). Several critical legal judgments established a parent's right to choose the type of education for their children such as *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (Gray, 1998; Johnson, 2014; Maingano, 2016; Pietersma, 2020). The modern homeschooling movement has seen wide ranges of growth in participation (Gray, 1998; Maingano, 2016; Pietersma, 2020; SanClemente, 2016). The theoretical framework, social theory of learning and (CoP), is evident within the history of home education found in the vast numbers of those who have chosen to home educate in the past and finding reasons or rationale for making these decisions (Beck, 2018; Bowens, 2020; Edwards, 2007; Feliciano, 2018; Felkins, 2018; Humason, 2012; Johnson, 2014; Koonce, 2007; Maingano, 2016; Marang, 2005; Martin, 2016; Moreau, 2012; Pietersma, 2020; Ray, 2016; Reese, 2006; Ripperger-Suhler, 2016; Romanowski, 2006; Salvo, 2018; SanClemente, 2016; Van Der Weide, 2019; Walters, 2015).

Characteristics of Families Who Homeschool

There are many characteristics of families who choose to homeschool. A typical home-educated family consists of two parents, two or more children, a husband who is a professional, business owner, skilled laborer, and a mother who is the main home educator in 97% of the homeschool homes (Feliciano, 2018; Francis, 2018; Pietersma, 2020; Yeager, 1999). There are on average five people in the home of a home-educated family. Home educators are described as hard-working, protective, and very interested in the curriculum needs of their children (Francis, 2018; Kerns, 2016; McQueen, 2019; Whitlow-Spurlock, 2019; Windish, 2016; Yeager, 1999). It would seem that home educators have a higher level of education when compared to public

school families (Kerns, 2016; McQueen, 2019; Windish, 2016). Thirty-three percent of nonhome educators had a bachelor's degree or master's where home educators were found to have 47% of their population with bachelor's or master's degrees; 52% of all home education families operate financially with one income. Nineteen percent of nonhome educators operated on one income. Guterman and Neuman (2018) found that the mother's education did impact the type of structure used within home education. Most of these families tend to be Caucasian (McQueen, 2019). There is also an increased number of families who have two parents in the home when looking at home education families. It was found that 81%-98% of families who homeschool had a two-parent home. The number of two-parent homes was reported at 58% in the public school population (McQueen, 2019; Windish, 2016). Homeschool families also tend to have larger families in terms of sibling count (Koonce, 2007). One in 5 homeschoolers were enrolled in public or private school part-time, 18% at some point in their schooling experience. More homeschoolers were White, non-Hispanic (McQueen, 2019). Thirty-two percent of home-educated students are Black, Asian, Hispanic, or other non-White groups (Ray, 2019). Parents' income did not tend to differ from nonhomeschool peers yet homeschool parents' education did appear higher than the nonhomeschool population. Twenty-five percent of parents who homeschooled achieved a bachelor's degree whereas 16% of nonhomeschool parents achieved a bachelor's degree (Marang, 2005).

Beck (2018) and Ray (2019) stated the following facts of the current home education model. The population of home educators is growing 2-8 % annually with a current estimated population of 2,300,000 students between the grades of kindergarten

to 12th grade. Ray (2021a) found home education as a practice is a parent-led model that is currently being considered mainstream as opposed to the label of cutting-edge alternative education and the number of home-educated children rose to nearly 5,000,000 during the global pandemic. Ray (2019, 2021b) found demographics of those who choose to homeschool is broadening and includes families who identify as atheist, Christians, Mormons, conservatives, libertarians, and liberals. Social class also shows a vast demographic as low-, middle-, and high-income families have chosen to homeschool. Education backgrounds vary of those who home educate with representatives having from Ph.D.s, GEDs, to no high school diploma. Families who home educate do not benefit from public taxes and an estimated \$27,000,000,000 is not spent on the children who home educate. Ray (2019) found an average of \$11,732 per pupil is spent on a student annually in the public system. The National Education Association (NEA, 2021) found the current per-pupil spending went up to \$15,400. Beck (2018) noted that roughly 3,400,000 adults in the United States were homeschooled at least one year during their kindergarten through 12th grade academic career. The average time of home education experience of the 3.4 million was between six to eight years. Many differing backgrounds and social structures come together in home education, yet they are not all networked (Ray, 2019). This concept of not truly knowing what others in the same field are doing does not agree with the concepts of (CoP).

In summary, Edwards (2007) and Kerns (2016) generalized characteristics of homeschool families as mostly White two-parent families. The mother is, generally, the full-time homemaker and primary instructor. The father is the primary breadwinner and

is most often employed in a professional, technical, or skilled occupation. The average family has two to three children. The formal education of parents is between 2 to 3 years of college. The annual income of homeschooling families is higher than the national average. Religion plays an important role in most homeschooling families. Most homeschoolers reside in rural areas or small towns (Edwards, 2007; Whitlow-Spurlock, 2019). Educational demographics reported on homeschool families show them as obtaining a high level of education (Feliciano, 2018; McQueen, 2019; Windish, 2016). Home educators with doctoral degrees resulted in 4.6%, 18% had master's degrees, 39.5% had a bachelor's degree, and 98% had a diploma from an accredited high school (Feliciano, 2018). Ray (2021a) found home educators typically have five in the home and have experienced higher levels of education in their lifetime as compared to the public school population. The majority of home education families operate using one income. Those who choose to home educate are becoming much more diverse in terms of socioeconomics, religion, and race. In looking at the characteristics of those who homeschool, one can assume there is a very diverse group of people who have made this educational decision and yet they share the same passion to educate at home. The theoretical framework of social theory of learning and (CoP) will allow for this diverse group to learn from different perceptions (Wenger, 2017). The reader has been exposed to the characteristics of home education families, but why do people choose to homeschool?

Reasons for Homeschooling

Wenger (2017) promoted the value of communities working together regardless of the different reasons they do things and focusing on the social structures of learning

from one another. Families who choose homeschool do so for specific reasons and rationales. There are numerous rationales and reasons for the choice to homeschool and one is not able to place all participants in this demographic into one category when looking at research. Reasons for using home education versus public or private education vary a great deal (Beck, 2018; Bowens, 2020; Edwards, 2007; Feliciano, 2018; Felkins, 2018; Humason, 2012; Johnson, 2014; Koonce, 2007; Maingano, 2016; Marang, 2005; Martin, 2016; Moreau, 2012; Pietersma, 2020; Ray, 2016; Ripperger-Suhler, 2016; Reese, 2006; Romanowski, 2006; Salvo, 2018; SanClemente, 2016; Van Der Weide, 2019; Walters, 2015). Most families who choose to educate at home do so based on more than one factor. There are typically several factors influencing the decision-making practice (DeRoos, 2018; Feliciano, 2018; Felkins, 2018; Maingano, 2016; Martin, 2016; Pietersma, 2020; Ray, 2016; SanClemente, 2016).

One reason used is the ability for the family to customize the child's curricular environment (Feliciano, 2018; Francis, 2018; Goode, 2009; McSwain, 2020; SanClemente, 2016; Whitlow-Spurlock, 2019). This is considered child-centered learning and the child is considered to be unique and the curriculum is created based on their style of learning (Efford & Becker, 2017). This provides freedom of learning and content. A child is not bound by a school's curricular calendar or grade-level requirements, parents can customize a child's learning, and they can provide remedial or more challenging content based on needs. Accomplishing more school in a shorter amount of time allows the student to move more quickly through the curriculum or spend more time in an interesting area or a subject of weakness. This flexibility in learning also allows students to better deal with racial problems, special needs, and

feelings of incompetency (Jamaludin et al., 2015). Fifty percent of home educators homeschooled based on the idea of being able to provide a better education than what was occurring in public schools (Bowens, 2020; Koonce, 2007). In terms of race, African American children being homeschooled increased 5 times more than the number of non-African American homeschoolers between 2000 and 2005 (Goode, 2009). Feliciano (2018) found that an increase in African American families who home educate was linked to dissatisfaction with public schools.

One of the major rationales for homeschooling is for religious reasons (Beck, 2018; Feliciano, 2018; Goode, 2009; McSwain, 2020; Pietersma, 2020; SanClemente, 2016; Thomas, 2019; Williams, 2018). Thirty-eight percent of homeschool families chose this method for religious reasons (Koonce, 2007). According to Thomas (2019), parents who chose religious reasons for homeschooling were less likely to ever enroll their child in a public school program. There is also a freedom to use pedagogical strategies that may not be used in the normal school setting (DeRoos, 2018; Martin, 2016; Tolentino, 2020). A prevalent rationale for home education is the ability to impart beliefs and worldviews that may not be shared in the public or private setting (Bowens, 2020; DeRoos, 2018; Maingano; 2016; Martin, 2016). Teaching a certain worldview and connecting it to content appeals to many families who home educate (Bowens, 2020). The additional time spent together is looked upon as an enrichment of the family structure and may strengthen the bonds among siblings, rather than going to separate age-segregated classrooms (Bowens, 2020; DeRoos, 2018).

Ray (2019) has agreed with the research and has added the following reasons and rationale for home education. Families home educate to customize curriculum based

on the individual needs of their child (Maingano, 2016). Boys who exhibit a more energetic nature tend to have accommodations in a home-educated structure that meets their needs for movement. Felkins (2018) studied home education and students with ADHD and reported many parents of students who were diagnosed with ADHD wanted to keep their child in the public setting yet were not able to find academic and social success for their child and resorted to home education. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder diagnosis has been linked to establishing a negative effect on self-concept and quality of life (Felkins, 2018). The need to individualize content appeals to these families. Families are motivated by the amount of content that can be accomplished in a home-educated environment as opposed to the amount accomplished in a public or private setting (Feliciano, 2018; Francis, 2018; Goode, 2009; McSwain, 2020; SanClemente, 2016; Whitlow-Spurlock, 2019). The freedom to incorporate different pedagogical methods in a home setting based on the content or student need has been cited as a rationale for home education (Feliciano, 2018; Francis, 2018; McSwain, 2020; SanClemente, 2016; Whitlow-Spurlock, 2019). The motivation to increase the family dynamic as seen through relationships with siblings and parents through the use of the home setting is a major motivator for many homeschool families (Bowens, 2020; DeRoos, 2018). Williams (2018) found the ability to provide a guided and controlled interaction with peers is a major motivator. Violence, drug and alcohol use, racism, and unhealthy sexual relationships found in the public sector can be regulated while educating at home (Williams, 2018). Wenger (1998) contended that social theory of learning is deeply connected to one's social structure. Decisions to home educate based on the social structure of public schools provide one perspective of this population.

According to Ray (2016) and Clark (2010), parents have come to a point of expecting more for their children's education. There is a desire for many parents to be free to customize education for their children (Beck, 2018; Jeffery, 2019). Clark (2010) and Jeffery (2019) stated the need for a discussion between public school educators and those choosing to homeschool.

School safety has been noted as another factor assessed by parents when choosing to homeschool (Feliciano, 2018; McSwain, 2020; Whitlow-Spurlock, 2019). Twenty-five percent cited choosing to homeschool based on the public school having a poor environment (Koonce, 2007). However, this conservative view can be contested because the popularization of homeschooling by Holt was considered a more liberal stance in comparison to a conservative ideology (Kerns, 2016; Martin, 2016; McQueen, 2019; Romanowski, 2006). Marzano (2014) considered the importance of a safe and orderly environment his fourth school-level factor; the idea of the home environment being safer than the public or private school environment was a deciding factor.

In summary, families choose to home educate for a wide variety of reasons (Beck, 2018; Bowens, 2020; Edwards, 2007; Feliciano, 2018; Felkins, 2018; Humason, 2012; Johnson, 2014; Koonce, 2007; Maingano, 2016; Marang, 2005; Martin, 2016; Moreau, 2012; Pietersma, 2020; Ray, 2016; Ripperger-Suhler, 2016; Reese, 2006; Romanowski, 2006; Salvo, 2018; SanClemente, 2016; Van Der Weide, 2019; Walters, 2015). These reasons range from religious preference, school environment, ability to customize curriculum, and general safety (Beck, 2018; Feliciano, 2018; Goode, 2009; McSwain, 2020; Pietersma, 2020; SanClemente, 2016; Thomas, 2019; Williams, 2018). Each reason or choice comes back to the ability to choose what is best for a student.

Whether the reason is teaching a certain worldview or curriculum, or due to safety, parents who home educate have the desire to make choices that make a difference in their child's education. There are many different reasons for choosing home education and a wide array of viewpoints (Beck, 2018; Bowens, 2020; Edwards, 2007; Feliciano, 2018; Felkins, 2018; Humason, 2012; Johnson, 2014; Koonce, 2007; Maingano, 2016; Marang, 2005; Martin, 2016; Moreau, 2012; Pietersma, 2020; Ray, 2016; Ripperger-Suhler, 2016; Reese, 2006; Romanowski, 2006; Salvo, 2018; SanClemente, 2016; Van Der Weide, 2019; Walters, 2015). This further lends to the social importance of learning from others in a (CoP) as found in the social theory of learning (Wenger, 2017). Along with differing reasons for homeschooling, there are different types or views on how to home educate (Edwards, 2007; Goode, 2009).

Types of Homeschooling

Parents are the main decision-makers when it comes to what type of homeschooling occurs (Edwards, 2007; Goode, 2009). The social theory of learning promotes the sharing of perspectives of all stakeholders and the concept of the main decision-maker does not agree with this theoretical framework. The type of schooling can be broken into three main categories of afterschooling, deschooling, and unschooling (Edwards, 2007). Afterschooling is considered working on school with your child after a normal school day when it has ended. Removing the formal education institution and replacing it with education done at home is considered deschooling. Goode (2009) referred to deschooling as a process of decompressing a home-schooled student from the influences of public education. Unschooling, which was referred to by Holt (2004) in 1977, is also known as relaxed homeschooling and one in which families

do not always use traditional teaching techniques and or resources. Children are allowed to explore what they want and learn at the pace they feel is best for them. Unschooling, like deschooling, is removing the traditional institutional structure of education by the state or private school (Edwards, 2007; Holt, 2004; Kerns, 2016; Maingano, 2016; SanClemente, 2016). All three terms help define the subject matter of home education into very general terms. Through these terms, it could be surmised that afterschooling refers to the typical process of working on homework with a child who attends a public institution. Deschooling would be a formalized type of home education that takes the child out of a typical public school setting, yet a set curriculum is taught. According to Clark (2010), most home-educated families are practicing this type of home education due to state regulations, complete with record keeping. Finally, unschooling could be considered a very loose and interpretive form of home education (English, 2019; Kerns, 2016; Tolentino, 2020; Williams, 2018). Tolentino (2020) pointed out the major drawback to uschooling is wasted time developing something new when existing and proven methods are available.

In summary, three broad categories of home education are afterschooling, deschooling, and unschooling. Afterschooling is considered a type of home education that takes place with most families who are involved in any type of schooling. Deschooling is the general term for providing home education separate from public education (Clark, 2010; English, 2019; Kerns, 2016; Tolentino, 2020; Williams, 2018). The broad view of deschooling uses (CoP) within the social theory of learning and can be experienced through home education CO-OP models. Utilizing the homeschool community as a resource to learn occurs in these communities. Parents use a formalized

curriculum when using this type of deschooling, especially in CO-OP (Pyrko, Dörfler & Eden, 2019). Unschooling, like deschooling, is separate from public education, yet it does not have a strict curriculum and is often set based on the interests of the individual student (Clark, 2010). With different types of home education and many different approaches, stereotypes and inaccurate information can easily be associated with home education (Maingano, 2016; McQueen, 2019; SanClemente, 2016).

Homeschooling Socialization and Achievement Misconceptions

Social norms and stereotypes are often associated with the history of home education (Humason, 2012; Maingano, 2016; McQueen, 2019; SanClemente, 2016). Wenger (2017) has established that one's history is a focal point of social theory of learning. The terms *isolation* (Humason, 2012; Maingano, 2016; SanClemente, 2016), *social delay* (Davis, 2000; McQueen, 2019), and *social misfit* (Martin, 2016; Romanowski, 2006) are all ways of speaking about what has been considered one myth of home education and are summed up in a term, socialization. Socialization is considered to be the greatest objection home educators deal with when deciding to homeschool (Pietersma, 2020; SanClemente, 2016). This myth seems to be rooted in stereotypes. Not all, but most home-educated students are experiencing socialization of a different sort throughout their day or week (Pietersma, 2020). It is not the standard batch model in which they are in a classroom with nonrelated children of the same age. However, it is often a multigenerational experience. The idea of a child waking early and only studying and having no contact with the outside world is attributed to this thought process (Martin, 2016; Romanowski, 2006). The identification of a student as a social misfit could hold true in any school setting, knowing all students have an

individual learning signature (Efford & Becker, 2017). Any institution of education and or home may have students who do not interact with others at a level that is considered the same as their typical peers (Efford & Becker, 2017, Martin, 2016). Homeschools do not create socially challenged people; this population can be found in all educational settings ((Efford & Becker, 2017; Martin, 2016; McQueen, 2019; Ray, 2016; 2019; SanClemente, 2016). It has been found with social measures, that homeschool students were above average, and the research included peer interaction, self-esteem, leadership, and community service (Efford & Becker, 2017; Martin, 2016; McQueen, 2019; Ray, 2016; 2019; SanClemente, 2016; Yeager, 1999).

Many homeschool families connect with one another and strong communities are established (Beck, 2018; Jeffery, 2019; Myers, 2017). Jolly and Matthews (2017) established that home educators also maintain high levels of community online through blogging communities and social networking. Many home-educated students experience several organized events that are presented in multiple forms. Church ministries, sports, field trips, scouting, political drives, community organizations, and volunteerism are widely used as social outlets in the homeschooling community (Pietersma, 2020; Ray, 2019; Whitlow-Spurlock, 2019).

Maturity levels are often found to be higher in home-educated children because they are less influenced by adolescent culture and more influenced by adults (Clark, 2010; Feliciano, 2018; Humason, 2012; SanClemente, 2016). Social measures such as community service, voting, college success, and internalization of beliefs and values have been found to increase in adults who were home educated (Feliciano, 2018; Ray, 2019). Adults who were home educated participate in more community service activities

than the general population, they vote more often, succeed in higher education, and internalize beliefs and value system at an equal or higher rate than their public school peers (Ray, 2019). Tolentino (2020) cited a study by Payton and Scott (2013) in which home-educated students showed lower levels of apprehension in communication than public and private school students. Public school students' level of communication apprehension was at 17.3% and private school students were at 12.9%, while home-educated students were reported at only 10% (Tolentino, 2020).

Socialization has been a factor brought up in the court systems as well. *State v. Hoyt* in 1929, *People v. Turner* in 1953, and *State v. Lowry* in 1963, all ruled that homeschools could not legally be called schools at all due to their lack of socialization. However, cases such as *Roemhild v. State* in 1983, *Delconte. v. State* in 1988, *Leeper v. Arlington Independent School District* in 1987, and *People in Interest of D.B.* in 1988 were all ruled by the courts in such a way to establish that being considered a school was based on academic standards and not based on social standards (Clark, 2010). The concept of low socialization is the polar opposite to (CoP) as other viewpoints must be solicited to learn (Wenger, 2017).

Another myth about home-educated students is they have a hard time being accepted into a college or university. Romanowski (2006) and Martin (2016) contended, schools such as MIT, Georgetown, Harvard, Princeton, and other prestigious institutions actively recruit homeschoolers. In addition, these students achieve just as high as or higher than nonhomeschool students nationally (Kliwer, 2019; SanClemente, 2016). On academic, social, and leadership measures home-educated students outperformed public and private school peers. This is cited in the national ACT and SAT results

(Feliciano, 2018; Felso, 2016; Geary, 2011; Pietersma, 2020; SanClemente, 2016). Ray (2021b) found the National Percentile Rank between public school students and home-educated students differed on standard academic achievement tests. The average percentile score for homeschoolers was 72 and the average percentile score for public education students was 50.

A larger percentage of homeschooled adults had college experience, compared with the general United States population (Kliwer, 2019; Ray, 2021a). There are similarities between home-educated and public school students and no statistical differences could be found in the *Journal of College Admissions* research on the achievement of first-year homeschool university students and their peers. Academic testing may suggest that some home-educated students are better prepared for college (Salvo, 2018). Francis (2018) stated home-educated students come to college just as prepared as public school students. In addition, homeschooled students show similar school preparedness for college and have similar academic achievement when compared to those who attended conventional schools (Francis, 2018; Kliwer, 2019; Marang, 2005; SanClemente, 2016; Yeager, 1999). There does seem to be an achievement gap in a positive direction with African American students. Black home-educated students were found to score 23 to 42 percentage points higher than their same minority group attending public schools (Maingano, 2016; Ray, 2016). Ray (2019) reported the following research findings in association with home-educated students. On standardized academic measures, home-educated students score 15-30 % higher than their public school peers. Black homeschool students scored 23-42 % higher on standardized academic measures in comparison to their public school peers who were

Black.

DeRoos (2018), Pietersma, (2020), and Ray (2021b) found a family's income or background in formal education did not affect students' performance on achievement tests as homeschool students score above average on achievement tests. Home-educated students' success is not related to whether their parents are certified teachers or not. The academic achievement of home-educated students is not related to the depth of state regulation of the homeschool sector. On measures such as the ACT and SAT, home-educated students scored higher on the average, however, the students sampled also appeared to have a higher socioeconomic level and those results showed similarities to public school students in the same socioeconomic position (DeRoos, 2018; Pietersma, 2020). Homeschool students, just as public school students, are actively recruited by colleges and universities (Falso, 2016; Geary, 2011; Kliewer, 2019; Ray, 2021b).

In summary, several myths about home education exist within the public sector (Humason, 2012; Maingano, 2016; McQueen, 2019; SanClemente, 2016). It is thought that homeschooled students are not socially adjusted as well as public school students. The idea of low socialization is attributed to this thought, yet it does not seem to be an accurate measurement based on activities that are happening outside of the home (Martin, 2016; Romanowski, 2006). The last myth addressed is the idea that home-educated students have a hard time getting accepted into colleges and do not perform well academically (Falso, 2016; Geary, 2011; Kliewer, 2019; Ray, 2021a). Wenger (2017) explained how conflicting views can lead to learning through CoP. Noting the researched similarities and differences in perceptions to socialization and academic achievement learning can be the outcome. Home education regulations are another area

of exploration within the study of perceptions of homeschooling.

Homeschool Regulations

Edwards (2007) stated the first compulsory attendance laws were brought about in 1852. This law started the process of moving the responsibility of teaching from the family to the state as in a state school system. These laws typically determined the ages at which a child should be in school. In many states, these requirements made home education a violation of the law (Clark, 2010; Edwards, 2007; Kerns, 2016; Kliewer, 2019). In the case of *Pierce v. the Society of Sisters* (1925), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that compulsory attendance laws must make provisions for both nonpublic and public schools. The court ruling explained that the liberties of parents were being infringed upon that are guaranteed in the 14th Amendment. Parents were able to provide education and religious training of their choosing. As parents refer to *Pierce v. the Society of Sisters* (1925) to support homeschooling, the State still has been affirmed by the court to reasonably regulate all schools (Clark, 2010; Edwards, 2007; Kerns, 2016; Pietersma, 2020; SanClemente, 2016; Swenson, 2016; Van Der Weide, 2019). This is a notable judgment because it determined that it is the constitutional right of a parent to direct education and the child is not a creature of the state (Clark, 2010).

The U.S. Supreme Court visited this situation again in the case of *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972) in a case that gives parents the right to homeschool their children due to religious beliefs (McSwain, 2020; Pietersma, 2020; Van Der Weide, 2019).

Conservative religious families would not send their 14-15 year-old children to public school due to religious objections. Green County, Wisconsin, charged the Yoder family with violating compulsory attendance laws. Edwards (2007) established the court found

the state of Wisconsin was abiding by an unconstitutional law and a four-pronged test was created to balance religious objection and the state's interest in enforcing compulsory attendance laws.

The first part of the test said the individual must have a sincere religious belief; second, the belief must be burdened by the state regulation; third, the state must have a compelling interest in maintaining the law; fourth, the state must have chosen the least restrictive means of achieving its goal. The court found that families with a religious or educational concern, in this case, the Amish, had the right to offer an alternate education to protect their religious beliefs, i.e., this case allowed the Amish an exemption from state compulsory education laws. (Edwards, 2007, p. 24)

Homeschool regulations vary from state to state with several different specifications as to what is required and what is not required (Clark, 2010; DeRoos, 2018; Goode, 2009). Paperwork and documentation can be very different from state to state. Many states require assessment as others require no assessment (Huseman, 2017). In some states one must teach specific content and curriculum in certain subjects and in other states it is not required (Clark, 2010; DeRoos, 2018; Goode, 2009). According to Huseman (2017), there are four levels of regulation in which each state can be placed. Level 1 states would be those that require little to no homeschool regulation. Level 2 states require a low degree of regulation. Level 3 states would be considered to require a moderate level of regulation. Level 4 states require the strictest regulations and require and mandate content and record keeping. Homeschool laws in each state may or may not require any notice of homeschooling (see Figure 1). There are

11 states that have no notice of homeschooling regulations. The number of states with low regulation of notice of homeschooling is represented by nine states. The states with this classification require a one-time declaration of homeschooling. There are 31 states that are considered to have higher regulations in terms of notification of home education. These states require an annual declaration of home education.

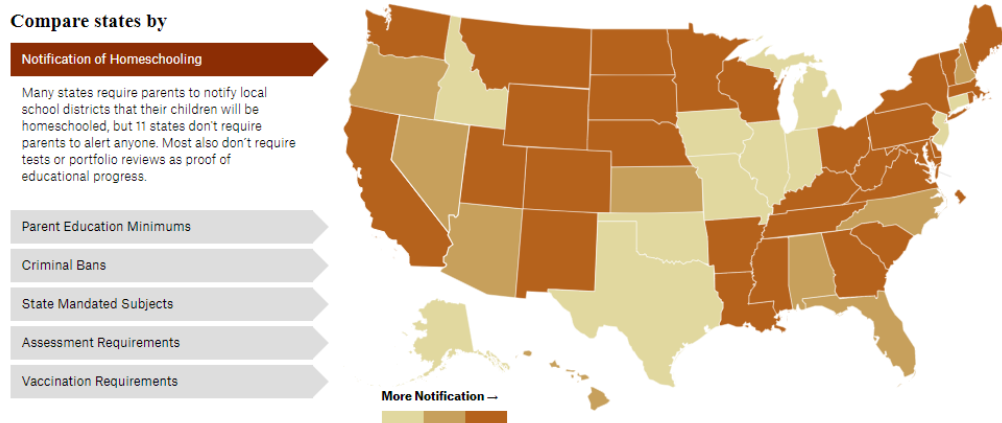


Figure 1. States that require notice of home education to the governing school district.

From *Homeschooling Regulations by State*, by J. Huseman Available at:

<https://projects.propublica.org/graphics/homeschool>

Some states have minimum requirements for parents' education for the parent to be eligible to home educate their child (see Figure 2). In the United States, 38 states have no educational minimum for parents who desire to homeschool their child. There are 11 states that require a high school diploma to teach at home. The remaining states are considered to have moderate requirements as there are requirements that exist yet there are no systems in place to enforce these requirements. Huseman (2017) provided the example of California requiring parents to be capable to teach yet no law defines the word capable and officials are not allowed to enforce discretion.

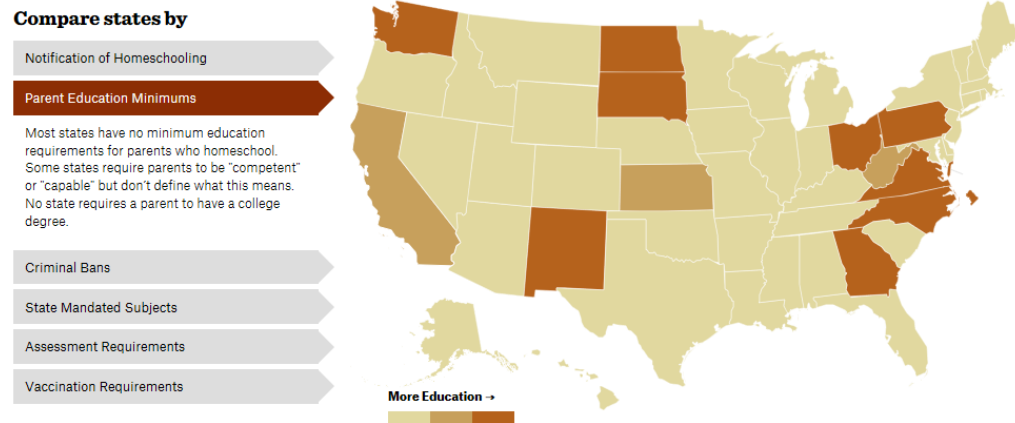


Figure 2. States that require more parents to have more college education in order to homeschool. From *Homeschooling Regulations by State*, by J. Huseman Available at: <https://projects.propublica.org/graphics/homeschool>

Two states, Pennsylvania and Arkansas, have restricted the right to home educate based on the parents' criminal record (see Figure 3). Huseman (2017) found only two states that ban parents from homeschooling their children. Pennsylvania prevents homeschooling for 5 years after a range of criminal convictions. In Arkansas, parents who are sex offenders must not live in the home if the residents want to home educate their child. Parents can file a petition for this to be waived (Huseman, 2017). The remaining states cannot legally use criminal history to prevent from homeschooling (Huseman, 2017).

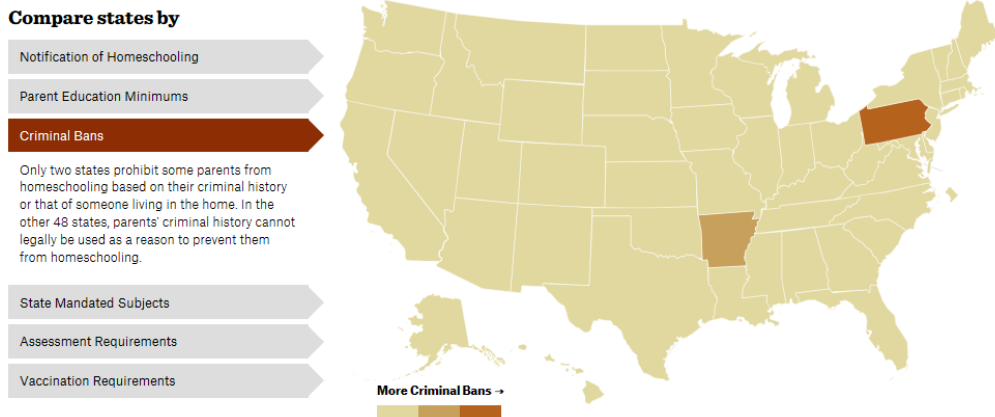


Figure 3. States that have criminal bans that do not allow parents to educate their child at home. From *Homeschooling Regulations by State*, by J. Huseman Available at: <https://projects.propublica.org/graphics/homeschool>

Some states mandate certain subjects that must be taught to home educate (see Figure 4). Certain subjects are required to be taught in 33 states. Huseman (2017) found in 22 of the states that required a certain subject to be taught, there was no existing method of checking on it. The children in most of these states are not assessed and if they are assessed the low-test score cannot be used against the homeschooling family (Huseman, 2017).

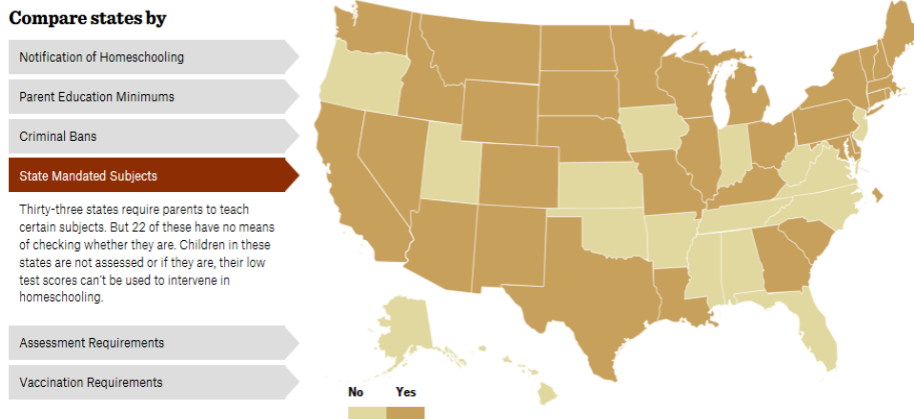


Figure 4. States that have mandated curriculum to home educate. From *Homeschooling Regulations by State*, by J. Huseman Available at: <https://projects.propublica.org/graphics/homeschool>.

Certain states have some assessment requirements for homeschoolers while other states have none (see Figure 5). Very few states require assessment data from homeschooling families. According to Huseman (2017), only nine states require testing that is reported to the state. The vast majority of states do not require assessment, and some suggest testing but do not have a method of tracking students. Huseman stated there is a vast difference between testing practices between public school students and home-educated students.

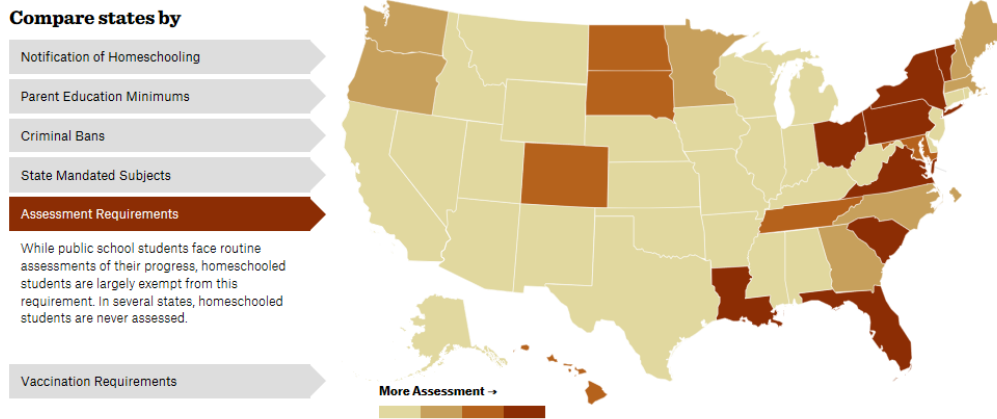


Figure 5. States that require assessment practices from homeschoolers. From

Homeschooling Regulations by State, by J. Huseman Available at:

<https://projects.propublica.org/graphics/homeschool>

Huseman (2017) explained each state provides certain regulations with which a home education family must comply. Within the regulation, a homeschool is defined by three distinct factors. The primary purpose must provide private or religious-based education, no more than four unrelated students can be pupils, they must also enroll pupils between the ages of 7 and 16, and they must not charge a fee. The standards also have specific time and record-keeping requirements. The researcher provided all figures in APPENDIX A.

In summary, all 50 states allow students to be home educated. There is a wide array of requirements that states have established for families to home educate. Each state sets its requirements. This concept of each state having different standards that are not deemed best practices would be considered an opposing view of the social theory of learning as a common goal has not been established (Wenger, 2017). Some states are very restrictive and other states have very few restrictions (Huseman, 2017).

Within the theoretical framework of social theory of learning, understanding

current realities provides a rationale for social practice (Wenger, 2017). Wenger (2017) asserted that the real-life setting and everyday activity, realities of life, of a group address one's social practices. State regulations may contribute to perceptions of home education.

Perceptions of Home Education

A person's perceptions are constructed socially and conversation along with a discussion of perceptions promotes understanding of viewpoints (Dreyer, 2017). Clark (2010) and Johnson (2014) both did educational research in the area of perceptions of home education. Johnson focused on homeschooling families and their perception of success when it came to home education. Johnson recommended that homeschooling families define what success looks like using Tomlinson's methodology of differentiated instruction and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. Johnson found that many homeschool families had not completely defined success in education or truly looked at what the final product should be.

Clark (2010) looked at the perceptions of school superintendents on home education. Clark cited data that showed school districts losing vast amounts of funding with the departure of students to home education. Maricopa County School District in Arizona lost \$434,000,000 due to 7,526 students leaving to homeschool (Clark, 2010). A perception of competition was established and school districts worked to win students back by providing different school offerings at local venues in the district.

Gray (1998) examined the perceptions of public school personnel when it comes to homeschooling. Gray did so by administering a perceptual survey to public educators. The survey asked about the quality of instruction, environment, a time designed for

learning, ability to make meaning out of instructional concepts, and rigor of academics. According to Gray, 53% of participants perceived the quality of instruction of home education as poor to fair. Gray reported 24% of the participants had the perception that home-educated students were not receiving the same level of instruction as a public school students. Gray also found 29% of participants reported very poor or poor when rating a homeschool's ability to socialize a child.

Clark (2010), Gray (1998), and Johnson (2014) all studied perceptions of homeschooling from very different perspectives. Johnson focused on home education families, Clark focused on superintendents' perceptions of home education, and Gray focused on educators' perceptions. All three researchers agreed that further study of perceptions of home education was needed to provide a better understanding of the model and to help all children learn. Shaw (2020) found more research has become important due to the current state of the country with many students being home educated due to COVID-19. Public school systems and parents have transitioned, due to COVID-19, into home education models (Bhamani et al., 2020; Eggleston & Fields, 2021; Shaw, 2020). Researchers agree that more open communication between public schools and home educators would benefit the students in all situations (Bhamani et al., 2020; Clark, 2010; Gray, 1998; Johnson, 2014; Shaw, 2020).

This study was guided by the social theory of learning and designed to fill a gap in current research. As Gray (1998) looked at the perspectives of homeschooling from public educators in California and in other studies such as Williams (2018), where he uncovered parents negative perceptions of public schools that lead to home education, a study has not been conducted in which the perceptions of both populations are analyzed.

One study by Kliewer (2019) looked at the perceived barriers of home-educated students concerning higher education. Perception literature in the realm of home education has focused on factors outside of the practice of home education, not the perceptions of home education itself. Seeing another's perception allows one to understand and not listen just to reply; communications are too quickly cut off due to a lack of understanding of other perceptions (Covey, 2020). Revealing perception data enables people with differing viewpoints the ability to work together, and communities of practice allow a structure for this to occur (Wenger, 2017).

Summary

Romanowski (2006) suggested public schools and homeschools should learn from one another to improve the learning experience for all children no matter what type of schooling they experience. Perceptual studies have been completed on home education from different views such as reasons different races chose to home educate, perceptions on social skill attainment, perceptions of curriculum resources, identity formation, development of homeschool children, perceptions of negative experiences, perceptions of barriers those who have homeschooled experience moving into higher education, perceptions of parents with disabled children who home educate, and perceptions of how homeschooling influences experiences (Clark, 2010; Johnson, 2014). Many of the aforementioned perception studies are dated and do not give the current reality of the perceptions they studied. This study will provide current perception data from home and public educators regarding the perceived quality of home education, the perceived ability of home educators to socialize and prepare children for success in the community, and the perceived services public schools should

provide to homeschool families. There is a clear gap in perception literature and studies based on home education. One study by Gray (1998) was conducted to find the perceptions of public educators on home education, however, these perceptions are currently over 23 years old and as stated, no perception studies from the viewpoint of home educators have been conducted. The gap in research is evident and this qualitative narrative study of the perceptions of home and public educators will help fill in a gap. The researcher sought to provide a clearer picture of perceptions on home education from these two educational groups. The theoretical framework of social theory of learning and (CoP) identifies the studies' perceptual focus. The whole purpose of (CoP) is to help create learning within a common topic, education, by working to understand the perceptions of all involved.

In Chapter Three, the methodology, instrumentation, and participants of the study will be addressed. Chapter Four contains a review, based on information gathered from interviews and analysis of the interviews along with a complete review of the results. Finally, in Chapter Five, a summary of the study along with connections and recommendations for further research will be found.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Home-educated students and public-schooled students show similar college preparedness. College preparedness is a common standard these students share (Francis, 2018; Kliewer, 2019; Marang, 2005; SanClemente, 2016; Yeager, 1999). With this commonality in mind, students have no control over what recent history has thrust upon them. The United States has experienced a national education climate of increased home learning and home education due to a global pandemic (Carpenter & Dunn, 2021; Duvall, 2021; Shaw, 2020). Not knowing how many of these students will remain in a home education environment, there is a need to understand the perceptions of home education from the public and homeschool sectors so students can experience the highest levels of education. This qualitative narrative study was designed to access perceptual data about homeschooling from two distinct education populations: home educators and public educators. Qualitative research seeks to understand how a person constructs their views and experiences (McSwain, 2020). The focus of this study was to uncover and understand the perceptions of public educators in Missouri on those who practice home education and the perceptions of those who homeschool on the practice of home education. Interviews were used to provide an opportunity for open-ended response. There is not currently perceptual data on these two populations in Missouri pertaining to homeschooling. By exploring, not testing, important questions and themes were discovered within this topic of perceptions of homeschooling (Gray, 1998). The use of open-ended conversational interviews will provide readers with information to start a baseline for understanding what perceptions are held about homeschooling in

Missouri. This study uncovered “what” the perceptions of the two populations are; it did not uncover “why” they are the perceptions.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to identify and understand the differing perceptions of home education between public educators and home educators in Missouri. This study has provided the perceptions of both populations.

The study was intended to help the public educators and home educators understand perceptions of those homeschooling in hopes to bridge the gaps between the two educational philosophies. A base of understanding and/or misunderstandings of families who homeschool may be recognized through research, interviews, a focus group, and documents. Public educators may gain insights into the perceptions of the education quality perceived by families in Missouri who are choosing to homeschool. Home educators may also gain insights into the perceptions of other homeschool families and perceptions of public educators on quality of education and socialization. This study also provided homeschool families the perceptions of homeschooling based on public educators in Missouri. The study examined perceptions on education characteristics and education quality and explored the sources of these perceptions in both populations. Qualitative methods often help to discover questions, processes, and themes (Flick, 2020). This study identified perceptions of public school employees when it comes to home education and identified

perceptions of home education by those immersed in the practice and discovered questions and themes between the two perceptions.

Some students will transition from public school to home education and from home education to public school or higher education (Dennison et al., 2020). The constant transition supported a need for this study. Senge (1990) insisted that organizations must be in a constant state of creative tension. Always being grounded in the current reality so the energy built up from the knowledge of where things are and where an organization wants to be can be used to create positive changes. Positive changes in any organized structure can be improved through a creative tension model (Senge, 1990). A public educator may have an inaccurate view of what home education is and if they have a negative experience with a child in the transition from home education to public education, this study will help provide information about how a large group of home educators views the practice. Conversely, home educators may gain insights from the views of public educators in terms of perceived educational quality and socialization. Home educators' perceptions of how public educators view homeschooling could also be skewed.

The purpose of this study is even more imperative due to the current U.S. health crisis regarding COVID-19 (Shaw, 2020). Shaw (2020) stated that more research has become important due to the current state of the country with many students home educating due to COVID-19. Public school systems and parents have transitioned, due to COVID-19, into home education models (Bhamani et al., 2020; Eggleston & Fields, 2021; Shaw, 2020). Researchers agree that more open communication between public schools and home educators would benefit the students in all situations (Bhamani et al.,

2020; Clark, 2010; Gray, 1998; Johnson, 2014; Shaw, 2020).

Research Questions

Through this study the following questions were addressed.

The central question was, what are the perceptions of home education held by public educators and home educators?

1. What perceptions are held by public school employees (teachers, staff, and administrators) and homeschool educators about the quality of academics in home education?
2. What perceptions are held by public school employees (teachers, staff, and administrators) and homeschool educators about the home educators' ability (homeschooled children you have observed) to socialize and prepare their children for success in the community?
3. What suggested services might public schools provide to homeschool children and their families and what information should home educators provide to local public schools?

Settings

Based on the two distinct populations involved in this study, the research setting for the interviews was based on the convenience of the participants, not the researcher. The researcher traveled to their preferred location or interviewed using Microsoft Teams. As the participants in the interviews chose locations, it was the understanding of the researcher that those interviewed were comfortable because they had a choice to participate in the study. All interviews were done in a conversational tone.

Phone interviews and virtual interviews via Microsoft Teams were allowed

however, the desired medium was a face-to-face conversation for this study. This practice accommodated anyone unable to travel or those who were unable to meet face-to-face based on COVID-19 restrictions. Although a phone interview may not appear as personal, the researcher asked the same questions and follow-up questions to ensure in-depth responses.

Virtual (online) conversations were permitted and were used for the third leg of triangulation using a focus group. The participants in this study were chosen from Missouri. A group format can help participants understand another viewpoint (Flick, 2020). Flick (2020) expressed academic skills such as critical thinking can be accomplished within a group format.

In summary, three different mediums of interviewing were possible during the research. Face-to-face interviews are the preferred method of interview. Phone and virtual methods were used at the participant's desire to ensure they were comfortable with the experience. The virtual (online) interview was the sole medium used for follow-up focus group discussion involving all 10 participants.

Participants

The participants in this study were public educators and home educators from the state of Missouri. A total of five public educators were interviewed and participated in a focus group discussion. A total of five home educators were interviewed and participated in a focus group discussion. Both groups of participants were adults over the age of 25, in the field of education as a teacher or administrator, or in the process currently or formerly of providing home education to a student between the ages of 5 through 18.

Five certificated educators currently serving in the public school sector and having a minimum of 5 years of experience represented the public education population. The participants represented either the home education group or public educator group. Any public school educator including administrators, specialists, and teachers in Missouri were eligible to be interviewed. Approximately 165 recruitment letters with the one-minute eligibility survey were sent out to public and home educators (Appendix B).

Any caregiver who was homeschooling their child or children in Missouri is eligible to represent the home educator population. Home educators had 5 or more years of experience in home education to ensure the population of home educators had been immersed in the practice to provide a range of experience. Home educator participants must have also participated in some type of Co-Op system or support community, such as a church or have other families they know who they were in community with to ensure they had experienced multiple students who had been educated at home, providing a wider range of experiences. Home education participants in a Co-Op or support community were able to provide more information about home education students as they did not teach students in complete isolation. The home educators' experience, not being in a solely isolated structure, may have been more relatable to the public educators. The study was able to gather more complete data using home educators who were exposed to a larger population of home-educated students than those who were home educated in isolation.

The demographics of participants were documented: home educators—the number of years involved in home education, the number of children they had educated

at home, their level of schooling, their participation in homeschool co-ops, and education history were reported when they were interviewed. Public educators—the number of years working in public education, level of schooling, and history of education were reported once they were interviewed. The only excluding factors based on participation were whether or not the participant met the defined parameters for participation.

Selection/Sampling

The selected region for this narrative study was Missouri. Missouri was chosen due to a lack of research from this region. Participants were purposefully selected to create a clear understanding of the problem and research questions (Showkat & Parveen, 2017). Non-probability sampling, more specifically, Purposive sampling was used. The researcher chose those who were interviewed based on their experiences (Showkat & Parveen, 2017). This study did not use convenience sampling, purposive sampling was utilized to be sure participants were able to provide relevance to the study. The five public educators were practicing certificated educators in Missouri public schools. The researcher attempted to diversify participants based on gender, district size, geographic location within the state, and level of experience. The five home educators were currently or formerly teaching students in the home. The researcher attempted to diversify participants based on gender, district size, geographic location within the state Co-Op in which they participated, and level of experience. The participants were ensured confidentiality to encourage honesty in responses.

At least one public school participant was selected from a district of over 5,000 students. At least one public school participant was selected from a district of between

1,000 and 4,999 students. At least one public school participant was selected from a district of less than 1,000. This selection also allowed for differing geographic locations.

At least one home educator was selected with a family size of six or more children who were currently homeschooling, making up the representative large family. A representative home educator was selected based on having between three to five children who were currently homeschooling, representing a medium-sized family. A representative home educator was selected based on having one or two children currently homeschooling, representing a small family size. Each representative home educator must have lived in a different county to provide diversity in region.

The researcher chose to conduct 10 in-depth interviews with participants. Baker et al. (2021), Bonde (2013), and Flick (2020) determined that in some cases only one interview is enough when conducting some narrative research. However, experts agree, the depth of the interview is what is most important in qualitative research (Baker et al., 2021; Bonde, 2013; Flick, 2020). Originally, the current researcher's committee suggested conducting two interviews with public school representatives and two with home educators. After determining criteria to make sure the information gathered was diverse, the researcher decided to conduct 10 interviews, five with public educators and five with home educators. In addition to the 10 in-depth interviews, a focus group with the same 10 participants was conducted with all 10 participants at the same time discussing responses and going deeper together. Flick (2020) asserted that fewer participants are needed when in-depth interviews are conducted, and the participants should also be asked to be a part of other portions of the study beyond the initial

interview. See Table 1 for participant requirements.

Table 1

Participant Requirements

Home Educator	Public Educator
At least one male	At least one male
At least one female	At least one male
At least one representative from a small family (1-2 Children)	At least one representative of a small district (1,000 or fewer students enrolled)
At least one representative from a medium family (3-5 children)	At least one representative of a medium district (between 1,001 and 4,999 students enrolled)
At least one representative from a large family (6 or more children)	At least one representative of a large district (5,000 or more students enrolled)
At least one representative from Southern MO	At least one representative from Southern MO
At least one representative from Central MO	At least one representative from Central MO
At least one representative from Northern MO	At least one representative from Northern MO
Participants will meet three of the criteria; a total of five home educators will be interviewed.	Participants will meet three of the criteria; a total of five public educators will be interviewed.

Note. Northern MO represents Missouri Regional Professional Development Centers 3, 4, and 5. Central MO represents Missouri Regional Professional Development Centers 9, 2, and 8. Southern MO represents Missouri Regional Professional Development Centers 7, 6, and 1.

Regional Professional Development Centers

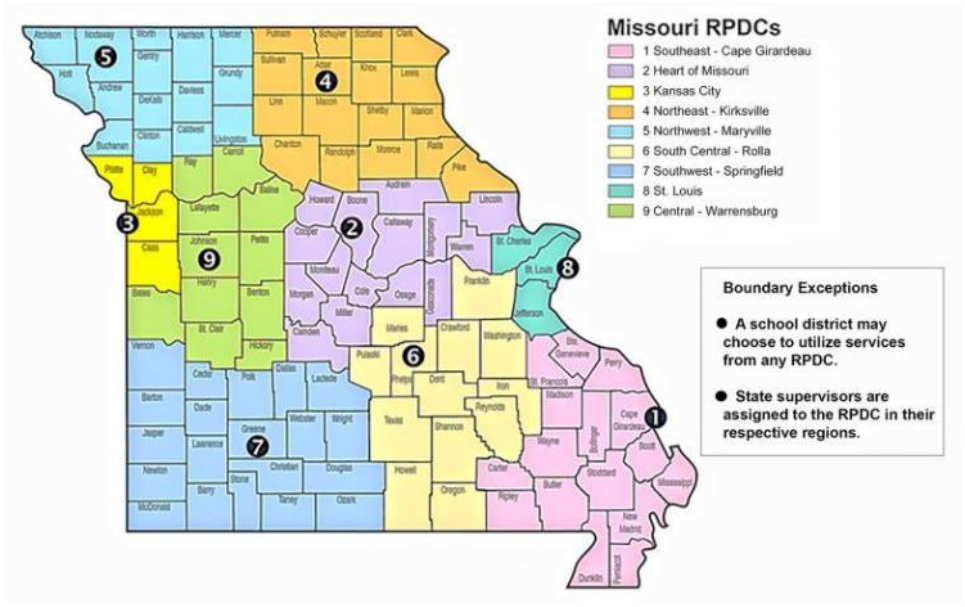


Figure 6. (Regional Professional Development Centers, 2020)

The decision to widen the net of interviews was based on diversity criteria in the sampling process to gain insights from educators from different parts of the state of Missouri. Sampling different genders, district sizes, family sizes, and geographical locations within Missouri diversified the research. Five public educators were selected based on the size of their districts: small, medium, and large. Home educators were selected based on family size: small, medium, and large. Those numbers were established earlier in the section to determine criteria distinguishing small, medium, and large for both sets of participants. There was at least one participant representing North, Central, and Southern Missouri from the public and home educators. There was at least one representative from a small, medium, and large family within the home education

participants. There was at least one representative from a small, medium, and large school district within the public school participants. There was at least one male and one female participant representing home and public educators. Participants needed to agree to take part in a focus group discussion in which the other participants were able to identify them by name, however, the transcript of the discussion was not be associated with their bio and any personal information was redacted for confidentiality. The rights of all participants were honored and protected throughout the study as no traceable information was present in the data. Participants who were interviewed signed a release of information and agreed to have the information they provided published in the dissertation. The researcher will keep all data and manuscripts on a password-protected device. Five years after the study the researcher will destroy all data as recommended (University of Virginia, 2021).

Research Design

A qualitative, narrative design best suited this study because this type of research tells what people think and feel (Butina, 2015). There was a lack of recent research on the perceptions of homeschooling according to Clark (2010), Gray (1998), and Johnson (2014). There were no current research studies later that 2014 on the perceptions of home education. Narrative studies provide the story from the viewpoint of individuals who are experiencing the topic (Butina, 2015). This provides a baseline for understanding. A nonexperimental approach is more appropriate because perceptual data is more likely to be uncovered by a narrative study (Butina, 2015). Interviews are used to gather firsthand knowledge of the topic and uncover the participants' perceptions of the topic. Each perception tells a story and the story is the raw data

(Butina, 2015). This specific study attempted to provide an understanding of home education from the perspective of the home educator and the public educator in Missouri. The goal of the study was to understand what the perceptions of home education currently were from the lens of home and public educators.

A narrative approach allows for open-ended dialogue and will present the information as it is without bias. A narrative study provides an in-depth understanding of a participant's experiences and this is done through listening, interpreting, and retelling what participants have said (Rhodes, 2018). A narrative study was chosen because the research questions directly ask for perception data based on one's experiences, making a narrative study the most fitting research method. Rhodes (2018) stated that narrative research is being used increasingly more in education due to teachers being natural storytellers. All participants in this study were educators telling their stories. The scope of this study included interviews with 5 public school educators in Missouri to gather perception data on homeschooling. The scope of the study included interviews with 5 home educators in Missouri to gather perception data on homeschooling. The chosen participants were selected based on their understanding and participation in home education or public education. The participants served as a representation of Missouri based on the selection process.

A qualitative narrative study commonly uses interviews to collect data. Ten total interviews were recorded. To strengthen the study, a triangulation of data was used to provide greater validity and reliability (Rhodes, 2018). The data sources used to triangulate this study were interviews, the Missouri Homeschool Standards, and a focus group discussion.

Interviews allow the researcher to have an open-ended dialogue with the stakeholders (Weiss, 1995). Five public educators were interviewed using a battery of questions that centered around the research questions. There were also five home educators interviewed with the same battery of questions. The questions were in a slightly different order to ensure those being interviewed could address the areas in which they were able to speak most comfortably first to create an overall comfort level in conversation. Changing question order is acceptable while using a semi-structured format of interview (Weiss, 1995).

The researcher recorded each interview with Otter.ai, a paid service running on a mobile device. To ensure the accuracy of the transcribed interviews, each interview was recorded. Each interview was transcribed individually using Otter.ai recordings. Otter.ai (2021) is a transcription software and allowed for all interviews to be transcribed instantly. The first step to ensure validity was to check all transcripts. This began with viewing the transcripts from Otter.ai. The transcripts were checked by the researcher by reading the transcript while the recorded audio was playing to ensure exact word-by-word transcription. If the transcription was incorrect, the researcher made a note and corrected the transcript. The second step to ensuring validity was to provide transcripts to the participants as recommended by Butina (2015) in a process called member checking.

Once complete, each participant had the opportunity to check their comments via transcript for accuracy and was able to change anything that misrepresented their statements. This process is called member checking and it allows for greater internal validity (Candela, 2019). The same process of member checking was used for the focus

group discussion with all 10 individuals. The group discussion audio was listened to by the researcher, transcribed, edited, and the entire transcript was provided to the participants. Not only were participants able to hear what others said in real time, they were able to member check after the focus group was held.

The researcher also obtained the Missouri Homeschool Standards. This document shows what home educators must provide to a student in Missouri to legally homeschool. This document helped the researcher understand the home educator's stance in home education and what was required to home educate. Such documents provide a better understanding of the overarching topic in which those being interviewed are speaking of.

Any time human data are collected one must protect the subjects to ensure anonymity (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012). The perception data collected can be viewed by some as sensitive information as different views of education are being compared. There was no tracking of the data and information was not able to be traced back to those who generated them. Participants had the option to view the study after its completion. Any contact information given to the researcher was given based on the participant's choice. The researcher conducted the study in an unbiased manner and the purpose of the study was to learn the perceptions of two populations of educators. The goal was to help provide high-quality information in which further research can be done to support all learners no matter what type of education they are given. Students do not choose how they are educated; this is left up to adult caregivers (Dennison et al., 2020; Neuman & Guterman, 2016; Pannone, 2017; Shaw, 2020).

Instrumentation

In a qualitative narrative study, the researcher must ask open-ended questions that allow those being interviewed to elaborate on their answers. The researcher must also examine data from multiple sources (Rhodes, 2018). This study sought to discover the perceptions of homeschooling from public and home educators in Missouri. The study also attempted to elaborate on how these perceptions compared to the perceptions of home school families who were practicing home education. The study of these perceptions could provide information about significant differences if any, and similarities in perception of those in public and home education. Three different sources of instrumentation were used in this study: interviews, the Missouri Home Education Standards, and a focus group discussion.

Interviews

The researcher interviewed 5 Missouri public school employees. The questions were open-ended. The interview was conducted conversationally, and some questions were not elaborated on in each interview; however, seven main questions were addressed consistently with all participants. These responses are presented in their entirety in an Appendix A.

The researcher interviewed 5 Missouri home educators. The questions were open-ended. The interview was conducted conversationally, and some questions were not elaborated on in each interview; however, seven main questions were addressed consistently with all participants. These responses are presented in their entirety in an Appendix B.

To ensure the study conducted had a high level of validity and reliability,

specific steps and strategies were used. To promote credibility or internal validity researchers should use at least two strategies in a study (Creswell, 2017). Each interview was transcribed individually using Otter.ai and Microsoft Teams. Otter.ai, a transcription software that allowed for all interviews to be transcribed instantly. Microsoft Teams also provided accurate transcription. The researcher used Teams and Otter.ai on two separate devices to provide a backup device to record interviews. The use of a backup device was to ensure full transcription in the case that a recording was not audible. Otter.ai allows prerecorded audio to be placed in its system to be recorded and transcribed (Otter.ai, 2021). The first step to ensure reliability was to check all transcripts. This began with viewing the transcripts from Otter.ai. As the transcripts were read multiple times by the researcher, validity was checked as the answers provided insights on the research questions. The transcripts were checked by the researcher by reading the transcript while the recorded audio was playing to ensure exact word-by-word transcription. If the transcription was incorrect, the researcher corrected the transcript. The second step to ensuring validity was to provide a synthesized transcript consisting of themes and concepts found in their conversation as recommended by Butina (2015) in a process called member checking.

To summarize the validity process, the researcher recorded each interview with Otter.ai running on a mobile device. To ensure the accuracy of the transcribed interviews, each interview was recorded. Once complete, each person had the opportunity to check their comments for accuracy and had the opportunity to change anything that misrepresented their statements. This process is called member checking and it allows for greater internal validity (Candela, 2019). The same process was be

used for the focus group discussion with all 10 individuals. The group discussion allowed the entire conversation, and everyone was assigned a conversation number associated with their comments.

To provide reliability within the study, Butina (2015) recommended providing detailed descriptions of the process, participants, and findings. The process of the study has been detailed in Chapter Three in order that another researcher might replicate it in the future. A detailed description of the participants is provided as well as a detailed selection process. Participants were purposefully selected to create a clear understanding of the problem and research questions. Each public and home educator had a background in either public education or home education. The participants were not identified, ensuring confidentiality of their personal information.

The first data source used in this study was interviews. Five public school educators and five home educators were interviewed on the perceptions of home education. The questions correlated to the research questions. Each interview started with some brief demographic questions and informal conversational questions to create a comfort level in the interview process. This study sought to uncover what each participant's own perception of the topic was and what their perceived perception of what the other population's thoughts were. Interview questions were based on the research questions. The central question was, What are the perceptions of home education held by public educators and home educators?

1. What perceptions are held by public school employees (teachers, staff, and administrators) about the quality of academics in home education?
2. What perceptions are held by public school employees (teachers, staff, and

administrators) and homeschool educators about the home educators' ability (homeschooled children you have observed) to socialize and prepare their children for success in the community?

3. What types of services might public schools provide to Homeschool children and their families?

Home Educator Interview Questions

The first set of interviews was very general and open-ended. This question allowed the participant to go in any direction they wanted with the topic. The interview questions that followed drilled down more specifically following Question 1. Follow-up questions could possibly accompany this question and were documented to present the opportunity to ask the same follow-up question if applicable in other interviews. The first set of questions directly correlated to the overarching main research question of the study.

1. What are the perceptions of home education held by public and home educators? What experiences have contributed to this belief? Do you feel that your perspective is like other home educators you know? If so, why or if not, why?

The second set of questions drilled down specifically to the perception of academic quality from the home educator's perspective. The question and related questions directly correlated to the second research question described in the study. The questions asked about the home educators' perception of home education and were introduced first to ensure a comfort level in the answering process.

2. What perceptions are held by home educators about the quality of academics in home education? What caused you to come to this perception? Do you feel that

your perspective is similar to other home educators you know? If so, why or if not, why? How important would you say the quality of academics is to home educators?

The third group of questions provided the participant the opportunity to discuss their experience with public education groups about home education. The questions in this section directly correlated with research Question 1.

3. What if anything has been communicated to you about the quality of academics in home education from the public educators? Do you have any experiences that have helped you develop this perception? Do you feel your perceptions on this subject are like other home educators you know? If so, why or if not, why? Why would the quality of academics in a homeschool setting be important to a public school employee? Where do you think these perceptions come from?

The fourth set of questions drilled down into the concept of socialization success from the perspective of a home educator. These questions directly correlated to Research Question 2. The perception of the home educators' thoughts on socialization were asked first to create a comfort level for the participant as this is what they are most familiar with.

4. What perceptions are held by home educators about the home educators' ability to socialize and prepare their children for success in the community? How would you define socialization? How important is socialization? How would you define success in the community? Do you feel your perceptions on this subject are like other home educators you know? If so, why or if not, why?

The fifth set of questions explored the home educators' perceptions of socialization

from a public school employee. These questions correlated with Research Question 2.

5. What has been communicated to you by public school employees (teachers, staff, and administrators) about the home educators' ability (homeschooled children you have observed) to socialize and prepare their children for success in the community? Do you have any experiences that have helped you create this perception? If so, explain. Do you feel your perceptions on this subject are like other home educators you know? If so, why or if not, why? How would you assume someone in public education would define socialization? How important would you say socialization is according to a person in public education? How would you say a person in public education would define success in the community? Where do you think these perceptions come from?

The sixth group of questions asked specifically about the services a public school might provide to homeschooled students. This set of questions correlated to Research Question 3.

6. What services might public schools provide homeschooled students and their families? What purpose would public school services serve? Would they be welcomed or unwelcomed? What experiences have contributed to your thoughts on this topic? Are you aware of services homeschooled students have access to?

The purpose of the seventh question was to close the interview and add any other information about home education perceptions.

7. How important is it for home educators and public educators to know one another's perception of home education? Please explain your answer.

Public Educator Interview Questions

The first question was very general and open-ended. This question allowed the participant to go in any direction they wanted with the topic. The interview questions that follow drilled down more specifically following Question 1. Follow-up questions could accompany this question and were documented to present the opportunity to ask the same follow-up question if applicable in other interviews. The first set of questions directly correlated to the overarching main research question of the study.

1. What are the perceptions of home education held by public and home educators?

What experiences have contributed to this perception? Do you feel that your perspective is like other public educators you know? If so, why or if not, why?

The second group of questions drilled down specifically to the perception of academic quality of home education from the public educator's perspective. The questions in this section directly correlated with Research Question 1.

2. What perceptions are held by public school employees (teachers, staff, and administrators) about the quality of academics in home education? Do you have any experiences that have helped you develop this perception? If so, explain. Do you feel your perceptions on this subject are like other public educators you know? If so, why or if not, why? Where do you think these perceptions come from?

The third set of questions provided the participant the opportunity to discuss what their perception was of the home education group's thoughts on the quality of academics. The questions in this section directly correlated with Research Question 1.

3. What if anything has been communicated to you by home educators about the quality of academics in home education? How important would you say the quality of academics is to home educators?

The fourth set of questions explored the public educators' perceptions of socialization within home education. These questions correlated with Research Question 2.

4. What perceptions are held by public school employees (teachers, staff, and administrators) about the home educators' ability (homeschooled children you have observed) to socialize and prepare their children for success in the community? Do you have any experiences that have contributed to this perception? If so, explain. Do you feel your perceptions on this subject are like other public educators you know? If so, why or if not, why? How would you define socialization? How important would you say socialization is? How would you define success in the community? Where do you think these perceptions come from?

The fifth set of questions drilled down into the concept of socialization success from the perspective of a home educator. These questions directly correlated to Research Question 2.

5. What if anything has been communicated to you by home educators about the home educators' ability to socialize and prepare their children for success in the community? How do you think a home educator would define socialization? How important would you say a home educator thinks socialization is? How would you say a home educator might define success in the community? What experiences have supported your stance? The sixth group of questions asked

specifically about the services a public school might provide to homeschooled students. This set of questions correlated to Research Question 3.

6. Are you aware of services homeschooled students have access to? What services might public schools provide homeschooled students and their families? Should some services be provided?

The Purpose of the seventh question was to close the interview and add any other information about home education perceptions.

7. How important is it for home educators and public educators to know one another's perception of home education? Please explain your answer.

Focus Group Discussion

A focus group discussion was used to provide additional information on perceptions of homeschooling. All 10 participants were invited to be a part of the focus group discussion. During the focus group, 6 participants were available. There were 4 home educators and 2 public educators. The researcher asked the group questions based on the themes developed from the individual interviews. The participants were also given the opportunity to clarify responses from the interview section of the study.

All participants attended the focus group virtually (online) as this provided an opportunity for all interviewees to participate in the focus group discussion. The online format allowed participants to respond to each other as well as the researcher. Participants joined the discussion via Microsoft Teams as up to 100 participants can utilize this platform simultaneously. The focus group

involved 7 people: the interviewer, 2 public educators, and 4 home educators, a number well within the range of capacity the site can handle.

Data Analysis

Butina (2015) described narrative analysis as a process without a set of agreed upon procedures but recommended five steps consisting of organizing and preparing the data, obtaining a sense of the information, coding, themes, and interpretation. To begin the organization and preparation of data, the interviews were transcribed using Otter.ai (2021) and analyzed. Notes of any themes or patterns were recorded on the transcription page. The transcribed pages from each interview were checked to make sure the Otter.a.i software was aware of voice changes and the transcript was edited to make sure individual speakers were identified by assigned letter.

Coding was done manually by the researcher by rereading the transcripts and identifying reoccurring words or phrases. Butina (2015) recommended highlighting ideas and reoccurring messages or words. After each transcript was read and coded, they were used to create a coding lists. A master list of the most frequent words used by each public educator was created. A master list of the most frequent words used by each home educator was also created. After the two list were complete, the researcher cross referenced both lists to create a list of the most frequent words used by both groups of educators. This list was then analyzed to determine the three major themes that resulted from the interviews. The three major themes guided the focus group discussion.

After the initial coding of the interviews was finished. The researcher did additional analysis of each question set. Each of the question sets were broken down and the researcher was able to determine a positive, negative, or neutral perception of

each set of questions from the interview as found in Chapter Four. This information was helpful in providing background information to the participants during the focus group discussion.

The last step was the narrative analysis, or making sense of the data (Butina, 2015). After studying the coded transcripts, the researcher combed through the resulting information looking for perception data that pertained to each group interviewed. This occurred throughout the study from the very first interview question to when the last theme was established. The review of the participants' answers in relation to the coding and themes provided unique perceptual data about home education.

The 10 interviews served as the first leg of triangulation. The data collected from the interviews were where the most emphasis on data analysis took place. The second part of triangulation was the use of the Missouri Homeschool Regulations document provided by Home School Legal Defense Association (2019). This document outlined the regulations a home educator must follow to comply with Missouri law. The coding from the interviews was used to refer back to the document to see if it provided additional help in uncovering perceptual data. The third leg of triangulation came in the form of a focus group discussion among the 10 participants who were interviewed. This took place after all the interviews were conducted. This conversation was hosted by the researcher and response review format was used. Responses from the interviews were reviewed and summarized for the panel and questions were formed based on those interview responses. Questions and topics in this forum were formed based on the coding and themes from the interviews. Participants were provided with the Missouri Homeschool Regulations prior to the focus group so they were familiar with them.

The focus group discussion provided the educators who were interviewed an opportunity to further explain their perceptions. The participants were also able to respond to educators who had a different perception. The focus group discussion was reported in chapter 4 in a narrative format. This format allowed the researcher to provide more in-depth perceptual data from the participants.

In summary, detailed interviews were conducted with 10 participants. Each interview was transcribed and followed a list of questions. These interviews were analyzed to produce coding and themes. The responses to the interviews also helped to produce the topics for the focus group discussion involving the same 6 participants. The 6 participants attended a virtual (online) meeting and discussion regarding their responses to the interview questions in the first leg of the study. The researcher asked questions that were developed from the themes discovered during the coding process. The Missouri Homeschool Standards Document, described in Chapter One, was also used to triangulate the data.

Summary

Chapter Three reviewed the methodology of this qualitative narrative study. Using narrative interviews, the researcher obtained perceptual data from public and home educators. Perceptions were gathered on the quality of academics of a homeschool program, perceptions on the preparedness of homeschool students in social venues in the community, and perceived services that public schools might provide. All interviews and the focus group discussion were documented by transcription and member checked. The Missouri Homeschool Standards were also used as a document to further understand the content that was found from the interviews. Coding and themes were

created based on the content generated from the interviews. The theoretical framework of the social theory of learning and (CoP) guided the research. In Chapter Four the researcher will present the results of the study. Chapter Five will include a summary of the study and provide conclusions from the data as well as recommendations for future studies in this genre of research.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to understand the perceptions of home education from public and home educators. The study involved 10 interviews with five public educators and five home educators. All participants were asked the same series of questions and given the opportunity to clarify any answers or responses. This chapter presents the results of the interviews and presents themes that were discovered by both sets of educators.

The theoretical framework within this study was based on the conceptual framework that has stated home education is an alternative method of education in the United States. Wenger (1998), a researcher for the Institute for Research on Learning, worked together with Lave in developing a social theory of learning. The overarching concept within the theory is that learning is a highly social experience. Communities of Practice (CoP) is a major component of this theory. Communities of Practice place the collective learning from different perspectives into the context of one's lived experience (Wenger, 2017). This study established a CoP among public and home educators to uncover perceptions of home education.

Research Questions

Through this study the following questions were addressed.

The central question was, what are the perceptions of home education held by public educators and home educators?

1. What perceptions are held by public school employees (teachers, staff, and

administrators) and homeschool educators about the quality of academics in home education?

2. What perceptions are held by public school employees (teachers, staff, and administrators) and homeschool educators about the home educators' ability (homeschooled children you have observed) to socialize and prepare their children for success in the community?
3. What suggested services might public schools provide to homeschool children and their families and what information should home educators provide to local public schools?

Participants

With all five public educator interviews and all five home educators interviews completed, transcribed, and checked for accuracy, the researcher began the process of coding interviews. To code the transcripts the researcher looked at line-by-line transcription to see words or phrases frequently used by those who were interviewed. All participants were asked the same set of questions created from the research questions of the study. Each participant chose to interview via Microsoft Teams, where their interview was recorded and transcribed. Each interview was also recorded via Otter.ai to make sure each interview was transcribed accurately.

To help with coding the researcher provided a system of ensuring demographics were preserved. Within the five public educators (PE) who were interviewed, there was at least one participant from each of the three different regions in Missouri. These regions were broken into Northern MO (N), Central MO (C), and Southern MO (SO). The researcher also ensured that within the five public educators PEs who were

interviewed, there was at least one participant from a district with 5,000 or more students, constituting a large district (L). There was at least one public educator from a district with between 1,001 and 4,999 students, constituting a medium district (M). There was also at least one public educator from a district of 1,000 or fewer students, constituting a small district (S). The researcher also ensured that there was at least one male and one female participant.

Within the five home educators (HE) who were interviewed there was at least one participant from each of the three different regions in MO. These regions were broken into Northern MO (N), Central MO (C), and Southern MO (SO). The researcher also ensured that within the five home educators (HS) who were interviewed, there was at least one participant from a family with six or more children, constituting a large family (LF). There was at least one home educator from a family with between 3-5 children, constituting a medium family (MF). There was also at least one home educator from a family of two or fewer children, constituting a small family (SF). The researcher also ensured that there was at least one male and one female participant.

Each participant was given an abbreviation such as HS, indicating homeschool, or PS, indicating public school. Next, each participant was given a letter based on the RPDC they were from; N for Northern, C for Central, and SO for Southern. Finally, each participant was provided a letter indicating district size. The capital letter S indicated a small school district of 1,000 or less students for public school employees or a family of one or two children for home educators. The capital letter M indicated a medium-sized school district of 1,001 to 4,999 students for public school employees or a family of three to five children for home educators. The capital letter L indicated a

large-sized school district of 5,000 or more students for public school employees or a family of six or more children for home educators. For example, the label PS-C-M-F would indicate the person interviewed was a public educator from a RPDC area that was in Central Missouri, from a medium-sized school district, and F would indicate they were female. Another example would be HS-SO-S-M, indicating the person interviewed was a home educator, from an RPDC area that was in Southern Missouri, from a small family, and they were a male. To provide clarity in the abbreviations, the researcher followed the following format: educational setting (PS or HS), followed by a hyphen, followed by the region (N, C, SO), followed by a hyphen, followed by the district or family size (L, M, S), followed by a hyphen, followed by the gender of the person interviewed (F or M). A number was assigned to a participant code if they shared the same demographic information. Table 2 presents the coding system used by the researcher to establish privacy and document the correct demographics of each participant.

Table 2

Participant Codes

Codes	Description
PS-SO-L-F	Public Educator, Southern MO, Large District, Female
PS-C-S-M	Public Educator, Central MO, Small District, Male
PS-N-L-F	Public Educator, Northern MO, Large District, Female
PS-SO-M-F	Public Educator, Southern MO, Medium District, Female
PS-C-S-M-2	Public Educator, Central MO, Small District, Male, (second interviewee with same demographics)
HS-SO-LF-M	Home Educator, Southern MO, Large Family, Male
HS-C-MF-M	Home Educator, Central MO, Medium Family, Male
HS-N-LF-M	Home Educator, Northern MO, Large Family, Male
HS-SO-SF-F	Home Educator, Southern MO, Small Family, Female
HS-SO-MF-F	Home Educator, Southern MO, Medium Family, Female

Note. Northern MO represents Missouri Regional Professional Development Centers 3, 4, and 5. Central MO represents Missouri Regional Professional Development Centers 9, 2, and 8. Southern MO represents Missouri Regional Professional Development Centers 7, 6, and 1.

Verification and Trustworthiness

Member checking and triangulation were used to provide validation in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). At least two validation strategies should be used to validate findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Member checking was used after the 10 interviews were recorded and transcripts were inspected by each person interviewed.

Once the transcripts were cleaned up and participants member checked and no participants requested any changes to the transcript, the interviews were viewed and coded by the researcher. Using Otter.ai, most frequent words in the interview were discovered and the researcher verified these findings by reading and listening to interviews. The researcher also read each interview transcript multiple times and was able to combine words that related to the same concept. Many interviews included words and phrases that revolved around the concept of family. Words such as *parent*, *child*, *kids*, and *kiddos* were calculated within the word *family*. Each transcript was read several more times and the researcher analyzed each question set. There were seven question sets in each interview and there were 10 interviews. The researcher examined each individual question set and assigned a positive, negative, or neutral perception, in order to help gain meaning from the perceptions of home education. Question Set 6 was not assigned a positive, negative, or neutral perception, but instead the resources mentioned during the interviews were collected and the researcher was able to see common perceptions based on the resources named. Within the study of the transcripts the researcher established three themes that were derived from the most frequent terms used in both the public and home educator interviews. These can be found in Tables 3,

4, and 5. The researcher also analyzed terms in all interviews that were asked within the interview very straightforwardly. These findings are found in Tables 3 through 5.

The triangulation used within the study started with the interviews of 10 educators. Once participants member checked and common terms were established from the most frequent words used, each interview was then analyzed by individual question set. A focus group discussion was held elaborating on the themes discovered. Within the focus group discussion, the Missouri Home Education Requirements were discussed, and participants were asked about their perceptions of the requirements. Using the participant interviews, Focus Group discussion, and the Missouri Home Education Requirements, perceptions of home education were uncovered from public and home educators.

Data Analysis

Through the study, the researcher was able to discover three overarching themes from the participants. These themes were established from 10 in-depth interviews with public and home educators. Through the coding process, the researcher found that public and home educators had contrasting perceptions of the quality of education in home education. The next theme discovered through the coding process was the quality of academics and socialization is dependent on family involvement. The last theme discovered from the coding process was public and home educators have contrasting perceptions on the home educator's ability to provide proper socialization.

Butina (2015) explained that data analysis is making sense of the data. To do so one must immerse themselves into the data and find insights into the research questions. Interviews were recorded using Otter.ai and this system tracked common words used

throughout the interview. All transcripts were read and reviewed as well as cleaned up for accuracy. The researcher deleted double words and corrected improperly transcribed words. The researcher also took out filler words that did not add to the content of the interview. Once the transcripts were member checked by the participants, they were analyzed by the researcher to find the participant's perceptions based around the research questions.

All interviews were performed by the researcher using question sets. The same question sets were asked of public and home educators. Each question set corresponded with a specific research question. The researcher coded each individual question set with a positive, negative, or neutral perception. Doing this allowed the researcher to see patterns and commonalities within a group of participants interviewed. Analyzing each individual question set allowed the researcher to capture strong descriptions of the perceptions desired to be discovered. To discover the perceptions, the researcher did not break the question sets down into individual questions. Groenewald (2004) recommended keeping context as whole as possible when investigating. Assigning a code of positive, negative, or neutral allowed the researcher to discover perceptions based on the interviews, not based on preconceptions. By distinguishing the difference between positive, negative, and neutral perceptions, units of meaning were discovered. Groenewald explained that themes are formed by grouping units of meaning together. This was done by rigorously examining transcripts, looking at the overall perceptions found in question sets, and using the most frequent words used during the interviews.

In addition to the question set analysis that uncovered perception data, the researcher coded each transcript for most frequently used words. Most frequent words

were found via Otter.ai and it was also checked while reading the interviews. Common words were tracked and are displayed for public educators in Table 3.

Table 3

Top Five Terms Most Commonly Used by Public Educators

Term	#	Term	#	Term	#	Term	#
PE 1		PE 2		PE 3		PE 4	
education	39	family(ies)	54	people	36	community	31
family(ies)	26	education	38	education	35	socialization	22
socialization	19	community	21	Family (ies)	31	Family (ies)	20
services	13	socialization	15	socialization	23	involved	18
resources	9	resources	10	idea	12	provide	14
PE 5							
education	75						
socialization	23						
worked	18						
resources	11						
opportunity	10						

Note. PE stands for public educator. Family includes the words family, families, kids, kiddo, and parents.

Common terms for public educators focused on quality of education, socialization, families, and being involved in the community. The term *education* was most often used in the context of speaking about the quality of education. The word *socialization* was introduced by the participants before the interviewer asked about the term in 4 out of 5 PE interviews. There was a clear perception by the public educators on the subject of socialization. When examined, 3 of the 5 had a negative perception of the home educator’s ability to properly socialize their child. The other two had mixed perceptions giving positive and negative experiences with socialization. Common words were tracked and are displayed for home educators in Table 4.

Table 4

Top Five Terms Most Commonly Used by Home Educators

Term	#	Term	#	Term	#	Term	#
HE 1		HE 2		HE 3		HE 4	
education	87	education	58	education	82	education	82
family(ies)	24	socialization	19	family(ies)	73	socialization	27
socialization	21	religious	17	community	32	Family (ies)	40
play	20	quality	17	socialization	25	community	23
question	16	family(ies)	16	learning	19	program	18
HE 5							
education	91						
Family(ies)	43						
socialization	41						
people	14						
interact	14						

Note. HE stands for home educator. Family includes the words family, families, kids, kiddo, and parents.

Common terms emerged in Table 4 from home educators based on the quality of education, socialization, and family values. The word *education* was used by each home educator multiple times when referring to the quality of education. *Socialization* was also a common term that seemed important to home educators. Socialization was talked about by each home educator before a question was asked by the researcher. The researcher looked at the most frequent terms used in all 10 interviews. The terms reported in Table 5 are ones that were used by both public and home educators. The researcher read through each transcript and listened to them several times, listening for common phrases. The common phrases that emerged were consistent with the most frequent terms used in the interviews.

Table 5

Top Five Terms Most Commonly Used by Public and Home Educators

Shared term	# of occurrences
Education	587 occurrences
Family (ies)	327 occurrences
Socialization	235 occurrences
Community	107 occurrences
People	50 occurrences

Note. Occurrences are a combined number from public and home educators.

After viewing the most frequent words used in the 10 interviews, three emerged as being used the most. *Education* was a term that was used 587 times. A variation of the word *family* was used 327 times. The words *family, families, kids, kiddo, and parents* were used to calculate this word occurrence. The word *socialization* was used 235 times across all interviews. Next, to uncover themes, the researcher analyzed each individual question set from each interview and assigned a positive, negative, or neutral perception to each participant’s response. The researcher was also aware of the most common words used to see where the words were used when answering the question sets.

This study identified perception by analyzing the content to collect data. Each question was asked based on one of the three research questions. A positive or negative perception was assigned to the overarching research question based on each participant’s responses. Perceptions assigned to questions were based on a positive, negative, or neutral response to the subject of the question. Neutral perceptions were

based on the participant providing both positive and negative responses. Questions in the interview were placed into groups so the participants would be able to express their thoughts completely. Each participant was assigned a perception based on their response.

Public Educator Question Sets

Public educator Question Set 1 asked participants about their overall perceptions of home education. They were asked about experiences that provided that perception. Participants were also asked if they were aware of whether their perceptions were similar to other public educators. Common perceptions that emerged are outlined in Table 6.

Table 6

<i>Common Perceptions in Question Set 1- Overall Perceptions of Home Education</i>	
Public Educator Perception	Educator Response
Positive	2/5
Negative	0/5
Neutral	3/5

When the five public school participants were asked about their perceptions of home education, 60% of those interviewed provided a neutral response, meaning they had both positive and negative perceptions of home education. Participant PS-C-S-M said:

You know, I’ve been around a lot of people. I’ve met a lot of people who have homeschooled their kids. The Kids seemed well-adjusted to me. You know, I think that there’s ultimately whatever you look at though, that there’s this idea,

this underlying current that homeschooling is not necessarily good for kids.

The ideas of high academics and low socialization were uncovered as common perceptions. Those who were providing a neutral perception were able to provide examples of both positive and negative situations they had experienced. There was a pattern of response in the interviews that expressed thoughts about home education had started to change among public educators compared to what was thought of it in the past. COVID-19 was commonly mentioned as the reason for this change. PS-SO-M-F, said:

We had our virtual school, choosing one of those or taking on their homeschooling. They really were thrown into it. There wasn't pre-planning for it. And that made it hard and some of them didn't even stick it out for the year and sent them back to seated classes. COVID has probably helped those families be able to provide more resources, especially virtually. So you know, there's just more options for them for sure.

Public educator Question Set 2 asked participants about the quality of academics in home education. The participants were able to provide experiences that formed their perceptions. Participants were also able to identify whether their perceptions were similar to other public educators. All participants were able to provide additional information about the origin of their perceptions. Perceptions that emerged are outlined in Table 7.

Table 7

Common Perceptions in Question Set 2- Perceptions of the Quality of Academics in Home Education

Public Educator Perception	Educator Response
Positive	2/5
Negative	1/5
Neutral	2/5

A common pattern of thought emerged in all interviews that the quality of homeschool resources and programs have improved. Another common theme that emerged from all interviews was that there is no assurance of quality from family to family. PS-C-S-M said:

But looking at public education a lot of times people come in and say they want to home-school their kids and what do they do? Those are the kids who aren't passing in school anyway, and so they're just going to take them out of school. They're going to sign a release. And so a lot of people have an idea of home school being that way.

Public educators provided the theme of their main experience coming from students who come into their schools, who are behind academically. PS-SO-M-F said

I have had experiences and I'll tell you that my experience has been those kids that are coming back from a home school setting where maybe they haven't been successful. And really, I think it's that early literacy piece oftentimes.

The theme of the family's socioeconomic status affecting the quality of academics was present in 3 of the 5 interviews.

Public educator Question Set 3 asked participants about what had been communicated to them by home educators about the quality of academics in home education. The participants were able to provide their perception of how important academic quality was to home educators. Participants' responses were coded as not communicated if they did not have this information communicated to them. Perceptions that emerged are outlined in Table 8.

Table 8

Common Perceptions in Question Set 3- What Has Been Communicated About the Quality of Academics in Home Education

Public Educator Perception	Educator Response
Positive (important)	3/5
Negative (not important)	0/5
Neutral	2/5
Not Communicated	0/5

The majority of public educators, 60%, perceived home educators as having more resources. The perception of individualized learning was uncovered in 60% of the interviews as parents expressed to public educators that was their rationale for home educating. The words *pride* and *quality* were expressed when commenting on what was communicated to the public educator about the quality of academics in home education by home educators. A common perception was that the quality of academics, “depended on the family.” All of the participants shared that they had experienced communication about the quality of academics. However, two participants shared that the standard for the quality of academics was different.

Public educator Question Set 4 asked participants about the home educators' ability to socialize and prepare children for success in the community. Participants were able to provide experiences that helped them inform their perceptions. They were able to identify if their perceptions were like other public educators. They were able to provide their working definitions of socialization and success in the community. This question set also allowed participants to express their perception of how important socialization is and where they feel their perception comes from. Perceptions that emerged are outlined in Table 9.

Table 9

Common Perceptions in Question Set 4- Perceptions of the Home Educators' Ability to Socialize and Prepare Children for Success in the Community

Public Educator Perception	Educator Response
Positive (able to)	0/5
Negative (not able to)	3/5
Neutral	2/5

All public educators shared a similar perception of socialization. Each participant was able to provide examples where home educators were not able to provide proper socialization. Two participants were able to give examples of experiencing home educators who were able to provide proper socialization. PS-SO-M-F said, "I feel like if families are really reaching out to that network of people that are homeschooling, that homeschool network, then those kids are equally socialized, and they might be more involved." PS-C-S-M said:

It is dependent on what community you're in. I think in the smaller community, kids are going to still be exposed to one another, even if they're not in school.

But generally. What I've ran into in the past is that with these kids, what's been discussed is that these kids are going to be socially stunted and I think that's what a lot of people will feel that way. That's one of the things that I've ran into time and time again in the past. People were like oh, they're keeping their kids out of school. They're not going to know how to function in society.

One participant also provided examples where proper socialization was not present. The term “coming in second” in response to socialization was used by one participant meaning home educators do not think of socialization first and it is often an afterthought. PS-SO-L-F said:

I would say socialization comes in second after the rigor and the actual work that's put into their program. I would say socialization is the concern of public educators coming in second, but I do know there are lots of opportunities. The families just have to seek them out.

All participants shared the view that home educators do not place the same emphasis on socialization as public educators. When the definition of socialization was discussed, 3 of the 5 participants agreed the definition of socialization involved getting along with one's peers. Another participant had a similar definition, however, it added the ability to get along with those of different ages, too. One participant simply stated that socialization was just being part of a group and contributing to the group. All participants provided a common message of socialization being very important.

Public educator Question Set 5 asked participants what has been communicated to them by home educators about the home educator's ability to provide socialization and success in the community. The participants were able to define what socialization

and success in the community was, as communicated by home educators. Participants were also able to provide their perception of the importance of socialization as communicated by home educators. All participants were able to provide additional information about the source of their perception. Participants' responses were coded as not communicated if they did not have this information communicated to them. Perceptions that emerged are outlined in Table 10.

Table 10

Common Perceptions in Question Set 5- What Has Been Communicated About the Home Educators' Ability to Socialize and Prepare Children for Success in the Community

Public Educator Perception	Educator Response
Positive (able to)	1/5
Negative (not able to)	0/5
Neutral	0/5
Not Communicated	4/5

Although only one participant was able to express that the value of socialization was communicated to them, all participants were able to provide examples of home educators socializing their children. Common examples were church, sports, co-ops, and traveling. PS-C-S-M said:

I didn't see an issue with their kids because once again some I talked about a while ago they played baseball. They were outside when the other kids were outside, they were on a soccer team. They weren't necessarily in a classroom being socialized, but they were socialized outside of homeschooling.

All five participants shared a definition of socialization. All participants expressed home educators would share a common definition of socialization with them.

Public educator Question Set 6 asked participants about possible services a public school could provide for homeschooled students and families. Participants not only mentioned services that schools could provide, but they also mentioned services that schools currently provide. Perceptions that emerged are outlined in Table 11.

Table 11

Common Perceptions in Question Set 6- Perception of Possible Services Public Schools Could Provide for Homeschooled Students and Families

Public Educator Perception	Educator Response
Special Education services	3/5
Related arts	3/5
Community events	1/5
Sports	2/5
Higher level classes	2/5
Assessments	2/5

A common theme emerged that none of the participants had a common understanding of what services were provided to home educators by public schools. When asked what services public schools might provide to home educators the most common responses were, access to special education services and related arts such as Physical Education, Art, and Music (band). A common theme emerged through the interviews that the public educators were aware of resources outside of what the public schools offer in terms of community groups, social media, and improved academic

resources. PS-C-S-M commented, “I have seen it in other areas where kids who wanted to play sports at the high school level. They're able to play even though they're homeschooled.” This was the only public educator who had this perspective of seeing home-educated students play sports.

Public educator Question Set 7 asked participants about their perception of the importance of home educators and public educators’ knowledge of one another’s perceptions of home education. The participants were able to provide explanations for their answers. Perceptions that emerged are outlined in Table 12.

Table 12

Common Perceptions in Question Set 7- Perception of the Importance of Home Educators and Public Educators’ Knowledge of One Another’s Perceptions

Public Educator Perception	Educator Response
Positive (important)	2/5
Negative (not important)	0/5
Neutral	3/5

It was found that 4 of the 5 respondents felt like it was important to know one another’s perceptions in general. Those four respondents were initially unsure of the importance of knowing the perceptions of home educators, but as they continued answering the question, concluded it was important. As one participant, PS-C-S-M-2, was answering the question they expressed, “I think everybody already knows what people think. You know for the most part.” One respondent, PS-N-L-F, expressed that it is important to know one another’s perceptions by saying, “I think to the extent that their paths cross is the extent that it's important for all of us to understand. Everybody's

got a perspective, right?” Two other respondents expressed a similar point of view highlighting the importance of understanding the perceptions of students who were coming to public school from a home education model.

Home Educator Question Sets

Home educator Question Set 1 asked participants about their overall perceptions of home education. They were asked about experiences that provided that perception. Participants were also asked if they were aware of whether their perceptions were similar to other public educators. Perceptions that emerged are outlined in Table 13.

Table 13

Common Perceptions in Question Set 1- Overall Perceptions of Home Education

Home Educator Perception	Educator Response
Positive	5/5
Negative	0/5
Neutral	0/5

When the five home educator participants were asked about their perceptions of home education, 100% of those interviewed provided a positive response. This meant they had positive perceptions of home education. It was found that 2 of the 5 participants did mention that public educators’ perceptions of home education seemed to be changing positively. One participant, HS-C-MF-M, commented about the public educators’ perception by saying, “Public educators seem to think that home educators are not getting enough of a standardized academic curriculum.”

Home educator Question Set 2 asked participants about the quality of academics in home education. The participants were able to provide experiences that formed their

perceptions. Participants were also able to identify whether their perceptions were similar to other home educators. All participants were able to provide additional information about the source of their perceptions. Perceptions that emerged are outlined in Table 14.

Table 14

Common Perceptions in Question Set 2- Perceptions of the Quality of Academics in Home Education

Home Educator Perception	Educator Response
Positive	4/5
Negative	1/5
Neutral	0/5

A common message emerged in all interviews that the quality of homeschool education was evident. HS-SO-SF-F said, “I would say our perception is that the quality of education that our students are getting, particularly ours is good. It's like it's a good, robust, well-rounded education.” Home educators expressed that within their communities there was a shared dedication to the quality of education. All home educators expressed that the quality of education within a home school setting was important. One participant was clear that it does depend on the home school.

Home educator Question Set 3 asked participants about what has been communicated to them by public educators about the quality of academics in home education. The participants were able to provide their perception of how important academic quality was to public educators. Participants’ responses were coded as not communicated if they did not have this information communicated to them. Perceptions that emerged are outlined in Table 15.

Table 15

Common Perceptions in Question Set 3- What Has Been Communicated About the Quality of Academics in Home Education

Home Educator Perception	Educator Response
Positive (important)	1/5
Negative (not important)	1/5
Neutral	0/5
Not Communicated	3/5

It was found that 60% of the participants in the interview provided a theme of public educators not communicating a perspective about the quality of academics in home education. One of the home educators interviewed mentioned that public educators they knew thought the quality of academics in home education is very good. One participant had a negative perception of the quality of home education based on their experiences as public educators. The socioeconomic level of the family homeschooling was mentioned as an indicator of whether or not the quality of education was of high quality or not. This participant mentioned that at their school there was a perception that, “When a student was taken out to home school it really meant no school,” said HS-SO-SF-F.

Home educator Question Set 4 asked participants about the home educators’ ability to socialize and prepare children for success in the community. Participants were able to provide experiences that helped them inform their perceptions. Participants were also able to identify if their perceptions were like other home educators. Participants were also able to provide their personal working definitions of socialization and success in the community. This question set also allowed participants to express their

perception of how important socialization is and where they feel their perception comes from. Perceptions that emerged are outlined in Table 16.

Table 16

Common Perceptions in Question Set 4- Perceptions of the Home Educators' Ability to Socialize and Prepare Children for Success in the Community

Home Educator Perception	Educator Response
Positive (able to)	5/5
Negative (not able to)	0/5
Neutral	0/5

Respondents agreed that home educators perceived they were able to socialize and prepare children for success in the community. All participants communicated the perception that socialization was important. Each home educator communicated examples of socialization ranging from church, sports, activities, co-ops, and other social environments. Each participant stated that there were examples of children with poor socialization, but this is often the case when the parents struggle with socialization. HS-SO-SF-F said:

So they would either bring up instances where a home schooled kid that they knew was socially awkward. But I mean, from my experience, generally the social awkwardness is probably because the parents are socially awkward, and they've learned that from them. That's been my just anecdotal experience.

A common view of the participants on socialization was the ability to interact with others. When discussing the concept of success in the community, definitions included being well versed, well-read, able to hold down a job, engaging in the community, playing with others, cooperation, teamwork, and having the ability to take

care of one's family.

Home educator Question Set 5 asked participants what had been communicated to them by public educators about the home educator's ability to provide socialization and success in the community, communicating importance. The participants were also able to define what socialization and success in the community were as communicated by home educators. Participants were also able to provide their perception of the importance of socialization as communicated by public educators. All participants were able to provide additional information about the source of their perceptions.

Participants' responses were coded as not communicated if they did not have this information communicated to them. Perceptions that emerged are outlined in Table 17.

Table 17

Common Perceptions in Question Set 5- What Has Been Communicated About the Home Educators' Ability to Socialize and Prepare Children for Success in the Community

Home Educator Perception	Educator Response
Positive (able to)	1/5
Negative (not able to)	1/5
Neutral	2/5
Not Communicated	1/5

One home educator, HS-SO-SF-F, explained, "Views of socialization have changed in the last 10 years because of technology." Two participants mentioned that what had been communicated to them was very mixed or neutral; some did not think home educators adequately socialize and prepare their children for success in the community and others did think they can do both. HS-SO-SF-F said:

And the perception from public education is kids who are home schooled are socially backwards or awkward, or they're not going to learn social skills because they're not with their peers. All the time and my response to them was always, well, I'm going to teach them social skills, and I can just say from having been in public education. I mean, you don't learn social skills from same age-based peers. You learn social skills from people who are a little bit further down the road than you that have the skills. So in same age-based classrooms, oftentimes it's the blind leading the blind. You know none of them have good social skills and it's people that are older like teachers or older students.

One of the participants mentioned that they had never actually had a conversation with a public educator about socialization, so it was not communicated. All five participants expressed that a public educator's definition of socialization would be similar to theirs, however, 3 of the 5 mentioned that faith would most likely not be a part of the public educators' definition.

Home educator Question Set 6 asked participants about possible services a public school could provide for homeschooled students and families. Participants were also asked to elaborate on their answers. Perceptions that emerged are outlined in Table 18.

Table 18

Common Perceptions in Question Set 6- Perception of Possible Services Public Schools Could Provide for Homeschooled Students and Families

Home Educator Perception	Educator Response
Related arts	3/5
Assessment	2/5
Dual credit	1/5
Sports	3/5
Use of school facilities	2/5
Clubs	3/5
Nothing	1/5

One participant wanted nothing to do with public education services due to what they referred to as contingencies or things the school would require of the student that did not fit with home education. A common theme emerged that all participants did not have a common understanding of what services are provided to home educators by public schools, which was also found with public educators. A theme was found between 3 of the 5 home educators that services should be provided due to home educators paying the same taxes as those who use public schools.

Home educator Question Set 7 asked participants about their perception of the importance of home educators' and public educators' knowledge of one another's perceptions of home education. The participants were able to provide explanations for their answers. Perceptions that emerged are outlined in Table 19. The researcher provided all tables for reference in APPENDIX C.

Table 19

Common Themes in Question Set 7- Perception of the Importance of Home Educators' and Public Educators' Knowledge of One Another's Perceptions

Home Educator Perception Theme	Educator Response
Positive (important)	5/5
Negative (not important)	0/5
Neutral	0/5

All five home educators communicated that it was very important to understand one another's perceptions. It was found by 60% of the participants that understanding each other's perceptions would help stop misinformation between the two sets of educators. One participant defined understanding one another's perceptions as a noble task. One participant added that understanding perceptions was a way of getting all educators on the same page as far as educating children. HS-C-MF-M said:

I think if they would just sit at a table together, get a home educator, get a public educator, sit at a table and run down your day-to-day activities, run down your curriculum ideas, run down your goals, and why you're doing this and just form a bridge of communication there. I think we'll find out that we're really not enemies of each other, you know, because when it's all said and done. Schooling and education is not about the teacher. It's not about the principal. It's not about the facility and programs, it's about the child. And I think if we put those put our stereotypes and our on our ideas aside and just open them up and realize that we are here to benefit the child.

After viewing the most frequent words used in the 10 interviews, three common terms emerged. The top three most frequent terms were also found to be areas of negative

perception among public educators when examining the individual question sets. The three most frequent terms were also areas of positive perception for home educators. Taking the two sources of information, the most frequently used words and the question set analysis, the researcher was able to establish three major themes to drive the focus group discussion. The first theme was that public and home educators had contrasting perceptions of the quality of education in home education. The term *education* alone was used 587 times within the context of the interviews and the common association of the word usage was connected to discussion based on the quality of education perceived within home education. Question Set 2 for public educators indicated a more negative perception held by the public educators as it pertained to the quality of academics in home education. Question Set 2 for home educators showed a more positive perception of the quality of academics in home education. The first theme established from the interviews as being important within the perceptions of both public and home educators was “public and home educators had contrasting perceptions of the quality of education in home education.” This was further noted by the researcher by reading transcripts multiple times. The researcher was able to discover each participant elaborating on the quality of education when asked directly. The researcher was also able to discover each participant alluded to the quality of education even when asked questions about other subjects. For example, participant HS-SO-LF-M said:

People ask what I teach, and I tell them chemistry and advanced math and theology, and they think they say wow, like, how do you know that? And I say, well, because I opened the books and I read and I study these things.

The participant was alluding to the quality of education when asked if they had any

other thoughts at the conclusion of the interview. The next theme that emerged was based on the usage of the word *family* in the 10 interviews and question sets.

The words *family*, *families*, *parents*, *kiddos*, or *kids* were used 327 times. The second theme established from the 10 interviews and question set analysis as being important within the perceptions of both public and home educators was “the quality of academics and socialization is dependent on family involvement.” Public and home educators communicated that the level of involvement of the home educator was closely related to the quality of academics and the quality of socialization. When looking at the different question sets, the concept of family involvement was present within Question Sets 1, 2, and 4 of both the public and home educators’ responses. Although the quality of academics was mentioned more often in association with family involvement, socialization was also mentioned by public and home educators. The interviewed participants mentioned that the quality of socialization could be increased through family involvement. Public educators also mentioned this as a factor of quality education within public schools.

The word *socialization* was used a combined 235 times within the 10 interviews. The perception of socialization was talked about when solicited or unsolicited by the interviewer within Question Set 1, 2, 3, and 4. Through the question set analysis, the researcher was able to gain the understanding that socialization made its way into other topics even when it was not asked about specifically, more so than any of the other themes. Socialization was most often used when confirming a strong perception of the ability to socialize students while homeschooling. All home educators had the perception that home educators had the ability to socialize and prepare children for

success in the community. However, 0 out of 5 public educators said home educators were able to socialize and prepare children for success in the community. In a breakdown of public educators' perceptions of the home educators' ability to socialize and prepare students for success in the community, three said home educators were not able to and two were neutral, meaning they were able to provide examples of both. The third theme established from the 10 interviews as being important within the perceptions of both public and home educators was "public and home educators have contrasting perceptions on the home educators' ability to provide proper socialization." Although the words *community* and *people* occurred multiple times in both sets of interviews, a strong correlation with one particular theme did not emerge when the words were studied in their context.

Focus Group Discussion

The focus group discussion was done after all coding and themes were established from the interview questions. During the focus group, as many public and home educators as possible who were originally interviewed had an open-ended discussion pertaining to the three themes that were established: quality of education, involvement of families, and socialization of students. These three themes were also supported by the question set breakdowns for public and home educators. The Missouri Homeschool Regulations and focus group served as the second and third parts of the triangulation of data. All participants were provided with a copy of the Missouri Home School Requirements to review before the focus group. Part of the open-ended discussion focused on whether knowing the requirements changed their perceptions of home education.

A focus group discussion was used to provide additional information on perceptions of homeschooling. All 10 participants were invited to be a part of the focus group discussion. During the focus group, six participants were available. There were four home educators and two public educators. The researcher asked the group questions based on the themes developed from the individual interviews. The participants were also given the opportunity to clarify responses from the interview section of the study.

All available participants attended the focus group virtually (online) as this provided an opportunity for interviewees to participate in the focus group discussion. The online format allowed participants to respond to each other as well as the researcher. Participants joined the discussion via Microsoft Teams as up to 100 participants can utilize this platform simultaneously. The focus group involved seven people: the interviewer, two public educators, and four home educators, a number well within the range of capacity the site could handle.

The 10 interviews served as the first leg of triangulation. The data collected from the interviews were where the most emphasis on data analysis took place. The second part of triangulation was the use of the Missouri Homeschool Regulations document provided by Home School Legal Defense Association (2019). This document outlined the regulations a home educator must follow to comply with Missouri law. All participants were provided with a copy of the Missouri Home School Requirements to review before the focus group. Part of the open-ended discussion focused on whether knowing the requirements changed their perceptions of home education. The third leg of triangulation came in the form of a focus group discussion among the 10 participants

who were interviewed. This took place after all the interviews were conducted. This conversation was hosted by the researcher and a response review format was used. Responses from the interviews were reviewed and summarized for the panel and questions were formed based on those interview responses. Questions and topics in this forum were formed based on the coding and themes from the interviews. Participants were provided with the Missouri Homeschool Regulations prior to the focus group so they were familiar with them.

Focus Group Analysis

The focus group discussion began with a brief overview of the information gathered from the analysis of the interviews. The focus group was informed that the public educators interviewed had positive perceptions of the quality of education. There were two public educators who had positive perceptions of the quality of education in home education, two had both positive and negative perceptions of the quality of education, and one public educator had a negative perception of the quality of education in home education. They were also informed that four home educators had a positive perception of the quality of education in home education and one home educator had a negative perception of the quality of education in homeschooling. The focus group was then asked about the first theme found from the interviews, “What are your thoughts about the quality of academics in home education?”

The participants agreed upon the idea that the quality of home school curriculum had changed simply by the fact that it is more readily available. There is no shortage of communities and resources available to homeschool. The group also discussed the availability of very good teaching aides found on YouTube. One public educator agreed

that the quality of education could be good depending on the amount of effort poured into it. PS-SO-M-F said:

I feel like the quality is as good as families want to make it. I know that's a really vague answer, but like I said, I believe the resources are there for families. It's growing exponentially. I believe that their, cohort, their model of homeschooling, but it's really a network and I know that they have a network that provides supports for them. So I feel like if families are truly in it for the long haul and have the commitment to home schooling, they have access to the resources and the network to help them be successful. I also think that, they can always reach out to schools and I don't feel like that's really done often enough, although there's been more of it in the last two years and I've seen.

The participants began a discussion of how families take their children out of public school and then they return a few years later and there is often a learning gap. It was expressed that this is a common experience for those in public schools. One public educator also mentioned the same situation happening in public schools when families transfer from school to school.

During the interview process, both public and home educators made reference to parental involvement in home education as being highly important. The concept of family involvement also came up in interviews as being highly important in public education too. The idea of home school being synonymous with no school in some areas of Missouri was expressed as well in relationship to certain low socioeconomic situations. The focus group conversation moved to the second theme gathered from the interview responses, "How much does family involvement impact the quality of home

education?”

One participant explained the difference between home educators who are highly involved in their child’s education and those who are not. They highlighted the concept of home education communities where parents come together with their children versus families who take their children out of school and the student does work at home while the parent is at work and the student is not actually receiving instruction. The participants in the focus group all agreed that family involvement not only made the quality of home education better, but it also increased the quality of education when it came to public education. The focus group conversation then moved to the third theme, “What are some perceptions that you would say go into the idea of socialization and home education?”

The researcher took a moment to summarize the perceptions that were gathered from the public and home educator interviews. It was explained that 3 of the 5 public educators had a negative perception of the home educator’s ability to properly socialize their children. There were two public educators who had a neutral perception, meaning they were able to provide both positive and negative examples of the home educator’s ability to provide proper socialization. All five home educators interviewed had the perception that home educators were able to properly provide socialization. After the summary of the perceptions found from the interview, the focus group was asked, “What are some perceptions that you would say go into the idea of socialization and home education?”

Each home educator agreed that socialization was the first thing people spoke to them about when they found out they were homeschooling. There was a perception that

the importance of socialization tends to be the major point of disagreement between those who homeschool and those who send their children to public school. One public educator expressed the idea that teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic established lower levels of socialization and that resulted in academic struggles. The public educators and the home educators agreed that socialization often looks different in the two models and children who struggle socially can be found in public and home education settings. The focus group discussion then proceeded to the last and final topic, “After reading the Missouri Homeschool Regulations, does this change your perceptions about home education?”

When the focus group was asked about this last question, the public educators in the group shared that the Missouri Homeschool Regulations did not change their perceptions at all. One public educator expressed a respect for the home educators in the group because they were going above and beyond the requirements of the state. Another public educator did mention that the requirements are very minimal and not monitored and that is why they did not change her perceptions on home education. One home educator complimented the work of the public educators in the group and agreed that the requirements were minimal and should be higher.

Summary

Chapter Four presented the demographics of the participants in this study. The chapter explained the process of the study as well. The researcher used the triangulation of data and member checking to provide valid data. The data from the three forms of triangulation were presented starting with the coding of the interviews. An analysis of each question set was also done. The coding of the interviews and question sets

established three major themes that would guide the focus group discussion. The overarching themes were discovered by first conducting interviews. Once interviews were completed the researcher read them and listened to the interviews to clean up the transcripts. Filler words and double words were omitted from the transcript if they did not provide context to the interview. The researcher looked for common patterns, phrases, and words. Once they were discovered the researcher read the transcripts again and analyzed each individual question set. When analyzing question sets, the researcher identified the common words and phrases that were discovered earlier and assigned a positive, negative, or neutral perception to each individual participant's question sets. The themes that emerged were “public and home educators had contrasting perceptions of the quality of education in home education” within the homeschool, “the quality of academics and socialization is dependent on family involvement,” and “public and home educators have contrasting perceptions on the home educators’ ability to provide proper socialization.”

People in a Community of Practice (CoP) learn from others’ experiences; learning is not separate from the practice (Paus, 2015). “CoP are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, 2017, p.1). Using a CoP allowed the researcher to take the coded data from the interviews, the developed themes, and analyze further data from the focus group discussion. Perceptions that were discovered were reported in the narrative analysis of the focus group. The Missouri Homeschool Requirements were also used to interpret perceptions found in Chapter Four.

Chapter Five presents the researcher’s opinions on the research findings. It also

summarizes the limitations of the study. A summary of methods is also found in Chapter Five. The chapter concludes with the researcher's recommendations for further research and a summary of the chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECCOMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to identify and understand the differing perceptions of home education between public educators and home educators in Missouri. The perceptions of home education within these two groups of educators is unknown, however, the knowledge of these perceptions may be useful for future partnership.

The theoretical framework within this study was based on the conceptual framework that has stated home education is an alternative method of education in the United States. Wenger (1998), a researcher for the Institute for Research on Learning, worked together with Lave in developing a social theory of learning. The overarching concept within the theory is that learning is a highly social experience. Communities of practice (CoP) is a major component of this theory. Communities of Practice place the collective learning from different perspectives into the context of one's lived experience (Wenger, 2017).

Chapter Five presents the researcher's opinions on the research findings. It also summarizes the limitations of the study. A summary of methods is also found in Chapter Five. The chapter concludes with the researcher's recommendations for further research and a summary of the chapter. References and appendices of documents can be found following Chapter Five.

Research Questions

Through this study the following questions were addressed:

The Central question was: What are the perceptions of home education held by public educators and home educators?

1. What perceptions are held by public school employees (teachers, staff, and administrators) and homeschool educators about the quality of academics in home education?
2. What perceptions are held by public school employees (teachers, staff, and administrators) and homeschool educators about the home educators' ability (homeschooled children you have observed) to socialize and prepare their children for success in the community?
3. What suggested services might public schools provide to homeschool children and their families and what information should home educators provide to local public schools?

Limitations

This study had some limitations based on the subject and method of research. The number of interviews (10) may not have given a clear description of the designated region. The researcher chose to conduct 10 in-depth interviews with participants. Baker et al. (2021), Bonde (2013), and Flick (2020) determined that in some cases only one interview is enough when conducting some narrative research. However, experts agree, the depth of the interview is what is most important in qualitative research (Baker et al., 2021; Bonde, 2013; Flick, 2020). Originally, the current researcher's committee suggested conducting two interviews with public school representatives and two with home educators. After determining the criteria to make sure the information gathered was diverse, the researcher decided to conduct 10 interviews, five with public educators

and five with home educators. In addition to the 10 in-depth interviews, a focus group with as many of the original participants was conducted. The researcher was able to conduct the focus group with 6 of the 10 participants at the same time discussing responses and discussing themes that were generated from the coded interviews. Flick (2020) asserted that fewer participants are needed when in-depth interviews are conducted, and the participants are also asked to be a part of other portions of the study beyond the initial interview. Sampled individuals were limited to voluntary response. Not everyone who received an invitation to interview agreed to participate. The researcher sought an alternative participant who met the interview criteria. This was especially true with the homeschool population due to difficulty researching this population based on privacy concerns held by many in the population (Jeffery, 2019; McQueen, 2019). Questions asked during the interview were subject to interpretation by the respondent. Self-reporting limits of this study were based on the respondent's accuracy. Some participants might have chosen to respond incorrectly. In the third leg of triangulation, the discussion focus group, all participants were unfamiliar with one another, and this might have hindered their true response. A quick introduction and reminder of confidentiality were given to provide a common understanding.

Summary of Methods

The participants in this study were home and public educators. A total of five public educators were interviewed and participated in a focus group discussion. A total of five home educators were interviewed and participated in a focus group discussion. Both groups of participants were adults over the age of 25, in the field of education as a teacher or administrator, or in the process currently or formerly of providing home

education to a student between the ages of 5 through 18.

Five certificated educators currently serving in the public school sector and having a minimum of 5 years of experience represented the public education population. The participants represented either the home education group or public educator group. Any public school educator including administrators, specialists, and teachers in Missouri was eligible to be interviewed. Any caregiver who was homeschooling their child or children in Missouri was eligible to represent the home educator population. Home educators had five or more years of experience in home education to ensure the population of home educators had been immersed in the practice to provide a range of experience.

The researcher completed interviews with all 10 participants using the same set of questions. All interviews were recorded using Microsoft Teams and Otter.ai. The researcher analyzed each transcript many times and was able to create lists of most used words from each individual interview. These frequently used words were then cross-referenced to create a master coding list of the most used words by both public and home educators. Those most frequent words then were used to help analyze question sets. The researcher was able to uncover common themes that emerged from both public and home educators. Once three major themes were discovered from the coding process, a focus group discussion was conducted. A narrative analysis was conducted and presented in Chapter Four. The researcher also used the Missouri Homeschool Regulations to further interpret perceptions from the focus group participants.

Summary of Findings

The researcher uncovered perceptions held by public and home educators about home education. This was completed through in-depth interviews with public and home educators. The repetition of frequently used words within the interviews and an analysis of question sets helped establish themes. The three major themes were then used to conduct a focus group discussion. The perceptions discovered from the conducted interviews and the focus group discussion address the research questions within this study.

Research Question 1. The first question asked, “What perceptions are held by public school employees (teachers, staff, and administrators) and homeschool educators about the quality of academics in home education?” The researcher analyzed all interviews and focus group discussions that were associated with this question. There were two of the major themes that emerged within the study that addressed this question. Those were the themes of “public and home educators had contrasting perceptions of the quality of education in home education” and “the quality of academics and socialization is dependent on family involvement.”

The participants’ perceptions of the quality of education in home education were highly influenced by the participant’s own experiences. Each educator had their own experience with the quality of education and all educators determined that the family’s involvement was the biggest indicator of the quality of academics in a home education system. Home educators were found to have a positive perception of the quality of academics in home education. Public educators shared a more negative perception of the quality of academics in home education systems. Public and home educators shared

the perception that the quality of academic resources has increased and positively influenced home education academics.

Research Question 2. The second question asked, “What perceptions are held by public school employees (teachers, staff, and administrators) and homeschool educators about the home educators’ ability (homeschooled children you have observed) to socialize and prepare their children for success in the community?” This question was associated with 2 of the 3 major themes, “the quality of academics and socialization is dependent on family involvement” and “public and home educators have contrasting perceptions on the home educators’ ability to provide proper socialization.” The data from the participant interviews and the focus group discussion provided clear perceptions on this research question.

There was a clear discrepancy between perceptions between public and home educators on the subject of socialization and success in the community. Public educators held a negative perception of the home educator’s ability to socialize and prepare their children for success in the community. Although public educators’ definitions of socialization and success in the community were somewhat common with home educators, perceptions were very different. Public educators found that a lack of socialization did not provide success in the community. Home educators all held the perception that home-educated children had many socialization opportunities, and those opportunities provided quality socialization. Public and home educators agreed that quality socialization and success in the community were based on parent involvement.

Research Question 3. The third research question asked, “What suggested services might public schools provide to homeschool children and their families and

what information should home educators provide to local public schools?” The data related to this question were found in the participants’ answers to the interview questions. The participants mentioned suggested services only when asked specifically about what services might be provided.

A common perception uncovered about suggested services a public school might provide home educators was that there was a lack of knowledge about services schools provide to homeschoolers. Home educators’ perceptions ranged from not wanting to accept services to wanting access to school facilities and related arts. Public educators’ perceptions involved providing related arts, special education services, and access to school events. Home educators also expressed the perception that they should have access to more services due to the fact that they pay taxes just like families who are enrolled in public schools. Although all educators in the study did not agree on the services that should be provided, they did agree that services should be offered to home educators and communicated. However, public educators expressed that there was little communication coming from home-educated families. All public educators expressed the perception that they would welcome helping any families in need of educational help. It was clear that there was very little communication from home educators.

Discussion

Educators should try to understand the perceptions of other educators who do not practice the same system of education (Shaw, 2020). This study was based on the concept of homeschooling being an alternative method of education within the United States (Yeager, 1999). Mason (2018) was immersed in both home and public education and found value in both methods. The social theory of learning was used as a connection

point throughout this study. DuFour and Eaker (2021) referred to the process of education as one that works best when collaborating with others. Wenger (2017) established CoP, which like DuFour and Eaker's (2021) professional learning communities, established the process of collaboration to improve performance. Wenger's social theory of learning is immersed in perspective and perception; it does not tell one what to do but informs people on what to look for. The social theory of learning points the reader to what is important, what difficulties are present, and how to approach difficulties. In doing so one is able to evaluate education through looking at the perceptions presented. Clark (2010), Gray (1998), and Johnson (2014) have conducted home education perception studies, and all agreed that further perception studies were needed.

The researcher found that when the interviews were conducted, viewpoints were very contradictory between home and public educators. However, when the participants came together in a CoP, during the focus group discussion more commonalities on perceptions arose. Wenger (2017) established a common outcome of people engaging in CoP with differing views was learning. During the focus group discussion, participants complimented one another on their differing practices and educational philosophies. There was a stated mutual appreciation for the quality of education, the involvement of families, and the level of socialization occurring in home and public education. This was supported by Guterman and Neuman's (2018) findings about more structured homeschooling. During the focus group, public educators specifically complimented the home educators in the focus group on the quality of education they were providing, their family involvement, and the level of socialization occurring. This

was contrary to much of the research on socialization and home education. Social norms and stereotypes of poor socialization are associated home education (Humason, 2012; Maingano, 2016; McQueen, 2019; SanClemente, 2016). The public educators commented that this was not typical of their experiences in working with home educators. These findings supported Research Question 1. By providing public and home educators an opportunity to collaborate in a CoP, the public educators' perceptions of the quality of education provided by home educators changed. It cannot be determined if the perception of the quality of academics changed overall or if it was only related to the home-educated participants in the focus group.

Creating a CoP among public and home educators presented some challenges. To provide diversity and to represent the public and home education populations thoroughly, the researcher invited educators from three different regions of the state. The researcher directed the group construction with Wenger's (2017) social theory of learning and CoP as a building point. Paus (2015) explained that CoP can be geographically or ideologically separate as long as there is a shared experience. In the beginning phases of the study the researcher had no trouble finding public educators to take a part in the research. Finding public educators from three different regions was not difficult due to public schools being listed online. Finding public and home educators from different regions was very important. However, finding home educators was a more difficult task. There were very few online resources that provided up-to-date information and many who home educate do so privately. Finding home educators from various regions proved to be difficult. This factor, having a difficult time as a researcher locating home education families for the study, illustrates the issue with

communication as presented in the findings under Research Question 3. If public schools were to increase their communication about possible services, they would have a very difficult time directing their communication. Johnson (2014) explained that home school families tended to be more private and not as willing to volunteer information. Clark (2010) established that superintendents of schools in their region had a willingness to communicate with home educators, however privacy was a concern on their part. Once the researcher found potential home education subjects, it was found that many homeschool families did not want to take part in the study. While pursuing candidates to send the qualification survey to, many potential home education participants did not feel comfortable providing information about their home education program.

The analysis of the data from the 10 interviews provided evidence that public and home educators do not share the same perceptions on the quality of education, the ability to socialize and prepare children for the community, and what suggested resources might be provided when it comes to home educators. Clearly home educators viewed all facets of home education with a more positive perception, whereas public educators clearly viewed most facets of home education with a more negative perception. However, all participants from the public education system expressed an openness to working with home-educated families. Clark (2010), Gray (1998), and Johnson (2014) did perceptual studies from very different perspectives involving homeschooling. The three researchers agreed more understanding in terms of perceptions of home education would benefit students in a homeschooling model and increase cooperation of home and public education. Gray (1998) looked at the

perceptions of home education from public educators in California. His findings supported the idea of public educators being open to working with home educators.

Clark (2010) and Johnson (2014) looked at perceptions of home educators and both researchers mentioned privacy concerns home educators had. These concerns often restricted the information home educators would provide. There were five home education participants interviewed and 4 of the 5 participants were open to services provided by public schools, however participant HS-C-MF-M expressed views that supported Clark and Johnson in their findings. He expressed:

I think those services are provided, but there are, you know, contingencies as far as I think you've got to enroll your students in so many classes to take advantage of those services. They are unwelcome. It adds an extra requirement that isn't necessary. When you require, you know, so many classes to be taken in the public school setting, just to be able to utilize those special services, they are unnecessary requirements.

Another home educator, while discussing services a public school would provide, expressed that their own perception of public schools not wanting to provide services was false. They had the perception that public institutions would be unwelcoming when they asked for help with their child's education. HS-SO-MF-F said:

I mean, like with summer school, I did feel like they were welcoming. When they sent the flyer out about summer school, you know, they opened it up to all the kids and they encouraged private school kids and home school kids to come. That did feel kind of welcoming to me. In my head I'm thinking, yeah, they just want my kids so then they can enroll them in the fall, you know, in my head,

that's what I'm thinking but, I have not personally met any person in the public education field in this area that has ever been rude or disrespectful towards me or my family for home schooling. You know, I don't know of interactions that they've had with my kids. They thought, they're truly home schooled. You know what I mean? So I will walk in probably with those fears, those concerns, those doubts but generally in this area people are really great. They're very kind. They're very understanding.

Researchers agree that more open communication between public schools and home educators would benefit the home-educated students (Bhamani et al., 2020; Clark, 2010; Gray, 1998; Johnson, 2014; Shaw, 2020).

Much of the literature found about home education did not pertain to perceptions. Perceptions of how one views a subject can be very different from what other people think. During the study, the researcher tried to keep personal perceptions they held bracketed out of the research and study. This study has bridged a gap in research because there was very little, and it was dated.

The purpose of this study was not to understand the importance of communication between two groups of educators with differing educational models. The use of the focus group discussion brought about very different perceptions. The perceptions within the group seemed to be different from the perceptions found in the interviews. Home educators were never asked about their perceptions of public schools however the home educators communicated a respect for what the public educators did. HS-C-MF-M said, "As a as a home educator, first I want to thank all of you that work in public education for the work you do. I really appreciate it." As noted, comments like

this were an unexpected result of bringing people together. If only the interviews were examined, there would have been a vastly different understanding of the overall study.

The study did exhibit limitations based on the number of participants who were able to finish the whole study. There were three public educators and one home educator who were not able to fit the focus group discussion into their schedules. The involvement of all participants would have brought more perception data to the focus group discussion. The additional participants may have had one bit of information to share that may have sparked discussion from other members. There was a home educator who was present in the discussion but did not add to the conversation. The open structure of the discussion group could have served as a limitation. The researcher could have designed the discussion to elicit each participant's input. Despite the limitations, the findings within this study can be used to help other researchers. The perception data collected were thoroughly analyzed and the only conclusions that were gathered came directly from the data.

Educational Implications

The perceptions found within this study are important to understand due to the number of students who are currently in a home education experience. Many students do not make the choice to home educate or to participate in public education. As an educator who has researched both home and public education, it is important to view both as viable options that can prepare students for the future. Simply being aware of the perceptions held by differing educators allows one to look at their own practices and learn from the differing or shared perceptions.

It was clear that both public and home educators were unsure of the resources

school districts provide to home educators in Missouri. Most of the questions that asked participants about information regarding communication resulted in most participants stating there was no communication between the two groups of educators. This was especially true when discussing possible services that are available to home educators. Even though the question centered around suggested services, it was found that actual provided services were not clear. These answers showed a lack of communication in both directions. Home educators are not reaching out to public schools and public schools are not reaching out to home schoolers.

The implications of a lack of communication for public educators could be very impactful. As observed in interviews, home educators were not aware of services in which their children could take part. This was also true for the public educators; some were not sure what services their district provided to home-educated students. Based on the schools' desires, an increase in communication about the services they provide could increase the number of students who take part in them. Mason (2018) explained that public and home education were both viable options of education. This study was based on the concept of homeschooling being an alternative method of education within the United States. Mason was immersed in both sectors of education and found value in both methods. As communication increases from public schools about the services they provide, this information could provide new avenues for future students who are being home educated. The study showed that public educators were very open to helping students in general.

For principals especially, the idea that families are in your area and they may need the resources your school can provide may be a big motivation. Realizing that

home educators may have children at home who need resources but do not know they have access to them is an area that schools and administrators could address easily. The use of social media to promote resources available to the public could be life changing for a home-educated child.

Another implication within the study was the identification of minimal standards required as documentation to the state by home educators. As stated within the focus group by public educators, the home educators in the focus group were not considered, “typical” home school families. Their level of involvement was much higher than what they were experiencing. The presentation of the Missouri Homeschool Requirements did not change the public school educators’ perceptions of homeschooling overall due to their minimal requirements. This study does shed light on the minimal requirements the state of Missouri requires.

The main takeaway from the study that serves as an educational implication is the concept of communicating like a CoP. The focus group discussion was a conversation where participants responded to one another. Although the perceptions were often different, mutual respect was communicated verbally. This was heard from home educators to public educators, and public educators to home educators. As the participants in this study showed, people have vastly different perceptions of the same concepts. This was illustrated in the differences between perceptions of the quality of academics in home education, communication going to and from public schools and home schools, the ability to socialize and prepare students for success in the community, and perceived resources provided to home educators. The CoP formed by several home and public educators provided an example of helpful dialogue that often centered around

differences but concluded with mutual respect. These findings go along with the theoretical framework associated with this study.

Wenger (1998) developed a social theory of learning. The overarching concept within the theory is that learning is a highly social experience. Communities of Practice is a major component of this theory and it was used during the focus group discussion. CoP place the many different learnings from multiple perspectives into the context of another person's experience (Wenger, 2017). Learning is looked at as an individualized process and it is experienced in one context. For example, to learn to read one learns in the context of reading. The social theory of learning and CoP assume a different view and consider learning as a social phenomenon (Wenger, 2017). Community of Practice is where learning takes place through the participation of those with a different perspective and the outcome from the participation results in learning (Virban, 2017). For example, learning components of reading through writing or learning writing from reading provides context for the learning that occurred. Within the theory, people in a community of practice learn from one another and learning is not separate from the practice (Paus, 2015). "CoP are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger, 2017, p.1). In the current study, the participants shared a passion for education. The educational models are different, however the implication for shared learning is very evident.

Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher interviewed 10 participants for this study. There were five public educators who met specific requirements based on their age, years of experience, the

region in Missouri they served as an educator, and the size of their district. There were five home educators who met specific requirements based on their age, years of service, region of Missouri where they served as a home educator, and the size of their family.

There was at least one male and one female representing both sets of educators.

1. The first area of future research to consider would be widening the scope of this study to other states that have the same home school regulations as Missouri. Another variation would be to conduct the study nationwide to see if perceptions of home education are consistent from state to state. It would also be interesting to see if individual states have drastically different perceptions or if they are relatively the same when it comes to home education.
2. Another area of interest for future study would be to elaborate more on the perceptions of socialization. In the study it would be interesting to drill down into the definition of socialization and measure the socialization skills of homeschooled students versus public school students. Participants in this study clearly had different perceptions on socialization of home-educated students. That information could be of use to higher education when looking at enrolling public and home-educated students.
3. A third recommendation for future research is in the area of resources provided to families who homeschool. The current study found inconsistent knowledge of actual services that were provided by public schools to home education families. This future study would be able to measure whether homeschool communities have more success in higher education, based on services that were provided by public schools. This study could even expand into the type of communication

used to welcome home-educated students to the services provided.

4. A fourth recommendation for future studies would be to elaborate on the work done in this study with CoP. There were drastically different perceptions presented during the individual interviews. Those contrasts were not as pronounced when the participants worked together in a CoP. This study would be able to measure how certain perceptions change based on open communication and shared passion.

This section provided the reader with four different future potential studies. The potential studies could help address potential gaps in research and provide further information on partnerships between home and public educators. These four studies could have a greater implication based on the number of students who experienced home education based on the COVID-19 pandemic. The following section is a summary of Chapter Five.

Summary

This study was guided by the social theory of learning and designed to fill a gap in current research. Gray (1998) looked at the perceptions of homeschooling from public educators in California. Williams (2018) uncovered parents' negative perceptions of public schools that lead to home education. Kliewer (2019) looked at the perceived barriers of home-educated students concerning higher education, but did not examine perceptions of public educators. Johnson (2014) focused on home education families and their perception of success when it came to home education. Clark (2010) focused on superintendents' perceptions of home education. Until now, a study has not been conducted that looks at the perceptions of home education through the lens of public and

home educators. Perception literature regarding home education has focused on factors outside of the practice of home education, not the perceptions of home education itself. Seeing another's perception allows one to understand and not listen just to reply; communications are too quickly cut off due to a lack of understanding of other perceptions (Covey, 2020). Revealing perception data enables people with differing viewpoints the ability to work together, and CoP allow a structure for this to occur (Wenger, 2017). This study researched the perceptions of home education from both public and home educators. Current perception data and research about home education are lacking. Understanding the perceptions of home education by both home and public educators in Missouri provides research that has not been conducted. With the growing number of students being home educated in Missouri, it is increasingly more important to understand perceptions surrounding this educational choice.

The current study focused on the quality of academics, the ability of home educators to socialize and prepare children for the future, and the suggested services provided to home educators. The theoretical framework within this study was based on the conceptual framework that has stated home education is an alternative method of education in the United States (Mason, 2018). Wenger (1998) developed a social theory of learning. Communities of Practice is a major component of this theory that emphasizes the uniting of different groups that have a common passion. These served as the framework for research due to all that was involved in understanding the different perceptions of home education. Both sets of educators were able to respectfully communicate through the use of CoP. Collaboration by educators provided perception data.

The research for this study clearly showed that home and public educators' perceptions about academic quality in home education are very different. There are also very different perceptions when it comes to the home educator's ability to socialize and prepare children for success in the community. The study also uncovered a strong perception on the involvement of families as a defining factor for academic quality. This was also the case for the quality of socialization; family involvement was perceived to be a defining factor in the quality of socialization of home-educated students. The study uncovered that most participants knew very little about services that were actually provided by public schools to home educators. This study showed that communication between home and public educators is something that is lacking. It was also clear that home educators provide very little information to public schools about their practice. Through the focus group discussion, a perception was uncovered that all public educators in the study were open to working with home-educated students. Not all home education participants in the study were open to working with public schools. The overarching takeaway from the researcher's point of view, which was an unintended conclusion, is that increasing the communication between two groups with different perceptions can result in an increase in mutual understanding as presented through the research.

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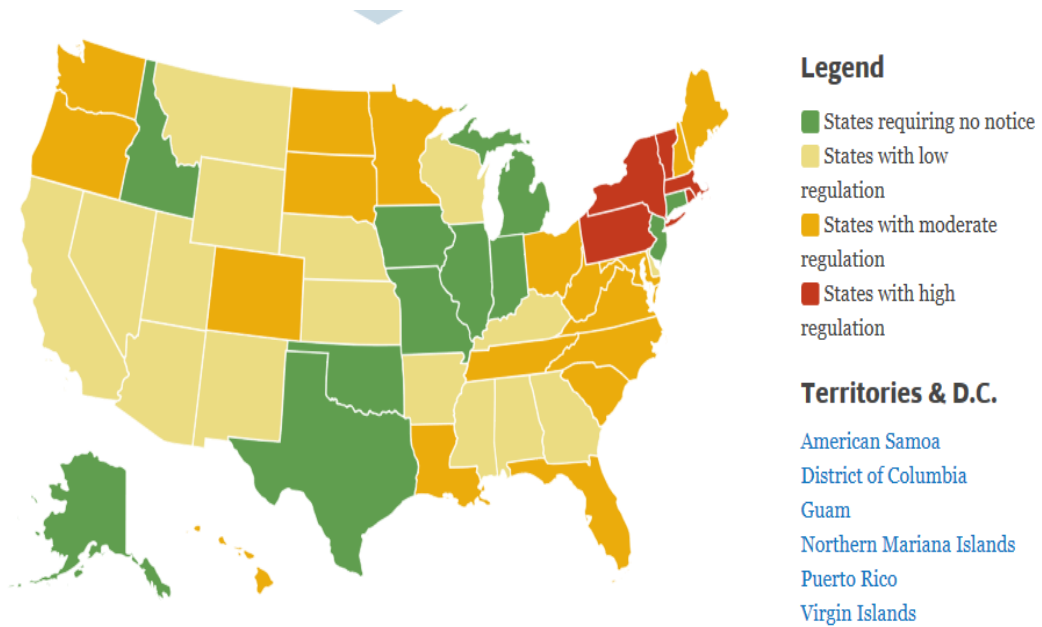
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APPENDIX A

Figures

Figure 1



Homeschooling is legal throughout the United States. Each state is free to create its own legal structure for home education, so one state's homeschooling laws may look very different from another's.

Figure 1. Homeschool Laws in Your State

Figure 2

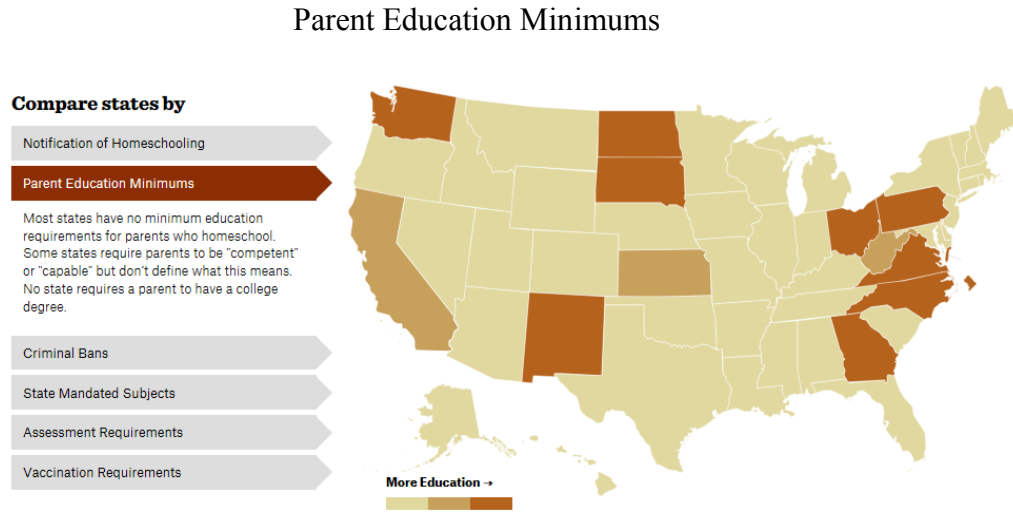


Figure 2. Parent Education Minimums.

Figure 3

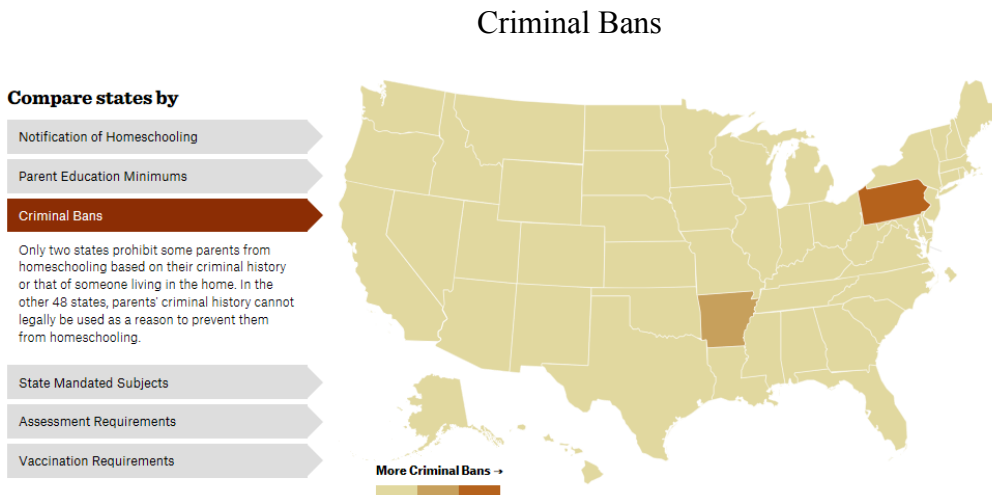


Figure 3. State Criminal Bans.

Figure 4

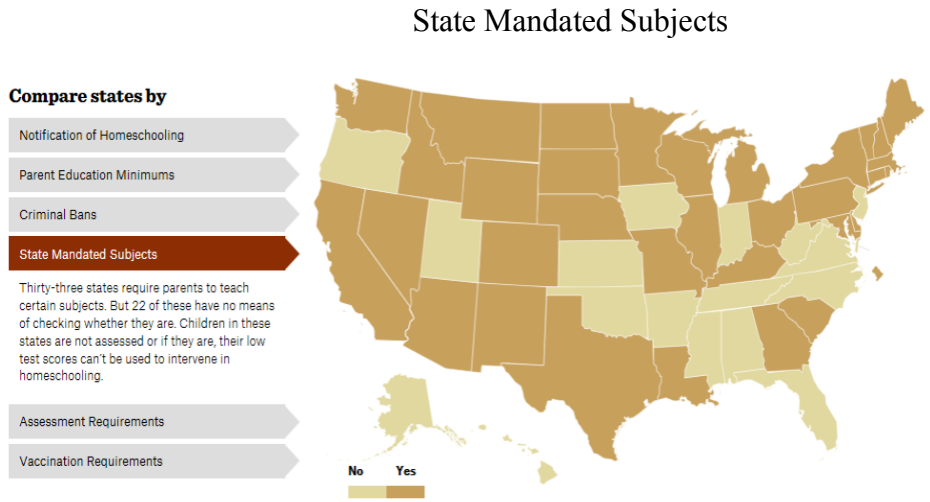


Figure 4. State Mandated Subjects.

Figure 5

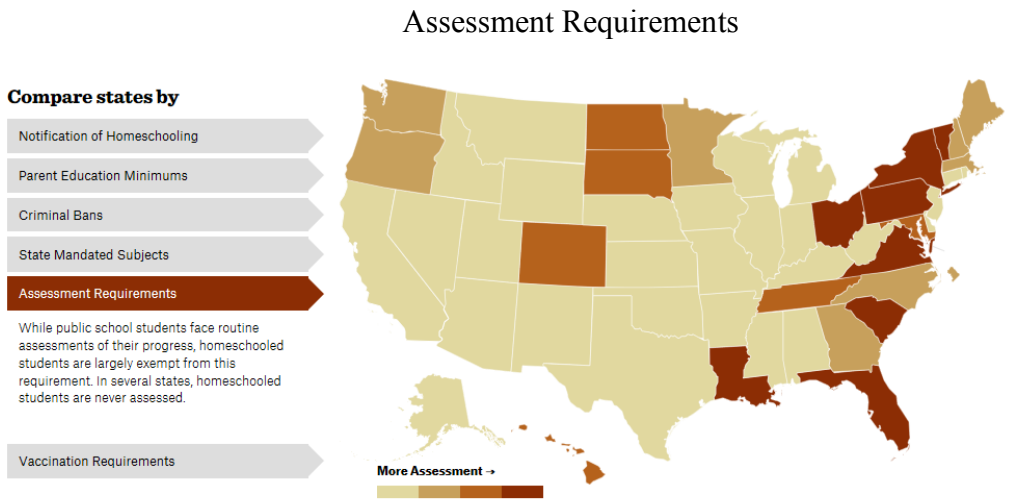


Figure 5. State Assessment Requirements

Figure 6



Figure 6. (Regional Professional Development Centers, 2020)

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Letters

Public Educator Recruitment Letter

To whom it may concern:

I am a doctoral student at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Missouri. As a final part of the doctoral program, I am completing my doctoral dissertation on perceptions of home education from public school and home educators. I am writing to ask if you would be willing to participate in a structured individual interview.

I am interviewing individual teachers in Missouri. Completing the interview should take between 30-45 minutes, and I would really appreciate your input. You may participate or ask a teacher to do so.

This research study has been reviewed by the Southwest Baptist University Research Review Board. Results will be used to provide further studies in the area of education as the number of home-educated students has increased in recent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The teacher interview is confidential. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. Following the interview, I am requesting your participation in a 45-60 minute online focus group where all ten people who were interviewed will have a discussion based on their perceptions of home education. 5 participants will be public educators and 5 participants will be home educators. All information will be confidential in this process and names or identifying information will not be displayed in the dissertation.

To agree to participate, please fill out this confidential participant survey. This [one-minute survey](#) will help me assign eligibility for the study. I will follow up with you via email to set a time for your interview if you are eligible for the study. Interviews will be conducted in person or on Microsoft Teams based on the participants preference. Once all interviews have been conducted, I will secure a time where all participants can meet online for the focus group. I would like to thank you in advance for your participation, and let you know that it is appreciated! As a token of gratitude, upon the completion of the focus group, I will send you a \$20 Amazon gift card via email.

Thank you for your consideration,

Ryan Knight,

Educational Doctorate Student, Southwest Baptist University

This project has been reviewed by the Southwest Baptist University Research Review Board for research and research-related activities including human subjects (417) 326- 1659.

Homeschool Educator Recruitment Letter

To whom it may concern:

I am a doctoral student at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Missouri. As a final part of the doctoral program, I am completing my doctoral dissertation on perceptions of home education from public school and home educators. I am writing to ask if you would be willing to participate in a structured individual interview.

I am interviewing individual home educators in Missouri. Completing the interview should take between 30-45 minutes, and I would really appreciate your input.

This research study has been reviewed by the Southwest Baptist University Research Review Board. Results will be used to provide further studies in the area of education as the number of home-educated students has increased in recent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The home educator interview is confidential. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. Following the interview, I am requesting your participation in a 45-60 minute online focus group where all ten people who were interviewed will have a discussion based on their perceptions of home education. 5 participants will be public educators and 5 participants will be home educators. All information will be confidential in this process and names or identifying information will not be displayed in the dissertation.

To agree to participate, please fill out this confidential participant survey. This [one-minute survey](#) will help me assign eligibility for the study. I will follow up with you via email to set a time for your interview if you are eligible for the study. Interviews will be conducted in person or on Microsoft Teams based on the participants preference. Once all interviews have been conducted, I will secure a time where all participants can meet online for the focus group. I would like to thank you in advance for your participation, and let you know that it is appreciated! As a token of gratitude, upon the completion of the focus group, I will send you a \$20 Amazon gift card via email. Thank you for your consideration,

Ryan Knight,

Educational Doctorate Student, Southwest Baptist University

This project has been reviewed by the Southwest Baptist University Research Review Board for research and research-related activities including human subjects (417) 326- 1659.

APPENDIX C

Tables

Table 1

Participant Requirements

Home Educator	Public Educator
At least one male	At least one male
At least one female	At least one male
At least one representative from a small family (1-2 Children)	At least one representative of a small district (1,000 or fewer students enrolled)
At least one representative from a medium family (3-5 children)	At least one representative of a medium district (between 1,001 and 4,999 students enrolled)
At least one representative from a large family (6 or more children)	At least one representative of a large district (5,000 or more students enrolled)
At least one representative from Southern MO	At least one representative from Southern MO
At least one representative from Central MO	At least one representative from Central MO
At least one representative from Northern MO	At least one representative from Northern MO
Participants will meet three of the criteria; a total of five home educators will be interviewed.	Participants will meet three of the criteria; a total of five public educators will be interviewed.

Note. Northern MO represents Missouri Regional Professional Development Centers 3, 4, and 5. Central MO represents Missouri Regional Professional Development Centers 9, 2, and 8. Southern MO represents Missouri Regional Professional Development Centers 7, 6, and 1.

Table 2

Participant Codes

Codes	Description
PS-SO-L-F	Public Educator, Southern MO, Large District, Female
PS-C-S-M	Public Educator, Central MO, Small District, Male
PS-N-L-F	Public Educator, Northern MO, Large District, Female
PS-SO-M-F	Public Educator, Southern MO, Medium District, Female
PS-C-S-M-2	Public Educator, Central MO, Small District, Male, (second interviewee with same demographics)
HS-SO-LF-M	Home Educator, Southern MO, Large Family, Male
HS-C-MF-M	Home Educator, Central MO, Medium Family, Male
HS-N-LF-M	Home Educator, Northern MO, Large Family, Male
HS-SO-SF-F	Home Educator, Southern MO, Small Family, Female
HS-SO-MF-F	Home Educator, Southern MO, Medium Family, Female

Note. Northern MO represents Missouri Regional Professional Development Centers 3, 4, and 5. Central MO represents Missouri Regional Professional Development Centers 9, 2, and 8. Southern MO represents Missouri Regional Professional Development Centers 7, 6, and 1.

Table 3

Top Five Terms Most Commonly Used by Public Educators

Term	#	Term	#	Term	#	Term	#
PE 1		PE 2		PE 3		PE 4	
education	39	family(ies)	54	people	36	community	31
family(ies)	26	education	38	education	35	socialization	22
socialization	19	community	21	Family (ies)	31	Family (ies)	20
services	13	socialization	15	socialization	23	involved	18
resources	9	resources	10	idea	12	provide	14
PE 5							
education	75						
socialization	23						
worked	18						
resources	11						
opportunity	10						

Note. PE stands for public educator. Family includes the words family, families, kids, kiddo, and parents.

Table 4

Top Five Terms Most Commonly Used by Home Educators

Term	#	Term	#	Term	#	Term	#
HE 1		HE 2		PE 3		PE 4	
education	87	education	58	education	82	education	82
family(ies)	24	socialization	19	family(ies)	73	socialization	27
socialization	21	religious	17	community	32	Family (ies)	40
play	20	quality	17	socialization	25	community	23
question	16	family(ies)	16	learning	19	program	18
HE 5							
education	91						
Family(ies)	43						
socialization	41						
people	14						
interact	14						

Note. HE stands for home educator. Family includes the words family, families, kids, kiddo, and parents.

Table 5

Top Five Terms Most Commonly Used by Public and Home Educators

Shared term	# of occurrences
Education	587 occurrences
Family (ies)	327 occurrences
Socialization	235 occurrences
Community	107 occurrences
People	50 occurrences

Note. Occurrences are a combined number from public and home educators.

Table 6

Common Perceptions in Question Set 1- Overall Perceptions of Home Education

Public Educator Perception	Educator Response
Positive	2/5
Negative	0/5
Neutral	3/5

Table 7

Common Perceptions in Question Set 2- Perceptions of the Quality of Academics in Home Education

Public Educator Perception	Educator Response
Positive	2/5
Negative	1/5
Neutral	2/5

Table 8

Common Perceptions in Question Set 3- What Has Been Communicated About the Quality of Academics in Home Education

Public Educator Perception	Educator Response
Positive (important)	3/5
Negative (not important)	0/5
Neutral	2/5
Not Communicated	0/5

Table 9

Common Perceptions in Question Set 4- Perceptions of the Home Educators' Ability to Socialize and Prepare Children for Success in the Community

Public Educator Perception	Educator Response
Positive (able to)	0/5
Negative (not able to)	3/5
Neutral	2/5

Table 10

Common Perceptions in Question Set 5- What Has Been Communicated About the Home Educators' Ability to Socialize and Prepare Children for Success in the Community

Public Educator Perception	Educator Response
Positive (able to)	1/5
Negative (not able to)	0/5
Neutral	0/5
Not Communicated	4/5

Table 11

Common Perceptions in Question Set 6- Perception of Possible Services Public Schools Could Provide for Homeschooled Students and Families

Public Educator Perception	Educator Response
Special Education services	3/5
Related arts	3/5
Community events	1/5
Sports	2/5
Higher level classes	2/5
Assessments	2/5

Table 12

Common Perceptions in Question Set 7- Perception of the Importance of Home Educators and Public Educators' Knowledge of One Another's Perceptions

Public Educator Perception	Educator Response
Positive (important)	2/5
Negative (not important)	0/5
Neutral	3/5

Table 13

Common Perceptions in Question Set 1- Overall Perceptions of Home Education

Home Educator Perception	Educator Response
Positive	5/5
Negative	0/5
Neutral	0/5

Table 14

Common Perceptions in Question Set 2- Perceptions of the Quality of Academics in Home Education

Home Educator Perception	Educator Response
Positive	4/5
Negative	1/5
Neutral	0/5

Table 15

Common Perceptions in Question Set 3- What Has Been Communicated About the Quality of Academics in Home Education

Home Educator Perception	Educator Response
Positive (important)	1/5
Negative (not important)	1/5
Neutral	0/5
Not Communicated	3/5

Table 16

Common Perceptions in Question Set 4- Perceptions of the Home Educators' Ability to Socialize and Prepare Children for Success in the Community

Home Educator Perception	Educator Response
Positive (able to)	5/5
Negative (not able to)	0/5
Neutral	0/5

Table 17

Common Perceptions in Question Set 5- What Has Been Communicated About the Home Educators' Ability to Socialize and Prepare Children for Success in the Community

Home Educator Perception	Educator Response
Positive (able to)	1/5
Negative (not able to)	1/5
Neutral	2/5
Not Communicated	1/5

Table 18

Common Perceptions in Question Set 6- Perception of Possible Services Public Schools Could Provide for Homeschooled Students and Families

Home Educator Perception	Educator Response
Related arts	3/5
Assessment	2/5
Dual credit	1/5
Sports	3/5
Use of school facilities	2/5
Clubs	3/5
Nothing	1/5

Table 19

Common Themes in Question Set 7- Perception of the Importance of Home Educators and Public Educators' Knowledge of One Another's Perceptions

<u>Home Educator Perception Theme</u>	<u>Educator Response</u>
Positive (important)	5/5
Negative (not important)	0/5
Neutral	0/5