



## Declarations of Independence: Home School Families' Perspectives on Education, the Common Good, and Diversity

Kenneth V. Anthony  
Mississippi State University

This study examined the perspectives of home school families regarding the rights, interests, and responsibilities of family and state over education. These families viewed the common good differently than critics of home schooling. They believed the diversity of curriculum and worldview in their home schools positively impacts the common good by increasing the overall diversity of society. These families situated the practice of home schooling within the exercise of religion inserting a Constitutional challenge into the debate over home schooling. The voices of these families, their declarations of independence from the educational norm in our nation, challenge our views of what really is the common good, what diversity we value, and what activities we include in our definition of the free exercise of religion.

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Home schooling is a growing and controversial phenomenon. Ray (2011) estimated the number of children home schooled in the United States was between 1.7 million and 2.3 million. Kunzman (2012) reported that the number of home schoolers increased by about 74% between 1999 and 2007. As the number of families who home school their children continues to grow, the movement has been thrust into a larger debate about the relationship between family and society regarding responsibility, interests, and rights over the education of children. Missing from this debate are the voices of families who are actively home schooling. The goal of this article is to share the perspectives of four home school families regarding the competing rights, interests, and responsibilities of family and state over education and analyze the impact of their views on the larger debate.

### **Philosophical Frameworks: Locke versus Marx**

The debate over the proper relationship between the family and state regarding education is situated in a much larger frame of reference than education. In 1690,

John Locke (1660/1692) described the family as the principal or first social order predating the development of the state. He also took the position that parents have sole authority over their children until they reach majority age. Locke's classical liberal ideas are held by many home school families who believe that parents have exclusive authority over their children in all things including education. Locke's ideas are counter-posed by Karl Marx (1818/1883), who in 1848 wrote in *The Communist Manifesto* that one of his goals was to dissolve the bond between parents and children. This would happen "when we replace home education by social" (p. 88).

The idea that education should be conducted by the larger society through special organizations called schools rather than in homes has remained strong. Today most Americans have been educated in a school setting and accept by default that the school is primarily responsible for education. This point is illustrated by Greene (2007) when she wrote that it is hard for us to understand how revolutionary public schools were when

the public school movement began because, “now the public schools are thought of as part of the nature of things” (p. 1).

### **The American Debate over Home Schooling**

The philosophical debate over the proper role of the family versus the larger society is manifested in the American conversation about home schooling. The tension between family and state over control over education is also evident in the debate over the efficacy and legality of home schooling. In his critique of home schooling, Lubienski (2000) argued that home schooling undermines the civic foundation of American society. He believed it denies public schools the “singular potential to serve as a democratic institution promoting the common good” (p. 211). Apple (2000) and Lubienski both bemoaned that home school families place the needs of their children above the needs of the larger society. These arguments highlight the tension between private good and public good.

### **Societal versus Parental Interests**

It is assumed by many that parents should not have total control over their children’s education. Reich (2002) criticized parents’ sole control over education. He stated, “Home schooling is the apogee of parental control over a child’s education, where no other institution has a claim to influence the schooling of the child.” (p. 4). Reich argued that parental limitations restrict students’ access to information that they will need in the future. Lubienski (2000) made the claim that home schooling usurps the public’s rightful interest and control over education. Both Reich and Lubienski contended that parents limit the public’s legitimate interest when they home school their children. They focused on whether home schooling is in the public interest, but others have questioned to what extent home schooling should be regulated and its legal status.

### **Regulation of Home Schooling**

While all states have made it legal to home school (Lines, 2001), there is little consistency on how much home schooling is regulated within the states. There are “three distinct approaches” states have taken when regulating home schools. The least restrictive approach allows the state to regulate only public schools and allows no regulation of private schools including home schools. The second approach requires parents to notify the local school board and register with the state when home schooling. The final, most restrictive, approach requires state permission to home school and requires home school teachers to be certified (Campbell, 2001, as cited in Waggoner, 2005, p. 32). Within these three approaches there is great variance leading to calls for more consistent regulation at the state level and the introduction of regulation at the federal level.

There are a variety of reasons given for increased regulation of home schools. Yuracko (2008) argued that home schooling should be regulated by the state and

federal government to guarantee that children receive a “basic minimum education” (p. 68). She contended that the equal protection clause forces the state to guarantee that children are not receiving unequal educations based upon gender. Yuracko (2008) concluded that, “it is clear and uncontroversial that states can regulate home schooling” (p. 68). She also recognized this as an infringement of parental autonomy, but believed it is legally required and desired.

### **Home Schooling and the Law**

The debate over the legality of home schooling appears to have been settled at the state level with all states recognizing the right of parents to operate home schools (Lines, 2001), but there is little agreement if this is an absolute right guaranteed to parents. Waggoner (2005) provided a comprehensive discussion of legal cases from 1923 to 2000 that impact the right of parents to control or direct their children’s education. Most significant of these is *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972) in which the United States Supreme Court allowed an Amish family to “educate their children privately” (p. 32) avoiding the compulsory school law. It also reaffirmed the public’s interest in education as it placed a requirement on the parents that the “children must grow up to be literate and self-sufficient” (p. 32). The Supreme Court also held that

The State’s interest in universal education is not totally free from a balancing process when it impinges on other fundamental rights, such as those specifically protected by the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment and the traditional interest of parents with respect to the religious upbringing of their children. (*Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 1972)

This justification for the decision directly linked the parent’s right to home school to the First Amendment. The court specifically cited that the free exercise of religion included directing the upbringing and education of their children. The decision placed the right to free exercise of religion over the state’s interests.

The *Yoder* case is also important to the current study because it established that parents who home school primarily for religious reasons have a more fundamental right to home school than those who do so for other reasons. One point that should be clarified is that there exists no explicit right to home school in the Constitution of the United States. The Supreme Court based the right of parents to home school on the Fourteenth Amendment (Waggoner, 2005) and First Amendment (*Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 1972) of the Constitution.

A second case that is of relevance to this study is *Swanson v. Guthrie*, 1988. The plaintiffs were home schoolers who wanted access to public school programs on a part time basis. The Tenth Circuit agreed that the parents had a constitutional right to home school, but that

the local school board retained the right to direct the type of programs offered in the school district. This meant that the home school family's right to home school did not place a requirement on the public school to allow them to participate on a part-time basis (Waggoner, 2005). The cases Waggoner details and the varied regulations in the states affirm that though home schooling is legal in all states (Lines, 2001), there are limitations placed on the ability of parents to educate exactly as they please, because states can and do regulate home schools and home school families can and have been denied part time or on demand access to public school programs.

### **Support for Home Schooling**

Though home schooling is legal, there is little consensus on the topic of home schooling. Not all scholars believe that home schoolers are undermining civil society. Ray (2000) argued that home schooling positively impacts the common good of society. Lines (1994) concluded that home school families are not abdicating their proper role as citizens in society, but rather they are affirming their individual rights and building stronger relationships within the community. Arai (1999) concluded that home schoolers have a different view of citizenship and citizenship education that emphasizes the importance of family and active participation in public activities. Arai argued that this view of citizenship is different but also valid. He wrote that society needs "to account for the fact that children can become good citizens without going to school." These and others highlight the important of parental autonomy and the positive aspects of home schooling in their efforts to legitimize the practice of home schooling.

Much has been written on both sides of the issue about the efficacy and legality of home schooling as well as the amount of regulation needed. What is missing are the voices of families who are actively home schooling their children. What are their arguments in favor of home schooling and what are their beliefs about regulation? How do these families' perspectives impact the current debate over home schooling?

### **Methods**

The study sought to fill a gap in the literature by exploring the perspectives of four home school families regarding the competing rights, interests and responsibilities of family and state over education. Participants were four home school families active in a home school organization that operated in the southeastern U.S. This study was part of a larger study that focused on motivations to home school, day to day operations of home schools, and challenges home school families faced.

This study was a qualitative study of four religiously conservative home school families from northeast Mississippi who are active in a local home school organization. The organization is a home school cooperative that takes a classical approach to education.

The four families were chosen from a larger pool of families in the cooperative. The criteria for choosing the families were that they had at least three years of home school experience, had children they were currently home schooling, and had at least one child who had completed their home school education and had moved on to college or the work force. This enabled the researcher to get a group with extensive experience with home education that was willing to discuss their motivations, successes, and failures.

Table One provides demographic details on the sample families including whether their initial motivation to home school was ideological or pedagogical. Findings reported in Anthony and Burroughs (2010) provides detailed information about these families' motivations to home school. The families in the cooperative based their curriculum on the classical education model. Classical education is divided into three stages called the Trivium: logic (the art of thinking,) grammar (the art of inventing and combining symbols), and rhetoric (the art of communication) (Joseph, 1937/2002). The students progress through each stage as they get older starting with the logic stage in elementary school and ending with the rhetoric stage in high school. Wilson (1991) argued that classical education aims to develop a classical mind that is aware of and is grateful for "the heritage of Western civilization" (p. 83). According to Wilson, the goal of a classical education is to have a conversation with the past that enables learners to become self directed and lifelong learners.

Glesne (2006) recommended using purposive sampling to describe a subgroup in depth. The researcher used purposive sampling from a home school cooperative in order to find a sample that would provide a rich detailed description of these families perspectives. Narrowing of the sample increases the depth of understanding, but also may limit the transferability to other groups which differ from the sample.

### **Limitations when Studying Home School Families**

As mentioned above, one limitation of the study is the population from which the sample was drawn. The nature of home schooling makes it difficult to study the typical home school family. Motivations to home school will serve as an example of this problem. Families choose to home school for a variety of reasons, but generally these motivations can be divided into two domains: ideological and pedagogical (Basham, 2001; Knowles, 1991; Knowles, Muchmore, & Spaulding, 1994). Ideological reasons are primarily religious and social. Pedagogical home schoolers are primarily centered on the process of education. There are similarities between the two domains and a family may have reasons to home educate that include both ideological and pedagogical reasons. The families in this study would be identified by many as home schooling for ideological purposes, but as reported in earlier research (Anthony & Burroughs, 2010)

Table 1  
Sample Demographics

	Smith	Johnson	Harbor	Riley
Family Structure	Intact	Intact	Intact	Intact
Father's occupation	Constitutional lawyer	Business owner	University employee (non faculty)	Business owner
Mother's education level	B.S. History	Some college	Some college	B.S. Education/ M.S. Education administration
Children at home school	Male (16), Female (13), Male (6)	Male (16), Male (10)	Male (15), Female (8)	Male (15)
Children at college	Male (20) Female (18)	Female (18)	Male (18)	None
Adult children out of college or in work force	None	None	None	Female (26) Male (25)
Children ever in private school?	No	Yes	No	Yes
Children ever in public school?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Initial motivation to home school	Ideological	Ideological	Pedagogical	Ideological

their decisions to home school included a mixture of ideological and pedagogical reasons.

Apart from the ideological- pedagogical divisions, others have identified primary motivations to home school including concerns about the negative environment of traditional schools, to provide religious or moral instructions, and dissatisfaction with academic instruction (Princiotta & Bielick, 2006). The families in this study all would agree that they home school for these reasons too, but in varying degrees with religious and moral instruction the prime reason from some, but not all.

The illustration of motivations could be extended to include the means or approach to home schooling, demographic characteristics, and regional differences. The problem with researching home school families is that there is not a typical home school family. Collum (2005) concluded, "This is a heterogeneous population with varying and overlapping motivations. Simplistic typologies cannot capture the complexities of home schoolers" (p. 331). Because these families may not match other families demographically and in their particular means and motivations to home school the

ability to generalize is limited, but this is a problem that naturally exists when studying a decentralized and individualized phenomena like home schooling.

#### Data Collection and Analysis

Data was gathered through interviews with the parents (three) and children (two as well as informal discussions during and after observations), observation of the families at home (2 per family), observations of home school group activities (two) and collection of artifacts. The study was part of a larger study concerning home school motivations, curriculum choices, and support structures. Appendix A includes interview protocols and artifacts collected. Data was collected over a period of two school years.

Data analysis began with an initial set of domains that emerged from the review of the literature. As additional domains emerged during data analysis, the set expanded accordingly. QSR's NVivo 8 software was used to code the data collected during the interviews and the observations. Data charts and matrices were used to analyze the information gathered within and across the four cases that was relevant to the research questions.

Supporting data from both parents and children as well as from the multiple data sources were identified to elicit major findings of the study. Peer review and participant checks were utilized to confirm the trustworthiness of the study's findings and conclusions. The trustworthiness of the data was also bolstered by the facts that the data were collected over a period of a two years and multiple data points within and across the cases were used to support each finding. Appendix B includes a sample analysis matrix for the theme: autonomy and subtheme: differing views of common good.

### **Findings**

This study was part of a larger study of home school operations. During initial data analysis the theme of autonomy emerged. All four of the families indicated a strong desire to raise their children and educate them apart from larger societal influences (Anthony & Burroughs, 2010). The theme of autonomy also revealed ways in which the children were encouraged to become autonomous learners, the families were able to operate their home school independently from the support of larger society, and the freedom and flexibility that home schooling provided these families. This article focuses specifically on autonomy as it relates to their perspectives.

The results of the study indicated two unique perspectives that differ from the prevailing view of society in America: (a) Their view of the society's hierarchical structure and (b) their view of the common good. The diverging perspectives directly impacted their home school operations and have significant implications to the larger debate over home schooling in America.

### **Family Roles versus Societal Roles in Education**

The four families in the study were fundamentalist Christians. This is important in understanding their view of society. At the top of society is God as revealed through scripture; next is family, then the larger society. Now many Christians and others from different faiths may espouse this or a similar hierarchy, but these families lived it as evidenced by one mother's statement about the primary goal of educating her son, "I am not grooming my child for this society or for this world. I am grooming my child for the Lord's Kingdom." Their divergent view of common good was based on this religious belief. They felt that they were properly exercising their religion as spelled out in the Bible when they home schooled their children. Each parent indicated that their first responsibility was to their children and that it was God assigned. This idea was also found in various books and articles shared with the researcher that had influenced their views on home schooling. Books included *Home Schooling: The Right Choice* (Klicka, 2002), *The Underground History of American Education: A Schoolteacher's Intimate Investigation into the Prison of Modern Schooling* (Gatto, 2000), and *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning* (Wilson, 1991).

These families also held ideas about society that were similar to Locke's in *The Second Treatise of Government*. They believed that the family was the primary or first societal organization. Their loyalty was to the family first then society. This is important when understanding their desire to home school. Since the family predates the state or nation, how can the state or nation enforce mandatory schooling on the family? Like Locke, these families believed that parents had primary responsibility and authority over children while they were minors. They also believed that the state had limited authority over children so long as parents were providing for basic minimal needs. They would not expand the concept of basic minimal needs as far as Yuracko (2008) to include a minimal level of education. In response to Yuracko, these families would claim that they were providing a more comprehensive and higher quality education to their children and that the onus is on the state to prove that they were not.

These families did not believe that society is responsible for educating all children. They disagreed with Lubiesnki that the public schools have the "singular potential" (Lubiesnki, 2000, p. 211) to promote the common good for civil society. They believed that role belongs to the family based on their philosophical and religious views. Their views were summarized well by John Gatto (2000) former school teacher and critic of public schooling when he wrote, "Government schooling is the most radical adventure in history. It kills the family by monopolizing the best times of childhood and by teaching disrespect for home and parents." (p. xxv). These families believed that the traditional school undermines what they believed is the proper role of the family in society. They saw public education as a threat to the family and find much truth in Marx's (1848/ 1964) prediction that social education would separate children from the influence of their parents.

Though their ideas can be understood through a philosophical lens it is more than just a philosophical argument; it is religious. Perhaps this is the most important point to understand. When discussing their decisions to home school all of the parents cited various scriptures that compelled parents to teach their children. The act of home schooling their children was directly linked to the exercise of their religion. This is where attempts to regulate, limit or outlaw home schooling collide with the Constitution. If home schooling is central to the exercise of their religion it becomes more difficult to justify regulation, limitations, or bans on the practice. Much is made of the influence of religion on government and the public sphere, but according to these families this issue focuses on the attempt by government or the public to interfere with the private sphere of the family and the free exercise of religion.

Others have argued that the government can limit parental ability to make decisions for their children when

it can potentially harm the children (Yuracko, 2008) or that society has an interest in the education of all children (Lubienski, 2000; Reich, 2002). These are valid arguments, but they do not address these parents' question about who is responsible for proving that they are harming their children or society by home schooling their children. These families countered that they were improving the common good by increasing the diversity of ideas in society, educating their children to be different and to make a positive difference in society, and exercising their religion through the practice of home schooling.

Finally these families agreed with Reich (2002) that:

Home schooling is the apogee of parental control over a child's education, where no other institution has a claim to influence the schooling of the child. Parents serve as the only filter for a child's education, the final arbiters of what gets included and what gets excluded. (p. 4)

They would say that is the proper role of the family and that for society to attempt to stop them is a violation of their God given right and responsibility to raise their children. They disagreed with Reich's (2002) assertion that they are narrowing the curriculum and excluding ideas counter to their beliefs. They countered that all schools filter what is included in the curriculum and that they are attempting to teach those things that are kept out of the public school curriculum and focus on things that will help their children develop into individuals who will positively influence society based on their own particular worldview.

#### **View of the Common Good and Diversity**

Critics contended that families who home school have abdicated their obligation to contribute to the common good (Kohn as cited in Lubienski, 2000). Initial conversations with home school families might lead one to that conclusion as evidenced by one parent's comment when asked about the common good: Our "responsibilities are not to the common good. Our responsibility is to raise godly children." This sentiment is found in home school literature cited by all the participants most notably *The Tools of lost learning: An approach to distinctively Christian education* (Wilson, 1991) where the author reminded parents that God gave the responsibility for raising and educating children to the parents and that parents do not have the option of abdicating this role to others. At first glance it would appear that the critics of home schooling are correct, but further discussion and analysis revealed a deeper and diverging understanding of the common good. These families believed that the act of home schooling positively influences the common good of society. Consider the following statement by a parent that is illustrative of the participants' views:

I think it's good for the common good not to have someone trained in the little gerbil/hamster wheel of public education. They are spouting them out with all the same moral, philosophical thoughts- very important issues, and our kids are probably going to be going against the grain challenging other people, hopefully.

These families believed that home schooling adds to the diversity of ideas in society thus providing a benefit, even if or especially if the views and education their children are receiving runs counter to the prevailing beliefs of the traditional educational system and society. This finding reinforces Ray (2000) who argued that home schooling positively influences society.

The idea that home schooling increases societal diversity is interesting, considering the current focus on diversity in education. One parent made an interesting observation about society's focus on diversity when he said, "we talk a lot about diversity in our society today, but the truth is there is not diversity in thought in public schools and you harm the common good again if everyone thinks in lockstep and is spoon feed what kind of attitudes and beliefs they should have." Interestingly he turned the arguments of home school critics around on them. Home school families are accused of educating their children narrowly thus limiting their exposure to varying ideas and beliefs (Reich, 2002), but these families believed that the public schools have a narrow curriculum that basically indoctrinates children.

The diversity of education these families provided to their children included both negative and positive elements. The families intended to provide an education that shielded their children from certain negative influences and in a sense inoculated them early so they would be prepared when they entered society as adults and had to deal with these negative influences. The families desired to counter-socialize their children. This idea was reinforced by the comments of one child when asked why his parents home school, "So I can be raised in a Christian environment. So that basically the people I am around will influence me more and if I am around my parents who are Christians I will follow those beliefs." One parent concluded:

I think human experience teaches that what happens is that kids are drawn down to their lowest common denominator at least morally if not intellectually. To throw our kids in the mix would invite them to partake in the behaviors that we are trying to protect against in the home school environment.

This idea of negative education protecting, or to use the analogy of one parent providing a nurturing environment like a greenhouse where the children will grow strong before being planted in the wider world, is one way that these parents planned to impact the common

good. They wanted to prepare their children to emerge as adults with a worldview different from the prevailing worldview of society in order to challenge and improve society.

The diversity of their education also included a positive element. Their curriculum was qualitatively different from what was available in both the local public and private schools as reported in Anthony and Burroughs (2012). Their curriculum was based on classical education. When asked to describe their curriculum one parent responded:

We follow a classical education. Based on ancient grammar and logic. In the 30's Dorothy Sayers wrote an article called, "The Lost Tools of Learning", where she said they are not just a subjects, they are also methods. Every subject has its own facts and logic. So everything focuses around history as our centerpiece. We also study biblical history which you don't get in public schools. Then we have arts, science and music revolve around the same time frame we are studying.

The families also did not limit their curriculum to one specific program or place rather they established specific learning objectives and then choose from a variety of options to meet those objectives. Anthony and Burroughs (2012) used the analogy of an educational menu to describe how these families make curriculum choices. Their education was not only diverse in terms of worldview, but also curriculum.

The families realized that they would be criticized for teaching their children a curriculum that diverged from the traditional school curriculum. They believed that the establishment saw their efforts as a threat as exemplified by one mother's statement that she fears "for home schools, because um...I mean we are teaching things that I don't think the other side wants our kids to know." This comment is enlightening in that these families realized that they were teaching something that was different from the traditional schools. They felt that efforts to limit home schooling existed less because of common good arguments, but more because the traditional educational establishment feared the ideas that were being taught and wanted to keep them out of the larger society, in effect, limiting diversity.

These families felt they had an obligation to their children and God to teach them knowledge, skills, and a worldview that are not necessarily a part of the traditional school curriculum. They believed that by doing this they were increasing the diversity of ideas in a society that was deliberately limiting the propagation of certain ideas in the schools and by extension in the larger society. Their goal was to positively influence society. Against charges of attempts to insulate his children from society one father commented, "They are being equipped to influence the world positively. But that equipping has to take place in a

more protective environment." This attempt to add to the diversity of ideas in the larger society stemmed from their hierarchical view of society. This finding reinforces Arai (1999) who concluded that these families have a different view of citizenship and common good that is situated in the family and working in the community and that we should appreciate this diversity.

What is the proper response by society to the diversity that home school families offer society? In a diverse society that accepts and embraces a variety of different lifestyles and claims to be multicultural, is it proper to criticize this group because they choose to teach and learn differently? Is it proper to criticize this group because they teach a world-view that is different from the larger society? If it is, what is the basis of the criticism? If based on their worldview then what of freedom? If their divergent worldview is the basis of criticism and failure to accept the diversity offered by home school families, then perhaps one parent is accurate in his question:

Aren't we a free country? What is this where you got mandatory education and they troll the streets for kids who aren't in school? And once you're there, and if parents dare to question the curriculum and the assigned reading they are treated like an animal. It's not exactly a model for freedom.

#### **Discussion**

How does our society reconcile these differing views of education and society? Does the will and actions of the majority dictate the actions of the small minority who choose to home school? Can and should the state limit the rights and activities of the family to educate which existed prior to and after the establishment of the United States and the United States Constitution? Currently, home schooling is legal in all fifty states with varying degrees of regulation, yet it remains a topic of significant debate among academics, legal scholars, professional educators, and the general public. How our society deals with home schooling will say much about the view of our society towards how to balance individual freedom and collective responsibility, the nature and practice of religious freedom, and respect for the diversity of ideas and practice.

The findings that these home school families view the common good differently, see their efforts as increasing societal diversity, and that the operation of their home schools is part of the exercise of their religion provides a clearer view of their motivations to home school and also places them in further contrast with critics of home schooling (Apple, 2000; Lubienski, 2000, Reich, 2002; Yuracko, 2008). These findings provide nuance to the idea of what is the common good for society as espoused by Lubienski (2000). Is it in the common good to have one form of education that all children participate in and receive a common worldview or is it in the best interest of society to have varied forms of education

resulting in a diversity of ideas that compete in the larger market place of ideas?

That these families saw their home school practices as increasing the diversity of society is an important finding in light of the focus the educational establishment has placed on diversity. This expansion of the definition of diversity to include how and where one is taught as well as the specific worldview and curriculum used presents a challenge to proponents of diversity. Does society reject this diversity, because it is based on a worldview that may or may not be generally accepted in the hierarchy of the traditional educational establishment?

Finally, that these families situated the practice of home schooling within the exercise of religion presents a philosophical and constitutional challenge that extends the debate over the regulation and legality of home schooling into a First Amendment issue. Placing the operation of home schools squarely within their religious practice potentially places them within the scope of the United States Supreme Court's Yoder (1972) decision. The Yoder decision was narrowly focused on one particular group, but the principle that directing children's education is a part of religious practice is a direct challenge to the larger societal interests claimed by critics of home schooling. Many people interpret or consider the free exercise of religion to equate with freedom of worship. The educational practices of many families who home school for religious reasons and the Yoder decision challenge those commonly held interpretations.

As home schooling continues to grow as a viable educational option for families, our society will continue to debate its merits as well as its legality and the proper extent of regulation. The voices of these families, their declarations of independence from the educational norm in our nation, will continue to challenge our views of what really is the common good, what diversity we value, and what activities we include in our definition of the free exercise of religion.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocols and Archival Data Collected

**Parent Interview 1**

1. What was the primary reason you decided to home school?
2. If someone told you they were going to home school their children what would you tell them?
3. What are some of the reasons you might consider stopping home schooling?
4. What reasons do you continue home schooling?
5. Describe one day of home schooling from this week?
6. Compare home schooling to traditional schooling.
7. How much time do you spend in direct instruction a day?
8. Overall what has been your experience with the home school group?
9. What benefits do you receive from the home school group?
10. What are some of the initial challenges you had to overcome when you started home schooling?

**Parent Interview 2**

Curriculum questions

1. What role does memorization play in education?
2. How important is reading in education?
3. What role does the accumulation of facts role in education?
4. What is the most indispensable part of the curriculum?
5. What part of the curriculum could be removed if necessary?

Distractions

1. What things distract the students from their work during their lessons?
2. What things distract the family as a whole from lessons?
3. Can you give an example of a distraction that was difficult to overcome?

Frustrations

1. What are some sources of frustration for you?
2. What are some sources of frustration for your children?
3. Can you give an example of a time you were frustrated while home schooling your children?

Evaluation

1. How do you evaluate your children's academic progress?
2. Can you give me an example of a time when you evaluated one child's progress and recognized a deficiency and how you responded?

**Parent Interview 3**

1. What books or literature did you read that influenced you to home school?
2. How much of an influence was literature about home schooling?
3. What is the future of American home schooling?
4. What principles guide your curriculum decisions?
5. How would you describe your instructional methods?
6. How do you determine what to put in your curriculum and what to leave out?
7. How do you handle material/ subjects that are in opposition to your belief system? Can you give an example?
8. How do your instructional methods change as a child moves through grades? Can you give an example?
9. How does the COOP support your educational efforts?
10. What ways do you use technology to teach your children?
11. How do you foster or encourage autonomous learning?
12. Other than the COOP what other support systems do you use?
13. Respond to the following prompt: "If we had leadership, our children could read!"
14. How would you respond to the idea that by home schooling your children you are hurting the common good?
15. Do you feel that your children are losing something by not being involved in a larger more diverse community of learners?

16. In some literature, home school advocates indicate that home schooling pre dates public schools as the original form of education in America. Do you see home schooling in America regaining status as the primary mode of education?
17. Would you consider using any public school resources if they were open for your use as a home school parent?

**Child interview protocol**

1. What reasons does your family home school?
2. Did you and your family discuss the decision to home school?
3. Have you ever discussed with your parents not home schooling?
4. What do you like about home schooling?
5. What things do you not like about home schooling?
6. What is hard about home schooling?
7. What is easy about home schooling?
8. How much information do you memorize? What types of things?
9. How do your parents teach you?
10. What part of your schooling would you like to stop doing?
11. What types of things frustrate you in school?
12. What types of things distract you from your studies?
13. How do you get graded?

**Archival data collected**

1. Student work
2. Parent- teacher lesson plans
3. Photographs taken during observations
4. Cooperative website
5. Weekly journals completed by participants
6. Course syllabi
7. Parent teacher planning books

Appendix B

**Sample matrix: Differing view of common good**

<b>Theme: Differing view of the Common good</b>			
Harbor family	<p>Mother: I think it could go either way, but our responsibilities are not to the common good. Our responsibility is to raise Godly children.</p>	<p>Husband: She more or less had a spiritual calling and wanted the children to have a Godly upbringing.</p>	<p>... our kids are being exposed to things we don't want them to be exposed to and I don't think everything is terrible.</p>
	<p><b>Responsibility to family and God first.</b></p>	<p><b>Common good is raising godly children.</b></p>	<p><b>Diversity of ideas and negative education positively impact the common good.</b></p>
	<p>Mother: Hurting the greater good or the common good. Well, the common good may not be, what people see as the common good may not be the same. You know what I see as the common good and what someone else sees as the common good may not be the same.</p>	<p>If we had leadership? Um, what do you think they mean by that? I think adult male role models, if the fathers were leaders in the families that are the idea. I think the sign means government. If the children see their fathers wanting to read even if it is reading newspapers or magazines, we read things that talk about it. It opens up conversation. I think that is the kind of leadership the country needs, fathers.</p>	
	<p><b>Disagreement over what is the common good.</b></p>	<p><b>Common good impacted by more than schools. Strong families impact the common good.</b></p>	
Smith	<p>Father: So, I think the idea of the common good is served not harmed by giving kids like plants in a hot house an opportunity to be nurtured and protected in a more structured environment at home. Rather than toss them in with everyone else in an environment that often times one that brings harmful influences their growth.</p>	<p>Mother: do believe all religion I mean all education is religious in nature. And the question is which religion, at least being in charge of our own children's education we know which religion we are trying to infuse and pass along to them. In public schools we were not quite sure, but we didn't approve much of it. So of course grammar, it doesn't appear to have a religious nature in it, but I found grammar books that use sentences that were conveying some sort of bias, math books (looking and smiling towards husband)</p>	<p>Mother: I think it's good for the common good not to have someone trained in the little gerbil/hamster wheel of public education. They are spouting them out with all the same moral, philosophical thoughts very important issues and our kids are probably going to be going against the grain challenging other people, hopefully.</p>
	<p><b>Different view of what the common good is combined with negative education and diversity of experience.</b></p>		<p><b>Diversity of ideas/ beliefs in the interest of the common good.</b></p>
			<p>Father: I think it is dead wrong. Because, we are not</p>

		<b>Negative education and importance of religion</b>	removing them from society, we are creating better citizens.
			<b>Home schooling positively impacts common good through superior education.</b>
Riley	<p>Mother: I think ultimately that's the parent's responsibility and you can teach a child to read if you just did it in one hour in the evening every day.</p> <p><b>Family is responsible for learning.</b></p>	<p>Mother: I am not grooming my child for society or for this world. I am grooming my child for the Lord's Kingdom world.</p> <p><b>Differing vision of the common good.</b></p>	<p>God didn't give me someone else's child. He gave us our child and that's where my concern has got to be. And if we had schools where we didn't have all of this outside agitation and influence or whatever from groups and things... everybody gets to say what they want to except for Christians. And you get to celebrate for all these different things but you can't celebrate Christian things</p> <p><b>Family and beliefs over the greater common good. Diversity of ideas.</b></p>
Johnson	<p>So I thought my primary responsibility is to my children. My little ones God has given to me to see about. So the combination of the outward pull with my daughter and seeing my son slip between the cracks and anyway I just came home and told my husband that whole thing and we said we'd try it for a year and if it isn't working we'll go back they're little. That's when we decided to home school.</p> <p><b>First responsibility is to the family.</b></p>	<p>The reason to home school is not knowledge itself because I would say that education encompasses a lot more than knowledge it includes skills.</p> <p><b>Diversity of ideas</b></p>	<p>It was important imparting our values to them. Like I was talking about earlier compartmentalizing during those years I was converted. I was raised in church and considered myself a Christian all those years, but I was really converted later. So I guess I did think more about really being able to teach my children on a daily basis and to live together.</p> <p><b>Diversity of ideas</b></p>
Books	<p>"Government schooling is the most radical adventure in history. It kills the family by monopolizing the best times of childhood and by teaching disrespect for home and parents." P. xxv</p> <p><b>Proper role of the family</b></p>	<p>"What we must strive for is an education involving every aspect of the child's life. The child must be taught how to love the Lord God with all the mind. If parents fail at this, a child may pick up a non-Biblical worldview from someone else." P. 49</p>	

(Gatto, 2000)

**Diversity of ideas and  
proper role of the family**

Wilson, 1991

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**Author Notes**

Kenneth V. Anthony  
Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education  
Mississippi State University  
[kva#3@msstate.edu](mailto:kva#3@msstate.edu)

Kenneth V. Anthony is an assistant professor of education in the Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education at Mississippi State University. His research interests include home schooling and social studies education. His email is [kva#3@msstate.edu](mailto:kva#3@msstate.edu).



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