

SCHOOL CHANGE: ADOLESCENTS TRANSITIONING FROM
CONVENTIONAL SCHOOLING TO HOME-BASED ONLINE EDUCATION

By

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

Harvey Klamm. SCHOOL CHANGE: ADOLESCENTS TRANSITIONING FROM CONVENTIONAL SCHOOLING TO HOME-BASED ONLINE EDUCATION. (Under the direction of Dr. Samuel Smith) School of Education, April, 2012. This hermeneutic phenomenological research explored the lived experiences of six recently graduated adolescents to extrapolate the valued essence of their transitional encounters in changing from conventional school to home-based online schooling. The homeschool research shifted the emphasis from the outcome-based academic achievement studies prevalent during the past 20 years to a focus on internal and external factors impacting student learning within this technological instructional process. Findings produced from analysis and interpretation of reflective adolescent lived experiences revealed rich truth regarding the internal emotions, environmental adaptations, academic ramifications, and social adaptations encountered when changing from conventional schooling to home-based online school. Cognitive, maturational, and social skills showed reported gains in the move from conventional school to home-based online school. Gender differences were not reported as major contributing adjustment factors. The greatest transitional ramifications were noted by participants who made a geographic move while simultaneously enrolling in home-based online school. The magnitude of the loss in social capital was accentuated by the geographic move. Adolescent attitude in acceptance of the move was a defining element, leading to successful re-establishment of new social capital or resulting in social and psychological withdrawal.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY	1
Background.....	1
Problem Statement.....	3
Focus of Inquiry.....	4
Significance of the Study.....	4
Research Question	4
Guiding Questions	5
Research Plan.....	5
Operational Definition of Terms.....	6
Assumptions.....	7
Delimitations.....	7
Summary.....	8
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	10
Theoretical Framework.....	12
Review of the Literature	13
Adolescent Theories and Research.....	13
Sources of Adolescent Stress.....	21
Adolescent Self-Development in Context	22
Changing Schools	29
Homeschooling.....	37
Influence of Technology.....	54

Summary of the Literature Review	57
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY	60
Research Question	60
Research Design.....	62
Participants.....	64
Selection of Site	66
Procedures.....	67
Personal Biography and Researcher Role.....	69
Data Collection	72
Data Analysis	81
Trustworthiness.....	85
Ethical Considerations	89
Summary.....	90
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS/FINDINGS	92
Demographics and Setting	93
Discontent that Propagated a Decision	101
Marquise’s Story.....	101
Stephen’s Story	102
Leigh’s Story.....	105
Ben’s Story.....	107
Chuck’s Story.....	109
Ann’s Story	110
Themes	112

Decision	113
Design	122
Distinctives	139
Disturbances.....	145
Destiny	152
Summary	158
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION.....	163
Summary of Findings.....	163
Discussion.....	165
Decision	166
Design	168
Distinctives	170
Disturbances.....	171
Destiny	174
Implications.....	175
Students.....	175
Parents.....	177
Online School Administrators.....	179
Limitations and Recommendations.....	181
Limitations	181
Recommendations for Future Research	182
Conclusion	183
REFERENCES	185

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS GROUNDED IN THE LITERATURE	200
APPENDIX B: OPEN CODING – PHASE ONE	205
APPENDIX C: OPEN CODING – PHASE TWO	207
APPENDIX C: AXIAL CODING	208

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Change is an inevitable element in human existence. Life changes can be voluntarily or involuntarily initiated. How individuals respond to change can make the difference between proactive motivation to achieve and despondent defeatism that destroys initiative and impedes success.

Adolescence is a crucial time of life that is permeated by complex human changes. During this transformational period, adolescents experience rapid physical, cognitive, psychosocial, and spiritual growth. The personal struggles to mature are additionally influenced by powerful external environmental contexts. It is through this interplay with the environment that adolescents experience valuable life lessons that enable them to open their childhood cocoon and emerge as mature, independent adults.

The interplay of relational contexts such as parents, peers, school, leisure, and work provide potential positive and negative stress that impacts adolescent cognitive, psychosocial, and spiritual development. Response to negative environmental school influences such as violence, poor academics, drugs, immorality, and spiritual antagonism has historically caused parents to withdraw their children from conventional school in favor of homeschooling (Isenberg, 2007). Exercising legal options for school choice, parents believe the change in educational pedagogy, curriculum design, and spiritual support will better meet personal family goals (Collom, 2005; Isenberg, 2007; Ray, 2000; Rudner, 1999).

Background

Because the modern homeschool movement began in the 1960s, nearly 140 years

after the passage of the first compulsory attendance laws that created this country's public schools, people tend to believe homeschooling is a new concept. Homeschooling is not a recent concept. In fact, homeschooling predates all other forms of educational pedagogy. Parents, by their innate nature, have educated their children in the rudimentary needs for survival since the beginning of time (Ott, 2009; Ray, 2000).

The appeal generated by proponents of the modern version of homeschooling has produced significant growth. By 2008, the number of homeschool students was approximately two million (Ray, 2009). The significance of the size of this population is that it exceeded the total combined number of students enrolled in charter and voucher schools (Isenberg, 2007).

The expansion of the Internet eased the delivery of homeschooling materials, and it is credited with energizing an increase in the numbers of homeschoolers during the 1990s (Conlin, 2006; Isenberg, 2007). With the expansion of the Internet as a form of educational opportunity, educational learning programs such as virtual schools and cyber schools have grown in popularity (Ott, 2009). The growth of technology-based virtual schools and cyber schools has created a subtle distinction between traditional homeschooling and its new hybrid form, home-based online education. Home-based online education is unique in that parents act as academic coaches, certified teachers offer support for student learning, and instructional designs vary from those providing periodic live or taped classes to designs providing a primarily text-driven format (Bazin & Burk, 2010; Calvert, 2009).

Even with the advancement in homeschooling options, exercising educational choice is more complex than parental cognitive or philosophical decision-making. The

choice impacts every facet of the home structure. For adolescents, this decision comes at a time when they begin to evaluate themselves in terms of beliefs and social comparisons (Harter, Waters, & Whitesell, 1998). In fact, critics of all forms of homeschooling rate socialization development as their number one concern (McDowell, 2004).

Parental concerns regarding educational quality and societal concerns regarding socialization are valid notions, but a broader and deeper question needs to be addressed. What impact does this form of school change have on the adolescent's cognitive and psychosocial development? Given the broad realm of adolescent development, what happens within children in this educational transition process? Specifically, what adaptations must children make as they move from the conventional school structure to home-based online educational pedagogy?

Problem Statement

Bryne, Davenport, and Mazanov (2007) reported that adolescence is a time period of rapid physical growth and psychosocial development that is marked by emotional turmoil. As life stress increases, adolescents seek means to reduce crisis and establish stability. Hotton, Monk, and Pitman (2004) reported that transitioning between conventional schools can lead to lower self-esteem and self-efficacy caused by psychological stress experienced by adolescents during school transition. While empirical research has been undertaken to study the impact of student mobility between conventional schools, the problem is that little is known about the lived experiences adolescents encounter when moving from conventional school to home-based online educational settings.

Focus of Inquiry

Using a philosophical and methodological research approach grounded in hermeneutic phenomenology, the purpose of this research was to explore the lived experiences of six recently graduated adolescents—to extrapolate the valued essence of their transitional encounters in changing from conventional school to home-based online schooling. The goal of this study was to utilize previous student reflexivity to provide an understanding of the internal emotions, academic struggles, and environmental adaptations students experience when changing to this form of homeschooling. Through the acquisition of these insights, interpretive textual descriptions were developed to reveal and share the truth of these adolescent experiences. In so doing, this research identified the heart of the successful adaptation to pedagogical and curricular change—the learning responses and adjustments operating within adolescents.

Significance of the Study

Reports by Garrett (2004), Hotton et al.(2004), Rumberger (2010), and VanHorne (2010) concluded that changing educational settings during adolescence is highly traumatic. This research sought to determine the cognitive and psychosocial adjustments children incur as a result of the move from conventional schooling to home-based online instruction. The results of this study are globally important in contributing needed research to the body of knowledge that is currently void in this educational area.

Research Question

What lived experiences do adolescents encounter when transitioning from conventional school to home-based online schooling?

Guiding Questions

Guiding questions supporting the research question were developed in response to Isenberg's (2007) call for research regarding the impact of homeschooling on the emotional and social development of children. The following questions guided this research in seeking to gain an understanding of the adjustments adolescents experience as they transition from conventional school to home-based online education.

- What emotional experiences do adolescents encounter when transitioning from conventional schooling to a home-based online school structure?
- What academic and cognitive experiences do adolescents encounter when transitioning from conventional schooling to a home-based online school structure?
- What social experiences do adolescents encounter when transitioning from conventional schooling to a home-based online school structure?
- What spiritual experiences do adolescents encounter when transitioning from conventional schooling to a home-based online school structure?
- What strategies do adolescents employ in an attempt to succeed when transitioning from conventional schooling to a home-based online school structure?

Research Plan

This research study utilized a qualitative design. Unique to qualitative research, the feelings of participants are more important than variable manipulation common in quantitative research (Bolle, Wessell, & Mulvihill, 2007; Eberly, Joshi, & Konzal, 2007). Since homeschoolers are the ones living with the transitional process, they are logically

the ones to inform the researcher about their emotional struggles, academic adjustments, and environmental adaptation challenges. These students thus became the best resources for providing rich insights to improve adult understanding and support practices.

The research design followed hermeneutic phenomenological theory and approach. Van Manen (1990) defined “phenomenology as research that focuses on the lived experiences of individuals ... and hermeneutics as a means to interpret the hidden texts within those lived experiences” (p.4). The utilization of this design and approach was instrumental in seeking to investigate the experiences of adolescents as they lived them, to reflect on identified themes, and to describe their experiences through writing this dissertation.

Operational Definition of Terms

Homeschool—A general term used to describe any form of educational means by which children are educated in their home environment. Historically, parents purchased or developed curriculum and taught it to their children.

Homeschooler—A general term used to identify children who attend school at home rather than in a conventional school facility.

Home-based online education—A hybrid form of homeschooling that provides established curriculum through a technology-based delivery system. The curriculum is predominantly text driven with imbedded enrichment options such as video clips, animation, and links to external websites and review games. Parents act as first responders in assisting student needs, and certified teachers provide secondary academic support. In this writing, home-based online education is broadly used as synonymous and inclusive of Virtual Schools and Cyber Schools.

Virtual School–This term is used to identify a form of home-based online education that is sponsored by public conventional schools. Virtual teachers teach courses using online technology and interact with students through email, via phone, or instant messaging. Student tuition is paid by the student’s state of residence, and the student graduates from the conventional school sponsoring the program.

Cyber School–This term is used to identify a form of home-based online education that is a virtual school which is privately sponsored through private schools or charter organizations.

Assumptions

In approaching the topic of adolescent adjustment when changing from conventional schooling to home-based online education, the following assumptions were made.

- Adolescence is a time of major change during which adolescents face increasing pressures from the interplay between themselves and their environments.
- Adolescents will seek means to reduce stress and create stability as they interact with their environment.
- Adolescents have a story to tell about their lived experience in changing from conventional school to home-based online education.
- Adolescents have insights that can be beneficial for others entering or involved in similar events.

Delimitations

Delimitations impacting this research included the choice to use one home-based online school and to use graduates of that school. No currently enrolled students were

invited to participate. Graduates of the school were not included if they had graduated more than 18 months prior to accepting the invitation to participate. Invitations were only issued to individuals who had not had any form of homeschool experience prior to making the change from conventional school to home-based online school. Additionally, the pool of potential participants was limited to those living within 150 miles of my community.

Summary

Adolescence is an important transformational period of human development. The interplay of relational contexts such as parents, peers, school, leisure, and work provide potential positive and negative stress that impacts adolescent cognitive, psychosocial, and spiritual development. Parents, seeking to support their children by countering perceived negative conventional school influences, are increasingly turning to homeschooling in an effort to improve academic quality. Technological advancements have increased the availability of homeschool learning materials through online virtual schools and cyber schools.

School change can add increased stress at a time when adolescents are seeking to decrease life pressures. The literature is void regarding the impact of school-change within students when moving from conventional school to home-based online school. Using hermeneutic phenomenological theory and approach, this research investigated the emotional struggles, academic adjustments, social adaptations, and spiritual ramifications adolescent encountered as they transitioned to home-based online education.

Chapter One introduced the study's rationale, background, significance, and research plan. Chapter Two provides a comprehensive summary of the literature in four

segments. The segments review adolescent theories, explore contextual adolescent development research, examine school-change research, and provide an analysis of the modern homeschooling movement.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

For the past 100 years, researchers have theorized as to how adolescents change and to what impact the change process has on adolescent development and behavior. After 100 years of research, questions persist. What impact does physiological change contribute to the psychological and sociological transformation that an adolescent experiences? Is this time period a manifestation of natural progression resulting from the interplay of complex internal genetic and external environmental variables? How do positive and negative stress contributors influence the adolescent maturation process? What impact does the contribution of the school environment make on the ability of an adolescent to develop efficacy and to avoid culturally negative social behaviors? Of importance to this research, what lived adolescent experiences impact adjustment when transitioning from conventional school to home-based online education?

To develop a true understanding of the individual in context within a phenomenon, it is important to learn as much as possible about the nature of the inner person and the nature of the external contextual world (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). Qualitative research seeks to understand a phenomenon through the lived experiences of involved individuals in their natural settings (Babbie, 1989; Bailey, 2007; Creswell, 2007). Of the various qualitative research designs, hermeneutic phenomenology provided the design and methodology for this examination. The opening section of this chapter encapsulates this conceptual design from rudimentary purpose to methodological function.

The literature review begins with a summary of past and present theories related

to adolescence as a distinct human developmental time period. These theories spawned a century of research in an attempt to understand why and how children mature biologically, cognitively, psychosocially, and spiritually. It is from the influence of these theories that much of the breadth and depth of current school pedagogical methods have been formulated. It is also from these influences that concerns regarding the validity of homeschooling to meet the developmental needs of children continue to be generated.

The second section of this review is dedicated to contextual developmental research—the interplay between the adolescent and his environment. This section focuses on adolescent stress factors associated with emerging adolescent responses to various environmental contexts, such as peers, home, and school.

The third section of this review shifts emphasis from adolescent psychology to a focus on studies related to the impact of school change on adolescents. With a void in the literature regarding adolescent change from conventional schooling to homeschooling, identified studies reported student issues related to changing from conventional school to conventional school. The cited literature provides generalized results which were applicable in analyzing this study's findings.

The fourth section of this literature review provides an analysis of the modern homeschooling movement. This part of the review summarizes key elements in the history of homeschooling and the development of the modern homeschooling movement, the growth of technological advances in curriculum delivery, and the development of the hybrid homeschool concept—home-based online education. Section four concludes with a brief summary of the research and the call for research needed to determine adjustment factors impacting the success of children making the change from conventional school to

home-based online education.

Theoretical Framework

Because human beings exist in a conscious world, live by values, express emotions, and act purposefully; the determination of behavioral meaning is rooted in the study of lived experiences rather than manipulated statistical events (Van Manen, 1990). Understanding the essence and meaning of school change within the adolescent thus requires more than an analysis of a statistical group comparison or the creation of a list of identified adaptations. To understand a lived experience requires an understanding of the complexity of the relatedness between the individual's physical and psychosocial development and specific environmental dynamics. The combinations of developmental and environmental dynamics collectively act as contributors to the individual's ability to describe and perceive the event.

Finding meaning within lived experiences is the fundamental premise for hermeneutic phenomenology. Van Manen (1990) described hermeneutic phenomenology as a human science that philosophically and theoretically builds upon the notion that an individual's reality and interpretive meaning is directly related to the individual's lived experiences and his perceptions of those experiences. Philosophically, phenomenology attempts to suspend all presuppositions and judgments regarding reality until they can be grounded in lived experiences (Creswell, 2007).

To fulfill its purpose, hermeneutic phenomenology combines two defining elements. The element of phenomenology seeks to distinguish between surface appearances and intrinsic essences of lived experiences by methodologically transforming the experiences into descriptive textual entities. The element of

hermeneutics seeks to interpret the phenomenon's meaning as it relates to the individual's lived experiences by methodologically identifying essential themes within textual facts (Van Manen, 1990).

Pursuit of meaning, for this research, integrated a review of the literature with field research. A review of the literature provided fundamental theoretical and practical knowledge critical to understanding adolescence as a definitive life time period. The review also provided the means for understanding the interplay of the nature of adolescents in context with the nature of their external contextual world (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). Field research methods were employed to hear the voice of adolescents in context to the school change phenomenon so that their lived experiences could be textually captured (phenomenology) and interpreted (hermeneutics). The combination of phenomenology and hermeneutics thus provided a theoretical foundation and guiding framework for the development of this research.

Review of the Literature

Adolescent Theories and Research

Adolescent theories and research (1900 – 1980). G. Stanley Hall is credited as being the catalyst for twentieth century focus on adolescent development (Peterson, 1988). Hall (1904), a Darwinian evolution devotee, theorized that adolescent development resulted from a series of life-changing events referred to as storm (physiological changes) and stress (psychological adaptations). As a result of Hall's work, the tendency has been to conclude that adolescence is a 20th century phenomenon. Historically, though, the early works of Plato, Aristotle, and Rousseau described the developmental and educational needs of children who would be later termed as

adolescents (Peterson, 1988).

Influenced by Hall's hypothesis, human development theory in the 20th century was dominated by the research and teachings of Sigmund Freud, Jean Piaget, Eric Erikson, Lev Vygotsky, and Lawrence Kohlberg. Freud's psychosexual stages, Piaget's four stages of cognitive development, Erikson's eight stages of personal and social development, Vygotsky's sign systems of cognitive development, and Kohlberg's six stages of moral reasoning provided a broad analysis which transformed such constructs as parenting and educational pedagogy (Guttek, 2005; Slavin, 2006).

Central to the debate among these theorists was whether the realm of human development is predetermined at birth, as postulated by Freud, or whether environmental influences and personal experiences, as proffered by Piaget, Vygotsky, and Kohlberg, are the major maturation determinants from infancy to adulthood. Within these theories resides a second fundamental issue. How does maturational change occur? Is development controlled by definitive psychosexual stages as viewed by Freud? Is development the result of a progression of life skill adjustments impacted by environmental influence as viewed by Piaget, Vygotsky, and Kohlberg (Guttek, 2005; Slavin, 2006)?

A direct result of the efforts of the stage theorists, through their defined periods of human psychosocial development, has been the attention they drew to a little understood period of transition from childhood to adulthood. That period was termed the period of adolescence.

Freud built his theoretical framework on Hall's presuppositions by emphasizing that normative adolescent turmoil leads to healthy adulthood (Ellis, 1934; Peterson,

1988). Freud theorized that conflict results as an individual experiences hormonally driven pleasurable drives. Maladjustment occurs when the satisfaction of an individual's sexual drives are suppressed due to environmental constraints. This maladjustment results in suppressed conflict and becomes a subconscious influencer leading to undesirable behaviors. Freud also theorized that resolving sexual conflict is fundamental to positive behavior and advancement from adolescence to adulthood (Ellis, 1934).

Steinberg and Sheffield Morris (2001), in their review of research regarding classic studies on causes of adolescent problem behavior, reported that by the end of the 20th century adolescent studies concluded that adolescence is not a time of normative disturbance as proclaimed by Hall and Freud. The majority of teenagers progress through the period without developing psychosocial maladjustment. Steinberg and Sheffield Morris reported that theories of normative adolescent disturbance are no longer considered influential.

Accepting Freud's postulate that physical development precedes learning, Piaget adapted Freudian theory. Popular in the late 1950s, Piaget's cognitive development theory divided cognitive development into four stages (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958). Piaget's first three stages traverse child ages from birth to approximately age 11. The fourth stage, the formal operational stage, culminates in human adulthood development. In the formal operational stage, individuals have the ability to think abstractly and solve problems through logical reasoning. These stages, though not rigid in rate, are considered to be rigid in function. An individual cannot advance to the next stage prior to developmental completion required in the previous stage. Development is tied directly to maturation of physical growth (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958).

Piaget also theorized that moral development followed cognitive development (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958). Just as cognitive development progresses in stages, moral development also progresses in predictable stages. Heteronomous morality is the earlier of Piaget's two moral stages. In this stage, the child views rules as rigid and punishment is automatic. Autonomous morality is the eventual stage whereby the individual understands that rules can be made arbitrarily and enforced based on multiple influencing factors rather than rigidity (Slavin, 2006).

Research of the past 20 years has criticized Piaget's cognitive development theory. For example, Gelman (2000) argued that Piaget's belief that developmental stages are fixed and development precedes learning is inaccurate. According to Gelman, Piaget's theory is too rigid and does not account for sources of variability. "In a sense, learning can take place 'on the fly' as the learner encounters relevant input to existing knowledge. The greater the number of examples, the faster the learning" (Gelman, 2000, p. 855). "Piaget's theory of formal operations ... has been more or less abandoned, as empirical studies on cognitive development have become dominated by information processing and computational models that cast increasing doubt on Piaget's fundamental propositions about cognitive development during adolescence" (Steinberg & Sheffield Morris, 2001, p. 85).

During the 1960s, Erik Erikson adapted Freud's theory on child development in creating his own psychosocial theory. Erikson (1968) viewed personal and social development as a series of eight crisis stages that move children from birth to adulthood. Adolescence, according to Erikson, is a time between the ages of 12 and 18 when the individual faces a crisis of identity. Adolescence is a time of growing independence as

children determine who they are and what they believe in context with who they desire to become as adults. In this process, adolescent peer groups and selected role models become stronger influencers than parents.

Erikson's theory of adolescent identity development is no longer considered viable (Steinberg & Sheffield Morris, 2001). Even so, much of Erikson's influence regarding adolescent values and peer and parent relationships continues to permeate belief in the value of schools as social remedies, guiding adolescent growth when believed parental influence lessens (Slavin, 2006).

Also emerging in the 1960s, Lawrence Kohlberg produced his adaptation of Piaget's studies regarding the development of moral reasoning. Kohlberg (1969) theorized that individuals pass through six life stages that are divided into three moral levels. The preconvention level incorporates Kohlberg's life stages one and two. At this level, individuals view rules as standards established by others. The conventional level encompasses life stages three and four. At this level, individuals view morality as cooperation among peers. Rules are understood as needed for the benefit of the greater society. In the post conventional level of stages five and six, individuals define their own principles of ethics. What is right is a conscious decision based on self-chosen abstract principles rather than on predetermined rules.

Kohlberg (1969) held that morality development within the moral levels is not necessarily identified by chronological age. With the aid of others who have achieved success, adjustment to moral dilemmas is more the cause of advancement than age. In fact, individuals may be in several levels at the same time based on life experiences. Kohlberg's influence stimulated the character education emphasis prevalent in

conventional schools for the past thirty years (Slavin, 2006).

Lev Vygotsky lived at the time of Piaget, but he disagreed with Piaget's belief that development preceded learning (Slavin, 2006). Vygotsky (1978) theorized that the learning process is just the opposite: learning precedes development. Vygotsky believed that intellectual development is the interplay of environmental influences and sign systems that culture utilizes to enable individuals to think, communicate, and solve problems. Learning is a stage process whereby the child moves from the help of competent peers and adults to self-regulation. Slavin (2006) reported that Vygotsky's social learning theory contributed to educational theory in the forms of the Zone of Proximal Development (readiness to learn), Scaffolding (decreasing external support as the child masters concepts or skills), and Cooperative Learning (peers learning by working together).

Adolescent theories and research (1980 present day). Prior to the early 1980s, adolescent research was limited in scope (Peterson, 1988). Peterson found that understanding the adolescent resulted from behavioral studies or psychological studies in which adolescents just happened to be involved or from observations of identified groups of adolescents such as delinquents or students in school.

While stage theories provided generalized progressive developmental descriptors, they were criticized for overgeneralization to the culture because all individuals do not develop at the same rate (Peterson, 1988). Stage theories were also criticized for being limited in focus. This limited focus was manifested in progressive development of the individual rather than the interplay of the individual and the environment. For example, "to fully understand even the biological developmental process such as puberty, it is

important to know about the effects of nutrition, exercise, and the norms of the broader society regarding weight and body shape” (Peterson, 1988, p. 588).

Prior to the 1980s, studies on individual development were driven by a desire to describe developmental processes and the functions of such processes. Issues such as self-esteem, moral values, psychosocial maturity, and identity development were prevalent (Steinberg & Sheffield Morris, 2001). Beginning in the mid-1980s, research shifted from an emphasis solely centered on how an individual psychosocially develops to the impact of the interplay between the individual and various environmental contexts in the developmental process.

The shift to contextual, process-oriented, developmental research opened the doors for a major emphasis in adolescent studies. Steinberg and Sheffield Morris (2001) reported four broad trends influencing interest in adolescent research. First, developmental psychology began to focus on life periods characterized by change in context (the individual interacting with the environment and the environment’s impact on the individual) rather than continuing to focus on content (the fact that troubled individuals act like troubled individuals). Secondly, the development of radioimmunoassay methodology enabled researchers to study the specific hormones responsible for gender differentiation and puberty maturation. This methodology provided researchers the means to test whether biological growth causes life crisis or whether stress is a result of timing in context with other social issues. Thirdly, research funding moved to social issues such as antisocial behavior, drug use, non-marital pregnancy, and depression among adolescents. Fourthly, the longitudinal studies which began with young children in the early 1980s shifted focus as those children entered

adolescence.

The shift to contextual, process-oriented, developmental research produced evidence that began to refute prior adolescent stage theories. Ruter (1989) reported longitudinal research that concluded that much of what was assumed to be true from earlier theories of adolescent behavior was erroneous. According to Ruter, teenagers involved in experimental aberrant behavior do not necessarily become lifetime deviants. Additionally, many recurrent problems associated with adolescents have roots in earlier childhood. The fact that the problems are observed in adolescents does not mean they are the result of adolescence. Finally, adolescents resolve many of their period conflicts by the time they reach adulthood with minimal long-term consequences.

More recently, Steinberg and Sheffield Morris (2001) reported that process-oriented contextual research topics have included:

- Parent-adolescent conflict in intact versus divorced homes
- Peer crowd values and their impact on student academic achievement
- Hours employed per week
- Community and neighborhood variables impacting adolescent values and behavior
- School environmental impact on adolescent development

Results of context research, for example, have identified a correlation related to parental marital conflict and divorce and mental health problems in adolescents (McMahon, Grant, Compas, Thrum, & Ey, 2003). Bryne et al. (2007) found that stressors such as peer pressure, romantic relationships, and parental relationships are closely related to the development of anxiety and depression in adolescents.

In addition, studies have broadened from the interplay of individual and a single context to the interplay of multiple contexts on the development of the individual. Examples include the relationship between the school and work (Steinberg, Fegley, & Dornbusch, 1993), and the interconnectedness influence of home, peer group, school, and community (Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992).

Sources of Adolescent Stress

As researchers studied the interconnectedness of adolescents in single and multiple contexts, sources of adolescent stress became prevalent. Wills and Shiffman (as cited in Mattes and Allison, 1992), categorized adolescent stress producers in three groupings of influence: major life events, everyday life events, and enduring life strain. Major life events are traumatic but short-lived. Examples include the death of a loved one, school change, and illness. Everyday life problems are defined as irritant issues such as waiting in line, arguing with a parent or peer, and school work. Enduring life strain encompasses long-term pressures adolescents encounter as they play multiple roles as family members, students, friends, and community participants. Individually, life strain pressures also include moral and spiritual pursuits in an effort to find purpose and meaning in life.

Research by McGue, Sharma, and Benson (1996) and Suldo, S. M., Shaunessy, E., Thalji, A., Michalowski, J., and Shaffer, E. (2009) reported similar adolescent contextual stress findings to those reported by Mattes and Allison (1992). McGue et al. concluded that genetic contribution, parental support or parental favoritism, peer relations, and school experiences are the strongest influencers in adolescence.

Bryne et al. (2007) reported that adolescent stress research design needed to move

from broad categories to specificity so research could become more focused. A list of 11 contextual adolescent stress producers was proposed.

1. Home Life
2. School Performance
3. School Attendance
4. Romantic Relationships
5. Peer Relationships
6. Peer Pressure
7. Teacher Interaction
8. Future Uncertainty
9. School and Leisure Conflict
10. Financial Pressure
11. Emerging Adult Responsibility (p. 402-403)

The result of adolescent stress research produced understandings as to how adolescents develop through the influence of and in response to these contextual stress producers. Contextual studies at the close of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st century began to provide a clearer understanding into the adolescent development process.

Adolescent Self-Development in Context

As adolescents transition from childhood to adulthood, they begin to evaluate themselves in terms of beliefs and social comparisons (Harter, et al., 1998). Children in early adolescence tend to focus on social comparisons because biological changes produce visible physical changes that are noticed and mentioned by peers and parents.

Adolescents tend to view themselves differently when they are in their homes than when they are with peers.

Harter, Marold, Whitsell, and Cobbs (1996) reported that adolescents tend to engage in practices that are not true to self when among school peers or in romantic relationships. The impact of this behavior depends on whether the individual is involved in experimentation or whether the individual is suffering from depression.

With rapid physical growth completed toward the end of adolescence, social comparisons become minimal and adolescents begin to view self-image based on personal life beliefs rather than on physical characteristics. Regardless of ethnicity or gender, high self-esteem is related to peer support, parental approval, and the ability to adjust positively to change (DuBois, Bull, Sherman, & Roberts, 1998).

Peers. The development of social skills increases in intensity in early adolescence, primarily led by quality friendships (Buhrmester, 1996). These socialization qualities began in early childhood through the influence of the family structure and life practice taught within the family structure. Research reports indicated that closely knit, supportive families produce children who are socially competent and who also cultivate positive friendships (Lieberman, Doyle, & Markiewicz, 1999).

McNelles and Connolly (1999) reported friendships are fostered as adolescents focus value on loyalty and intimacy. Trust is tested through shared self-disclosure. Females tend to develop relationships based on conversation and males develop relationships through activities.

Peer influence can be positive or negative. Peer behavioral influence is most strongly generated in middle adolescence (Suldo et al., 2009). Adolescents manifesting

peer accepted physical, emotional, and social traits are most often labeled as popular choices for friendships. Not meeting popularity criteria can be very traumatic for an adolescent, leading to victimization, loneliness, depression, choice of antisocial peer groups, and aggressive antisocial tendencies (Steinberg & Sheffield Morris, 2001). Peer influence can increase academic achievement and acceptable social behaviors (Wentzell & Caldwell, 1997).

While peer acceptance is a major contributor to student success, peer alienation in the school setting is a major factor for decreasing student efficacy and student achievement (Eccles, J. S., Midgley, C., Wigfield, A., Buchanan, C. M., Reuman, D., Flanagan, C., & Mac Iver, D., 1993; Suldo et al., 2009). Peers can influence experimentation with the use of tobacco products, illegal drugs, alcohol, and juvenile delinquency (Urberg, Degirmencioglu, & Pilgrim, 1997). Most peers report that choice of behavior is not the result of coercion but rather the result of admiration and respect for each other (Sussman, S., Dent, C. W., McAdams, L. A., Stacy, A. W., Burton, D., & Flay, B. R., 1994). Admiration is fostered by the fact that adolescents tend to choose friends who have similar attitudes and who manifest similar behaviors (Hogue & Steinberg, 1995).

Personal feelings of emotional or physical hurt often grow out of the unresolved situations manifested by disrespect for individuals. A lack of respect for authority, property, or individual worth is a common root cause of violent acts. Disrespectful acts are often found to be reactions to disrespectful acts received. Sarcasm, harassment, media exploitation, gender and racial inequity, and jealousy are actions and/or reactions of disrespect (Lanning, 2007). The statistics of incidents of teasing and bullying in

school are staggering.

Six out of ten American teens witness bullying at least once a day. Sixty-six percent of youth are teased at least once a month, and nearly one-third are bullied once a month. Over the course of a year, nearly one-fourth of students reported that they had been harassed or bullied on school property because of their race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or disability. Nearly one-third of middle schoolers have been the object of sexual jokes or comments (Lanning, 2007, p. 1).

The personal impact of students being bullied negatively impacts adolescent adjustment. Lanning (2007) reported that 160,000 intimidated children are daily absent from school. Bullying is the cited reason that one out of 10 children drop out of school. Victims are five times more likely to suffer from depression. The effects of depression from being bullied in middle school have been shown to continue into adulthood.

Using violent means in the pursuit for acceptance and independence has statistically been a male behavior, but female aggression for similar pursuits is increasing. Female responses to depression for peer rejection have traditionally resulted in societal withdrawal. That trend is rapidly changing (Roca, 2010). From 1980 to 2003, female arrests for simple assault rose 269% (Montes, 2006).

At the root of this rise in female violence seems to be a mixture of old standby explanations mixed with statements about new societal pressures on girls to be competitive (Prothrow-Stith & Spivak, 2005). Girls fight over boys. They fight over gossip, exchanged dirty looks, differences of opinions, and to gain respect. Girls may become aggressive if they feel a sense of hopelessness regarding future goal attainment

regardless of academic or social success. The pressure on girls to set high goals for themselves may cause many to confuse the difference between assertiveness and aggression (Zahn, M. A., Brumgaugh, S., Steffensmeier, D., Feld, B. C., Morash, M., Chesney-Lind, M., ... Kruttschnitt, C., 2008).

Home. Peer influence, though strong, is not a singular power impacting student behavioral choice. Lieberman et al. (1999) and Gauze, C., Bukowski, W. M., Aquan-Assee, J., and Sippola, L. K. (1996) reported that adolescents do not enter the time of adolescence as empty social persons seeking peer input. Adolescents bring the teachings and influences of their parents with them. Adolescents exposed to violence at home may experience some of the same emotions and difficulties as younger school-age children. For example, adolescents continue to express emotions of fear, guilt, anxiety, depression, and they may have trouble concentrating in school. With poor home life and deficient adult role models, children are left to find approval through peers.

While some children overcome troubled home life by finding acceptance in positive peer relationships, the norm tends to be that rejections often lead frustrated children to seek approval from other frustrated children (Montes, 2006). Studies have shown that adolescents exposed to violence are more likely to engage in violent acts, often as preemptive strikes in the face of a perceived threat (Satcher, 2001).

Gauze et al. (1996) and Lieberman et al. (1999) reported that adolescents with close family relationships are more socially adept, choosing close friends that are supportive of family values. Children in secure home environments feel accepted and are less likely to become violent when expressing anger. Conversely, children in homes disrupted by divorce, death, remarriage, or abuse experience social and psychological

trauma that can negatively impact school performance and social relationships (Rumberger & Larson, 1998). Mounts and Steinberg (1995) reported evidence that authoritative parenting tends to reduce the negative influence of peer pressure. Authoritative parenting is exemplified in teaching children respect for authority and in demonstrating attitudes of warmth and caring in meeting the needs of children. Authoritative parents understand the difference between nurturing and indulging by teaching right living while allowing adolescents to accept challenges and take risks. Gauze et al. (1996) added findings that peer influence is most prominent in adolescent relationships when the home environment lacks cohesiveness and parents display rigidity in refusing to adapt to adolescent developmental needs.

Sibling rivalry increases as children move into adolescence. Sibling relationships can contribute positively to the development of social skills manifested in developing peer relationships. In addition, a positive sibling relationship improves school achievement, increases self-image development, and plays an important role in teaching the adolescent how to balance home relationships with the growing desire for independence (Brody, Stoneman, & Burke, 1987). Buhrmester and Furman (1990) added that friction and negativity within the home environment contributed to the adolescent's desire to spend increased time with congenial peers outside the home.

Brody et al. (1987) reported that unequal treatment by parents toward the siblings contributes to family stress and encourages conflict among the children. Brody, Stoneman, and McCoy (1994) indicated that a quality parent and adolescent relationship decreases the impact of sibling conflict and contributes to equitable sibling acceptance.

School. During the latter part of the 20th century, a growing philosophical and

applicative trend to use community influence in school programs to shape positive adolescent development exponentially increased (Eccles et al., 1993; McLaughlin & Irby, 1994). Central to this challenge has been the belief that the very nature of the school environment contextually provides an opportunity to teach the whole child, not just meet the child's cognitive needs (Roeser, R. W., Eccles, J. S., & Sameroff, A. J., 2000).

Vollmer (2003) charted the growth of American school programs that were added during the 20th century. These programs were often politically driven as a proactive response to societal pressure to impact adolescent development. Vollmer reported that the Massachusetts Puritans in 1640 established schools to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic skills and to cultivate values of a democratic society. Between 1900 and 1910, nutrition and health was added to the school curriculum. From 1910 to 1930, physical education and athletics, practical arts, and vocational education were included. In the 1950s sex education was introduced. In the 1960's career education, consumer education, and adult education entered the school list of responsibilities. The 1970s saw the addition of parent education, behavioral adjustment classes, character education, environmental education, women's studies, drug and alcohol abuse education, and African-American heritage education. In the 1980s, school program additions included ethnic education, global education, multicultural and non-sexist education, teen pregnancy awareness, Hispanic education, stranger danger education, and anti-smoking education. The 1990s included program additions such as internet education, conflict resolution, HIV and AIDS education, gang education, and death education.

With the plethora of programs now prevalent in the nation's schools, researchers have a natural setting to determine adolescent psychosocial functioning in relation to

schooling and psychosocial functioning as it relates to academic development (Roeser et al., 2000). For example, Roeser et al. found that self-perception of academic competence and educational value improved student motivation and decreased problem behaviors. “When adolescents perceive an emphasis on improving their ability rather than proving it compared to others; when they feel they have a voice and some choice in classrooms; and when they perceive supportive and respectful teachers, they are more than likely to bond with school and are less likely to bond with peers who are alienating from school and social institutions” (Roeser et al., 2000, p. 464).

Even with the mass emphasis on psychosocial development in school environments, the trend for violence appears unabated. During the last quarter of the 20th century, violent acts in schools fueled local, state, and national concerns. Race, socioeconomic factors, and gender became part of a myriad of studies attempting to determine causal relationships for why students behave violently toward school and toward each other. Findings indicated that, in isolation, racial distinction is not a valid predictor for school violence. The research did indicate a significant tie between school violence and the influence of socioeconomic factors, especially in urban areas ((Satcher, 2001).

Changing Schools

School change is not foreign to American students. Wood, Halfon, Scarla, Newacheck, and Nessim (1993) reported that 50% of all American school-age children moved at least twice in their school career and 10% moved at least six times. In the 1980s and early 1990s, approximately 20% of Americans changed locations annually (Swanson & Schneider, 1999). Barker (2010) reported the major reason for school

change has traditionally been geographic relocation associated with parental occupations. Economic issues in the United States at the turn of the millennium decreased the rate of geographic relocation, but the rates at which students continued to change schools increased (Swanson & Schneider, 1999).

With the turn of the millennium, school safety and deficient academic quality became increasingly persuasive parental catalysts for changing schools. Additionally, the passage of school choice legislation allowed parents freedom to choose public school alternatives outside their child's attendance zone without the need for family relocation. The creation of charter schools and technology-based virtual schools added to the number of public offerings and provided parents with even greater numbers of schooling alternatives. The growth of private school numbers, the increasing popularity of homeschooling, and the emergence of technology-based cyber schools also augmented parental options and increased the prospect of school change.

The plethora of educational options has created the potential for numerous student moves during a child's educational career as parents seek to determine a best academic and cultural fit for their children. Pursuit of nurturing learning environments, improved academic standardized test scores, increased curricular options, and improved extracurricular activities have caused parents to treat educational choice like a shopping spree, choosing to move children between public, private, and home schools in an effort to gain the advantages of all academic worlds (Barker, 2010).

School mobility studies. Philosophical and practical parental justification for school moves can produce negative side-effects in children. DuBois, Felner, Meares and Krier (1994) and Long (1992) reported that mobility studies in the 1970s and 1980s

credited school change as a causal influence for negative school cultural adjustment with accompanying negative effects on student learning and student behavior. In these studies, students who changed schools one or more times were reported to score lower in standardized test proficiency. Students who moved six or more times, compared to those who never moved, were reported to experience delays in growth and development, to have learning disorders, and to experience grade retention.

Reviews of the research from the 1970s and 1980s, though, generated methodological questions that challenged the validity of findings. Problematic for the early research was that it compared mobile and non-mobile students without considering group distinctives such as socio-economic factors. Alexander, Dauber, and Entwisle (1996), Dubois et al. (1994), and Long (1992) expressed concern that by not isolating socio-economic factors the suggested results provided inaccurate generalizations. Long suggested that the early findings did not account for Bureau of Census reports that stated poor families tend to move 50% more often than middle or upper income families. The ignored demographic data also indicated that poor families tend to be single parent in nature and that these single parents often did not graduate from high school. Dubois et al. added concern that children from disadvantaged homes, due to continual uncertainty within the home structure, have been found to be more likely sensitive to additional life stressors such as school change than children from stronger socio-economic backgrounds.

Factoring for socio-economic background, Simpson and Fowler (1994) reported that single school moves are not considered psychosocially traumatic when compared to multiplicities of school moves. The rationale purported that children understand the move from elementary to middle school and middle school to high school. They also

understand the need to change school due to parental employment change.

When factoring for socio-economic influences in multiple school moves, researchers found evidence that multiple school moves are detrimental to child psychosocial development. Simpson and Fowler (1994) reported that three or more school changes increased by 2.3 times the risk for emotional and behavioral problems that can translate to negative school adjustment and subsequent negative school behaviors. Addition research studies by Eccles et al. (1993), Garret (2004), Hotton et al. (2004), Rumberger (2010), and VanHorne (2010) reported that being a new student in a strange environment can be detrimental to a child physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Social capital theory. Pribesh and Downey (1999) theorized that the negative repercussions children may experience as a result of school mobility, while influenced by normal psychosocial growth and development stages, were significantly tied to the child's loss in social capital. Social capital theorists advocate a correlation between positive student performance and strong connections within families and community. The disruption in established social capital creates social stress among impacted individuals and psychological stress within the individuals. Student inability to adjust to a new school environment is thus attributed to the child's inability to develop new social relationships and to resolve internal psychological stressors.

Pribesh and Downey (1999) and Simpson and Fowler (1994) reported that geographic moves disrupt crucial parental and child social networks. For the parent, the loss of established parental relationships, formed through active school involvement networking, decreases a feeling of community and understanding of the school culture. The time needed to rebuild community relationships and to adjust to a new job can

produce a critical loss of attention to the child's needs. For the child, the loss of parental attention, the loss of friends, and the loss of familiarity with teachers and administrators impacts new school adjustment and academic performance. If the move and loss of parental attention is crisis attributable to death, divorce, or remarriage, the school adjustment impact is negatively compounded (Tucker, Marx, & Long, 1998).

Eccles et al. (1993), Garret (2004), Hotton et al. (2004), Rumberger (2010), and VanHorne (2010) reported that children feel vulnerable when they leave established friends and enter a new school. School change disrupts adolescent memory makers such as playing sports or doing other extracurricular activities. Students who frequently change schools have difficulty understanding concepts such as teamwork and peer confidence. Eventually, the child may quit attempting to enter activities and attempting to make friends to avoid the feeling of loss. The once active child may become physically inactive, academically unmotivated, and socially recluse in the newest school environment. The more frequent the changes, the greater the potential for child depression and resulting deviant misbehavior (Garret, 2004; Hotton et al., 2004; Rumberger, 2010).

The timing of mobility is additionally critical. Heinlein and Shinn (2000) reported that children in the third grade who had moved 3 or more times functioned below grade level in reading and math. Swanson and Schneider (1999) reported that school mobility between Grades 8 and 10 provided lasting positive academic results provided the students successfully made it through the move's troublesome transitional phase. Rumberger (2010) reported that graduation rates dramatically declined for students making school changes in the 10th through 12th grades, as opposed to school

changes made in Grades eight and nine.

The loss of social capital has the potential for negative school results, but negativity is not always the outcome. Family attitude and commitment to the change can greatly lessen the negative factors associated with a move. Moving to a better social community with a stronger academic environment can improve social capital and therefore reverse the potential for negative results and proactively affect transitional health (Swanson & Schneider, 1999; Suldo et al., 2009). For students in these situations, instances of increased tests scores have been noted (Rumberger, 2010).

Geographic moves that require attendance in a new school district account for one-fourth of school change instances (Swanson & Schneider, 1999). In comparison to research on the long distance geographic moves, educational research is greatly lacking concerning the impact of family moves within school districts which do not require school change. Research is also lacking concerning students who make school change but do not change residences. Of the three mobility types, geographic moves with school changes showed the greatest adjustment challenges. Geographic moves which did not require school change provided the least impact on student educational adjustment (Pribesh & Downey, 1999).

With the increasing educational options available within school districts, students choosing to leave mandated school systems face unique social capital challenges. Parental networks and family stress is minimized in-part because geographical change is not a factor. Pribesh and Downey (1999) reported that when school-only change is factored, student standardized test scores remain unchanged during the ensuing transitional years. Because young children do not have strongly bonded social networks,

school-only change is not considered strongly detrimental in elementary years. Conversely, students in upper high school grades may experience a greater potential for social capital impact in school-only moves. By not changing geographic locations, social capital bonds and networking do not experience the negative depth and breadth associated with long distance moves. When social capital is not strong, changing schools-only can actually be a means of strengthening social capital.

Research by Finn (1989) theorized two models to explain why students use school mobility to reduce stress and improve social capital. The frustration-self-esteem model postulates that academic failure reduces student self-esteem which creates feelings of learning inadequacy within the child. The institution becomes the personification of negative learning causality. Self-defeatism leads to absenteeism and misbehavior. Changing schools is viewed as an opportunity to improve social standing by developing new friends. Improving academic performance is thought attainable through new teacher relationships.

The participation-identification model views school withdrawal as causally impacted by the student's lack of social bond with the institution. In this model, students who do not find avenues of productive activity develop institutional disconnect. This disconnect develops into student feelings of alienation. Students experiencing this alienation tend to become isolationists or they may seek to develop social capital with students suffering from like experiences. The lack of participation in academic activities grows from the lack of overall school activity. As a result, negative behavioral manifestations develop which lead to emotional unrest until school change is realized.

The significance of these two models is that they articulate the delicate balance of

student needs and institutional support. Finn (1999) reported that students who enjoy academic success view school positively, even if they are not highly involved in school activities. As long as social needs are met outside the school, students enjoying academic success remain loyal to school involvement. Students who are highly involved in school activities view school positively, even if they are not achieving high academic results. As long as these students maintain minimal academic standing to meet activity eligibility, they remain loyal to school involvement. In the broadest sense, school-only change is influenced by school engagement and participation. From a global vantage point, these models encompass issues related to school philosophical mission and methodological practices, issues related to student learning styles and special needs, issues related to cultural diversification and socio-economic divisions, and issues related to school cultural development.

Regardless of the reason for school change or for the type of school change, mobility students must find school engagement and participation connectivity to establish social capital and experience self-actualization. In 2004, Hotton et al. reported that mobile students face five environmental adjustments.

- New institutional setting (codes of conduct)
- New informal school setting (establishing peer groups)
- New academic expectations (coping with curriculum changes)
- New social order (establishing status)
- New home and family environment if geographic change caused the move. (p. 2)

Rumberger and Larson (1998) summarized school mobility as the influential

product of family factors and school factors. Educational stability and academic achievement are influenced by student engagement and social capital. The greater the number of school moves, the greater the potential for negative consequences such as grade retention and lower standardized test results. School change in the upper high school grades reduces the time potential to rebuild lost social capital and thus increases the possibility for student social and psychological withdrawal. Students experiencing school mobility, regardless of educational constructs, must find support within the institution to help them adjust to the unique institutional culture, to establish positive connectivity, and to facilitate attainment of student goals.

Homeschooling

History. Publications such as Ivan Illich's (1971) *Deschooling Society* and John Holt's (1981) *Teach Your Own: A Hopeful Path for Education* were instrumental in fueling parental passions that led to the establishment of the modern homeschooling movement. While the rise in homeschooling over the past 40 years is credited to Illich, Holt, Raymond and Dorothy Moore (Farenga, 2002), homeschooling is not a new concept and in fact predates mandated institutional schooling (Ray, 2000). The long list of notable homeschoolers includes William Penn, John Quincy Adams, Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Agatha Christie, Pearl Buck, General Douglas MacArthur, Charles Dickens, Andrew Carnegie, and Mark Twain (Jones & Gloeckner, 2004).

From the creation of the first man and woman to the establishment of compulsory school attendance laws, educational opportunity was considered the responsibility of parents (Farenga, 2002; McLoughlin & Chambers, 2004). From the beginning, parental

teachings were occupational and religious in thrust. The biblical account of the decedents of Cain illustrates the early emphasis on occupational instruction. Genesis chapter 4 identifies Jabal as the father of those who dwelled in tents and raised livestock. His brother Jubal was the father of those who played the harp and flute. Their stepbrother, Tubal-Cain forged tools of bronze and iron. In Deuteronomy 11:19, the Jewish people were commanded by God to teach their children the words of God “when you sit at home, when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (New International Version).

Occupational and religious teaching continued to be the primary emphasis of home education throughout European history and early American history. In the American colonies, children were taught biblical principles along with reading and writing at home or in church schools. Because parents taught their children based on their level of educational accomplishment or based on their financial ability to employ tutors, a disparity in educational opportunity among children was common (Carper, 2000). It was this disparity that led Thomas Jefferson, a product of homeschooling, to initiate the concept of free public schools in America (McLoughlin & Chambers, 2004).

Jefferson’s plan, influenced by the European Enlightenment, was to provide equity in educational opportunity for all children regardless of parental economic status (McLoughlin & Chambers, 2004). Jefferson pushed for universal education and state sponsored facilities (Seelhoff, 2000a). The founding fathers were unable to reach consensus on this matter and deferred the notion of educational pedagogy to the home and will of the states. No mention of education is thus found in the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, or the Bill of Rights (Farenga, 2002).

Early American colonies often organized into geographical regions based on shared religious beliefs (Carper, 2000; Seelhoff, 2000a). As a result, the development of church schools enabled parents to have assistance from individuals with higher educational preparation in the teaching of the children. As the number of church schools increased, the need for greater numbers of clergy and laymen with higher education also increased. The response to this need led to the formation of America's first colleges, Harvard in 1636 and Yale in 1701 (Seelhoff, 2000a).

During the latter part of the 18th and the first part of the 19th centuries, American children continued to be taught in church schools or at home. Children of wealthy parents attended tuition-charging college preparation schools (Seelhoff, 2000a). Against much public concern, public high schools were first mandated in Maine and Massachusetts in 1821 (McLoughlin & Chambers, 2004). From that point to the current day, compulsory public education has grown in scope and power to the extent that homeschooling is currently considered to be a parental reaction against public education rather than the historical opposite.

Compulsory attendance laws propagated the notion that each state has the responsibility to provide educational opportunity for all children (Carper, 2000; Ott, 2009). Legislative mandates led to the teaching of non-sectarian curriculum that embraced a humanistic philosophy and today's high-stakes-testing of standards-based achievement (Stewart & Neely, 2005).

At the conclusion of World War I, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925) that the United States Constitution did not interfere with a state's right to require compulsory school attendance. In the decision, though, the

Court also struck down an Oregon law that prohibited parents from sending their children to private schools. In so doing, the Court recognized the rights of parents to choose the form of education they wished for their children.

Rights guaranteed by the Constitution may not be abridged by legislation which has no reasonable relation to some purpose within the competency of the state. The fundamental theory of liberty upon which all governments in this Union repose excludes any general power of the state to standardize its children by forcing them to accept instruction from public teachers only. The child is not the mere creature of the state; those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right, coupled with the high duty, to recognize and prepare him for additional obligations. (*Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 1925, para. 10)

With the right to attend private schooling secured, the right of parents to homeschool their children was not granted until the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972). In this case, Amish parents living in Wisconsin were appealing the compulsory attendance law of their state. At issue was a common practice in which Amish parents withdrew their children from public education after the eighth grade to teach their children vocational skills which were not taught in public schools and to teach their children religious principles which were not supported or taught in the public schools. This withdrawal action was considered to be in defiance of state compulsory attendance law (*Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 1972).

In reaching this landmark decision, the U. S. Supreme Court ruled that the rights of parents to choose the form of education they wish for their children as ruled in *Pierce*

v. *Society of Sisters* (1925) could include the right to homeschool.

A State's interest in universal education, however highly we rank it, is not totally free from a balancing process when it impinges on fundamental rights and interests, 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 so long as they, in the words of Pierce, “prepare [them] for additional obligations”.

(*Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 1972, para. 19)

Parental choice to homeschool children based on religious convictions opened the door for full parental-choice rights based on educational quality (Aix & Kortner, 1994). Dodson (2000) listed classic works published in the late 1960s and early 1970s that included: Ivan Illich's (1971) *Deschooling Society*, Charles E. Silberman's (1970) *Crisis in the Classroom: The Remaking of American Education*, John Holt's (1964) *How Children Fail* and Holt's (1967) *How Children Learn*, and Dr. Raymond and Dorothy Moore's (1975) *Better Late Than Early: A New Approach to Your Child's Education*.

Ivan Illich is credited with starting the modern homeschool movement (Dodson, 2000; Farenga, 2002). Illich believed that schools viewed education as a commodity to sell, instead of helping children develop skills and knowledge from which to build life-long learning processes (Farenga, 1999). Illich (1971) theorized that, as societies develop institutions such as schools, the process dehumanizes the individual and projects expectations on children that they may or may not be ready to complete. Failure diminishes confidence within the child. Diminished confidence may lead to a belief in the lack of capacity to learn. In reality, the failure is not that the child cannot learn, but

the rigidity of institutions fails to allow the child the parameters needed to succeed.

Illich (1971) argued that school leaders have brainwashed American culture into accepting the notion that children must be grouped according to age to be taught effectively and that children can only best learn in a school environment. He believed that classroom attendance removes children from the real world of cultural influence and infuses children into a “magical womb that upon delivery expels children into adulthood” (Illich, 1971, p. 32). Classroom attendance also subjects the young child to the influential and philosophical power of the adult leader. “Children are protected by neither the First nor the Fifth Amendment when they stand before that secular priest, the teacher” (Illich, 1971, p. 31).

Illich (1971) accepted teaching as an element in learning, but maintained that most true-life-learning takes place casually through leisure and work related influence outside of the school’s programmed environment. To achieve *deschooling reform*, Illich proposed conviviality relationships in which students would be free to interact with their environment through the use of technology advancements rather than continuing to be taught in institutions of learning and by teacher manipulation. Illich understood that his call to *deschool* educational institutions would be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve because the nature of institutions tends to maintain the status quo. Illich, thus, did not seek an end to schools, but rather sought an end to compulsory school attendance (Farenga, 2002).

After many years of attempting to initiate educational reform, John Holt (1981), a veteran school teacher, concluded that he too could not affect needed changes in public education (Dodson, 2000; Lyman, 1998). From his experiences, Holt believed that

traditional schools were detrimental to learning (Lyman, 1998; Ott, 2004). Holt described schools as institutions for sorting children into winners and losers based on test scores. Central to Holt's theory was the belief that children have an innate desire to learn. Holt believed that given the opportunity to learn, independent of pressure to perform, children would achieve. As a result, Holt (Hegener, 2006) encouraged parents to leave public schools and embrace the concept of *unschooling*. He coined the term, *unschooling*, to distance his form of teaching and learning from traditional homeschool models that often resembled traditional school transported to the geographic home location.

Unschooling was often branded as simply a refusal to go to school. Conceptually, *unschooling* was difficult to understand because of its lack of organizational structure. Holt never established an official homeschooling program. Instead, Holt used his writings to share stories that illustrated "the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of all of life learning, the futility and absurdity of attempting to break life down into subjects, and the innate goodness and honesty of children" (Seelhoff, 2000d, p. 67). Holt's philosophy was not accepted by evangelical Christian homeschooling parents who saw parent-child relationships in terms of obedience and authority (Seelhoff, 2000d).

Raymond Moore and his wife Dorothy (Moore & Moore, 1986) were proponents for readiness education, productive work, and community service. They theorized that formal education should begin when most children reach the age of ten (Farenga, 2002; Lyman, 1998) and that conventional education is designed to burn-out the child's desire to learn. This is accomplished by pulling children from home and placing them in a less secure environment that is void of parental proximity. The resulting uncertainty creates

feelings of anxiety and frustration brought about by regimented expectations that children are not developmentally ready to accept. By allowing children to remain in the trusted environment of the home and to learn as they naturally develop, motivation is cultivated and learning is enhanced.

Religious rationale was now fueled by non-sectarian notions advocating homeschooling as a means to improve child learning, parental groups successfully lobbied passage of homeschool legislation in 40 states by 1982 (Ott, 2009; Seelhoff, 2000a). The other 10 states allowed homeschooling if overseen by a state licensed teacher (Seelhoff, 2000b). Homeschool families now represented every facet of the diverse American religious, political, and economic culture (Dodson, 2000).

The early 1980s passage of homeschool rights laid the foundation for the rapid growth of homeschooling which became fueled by Christian organizations opposed to the integration of secular humanism in public school textbooks and educational materials (Seelhoff, 2000d). Religious leaders argued that secular humanism is a religion and philosophy that believes man exists independent of a notion of God. Without responsibility to a supreme God for life decisions, moral values are relative and change from person to person based on situational needs. Sexual gratification is not to be denied as long as no one gets hurt. Without a creator God, evolution is taught as fact. Because man evolved, man's nature is basically good and moral until influenced negatively by his environment (Hall, 2005).

Most notable among Christian activists opposed to the inclusion of secular humanism infiltration in curriculum were Mel and Norma Gabler, founders of Educational Research Analysts; Dr. Robert Simonds, who organized the National

Association of Christian Educators; Phyllis Schlafly, who organized Eagle Forum; Bill Gothard, developer and teacher of the Institute in Basic Life Principles; and Michael Farris, who organized the Home School Legal Defense Association (Seelhoff, 2000a). The Home School Legal Defense Association built a network of lawyers who represented homeschooling interests and represented families involved in cases of legal harassment (Ott, 2009).

As parents withdrew their children from public schools over concerns for the infusion of secular humanism, homeschool support groups became prevalent. In the early 1990s, the threat to homeschool existence changed from external legal pressures to internal philosophical disputes. Homeschooling leaders disagreed on issues such as child readiness, discipline, and homeschool structure (Seelhoff, 2000b). The movement became sharply divided by those who believed in rigid curriculum structure and testing assessments; those who were John Dewey progressives, emphasizing readiness and experimental learning along with student involvement in planning and assessing their work; those who focused on a liberal education, utilizing the arts—literature, theatre, music, and art; and those who believed in an existentialist view, avoiding labels in favor of recognizing the value of the individual, and allowing children to choose their own curricula (Seelhoff, 2000b).

The lack of continuity within the homeschool community caused movement leaders to fear that possible government intervention and regulation could restrict the freedoms enjoyed by homeschool parents and students. Leaders developed regional and national homeschool conferences to unite parents along ideological lines. The goal was to strengthen ideologies, to appreciate diversity for the sake of the movement, and to

strengthen their desired pedagogies.

In 1994 (Seelhoff, 2000c), a crisis emerged with the introduction of HR 6, known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or the Improving America's Schools Act. Within the definition of *nonprofit schools* was a perceived requirement that parents, as teachers in homeschools, would be required to be licensed in all subject areas.

Representative Dick Armey asked Michael Farris of the Home School Legal Defense Association to draft an acceptable amendment that would clarify the concerned section of the bill. The passage of the Home School/Private School Freedom Amendment protected private, religious, and home schools from government control, even if such schools chose to participate in identified federal programs listed in the bill. While many politicians believed the threat in the original wording was too ambiguous to apply to private schools and homeschools, the size and power of the homeschool movement as a unified force became visible in the fight either to kill HR 6 or to include the Armey amendment (Seelhoff, 2000c).

Between the ruling of *Wisconsin v. Yoder* in 1972 and the late 1980s, the mood on the U.S. Supreme Court shifted from support of individuals' religious liberties to support for increased government control. This shift led Michael Farris to draft The Religious Freedom Restoration Act. This bill reinforced the original balancing test in *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, which restricted government interference in religious practice unless the government could prove the need to do so was due to compelling governmental interest (Seelhoff, 2001). Congress passed the bill in 1994.

With the dawn of the 21st century, parental rights to educational preference continued to be upheld by law. The most recent U.S. Supreme Court decision on parental

rights that had implications for homeschool parents was *Troxel v. Granville* decided in June of 2000. In this case, the Court ruled that parents have the right to make decisions regarding the care, custody, and control of their children. While this case did not involve homeschooling, the result continues to provide legal jurisdiction for parental choice with regards to decisions they feel are in the best interest of their children.

As legal rulings continued to support parental rights to school choice, homeschooling membership has enjoyed greater viability as an educational option. The development of homeschool support groups, the ease in networking through the internet and e-mail, the increase in conventional school problems such as violence, drugs, bullying, and the media portrayal of dumbed-down curriculum have been pivotal elements in continued homeschooling growth (Dodson, 2000).

Isenberg (2007) reported that as of 2003 the three most common reasons for homeschooling were “concern about the environment of other schools, dissatisfaction with academic instruction, and to provide religious or moral instruction” (p. 399). Ray (2009) agreed with Isenberg and added curriculum customization, individualization, and enhancement of family relationships to the common reason list.

Academic performance. Legality for homeschooling constituted its battle to exist. Quality of homeschool education became the battle for respect. Public educators, during the 20th century, created the perception that educational quality could be measured by using standardized achievement tests. Student learning was thus equated with results from standardized test scores. In so doing, the platform for school quality comparisons was established.

Ray (2000) conducted a comprehensive literature search from 1985 to 2000 to

determine “how were the home educated, across the nation, performing in terms of academic achievement in the mid-1990s compared to previous studies, and he wanted to find if selected background variables were more or less helpful with respect to explaining the academic achievement of the home educated compared to those conventionally schooled” (p.71). Galloway (1995), Ray (2000), and Rudner (1999) found consistency in quantitative studies that homeschool students demonstrate high academic achievement.

On annual standardized academic achievement tests, homeschool national averages ranged in the 65th to 80th percentile for the past 20 years (Lyman, 1998; Ray, 2001; Ray, 2004; Rudner, 1999). In 2004 and again in 2009, Ray reported that homeschool students often score high on college entrance tests. Empirical research regarding causality for these results is not conclusive.

Collom (2005), Ray (2000), and Ray (2001) determined that there were inconsistent findings regarding the impact on student achievement based on parental educational attainment and whether the home-educating parent is a certified teacher. Attempts by state education agencies to regulate homeschooling have also not been shown to have a statistical bearing on homeschool student success (Ray, 2004). Bernard, R. M., Abrami, P. C., Lou, Y., Borokhovski, E., Wade, A., Wozney, L., ... Huang (2004) “found few factorial design studies to enable educators’ to address homeschool causality questions” (p. 414). As a result of research inconclusiveness, Ray and Bernard et al. called for more research as to how students’ best learn in the homeschool environment.

Ray (2004) attributed much of homeschooler testing success to their access to wide ranges of learning resources available through the advancement of technology. Ray

theorized that through the realm of technology, homeschool students develop skills as independent learners by researching information on topics they study rather than developing dependence on teachers to disseminate predetermined important information. University admissions counselors report that these skills prepare homeschool students to succeed in post high school education (Jones & Gloeckner, 2004; Ray, 2004).

Jones and Gloeckner (2004) completed a study of college admissions counselors' attitudes and perceptions regarding homeschool applicants. The college admissions counselors represented 55 four-year public and private institutions. Jones and Gloeckner reported that 75% of the counselors stated that they expected homeschool graduates to achieve first year college grade point averages equal to or greater than their conventional school counterparts. Sixty-five percent of the counselors expected homeschool graduates to equal or exceed the college retention rate of conventional school graduates. Only 12.7% believed the retention rate would be less and the remaining percentage of counselors did not respond to this question. Forty-five percent of the counselors expected homeschoolers to cope well socially, 35% expected social concerns, 17% had no opinion, and three percent did not respond. Only 16% of four-year college counselors participating in this study stated that they would encourage homeschool graduates to attend community college prior to entering a university setting. Jones and Gloeckner stated that their 2004 study was in stark contrast to a 1986 study by Barnebey that reported 65.5% of college admissions counselors recommended homeschool graduates should attend community college before attempting to attend a four-year institution.

Demographics. Data for homeschool research purposes is greatly lacking. "The wealth of school administrative data available to study public schools or publicly funded

voucher programs precludes a study for homeschooling because by definition, the population of interest is absent from the data” (Isenberg, 2007, p. 389). Isenberg theorized that school districts gain no state funding for homeschool students in their districts so there is little incentive to collect and evaluate homeschool data.

Homeschooling enrollment more than doubled from 1990 to 1995 (Lines, 1999). Romanowski (2006) reported that the number of homeschooled students increased 29% between the years of 1999 and 2005. By 2008, the number of homeschool students was approximately two million (Ray, 2009). While the enrollment constitutes between one and two percent of the conventional school population, homeschoolers comprise 20% of national elementary and secondary private school statistics (Lines, 1999). Isenberg (2007) added that while homeschool enrollment is increasing, “37% of homeschool families return to traditional education models after one year. Eighty-five percent of homeschool families end homeschooling between the second and sixth year” (p. 398). Information is lacking in the literature as to the causes for these rates of change.

According to research by Ray (2004), the homeschool population is comprised of 95% two-parent families. Most parents have attended college, and half of the parents have a bachelor or additional advanced degree. Both parents participate in the instructional process, but the mother is usually the lead teacher. The total annual household income is similar to the median income for all U. S. families. Male and female students are numerically equal in the population.

In terms of ethnic background, Ray (2004) and Mashaun (2007) reported that 85% of homeschool students are white and non-Hispanic. Minority involvement has increased nearly 23% over the past ten years (Mashaun, 2007; Ray, 2009). Ray (2009)

also reported that 75% of homeschool families continue to be predominantly conservative in worldview, seeking to make life decisions based on biblical doctrines. The percentage is changing, though, as the popularity of homeschooling is increasing. Homeschool enrollment is growing among agnostics, atheists, Buddhists, Jews, Mormons, Muslims, and New Agers.

Isenberg (2007) used a comparative analysis of statistical data from the 2003 National Household Education Survey, the Educational Testing Service, the 1994 Current Populations Survey Education Supplement, and the Parent and Family Involvement Survey of 1996 to determine why parents choose to homeschool their children. The results of the comparative study concluded that student homeschool enrollment numbers could best be determined based upon religious affiliation of student families and poor educational offerings in the local community. In small towns, homeschool choice is most often related to poor math test scores in public institutions.

Most homeschool students have little interaction with conventional schools upon withdrawal from school (Ray, 2004). Ray also reported that homeschool students engage in independent study subjects of interest in addition to math, science, reading, and writing. The learning program is individualized, flexible, and includes a variety of homemade and purchased curriculum. “Many students take advantage of the flexibility ... to participate in special studies events, such as volunteer community work, political internships, travel, missionary excursions, animal husbandry, gardening, and national competitions” (Ray, 2004, p. 6).

Social issues. With the issues of homeschool legality resolved and academic quality longitudinally established, parents considering homeschooling are consistently

confronted with the question of socialization (Klicka, 2007; McDowell, 2004). Critics of homeschooling now place socialization as their number one concern (McDowell, 2004). “Many think that, no matter what intellectual and emotional gains are made, school-at-home is doomed to failure, because of the lack of peer contacts” (McDowell, 2004, p. 20).

Aiex & Kortner (1994) reported that critics of homeschooling often portray homeschool children as being shy and passive because of their lack of social contact found in traditional schooling. Aiex and Kortner also reported that critics of homeschooling express concern that children are too sheltered from the real world by overprotective parents. This overprotection leads to children unprepared and socially unequipped to handle the pressures of an adult society.

Chris Klicka (2007) countered the socialization criticism by reporting that homeschool children are not recluses from society. Homeschool children receive greater benefit from a learning environment that is not cluttered with competition, bullying, anti-spiritual influence, and negative peer pressure. Klicka and Ray (2009) added that homeschoolers receive valuable social contact through homeschool support group activities such as choir, athletics, special speakers, community clubs, church youth group involvement, neighborhood play, cultural and mission trips, and involvement in community organizations such as theatre and vocational apprenticeships.

Susan McDowell (2004) reviewed 24 studies on homeschooler socialization. In this review, McDowell concludes that “socialization is not considered a problem by homeschooling families. Homeschooling families provide ample opportunities for social interaction outside the home, and socialization concerns are one of the reasons that

parents decided to homeschool their children” (McDowell, 2004, p. 83). McDowell also reported that “there is no statistical difference in measured socialization indicators between homeschooled children and conventionally schooled children” (p. 83).

As compared to public school peers, homeschool children appear to be more concerned about the strength and longevity of friendships. As a result, the homeschooler’s response to the dissolution of close friendships tends to be more negatively emotional (Ray, 2004). Ray also noted that homeschoolers tend to depend on best friends more heavily than conventional school students.

Medlin (2000) reported concerns that homeschool socialization studies “have customary faults of research in a young field: no guiding theory, inadequate experimental design, poorly defined research questions, untried and weak measures, unorthodox treatment and presentation of data, and conclusions based on subjective judgments” (p. 118). Medlin judged that even though research methods need improvement, cursory conclusions from studies completed do provide some valuable preliminary conclusions. Homeschooled children are not isolated from society. They are active community participants who associate with and feel close to a diversity of people. Homeschooled children have positive self-esteem. Homeschooled children are taught values that will enable them to be successful adults. Adult members of society who were homeschooled appear to be highly functional and socially effective.

To date, no studies have been undertaken to determine why homeschooling is successful as a social development entity (Klicka, 2007; McDowell, 2004). Troy Parish (2007) theorized that socialization success is because children in homeschooling settings never leave their environment, so training is continuous. Because the environment is

continuous, parents are not bound by 8:00 – 3:00 traditional school constraints and thus see every opportunity as a teachable moment. Social learning thus becomes associated with real life application. Isenberg (2007) called for research regarding the impact of homeschooling on the emotional and social development of children.

Influence of Technology

The end of the 20th century produced a radical shift in educational emphasis with the introduction of the technological age. Using technological advances, traditional schools had the ability to move from mass production classrooms to individualized learning stations. One-size-fits-all education could now be replaced by means that can be structured to the readiness and learning style of each child.

Ott (2009) reported that the growth of the internet had a profound impact on the growth of homeschooling. Pearson (1996) stated that “homeschooling is no longer solely dependent upon parental education and teaching skills” (p. 75). The expansion of the internet eased the delivery of homeschooling materials and is credited with energizing an increase in the numbers of homeschoolers during the 1990s (Conlin, 2006; Isenberg, 2007). Wichers (2001) adds that “the influx of supplemental teaching materials, subject area kits, video cassettes, internet sites, and educational television programs has increased the propensity of educational achievement for students who are being homeschooled” (p.145). Information is lacking in the literature as to the causes for these rates of change.

“Technological tools are designed to situate learning in more authentic contexts. Technological tools are also designed to emphasize the exchange of ideas between participants, and they are designed to rely actively on the engagement of the learner” (Hartley & Bendixen, 2001, p. 22). As a result, technology has become the

homeschooler's tool of the trade. Sixty-four percent of homeschoolers report daily use of technology in their curricular studies (Jones, 2010). Jones also reported that 87% of homeschoolers envision the use of technology in their program within the near future.

Access to vast amounts of potential curriculum options and the all-day one-on-one instructional assistance available on the internet has enabled parents of low and middle income economic status to afford homeschooling. The use of podcast classes, collaborative interaction with peers using webcams, video streaming technology to view documentaries, and digital science equipment in virtual laboratories became just a few of a myriad of enhancements that homeschool children can now integrate into their learning environment (Jones, 2010).

Ott (2009) reported that the internet has created a natural environment for interaction among homeschool parents. The potential for peer collaboration on assignments has increased social interaction capabilities among students. The growth of homeschooling co-ops has been also enhanced because of the improvement in communication capabilities.

With the expansion of the internet as a form of educational opportunity, educational learning programs offered in virtual schools and cyber schools have grown in popularity and size (Ott, 2009). The growth of virtual schools and cyber schools has created a subtle distinction between the traditional homeschooling and home-based education. In home-based online education, parents act as academic coaches, certified teachers offer support for student learning, and most offer periodic live or taped classes in which online students can view instruction taking place on campus (Bazin & Burke, 2010; Calvert, 2009). In some school districts, conventional schools are partnering with

parents by utilizing virtual schooling to allow students to attend conventional school part-time and attend homeschool for the remainder of the school day. The value of sharing resources provides academic appeal. The value of sharing resources also appeals to single parent families who desire to homeschool but face time limitations due to conflicts created by the parent's work schedule (Ott, 2009).

The development of the internet enabled homeschool students to access online public school, private school, and university programs through specially developed distance learning options (Ott, 2009). Ott reported that public and private school programs are often designed similar to conventional school in that curriculum content and sequence are predetermined. Teacher support is provided through various forms of email, instant messaging, online white boards, visual conferencing, and the telephone. These programs are often referred to as home-based education because the student is enrolled in a traditional school model but his attendance is in a home setting rather than on campus. In addition, university online courses offer dual credit programs that enable the student to complete work toward high school graduation while achieving college credit.

Class.com, K12, Eastern Pennsylvania Cyber Charter School, and Florida Virtual School are four examples of prominent home-based programs. Class.com is a spin-off of the University of Nebraska's original correspondence high school. Eastern Pennsylvania's Cyber Charter's Learning Center is a charter school that offers a variety of educational options from the University of Missouri, the University of Nebraska, Keystone National, and Maryland's Calvert school (Clowes, 2001). The Eastern Pennsylvania Cyber Charter School enrolls nearly 20,000 students (Calvert, 2009).

Florida Virtual School began in 1997 and by 2007 had grown to an enrollment of 114,000 students. Florida Virtual School is located in Florida but its offerings have expanded to students worldwide (Florida Tax Watch, 2007). Beginning in 2009, all Florida public school districts offered an online school option, allowing students the choice of attending school on campus or in an online home-based setting (Calvert, 2009).

Summary of the Literature Review

Research and scholarly literature describes adolescence as a time of dramatic life change. Successful development during this life period incorporates a series of complex transformational processes. As a result, adolescents mature physically, socially, psychologically, and spiritually. The adolescent cognitively moves from concrete to abstract thinking and socially moves from family dependence to social networking. The adolescent's worldview transitions from an understanding of who he is in context with parental beliefs and teachings to that of an independent adult, ready to confront the physical world with ideological fervor. The passage from childhood to adulthood is generally thought to begin at the time an individual begins puberty, about the chronological age of 12. Adolescents complete the transformation from childhood to adulthood about the age of 17 or 18.

Early theorists viewed adolescent change as an internal stage process that was caused by innate biological crisis factors. Modern theorists acknowledge adolescence as a definitive time period, but they now view adolescence as interplay between the individual and social constructs primarily including home, school, community, and peer relationships. Within the interplay in these relationships, stress is a natural manifestation that when successfully navigated produces life skills necessary for a productive

adulthood (Suldo, et al. 2009).

School change during adolescence can have negative and positive impacts on an adolescent. Positive school change can be produced if the new situation provides better school conditions, improvement in academic offerings, and the opportunity to develop positive peer relationships. Negatively, school change may decrease academic advancement if the new school is inferior to the previous school. The adolescent may struggle to make new friends and he may struggle to develop social group status. Inability to adjust to new school environments can lead to depression and possible failure to graduate from high school.

Research indicates that parents are key enablers for successful adolescent adjustment. Close parental and child bonds beginning before the time of adolescence and maintained throughout adolescence impact self-efficacy, academic advancement, peer choices, and spiritual formation.

The education of children has traditionally been the responsibility of the parents. In spite of the homeschooling criticisms and political establishment of compulsory school attendance laws, homeschooling legally exists in all 50 states. The growth of the modern homeschool movement which was spurred by Illich, Holt, the Moores, and others has increased in depth and breadth due to the development of technology and the internet. The availability of technological advancements has led to the increase in diverse economic and ethnic enrollments. Home-based online schools such as cyber schools and virtual schools have added new dimensions to the concept of homeschooling.

Because research efforts in the modern homeschool movement have primarily been in response to questions regarding the validity of academic instruction and

verification of student outcomes, the phenomenon is in need of new contextual research. Ray (2009) called for new directions in research, citing the fact that there are no empirical studies that prove homeschooling is the factor causing student success. Ray also emphasized that there are no studies providing negative causality in comparing homeschooling to conventional schooling. Ray's (2001) and Bernard's et al. (2004) studies concluded with calls for more research as to how student's best learn in the home environment.

Isenberg (2007) reported that homeschool attrition is high. Growth statistics indicate much student movement in and out of home educational models. Given the negative findings noted in the literature regarding mobility's impact on social capital, the attrition rate may become a detrimental contributing factor to student longitudinal academic success.

Research is lacking regarding the causes attributed to homeschool and home-based online student success. Research is also lacking regarding the transitional adjustment factors impacting student tenure within this educational choice. Response to these literature voids provided the fundamental rationale to initiate this study.

Chapter Two provided the theoretical and historical basis for undertaking this research. Chapter Three addresses the research planning undertaken prior to field data gathering and later analysis. Major sections in chapter three describe research design, processes utilized for participant and site selection, research procedures, and plans for data collection and analysis. The final sections of chapter three provide important information regarding the study's trustworthiness and ethical practices.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

Using a hermeneutic phenomenological philosophical and methodological research approach, this study's purpose was to explore the lived experiences of six adolescents in an effort to examine the transitions they encountered as a result of changing from conventional school to home-based online schooling. In this chapter, the philosophical premise, methodology, and procedures to be utilized in carrying out the research design are outlined. Procedures for participant selection, site selection, data collection, data analysis, and means for increasing the trustworthiness of the study are included. The goals of this examination were to understand adolescent experiences incurred when transitioning from conventional school to home-based online school and to produce a cohesive document that richly and frankly represented the voices of students encountering this form of school change.

Research Question

Societal concerns for the potential impact of homeschooled children being isolated from society and thus disadvantaged in social development have continued with little responsive research (Klicka, 2007; McDowell, 2004). Because of this knowledge dearth, Isenberg (2007) called for research regarding the impact of homeschooling on the emotional and social development of children.

This study's general research question and supportive guiding questions were developed in response to Isenberg's (2007) call for psychosocial research and broadened to include cognitive learning influences. Theoretically, the general and supportive research questions were designed to align with current adolescent developmental theory

that views adolescence as a definitive, pre-adult, maturational, time period. During this span, individuals must develop life skills critical to management of natural life stressors that impact the interplay between the individual and social constructs—primarily including home, school, community, and peer relationships (Bryne et al., 2007; McGue et al., 1996; Suldo, S. M. et al., 2009). Specifically, this study focused on the stress impact of school change on individual and social constructs when linked to social capital theory purported by Pribesh and Downey (1999).

Narrowing the broad field of homeschool structural options, this research focused on students who had left conventional school and enrolled in home-based online schooling. The examination was directed by the general research question: What lived experiences do adolescents encounter when transitioning from conventional school to home-based online schooling?

The general question contained numerous intrinsic phenomena. The following questions guided this research in seeking to gain an understanding of the adjustments adolescents experience as they transition from conventional school to home-based online education.

- What emotional experiences do adolescents encounter when transitioning from conventional schooling to a home-based online school structure?
- What academic and cognitive experiences do adolescents encounter when transitioning from conventional schooling to a home-based online school structure?
- What social experiences do adolescents encounter when transitioning from conventional schooling to a home-based online school structure?

- What spiritual experiences do adolescents encounter when transitioning from conventional schooling to a home-based online school structure?
- What strategies do adolescents employ in an attempt to succeed when transitioning from conventional schooling to a home-based online school structure?

Research Design

Qualitative research design provided an optimum analytical framework to investigate the lived experiences of adolescents who transitioned from conventional school to home-based online education. Qualitative research was uniquely suited for this investigation because it enabled examination of the human phenomenon through the student's true lived experiences in deference to variable manipulation common in quantitative designs (Bolle, Wessell, & Mulvihill, 2007; Eberly, Joshi, & Konzal, 2007). As a relational research, this design provided the means for acquiring rich insights regarding transitional adolescent school change experiences.

Of the numerous qualitative research approaches, hermeneutic phenomenology was utilized because it uniquely combines philosophical and methodological approaches in pursuit of experiential truth and meaning. Van Manen (1990) defined phenomenology as a means to “describe how one orients to lived experience and hermeneutics is described as how one interprets the ‘texts’ of life” (p. 4). Creswell (2007) stated that hermeneutic phenomenology is philosophical because it attempts to “suspend all judgments as to what is real until they are founded on a more certain sense” (p. 58). Moustakas (1994) added that in phenomenology the investigator abstains from making suppositions and through the guidance of the research question finds the relationship of

external and internal participant realities.

Methodologically, hermeneutic phenomenology is a human science that begins in a person's lived world and is studied in context with a social background. In an effort to derive meaning, the context is treated as an entity rather than being fragmented into pieces (Van Manen, 1990). Hermeneutic phenomenology is a research methodology that seeks to produce rich textural descriptions of chosen life phenomena so that involved individuals can connect their experiences to the experiences of the greater world (Smith, 1997).

Hermeneutic phenomenology is thus a philosophically and methodologically intertwined inquiry of the pre-reflective lived experiences and feelings of individuals as they encounter and interact with a particular phenomenon. Truth and meaning materializes as the participants share their life journeys as contexts and experiences for researcher examination, assimilation, and interpretation. Through interpretation, the researcher identifies and represents the meanings of participant experiences and expressions of feeling in a textual language so that the interplay between the participant and the phenomena can be understood. As interpreter, the researcher serves as a mediator, representing the voice of the participants to the educational world (Van Manen, 1990).

The general research question for this examination philosophically aligned with the phenomenological pursuit of experiential knowledge and truth in stating that this examination searches for meaning through the lived experiences of involved adolescents. The use of an interpretive paradigm was considered a best fit for this research because of its suitability to enable the researcher to produce new understandings from

multidimensional complexities. Such complexities included the impact of social, academic, emotional, and spiritual factors influencing student transitional adjustments when making a change from conventional school to home-based online schooling.

In choosing this design, certain notions were accepted. Primarily accepted was the belief that communication and reasoning are interactive processes. Through the exploration of these processes, embedded conscious and subconscious meaning connected to contextual experiences can be ascertained. The dialogue between the researcher and the participants was designed to gain more than superficial reactions and opinions. Quantitative measurements were rejected because the nature of such assessment disregarded the complexity and authenticity bound in the specificity of each individual's unique situation. Understanding the essence and meaning of school change within the adolescent requires more than an analysis of a statistical group comparison or created list of identified adaptations. To understand a lived experience requires an understanding of the complexity of the relatedness between the individual's physical and psychosocial development and specific environmental dynamics.

The interpretive element in this research design provided suitable processes to engender practical knowledge and understandings which constructively consummated with the rich meaning of the experiential and perceptual reality of the participants. In so doing, I acted as a mediator by absorbing the participants' voices and then translating meaning to the educational world through this writing. Contextual meaning was the research pursuit.

Participants

Qualitative research is participatory on the part of the researcher and the

responders. The relationship between the researcher and the responder as they work collaboratively builds responder trust and opens the researcher to richer insights (Maxwell, 2005). Because qualitative research uses small numbers of participants, participant selection is vital in attempting to create a true-world description of the phenomenon.

The goal when using qualitative design is richness of information. Generalization of findings is not as important as gaining the depth and breadth of information that purposefully selected participants can experientially provide (Patton, 1990). Using purposeful sampling strategies, potential participants were identified for their ability to provide information-rich data.

For this study, purposeful invitees must have transferred to the online school in their junior or senior year. In addition, they were to have had no homeschool background prior to making the school change. Additionally, potential invitees must have graduated from the school after attending in fulltime status for a minimum of one complete academic year, and they could not have been out of high school for more than 18 months. To gain data from a cross-section of students, the preliminary list of prospects included both genders and adolescents who had attended public and private conventional schools. Because the research plan included face-to-face interviews as part of the data gathering process, the list was reduced to adolescents who lived within a radius range of 150 miles from my home. No other biographical or family information was secured prior to invitations being emailed to all qualifying students.

The use of students in this age range was considered desirable because of their potential maturity in being able to answer interview questions. This student age was also

considered desirable because the contributing length of previous conventional school experience, before enrolling in the online school setting, increased the likelihood that the participants could clearly describe their lived experiences in rich detail. Post-high-school lapsed time was limited to a maximum of 18 months to ensure freshness in memory details, which were considered vital to developing rich descriptions of the lived experiences.

Participants were graduates of the online school I administer. The school's main offices are located on the east coast of the United States. Access to alumni contact information was readily available. Based on the predetermined criteria, a pool of 26 qualifying prospects was identified—ten male and sixteen female. Of the qualifying candidates, a couple of the students had met me at graduation, but other than that one exposure, I did not personally know the online families. Familiarity with my name proved to be beneficial in gaining participant willingness to volunteer.

Random purposeful sampling within the identified pool of potential participants was utilized through issuance of invitations to all candidates to participate. As the pool decreased to half of its original number through expressed decisions to not participate, homogeneous sampling was utilized with the remaining adolescents to develop a six member group of three males and three females (Patton, 1990). Student confidentiality was maintained by the use of pseudonyms.

Selection of Site

Site selection is a dominant central issue in successful qualitative research. Site selection is vital because it enables the researcher to enter and experience the community and culture of the participants. Such enablement provides the researcher with

opportunity to be immersed into the environment and to experience the surroundings and atmosphere that impact participant life (Keen & Packwood, 1995).

Interacting with the participants in their natural environments was considered a priority for developing an understanding of the environmental changes each adolescent encountered. The settings for this investigation included communities in which the students lived, homes at which the students resided, home-based classrooms in which the students worked, and social capital that interacted within the student's environment. Scheduling and completing personal interviews at each participant's home provided a valuable experiential element that greatly enriched my understanding of each participant's unique educational setting.

Procedures

Following dissertation committee approval of the study's proposal, a completed application was submitted to the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for review and approval. The institutional review process was designed to ensure that applicable ethical standards were included in the research design and that they would be upheld in practice. Because this research only involved participant interviews and voice recordings, the expedited review process was utilized. Participant written willingness to participate was secured before researcher involvement with participants was undertaken.

Initial requests for research partnerships were made with administrative leaders at five online institutions. Four declined the invitation and one accepted. Following the participant selection guidelines, school officials sent several email requests to potential participants. The invitations contained a researcher generated letter encouraging involvement and explaining the research purpose and participant expectations. Included

with my letter was a letter from the school administration which also encouraged participation. Three email appeals were sent over the span of three months. No potential volunteers responded in the affirmative. As a result, the decision was made to seek participants from the online school I administer. Phone and email conversations were the primary means for initially getting acquainted with the participants before the personal interviews were conducted.

The data gathering process was comprised of four communicative elements. Before meeting with the participants for the formal interview, they were asked to reflect on their experiences as they transitioned from conventional school to home-based online school and to write their reflexivity in journals. Following receipt of the journal writings, formal face-to-face interviews were scheduled. These interviews took place in the homes of the participants so that I could experience firsthand the environments in which the students lived and studied. Interview focus encompassed comparisons of educational experiences in conventional school and home-based online school. In so doing, question probes were designed to centralize on the decision-making process for the school change, academic advantages and disadvantages in making the change, social ramifications resulting from the decision, and lessons learned during the entire process. The third phase of the field research utilized an online chatroom specifically established for this study. Statements used for eliciting chat room responses were generated from homeschool research, thus broadening participant reflexivity to incorporate personal experiences against theory expressed in homeschool literature. The field research concluded utilizing a live, webinar, focus-group activity. This fourth interview format was designed to generate increased depth and richness of detail regarding the internal

struggles and personal impact this school change produced within each individual. The use of the focus group was chosen for its innate methodology to enable multiple student dialogues in response to each individual's communicated reflective thoughts.

The live interviews and the webinar focus group session were audiotaped on a digital recorder. Recordings were transcribed using Dragon Naturally Speaking voice-to-text software. Transcripts were distributed to the participants for review and correction. Participants verified record authenticity by signature agreement.

With the field research data gathering process concluded, data analysis began. The purpose in data analysis was to deconstruct the data line-by-line in search of interpretive essence communicated by the participants. Open coding, axial coding, and selective coding were the processes by which textual analysis was completed. After deconstruction, a unified story, rich in meaning and vibrant in experiential truth, was interpretively constructed and written in this document.

Personal Biography and Researcher Role

Thirty-six years as a coach, teacher, and school administrator culminated in a visionary quest for a career apogee. The desire for the new vision was that it manifest a blend of previous educational understandings and skills with a platform to potentially increase my influence as an educational leader. It was during this time of reflection that personal research into the phenomenon of online education began. In particular, pre-college online education and its connection with homeschooling sparked an internal fire reminiscent of those early days as an idealistic young teacher embarking on his career journey.

In the summer of 2007, a local university, desiring to expand its online university

program to include a separate online school for students in grades 3-12, extended an invitation for me to lead the academic development of the new school. Position acceptance opened a new educational world to this traditionalist. Suddenly thrust into an out-of-the-box philosophy and pedagogy, developing the school and understanding a new culture was at times overwhelming.

As a conventional school administrator, working with homeschool parents as they enrolled their children in our conventional school had been commonplace. Children from quality structured homeschool experiences were found to be academically prepared to succeed in a traditional school. Conversely, children from poorly structured homeschool settings were ill-prepared to succeed at grade level.

These unscientific observations provided impetus for the belief that this new online school must, along with its curricular offerings, provide a source of educational structure to supply independent learners with support to succeed. Emerging from that premise, a new cyber school emerged—a school that contained many of the structured elements that made conventional school successful for students and a school designed to support individuality in student learning styles, flexibility in curriculum offerings, and self-pacing enjoyed by homeschoolers. Students received sequentially progressive and developmentally appropriate curriculum which was accessible through a technology-based delivery system. The curriculum software contained a weekly assignment calendar so students could be held accountable and parents could track academic progress. Using electronic services, certified teachers assisted students with grading and learning acquisition.

Experiencing this administrative role change, working now with conventional

school parents as they enrolled their children in this online school became commonplace. Children from quality conventional school experiences were often found to be academically prepared to succeed in an online school. Conversely, children from poorly structured conventional schools were often found to be ill-prepared to succeed as independent learners.

Just as the passion had been to help children succeed as a conventional school advocate, the same passion continued as an online school proponent. A review of the student mobility literature revealed that educational changes can be traumatic for children. Minimizing the number of school changes is critical to a child's learning and overall school success. Further reviews of the literature revealed instability in student movement between conventional schooling and homeschooling (Romanowski, 2006; Isenberg, 2007).

Information is lacking in the literature as to the causes for school-change instability. Could it be that within the silence of the research void lie answers to the premise that children's rates of adjustment to complex personal and environmental factors might be the major contributors to homeschool attrition? The desire to help children educationally succeed in online education, the desire to reduce attrition rates, and the desire to contribute to the body of knowledge provided the fundamental passion for embarking on this research path.

As the researcher in this study, my role was to utilize the reflective lived experiences of recently graduated online students to gain an understanding of the internal emotions, academic struggles, and environmental adaptations students experience when changing from conventional schooling to home-based online education and then to

represent their collective voice in writing this document (Van Manen, 1990). To accomplish the goal, my role as investigator required critical listening skills and effective questioning techniques. My role as analyzer demanded thoroughness in data collection. My role as interpreter enabled me to identify and represent the meanings of participant experiences and expressions of feeling in a textual language so that the interplay between the participants and the phenomena could be understood.

Data Collection

“The point of phenomenological research is to ‘borrow’ other people’s experiences and reflections on their experiences in order to be better able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience in context of the whole human experience” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 62). Data collection thus becomes the researcher’s attempt to gain experience through the experiences of others. In this examination, data collection included four formats: reflective journaling, face-to-face interviews, online chat room conversations, and a focus group discussion. All student documentation was coded by use of pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants.

The data gathering process took place during the three-month time period of June, July, and August in 2011. The journal writing and interviewing processes, in this hermeneutic phenomenological study, served as a means to gather and explore the narrative stories of participant’s lived experiences. Variety in interview processes also provided a means by which various approaches could be utilized to establish researcher and participant relationships and through which experiential meaning could be interpreted reflectively as participants shared their stories. Each interview’s semi-structured design

and procedures followed Rubin and Rubin (2005) qualitative interviewing techniques. Use of this design reduced rigidity associated with fully structured interviews and was advantageous in granting the freedom to probe participant responses to increase the richness of the narrative.

After participants submitted their written willingness to participate in this study, they were assigned an initial reflective journal writing assignment. The reflective journal was the first component of the four-part field research data gathering process. Serving as an introductory reflective exercise, each participant wrote a collection of school transition memories before the face-to-face interview took place. The function of the reflective writing was to serve as a type of *warm-up activity*. Participants were encouraged to write their journals as narrative stories. Those not desirous of writing in a story format were given the option to respond to the following list of supplied questions and statements.

- As you reflect on your experience, making the change from conventional school to home-based online school, what memories stand out?
- What pre-change expectations proved to be real and what pre-change expectations proved to be false when you actually participated in online schooling?
- Describe the differences between your conventional school and home-based online environments. What did you generally see, hear, and feel when attending each setting.
- Describe the differences between your previous school day and your online school day. What was unique in each school setting that required you, as a student, to have to make academic, social, and emotional adjustment? Include a comparison of how you spent your time on an average school day in each school

environment.

- What were the differences in your learning environment in each school setting? Describe teacher relationships, your work space, when you studied, how you decided what order to do your assignments, and how long you spent studying on an average day.
- Describe uniquenesses in your online experience that led to feelings of confidence or frustration.
- Describe uniquenesses in your online experience that impacted how you learn?
- What personal study habits changed during the transition from one school to the other?
- How did daily social life change when making the transition from conventional school to online school? In answering this question, consider illustrating the differences in social experiences in which you participated in each school setting. Compare measures you took to maintain your social network of friends in each school setting? What did each setting teach you about friendships? How did the change from conventional school to online school impact relationships in your family?

Following receipt of the writings, formal face-to-face interviews were scheduled.

During each interview visit, a tour of the participant's school classroom was included.

The purpose of the in-home visits was two-fold: to interview participants in the comfort of their home surroundings and to enable first-hand observations that would help me

understand the uniqueness of each home-based setting through personal interaction in

that environment. Utilizing the interview and the tour enabled data gathering to truthfully

and richly describe the transitional experiences each of the participants encountered.

Five days utilized to complete the six interviews spanned six weeks of time. Each visit was approximately two hours in length, with the actual interview comprising 60 - 90 minutes of the appointment. The interviews were audiotaped using a digital voice recorder.

Each home visit included time for introductions and explanation of the purpose and procedures for this study. Questions by participants and parents were answered fully. All participants expressed support and an eager excitement to be involved in this venture.

The interviews contained two phases. In the first phase, an initial set of preliminary interview questions was posed to each participant that was biographical in nature. The primary purpose of the opening questions was to function as an icebreaker and to foster a dialogue that would enable the interviewee to relax and from which a relationship with the participant could begin to be established.

In the second phase, a set of identical lead questions was posed to each interviewee. The questions were open-ended to engender participant narrative responses. Follow-up questions and probes generated depth, detail, and vividness so the true essence of the participant's experience could be derived.

The eleven, open-ended, interview questions were developed prior to engaging in the home visits. The list was created following face and content validity evaluations and revisions of an initial set of 20 proposed questions. Three online teachers, all of whom were in doctoral programs, and four former online students who had graduated from an online school, provided question face and content validity input. The final list of questions was grounded in school change theory and field-tested using a three-member

focus group to evaluate final wording clarity and question ability to elicit quality responses. Practicing the questions in a live setting enabled me to get a sense of question ability to elicit quality responses. The use of the focus group also provided opportunity to practice follow-up question probing strategies. The final list of questions was as follows. See Appendix A for the list with ties to the literature.

- How did the idea of changing from traditional school to online school come to be?
- What were your thoughts and feelings during the decision-making process?
- Describe the differences between your old and new school experiences.
- Describe your feelings about the change in school design and curriculum delivery.
- Compare your traditional school day with a typical day as an online student.
- How did using technology affect the way you learn?
- Describe how participation in online school affected your family and peer relationships.
- Compare the pressures to achieve academic success between your experiences in traditional and online school.
- What online experiences contributed to developing personal values that you believe will best prepare you to achieve life goals?
- What personal experiences were significantly influential in your transition to online schooling?
- What advice would you offer to other students who are considering enrolling in an online school?

The interview was audiotaped on a digital recorder, and then transcribed using Dragon Naturally Speaking voice-to-text software. Using the digital recording, I listened

to the interviewee one phrase or sentence at a time and then repeated the words into a microphone. The software typed my dictation much more quickly than I could have personally typed the information. This process provided an excellent occasion to begin reflective thought that would be needed in data analysis. To validate transcript authenticity, copies of the transcript were sent to each participant for review, correction, and signature verification.

The third phase of the field research utilized an online chatroom specifically designed for this study. A website was developed using Wikispaces for Educators. The free website provided a controlled login and password protected online location for posting discussion statements and recording participant dialogue. Statements used to elicit responses were generated from adolescent theory and homeschool research. The aims of this activity were to broaden participant reflexivity to incorporate personal experiences against theory expressed in the literature and to provide information that may have been missed in the verbal interview process.

For this activity, participants were asked to compare transitional school-change experiences in response to theoretical statements. After posting their own comments, the participants were encouraged to broaden the dialogue by commenting on the posts of other peer writings. As moderator of the site, I encouraged and facilitated the discussions. I asked questions for clarification, but I did not enter into the conversations as a participant.

Three initial prompts began the chatroom discussions. Over a two-week period, an additional prompt was added every few days. The seven prompts were as follows:

- Harter, et al., (1998) reported that teens tend to view themselves differently when

they are at home than when they are with their peers. What personal experiences did you encounter while transitioning to online schooling that illustrates agreement or disagreement with the researchers?

- Erikson (1968) theorized that an important function of teen development is becoming independent. How did your experience as an online student impact your desire to be independent?
- Respond to the following statement using your experiences as an online student: “School-at-home is doomed to failure because of the lack of peer contacts” (McDowell, 2004, p. 20).
- Respond to the following statement from your experiences as an online student: Aies and Kortner (1994) felt that homeschooled students are too sheltered and not prepared socially to handle the pressures of an adult society.
- As a follow-up to the previous question: While you were enrolled in online school, how much time per day, on the average, did you spend communicating socially with peers either in person or through other media means? How did this time compare to your communication with peers outside of the school day when you were in conventional school?
- How did the timing of your school change from conventional school affect you personally?
- Bryne, Davenport, and Mazanov (2007) reported that adolescence is a time period of rapid physical growth and psychosocial development that is marked by emotional turmoil. As life stress increases, adolescents seek means to reduce crisis and establish stability. In making the transition to online school, what were

the greatest academic and life stress producers you experienced? Share a short story to illustrate each of your experiences.

The field research concluded utilizing a live webinar as a focus-group activity.

Use of

GoToMeeting technology provided participants with the ability to view my hosted questions on their computer monitors and to communicate verbally by phone conference call. Design and structure for conducting the focus-group activity followed procedures advocated by David Morgan (1997). I directed and redirected questions to maintain member involvement while maintaining a low profile through little discussion involvement.

This interview format was intentioned to generate increased depth and richness of detail regarding the internal struggles and personal impact this school change produced within each individual. The questioning focus shifted from external transitional issues probed in the first three activities to the internal impact school-change experiences had within the adolescents. The use of the focus group was chosen for its innate methodological design, enabling multiple student dialogues in response to individual thoughts. The initial list of lead-in questions was as follows.

- Life change is often filled with challenges. What were the greatest internal, personal, challenges that you incurred in transitioning to online school?
- What have you learned about peer relationship's through your online experiences?
- What have you learned about yourself through your online experience?
- Each of you gave up your senior year at your conventional school. How was your quality of life impacted as a result of making this school change?

- Did your online experience increase or decrease your time to do the things you enjoy?
- What were some of the personal motivational advantages and disadvantages of online school according to your experiences?
- How did the change to online school affect you spiritually? The term spiritual can mean religiously or it can be applied as your emotional feeling of well-being.
- Describe how your online experience impacted the way in which you learn.
- Was there personal satisfaction in learning to be an independent learner? Explain.
- What academic areas were strengthened and what academic areas decreased as a result of your online experiences?
- There have been people who said that online students will decrease in communication skills because online school does not have the level of dialogue involved in conventional school. What is your reaction?
- In what ways has the transitional process affected your maturation as a young adult?
- If you were a rising senior, instead of having graduated, would you choose to continue as an online student this fall or would you choose to return to conventional school?

The webinar concluded when it was apparent from participants' responses that experiences were being repetitively utilized. For these participants, the stories of their experiences had been saturated.

The webinar was audiotaped on a digital recorder, then transcribed using Dragon Naturally Speaking voice-to-text software, and distributed to the participants for review,

correction, and signature agreement, thus verifying record authenticity. Data from all four field-research elements were safely filed in print and electronic forms and kept in a locked location in my home for reference during data analysis.

Data Analysis

Van Manen's (1990) phenomenological hermeneutic approach to data analysis was used for this research. Beginning with exploration of the phenomenon of interest, the research shifted from a theoretical premise to an investigation of lived experiences of six individuals directly involved in the phenomenon. The investigative phase culminated in the development of a collection of textual data.

Field notes, journal writings, online chatroom entries, and transcripts of face-to-face and focus-group interviews formed a complex volume of disjointed data. Self-reflection using the Hermeneutic Circle (continual interpretive movement referencing the whole text to the individual parts and parts back to the whole) was utilized to read, conceptualize, and interpret the data as an entity, as segmented elements, and as isolated line statements (Van Manen, 1990). Coding (Patton, 2002; Tellis, 1997) provided the most practical means for seeking emergent patterns in the data and for itemizing, organizing, and managing the information.

According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), the coding aim was to disassemble identified cohesive elements from originally disjointed data to produce a unified reassembled narrative that interpretively produces new understandings of the experiences and values of the participant group. Thus, the process in this data analysis was to initially use coding methodology to deconstruct the line-by-line data in search of interpretive essences communicated by the participants. After deconstruction, the goal

was to interpretively construct a unified story, rich in meaning and vibrant in experiential truth that would be written in this document.

Coding nearly 150 pages of typed notes and authenticated interview records was laborious. The coding process began with several readings of the data. Open coding, axial coding, and selective coding processes were then utilized to sequentially and methodologically provide the means to identify classifications, codes, and categories that ultimately led to development of the data's overarching themes.

Open coding was the first coding element undertaken. Open coding involved two phases: development of textual classifications and refining of the classifications to develop a finalized list of codes. In phase one, commonly-noted *vivo* words used by the participants were underlined in the text. These words identified constructs such as participant feelings, situational occurrences, and intrinsic meanings. Conceptual passages were, at times, noted with my classification terminology in the textual margins.

These rudimentary, phase-one, data classifications facilitated ease in locating recurring similarities within singular participant data and collective group data. Through constant comparison of the data to the classifications and the classifications to the data, I sought an impecancy of fit. Data groupings were then judged as internally homogeneous based on their ability to unite descriptively or externally heterogeneous based on their distinctive diversification (Patton, 2002).

The process of phase-one open coding continued until the development and evaluation of new classifications could no longer produce new classifications. Continued work only led to repetition of what had been identified. A list of 86 classification terms was developed.

The list of classifications provided the primary basis for the development of eventual data codes. Prior to determining codes, the classification list was interpretively divided into 19 demographic classifications and 67 construct classifications. See Appendix B for a complete listing. The value of making the division was that the distinctions delineated the data as two contributing entities.

An interpretive analysis of the classification terms resulted in a final combined list of 44 codes. See Appendix C for a complete listing. The decrease in number from initial classifications was largely attributed to combining synonymous terms.

With codes determined, the process of deconstructing every sentence in the original data began. Information was labeled according to its identification with a specified code. If a statement fit multiple code definitions, it was placed under each of the qualifying titles. Upon completion, the original deconstructed data were printed as a newly constructed codified document and placed in a notebook.

Axial coding strategies (Creswell, 2007) were then used to interpret the open codes and link them to central categories. Axial coding utilized the interconnectivity of relational classifications to central categories to create the means by which the data were reassembled to produce a fuller understanding of the phenomenon. That understanding became clearer as I compared it to adolescent growth and development theory and to school-change theory. The 44 codes were interpretively linked to six central categories:

- Demographics
- Decision Making
- Academics
- Personal Growth and Development

- Social Impact
- Life Change

See Appendix D for a complete coded listing. The coded data were rearranged as they met definitions of the central categories to construct a second coded document. The six central categories provided a much more cohesive rendering of the data.

Selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) was then utilized to analyze the central categories to determine their value as potential central themes. Through interpretive evaluation, the categories' terms were judged as valuable classification summaries but they did not hold cohesive significance as identifiers of a thematic storyline. Further evaluation and interpretation produced five central themes that unified data in a storyline sequence while tying experiential responses to the study's central questions. The central themes, categories, and construct subcategories effectively incorporated all designated data in a manner that richly outlined and shaped the participants' stories. The five central themes were as follows:

- Decision – What experiences were involved in deciding for this form of school change?
- Design – What experiences were realized in transitioning to home-based online schooling?
- Distinctives – What positive experiences were realized in the school change?
- Disturbances – What negative experiences were realized in the school change?
- Destiny – What did the participants learn from the school change process that they could offer to individuals contemplating the same school-change choice?

Each theme was supported by two categories: School Experiences and Personal

Experiences. The school experiences and personal experiences were each supported by four summary construct classifications of data. School experiences contained classifications of environment, curriculum, pedagogy, and cognition. Personal experiences contained classifications of maturity, relationships, social activities, and stress.

With central themes, categories, and construct sub-categories determined, the deconstructed data were reconstructed a third time. The resultant selective-coded textual story was created, electronically stored, and printed in a third notebook. Using demographic identifiers, pattern matching was utilized to compare student experiences by gender, former school structure (public or private), and whether or not a geographic move was included at the time of school change. The research concluded with the entry of the findings in this document.

Trustworthiness

The issue of trustworthiness in qualitative research concerns itself with validity, correctness, and credibility of the research description and conclusion (Maxwell, 2005). A major emphasis during this study was thoroughness and accuracy in collection procedures and analysis of data. Data evaluation began at the earliest stages of data gathering and continued during each of the four data collection phases: reflective journal, face-to-face interviews, online chat room discussions, and webinar focus group discussion. The data were deconstructed and reconstructed into coded segments based on identifiable constructs. Constant comparisons were made until themes emerged and a cohesive group voice was heard through the richness of the text.

Threats to validity can be internally located within the research design, or they

may be externally manifested in generalization of result statements. Of greatest internal concern within the qualitative research design is the issue of researcher subjectivity influencing the setting (Maxwell, 2005; Tellis, 1997). My experiences both in conventional and online school philosophy and pedagogy were those of an adult leader not those of an adolescent student. As a result, a tendency existed to view school changes in terms of student study skills and environmental assimilation. Husserl (1970) stressed that to undertake successfully a phenomenological study, it is important that the researcher place himself outside of assumptions and presuppositions about the phenomenon and seek to see the lived experience through the eyes of the participants.

Understanding that my pre-study thoughts were not grounded in any valid theory, I did not find it difficult to open myself to the expressed world of the participants. Beyond casual introductions with a couple of the students at graduation, I did not personally know the participants. The lack of personal knowledge regarding the former students enabled me to be free of presuppositions and personal contact influences that could impede the rigor of the research. The lack of personal knowledge by the participants toward me, and the fact that they no longer attended the school, enabled them to be free to express themselves without any pretentious regard to positive or negative social ramifications or possible perceptual concern for academic repercussions. The fact that these students lived in isolation of all other classmates freed them of potential influences from the experiences of other peers and therefore helped maintain purity in their stories.

Interacting with participants in their natural environments became a priority for relationship cultivation and for developing an understanding of the environmental

changes each adolescent encountered. The eleven, open-ended, face-to-face interview questions were developed prior to engaging in the home visits. The list was created following face and content validity evaluations and revisions of an initial set of 20 proposed questions. The final list of questions was field-tested using a three-member focus group made up of former online students.

My personal involvement with the subjects intermittently spanned a three-month time period. During that duration; journal writing, face-to-face interviews, online chat room discussions, and a focus group activity were utilized in triangulation to understand and report the participants' lived experiences from the viewpoint of their experiential lens. Variety in interview methods and thematic shift in question probes for each data collection process provided a means to deepen researcher and participant relationships. The variety also provided a means by which experiential meaning could be reflectively interpreted as participants shared their stories.

Journaling, face-to-face interviews, in-home visits, online chatroom discussion, and focus-group activity provided triangulation sources that were vitally contributive to the trustworthiness of results. Data analysis included multiple readings of reflective journal submissions, online chatroom written entries, and auditory review in the transcription of interview tapes from the face-to-face interviews and the webinar focus group activity. The transcription process immediately followed interview events. The evidence created in the production of interview transcripts was verified by member-check validation as outlined in Keen and Packwood (1995) and Tellis (1997).

Interpretation, according to Patton (2002), by its very nature, requires the researcher to delve into the full meaning of the descriptive data. In so doing, truth and

meaning embedded in the data emerge. Textual analysis included the use of three coding processes (open coding, axial coding, and selective coding) to identify data categories and compare relationships. Through the use of coding, five final themes emerged.

Rigor resulted from the use of a structured research design and the use of analysis strategies such as the development of an audit trail, the inclusion of transcript member checks, and pattern-matching techniques. Internal validity concerns were addressed through thoroughness and accuracy in producing a rich description of the lived experiences of adolescent students involved in transitioning from conventional school to home-based online school.

Problematic in phenomenological studies of this nature are external validity concerns regarding over generalization of findings (Tellis, 1997). Increasing trustworthiness provided greater potential for generalization of results, though generalization was not considered a major outcome of this form of qualitative research. The six participants were not declared to be a representative sample of the home-based online student population. They were, however, viable members of that population, so the experiences they faced in transitioning from conventional school to home-based online education may have some potential for transferability.

Generalization is limited to these findings and is not meant to be representative of all home-based online students. Great care was taken to describe accurately and richly the participants' experiences. Results are considered potentially valuable to parents and students from the perspective that the real-life experiences of these six former conventional school and then home-based online school students become a possibility for causal understanding for other students in similar circumstances. The results are also

considered valuable to online school administrators and teachers as they seek to meet the needs of new enrollees.

Ethical Considerations

Participant written willingness to participate was secured before researcher involvement with participants was undertaken. Participant involvement in this research was purely voluntary and no financial remuneration was provided. A gift card, given as an expression of appreciation, was provided to each participant at the end of the field research involvement. Risks to participants were minimal. Participants were not involved in any physical or emotional activity other than being interviewed regarding school experiences.

Clearly communicated to the participants was the practice that if no parents were to be in the home during the interview, the interview would be rescheduled. My wife traveled with me to provide a guarantee that an additional adult would be in the house, just in case something prohibited parental attendance for an element of the interview duration. At least one parent was in the home during each interview. Parents did not participate in the interviews, but their presence in the home helped insure compliance with ethical research standards.

The records of this study have been and will continue to be kept private. Data and results presented in this document were truthfully presented. Student confidentiality was maintained by the use of pseudonyms. Specific home locations and school names were not published. Accepted publishable information included all data collected pertaining to the needs of this study, including the use of subjects' identification by pseudonym, gender, type of previous conventional school attended, and that they attended a cyber-

school on the east coast of the United States.

Written records were initially stored on my personal computer and on an external hard drive, both of which were password protected. Written records were converted to compact disks (CDs) for final storage and then all computer hard drive and external hard drive records were erased. CDs, audio taped data, and printed materials were then stored in a locked cabinet at my residence. Audio records will be destroyed after five years. Written records will be maintained in the secure cabinet indefinitely. Due to the nature of this research, there is no plan to reuse these records in future research studies. Any future research of a similar nature would need new subjects in its own circumstances to be of benefit to that study. Storage rationale following the completion of the dissertation was purely for the purpose of providing backup should unforeseen legal or academic peer challenges to this research require review of the documentation and for possible personal use in writing future publications which might arise as a result of the research findings.

Summary

This study's purpose was to explore the lived experiences of adolescents as they transitioned from conventional school to home-based online schooling. Qualitative research design provided an optimum analytical framework to investigate adolescent school-change adjustments because it enabled the researcher to relationally acquire participants' rich insights in deference to variable manipulation common in quantitative designs. Using purposeful sampling strategies, six adolescents volunteered to participate from an identified pool of 26 invitees. The three males and 3 females were graduates of the school I administer.

Data collection included four formats: reflective journaling, face-to-face

interviews, online chatroom conversations, and a focus group discussion. All student documentation was coded by use of pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants. Self-reflection using the Hermeneutic Circle (continual interpretive movement referencing the whole text to the individual parts and parts back to the whole) was utilized to read, conceptualize, and interpret the data as an entity, as segmented elements, and as isolated line statements (Van Manen, 1990). Open coding, axial coding, and selective coding strategies (Creswell, 2007) were used to categorize the data. Through the coding process five central themes emerged that cohesively tied the adolescents' experiences to the study's central questions.

Journaling, face-to-face interviews, observations during in-home visits, online chatroom discussion, and focus group activity provided triangulation sources that were vitally contributive to the trustworthiness of results. Rigor resulted from the use of a structured research design and the use of analysis strategies such as the development of an audit trail and the inclusion of transcript member checks, and pattern-matching techniques. Confidentiality, thoughtfulness, professionalism, truthfulness, and ethical standards were maintained throughout the study.

Chapter Three provided the theoretical and practical basis from which data were obtained and by which they were analyzed. With chapter three as the research skeleton, chapter four becomes the research meat. Chapter Four richly communicates the participants' stories as viewed through the lens of the five central themes—decision, design, distinctives, disturbances, and destiny.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS/FINDINGS

“The point of phenomenological research is to ‘borrow’ other people’s experiences and reflections on their experiences in order to be better able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience in context of the whole human experience” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 62). Using a philosophical and methodological research approach rooted in hermeneutic phenomenology, the purpose of this research was to explore the lived experiences of six adolescents—to extrapolate the valued essence of their transitional encounters in changing from conventional school to home-based online schooling. Data collection included four formats: reflective journaling, face-to-face interviews, online chatroom conversations, and a focus-group discussion. The goal of this study was to utilize the participants’ reflective lived experiences to gain an understanding of the internal emotions, academic struggles, and environmental adaptations students experienced when changing from conventional schooling to home-based online schooling. Given that all children should learn effectively and efficiently, this study gets at the heart of successful adaptation to pedagogical and curricular school change—the learning responses and adjustments operating within children.

To develop a true understanding of the individual in context to a phenomenon, one must learn as much as possible about the nature of the inner person and the nature of the external contextual world (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). This chapter is their story. The chapter begins with demographic descriptions that identify the six participants’ educational backgrounds and the settings in which they lived. The lead-up

stories of discontent that propagated a decision comprise the second section of the chapter. The third section provides an elaboration of their collective story as articulated in the five major themes—decision, design, distinctives, disturbances, and destiny. The final section contains parting reflexive summative thoughts that the participants offer as critical advice for adolescents and parents considering school change from conventional school to home-based online school.

Demographics and Setting

Three males and three females agreed to participate in this study. All six were graduates of the school I administer. Three enrollees attended public school before making the school change and three attended private Christian schools. Based on purposeful sampling strategies, participants must have graduated from the online school after attending in fulltime status for a minimum of one complete academic year, and they could not have been out of high school for more than 18 months. One volunteer graduated one month prior to agreeing to participate in the research. Four alumni graduated twelve months before agreement, and one graduated 18 months prior. See Table 1 for participant demographic information. Student names are pseudonyms.

The settings for this investigation included communities in which they lived, the homes at which the participants resided, the homeschool “classrooms” in which the students worked, and the social capital with which they interacted. The six participants lived in a cross-sectional representation of community environments. Three lived in small rural towns. Two lived in suburban areas near major metropolitan cities. One student lived in a metropolitan inner city neighborhood.

Ann lived in a rural neighborhood a few miles south of her community. The city

of 75,000 inhabitants was located on the bank of a major river. The geographic region was bordered on the west by a picturesque range of mountains.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

Participant Name	Gender	Family Unit	Ethnicity	Previous School Type	Online School Grade Entry	School Change Rationale	Geographic Move Included?
Ann	Female	Two Parent Home	Caucasian	Public	12	Moral Values & Academics	No Geographic Move
Leigh	Female	Two Parent Home	Caucasian	Private & Public	12	Moral Values & Academics	Geographic Move
Marquise	Female	Two Parent Home	African American	Public	11	School Violence	Geographic Move
Ben	Male	Two Parent Home	Caucasian	Christian	11	Academics	No Geographic Move
Stephen	Male	Two Parent Home	Caucasian	Christian	12	International Travel	No Geographic Move
Chuck	Male	Two Parent Home	Caucasian	Christian	12	Academics	No Geographic Move

The houses in Ann’s subdivision were single-floor duplex structures. Each unit had a single car garage. A cross-gabled hip roof architectural design added the appearance of structural height above the front door. A double window functionally and decoratively built into the front wall was surrounded by a red brick façade. Non-brick exterior surfaces had beige colored siding. The house was trimmed in white.

Ann used a laptop computer when doing her schoolwork. The portability of the

laptop enabled Ann to move about the house and added variety to her study location options. Ann's study preference was the solitude of her bedroom.

Just inside the bedroom entrance and to the right was a darkly stained chest-of-drawers. A small television on top of the piece faced the queen-sized bed. The double window described as a main feature in the front of the house was a major part of the bedroom wall to the right. Ivory colored venetian blinds controlled the amount of sunlight entering the room. The walls were painted a light gray and the room's wood trim was painted white.

Ann stated that she often studied on her bed. She liked the privacy of the room, the windowed view of the neighborhood, and the comfort of her bed. Ann added that she moved to suitable table locations in other rooms if study needs required hard surfaced space. The study areas Ann utilized in her home were well-lit. Temperatures were controlled by central air conditioning and heating as desired.

Leigh lived in a rural historic community on the east coast of the United States. Elegant horse farm pastures with bordered white fences accented the rolling hill countryside. Leigh's home was in a relatively new neighborhood, on a quiet street. The three-story frame house nestled into a slopping lot.

Leigh's school room was her upstairs bedroom. A modern style, L-shaped, glass-topped desk encompassed a space in the right corner of the room at the foot of the queen-sized bed. Leigh's computer monitor and keyboard were situated in the center and the computer tower was strategically located under the desk. Books and magazines stood in a row on the right desk wing. The room was warm in appearance with light colored walls. Central air conditioning provided cooling and heat as needed. Leigh stated

satisfaction with the room's functional use for study and sleeping purposes.

Marquise lived in a northwest suburban area of a major east coast city. Her modern-style, gable-ended, two-story home was situated on a level lot. The exterior wall above the porch roof was covered with a beige-colored siding. A multicolored brick façade covered the wall area under the porch roof. The house was trimmed in white. The small front yard provided a sufficient buffer between the street and house and enhanced the property's curb appeal.

Marquise's study area was in her upstairs bedroom. A small, free-standing, computer desk was located in the walking space between her bed on the right and a chest of drawers on the left. The desktop was just large enough to hold her laptop and a few small study aids. To the left of her computer was a pink box that housed a stack of 4 x 4 inch blank note sheets. A silver and black pen was clipped to the top left corner of the box.

Marquise stated that her laptop allowed opportunity to study at multiple locations in her home. She used the computer desk frequently. Sometimes she worked as she sat on her bed. At other times she completed schoolwork in the family room or at the dining room table. Having all text materials on the computer screen aided portability because there were no additional textbooks to impact the needs of a prospective study area. Marquise stated that the environment was well suited to meet her study needs.

Ben lived in an inner city location in a major metropolitan city. His three-story townhouse was centrally located among a row of townhouses that coursed the length of a city block. Each house was distinguished by a front tower that juttred beyond connecting recessed walls. The towers and recessed connecting walls produced a castle-like

appearance. Landscaped plantings between the sidewalk and the house fronts provided a touch of grace to the curb appeal. The neighborhood has long been the scene of morally degrading lifestyles. The previous owner of Ben's home was murdered in the house.

The first floor of the house was used as a church worship center. Large religious-themed banners hung on the worship area walls. Thirty members attended weekly services in the home.

Ben's schoolroom was a converted bedroom at the front of the house on the top floor. As we scaled the numerous century-old stairs, creaks and groans echoed through the home. At the top of the stair, we made a left turn, and walked a short distance to the entrance to Ben's classroom.

A light gray, plastic-topped, six-foot-long, folding table was centered in the room, perpendicular to the front exterior wall. The panoramic view of the neighborhood could be seen through three, tall, narrow, windows. A window air conditioning unit was in the left casement. Pull-down blinds were used to control outside lighting. The plaster walls were painted white and the room's wood trim was also white.

Ben stated that the room fully met his needs. Being on the top floor, it was quiet. Room temperature was controlled using the window air conditioner and radiator heating. The table space was fully adequate for study purposes. Ben used a laptop computer to access his online school and curriculum.

Stephen, like Leigh, lived in a historic rural community, though his home was in another state, 120 miles from Leigh's residence. Quaint artisan shops lined Main Street in this riverfront community. Stephen's residence was located on the outskirts of town at the crest of a small hill.

The two-story, gable-ended, red brick home was elegantly designed. Upon entering the home, a short hall extended past a converted formal living room that had been Stephen's school room. Straight ahead was a large family room. The family room's open floor plan included a kitchen and dining area.

With Stephen now a college student, his school room had experienced a few minor changes. Stephen stated that a large office desk was originally located in the right corner of the study room. From this corner location, Stephen could enjoy looking across the room to a view of the lawn and trees as seen through the double-wide front windows.

The schoolroom atmosphere was pleasant. With the entrance French doors closed, the room was quiet. The home's central air conditioning and heating made the study area comfortable. Stephen stated that he enjoyed the space and that it fully met his needs.

Chuck lived in a major city suburban neighborhood. His house was located on a cul-de-sac at the base of a gently sloping hill. The dwelling was situated on a spacious level lot surrounded by colorful and well-trimmed landscaping.

Dark gray shingles adorn the home's gambrel roof architecture. Slightly protruding from the second story shingled wall, five gabled windows add a strikingly contrasting element to the roofline design. The exterior wall for the main floor was covered with a stone façade. Large, randomly-patterned stones, in varying brown tones give the house a cottage-like charm.

Chuck's schoolroom was located in a large open living area on the backside of the residence's main floor. Walnut stained hardwood flooring coursed the length and breadth of the expanse. The kitchen was to the left. A formal dining room could be seen through

an entrance door beyond the kitchen. To the right was a family room with large fireplace. Beyond the family room was a glassed sunroom.

A country-style dining table with an oak top and white frame base accented a space between the kitchen and the family room. Under the table was a patterned area rug that provided a floor covering and a decorative accent to the space. Behind the table, a floor-to-ceiling bay window elegantly added charm and a picturesque view of the large back deck and yard.

Chuck stated that the table functioned as the family's most frequent eating area, and it also served as the desk for Chuck's schoolwork. Normally seated with his back to the bay window, Chuck used a laptop computer to read his lessons and complete assignments. The table area was sufficient in size to accommodate his laptop and any additional study aids that might have been utilized. The window's northern exposure allowed natural daylight for reading and minimized glare from the sun. Heating and air conditioning provided room temperature comfort.

Chuck stated that he was pleased with the workspace and that the location did not have many distractions during the day, because other family members were generally out of the house when he studied. Chuck liked the proximity to the refrigerator for self-declared break times.

Based on participants' interview responses, the descriptions of home-based school settings blended the influences of environmental elements and human capital. The home-based online school shifted human capital from a conventional school community of teachers and peers to predominantly online textually-driven instruction. Parents acted as first responders to student instructional needs and certified teachers provided secondary

support.

All participants lived in a two-parent home. Each of the fathers held college degrees. Three of the mothers had earned bachelor degrees, two had attended college without graduating, and one had a high school diploma. The participants stated that their parents desired a high degree of knowledge regarding their child's academic progress either through various forms of student learning assistance, or utilizing parent access to electronic daily progress reports, or both assistance and daily electronic monitoring. See Table 2 for parental demographic information.

Table 2

Parental Demographic Information

Participant Name	Father Occupation	Mother Occupation	Father Educational Level	Mother Educational Level	Percent of Parental Assistance
Ann	Contractor & Fireman	Registered Nurse	Associate Degree	Bachelor Degree	None
Leigh	School Teacher	Realtor	Master Degree	High School Diploma	Less than 50%
Marquise	Church Hospitality Director	Artist & Para Ed. Special Education Aid	Bachelor Degree	Some College	Less than 50%
Ben	Pastor & School Teacher	Stay-at-Home Mom & Assist. Pastor	Double Master Degree	Bachelor Degree	70-79%
Stephen	Physician	Book Keeper	Medical Doctor	Bachelor Degree	Less than 50%
Chuck	Govt. Consultant	P/T Nanny	Master Degree	Some College	50-69%

Discontent that Propagated a Decision

Each participant story began with life-changing experiences that resulted in feelings of stress and anxiety. Valuable insight regarding the participants' personalities, the unique issues they faced, and the personal values they relied upon are manifested in the following lead-up stories of discontent that propagated a school-change decision.

Marquise's Story

The last day of school began with excitement as the end of Marquise's sophomore year was about to culminate. At 9:00 A.M., Marquise was getting dressed for physical education class when her teacher yelled that the students needed to get out of the area immediately!

Elation that filled the day was shattered as news of a shooting in the building spread like wildfire. In moments, the school was enveloped in chaos. No lockdown was ordered. Students and teachers became frantic. Marquise described the scene as follows:

Helicopters were flying over the building and there was a lot of chaos inside. All doors were open and everyone was scattering. People were screaming that someone had been shot. There were a lot of things going through my head. I had a lot of friends in the school, and I was very active at school. I was in the choir. I really didn't know what was going to happen.

A few blocks away, Marquise's mother was working at the elementary school. A lady across the hall from Marquise's mother asked if she had a daughter at the high school. Affirming that she did, the lady exclaimed, "Things are crazy over there. Somebody is shooting up the place!"

Grabbing her wallet for identification purposes, Marquise's mother and a couple of other teachers ran to a car and drove toward the high school. Because of the chaos, there was no place to park. Panic stricken, the ladies exited the car and ran toward the building. The noise of the helicopter blades could be heard overhead. Media vans with satellite dishes were already there.

Marquise's mother breathed a quick prayer, asking God to help her find her daughter. Somehow she was able to get into the building. Upon entering the door, she saw Marquise coming down the hall. In Marquise's words,

We yelled a greeting and hugged each other. My mother said her heart was beating so fast that she thought it would burst. She then exclaimed, 'I am taking you out of this building, and we are never coming back!'

Shortly after, media reports stated that the shooting had been performed by a boy using a pellet gun. He had shot another boy in the ear. In the days to follow, Marquise's mind was filled with unanswered questions. "What high school would I end up going to? Would it be easy to make friends? Will it be far away? A lot of questions kept running through my head like a NASCAR racer."

Stephen's Story

Stephen's eleventh grade school year was over. The freedom to enjoy summer activities had begun. With the advent of a senior year just weeks away, Stephen's world caromed when he received an invitation to go to Africa for four-and-a-half months. As he excitedly contemplated the opportunity, his mind recalled the stories shared by his best friend, who had taken such a trip the year before. Accepting the invitation would mean missing the first semester of his senior year.

The lure of adventure, the excitement of international travel, and the opportunity to be immersed in a combination program of biblical discipleship training and mission service was too powerful to put aside. For Stephen, the affirmative decision was final. He was not dissuaded by school officials who ruled that he would not be able to attend the second semester if he missed the first semester. Even the realization that Stephen would not be graduating with his class did not diminish determination.

For this tall, lean, athletic young man and his family, school-choice decisions were always fashioned around family priorities. Stephen attended Catholic school in third and fourth grade because of the academic structure and moral emphasis offered. His transfer to a small Christian school for grades five and six was based on parental desire to have Stephen in a school more closely aligned with Stephen's parent's doctrinal beliefs. Options for middle school were weighed between continuing at the small Christian school, attending public school, or homeschooling. Because financial resources were being channeled to the building of their new home, the public school option was chosen for seventh grade. Dissatisfaction with the public school academic program and social environment generated yet another school change. Stephen returned to his former Christian school for grades eight through eleven.

Stephen's parents had raised their three sons to make spiritual commitment a driving force in making life judgments. For Stephen, the opportunity to grow spiritually in a cross-cultural environment could not be bypassed without at least a passionate presentation to his parents. Stephen found their support.

My mom was pretty open to it. I think that the Lord had prepared my mom previously in telling her that one of her kids would be making a trip like

this. I think that helped her be a lot more open to my decision. My dad's a pretty calm guy. He doesn't freak out much about things. It wasn't like I was going to be moving to some country and partying all the time (laughter). He felt that I would get a good education through this experience, so he was okay with it. My parents understood that I still planned to finish school. They were pretty cool with it.

With Stephen's parental approval secured, his two college-aged brothers decided to join him on the quest. Stephen's best friend and school classmate chose to go again as a junior leader. Youth for a Mission was the sponsoring organization. Ghana was the destination. Fifty miles outside the capital city was the setting. Tourist lifestyles were not the plan. The program was best described by Stephen as Christian boot camp.

The environment was much different than being at home. We were in Africa, not the United States. We got up at five in the morning. During the day we would attend classes and have work duties on-site. We did landscaping and fixed up things.

Evening meetings supplied opportunities for attendees to practice evangelism skills on teammates. Outreach trips provided occasions for practical ministry application. During the day, the adolescents helped villagers and offered invitations to evening meetings. Preaching was in local churches or open community gatherings.

As time elapsed, Stephen began to contemplate his return home. What would he do for school? Would he work a job during the winter and attend his senior year the next fall at the private school? Would he find a means to complete his senior year through an independent educational program? What program offerings would be attractive in

meeting his unique needs? An online search soon consumed his spare time.

Leigh's Story

Leigh is a tall, thin young lady with long blond hair. Initially, she appeared quiet and reserved. As we became more acquainted during the interview, Leigh's gentle personality emerged in her facial expressions and deeply thought-out question responses. Leigh enjoys taking pictures and editing digital photography. Graphic design has been a consideration as a college major. Leigh also has a passion for teaching young children. Vegetables of any variety are a welcome meal favorite.

Family times away from her father's career military lifestyle provided fond childhood memories. Leigh's favorite family trip took place when she was an eighth grader. The family goal was to visit all of the major national monuments in the United States, traveling on a three-month road trip in a recreation vehicle.

Family times were important respites during her father's military career. From his early twenties, military life and numerous family moves were part of expected life. As retirement approached, Leigh was promised that the family would remain in its current community location until she graduated from high school. The encouraging promise was ever present in her mind as she spent her first two years of high school attending a strongly-academic private prep school. Close friendships and a growing social life were budding.

Leigh's emotions oscillated as her father, upon official retirement, announced that he had accepted a high school science teaching position in his boyhood home town. Teaching in that community had been his life dream. Reneging on his promise to Leigh, her father led the family as it made passage to its new locality. Leigh described her

feelings as filled with self-pity at that time.

I was struggling with anger toward my dad for moving us to this town after he said he would not move us until I graduated from high school. I was very selfish and angry at him. I was also angry at my mom, because I thought she was being a pushover by letting my dad make us come here when none of us wanted to except for him.

Upon arriving in the new community, the family made temporary living arrangements in a relative's house. Leigh's bedroom did not brighten adjustment potential. "My bedroom was in a basement and it was dark and damp. It was like a little dungeon down there."

Attending public school for the first time in her life added culture shock to Leigh's overwhelmed psyche.

I had been sheltered in small private schools all of my life. At the public high school, I saw all of these kids my age using profanity and doing things that I have always thought were inappropriate, actions and behaviors that I had never seen before to that extent and had not been around. I did not know how to handle my feelings and the situation.

Social opportunities contributed little to rally Leigh from a darkening cloud of engulfing depression.

On the military posts, kids were used to moving. Accepting new kids was just part of the experience. Everybody was coming and going all the time. Here, everybody had known each other since they were in diapers. Not many people move in or out of the community, so the kids in the

community are not accustomed to helping new students adjust. It was a very awkward time for me. I realized that I would not be making many friends because I did not find kids who held to my beliefs. It was hard for me to blend in, especially because I am not assertive.

Academic transitional issues compounded mounting feelings of defeat. Leigh quickly realized that the course material she was being taught was a repeat of information she had learned nearly two years earlier in her prep school honors classes. Leigh felt she was not being challenged, and she became concerned that her pursuit of a viable college academic preparation was in jeopardy.

In an effort to counter her feelings, Leigh began to research educational options privately. The school choices were limited in this rural region. Leigh's family had some friends who were homeschooling. Leigh surmised the option was a best means to escape her perceived chaotic world. She knew her parents would not accept such a notion without genuine rationale. Leigh planned her approach for about a week. She even created a poster board visual of decision pros and cons to illustrate her presentation.

The time for the family meeting arrived. Leigh's parents were seated in the kitchen. As Leigh attempted to speak, the emotions of the moment overwhelmed her. As tears rolled down her cheeks, Leigh lost control and broke down crying. The presentation was a disaster in her mind, but the poster preparation was clearly expressive to her parents and the emotions she conveyed spoke passionately to them. They committed to join Leigh in an effort to seek a viable educational solution.

Ben's Story

The inner city life did not produce a lot of close friends for Ben. In his

neighborhood, drugs and immoral lifestyles were the norm. Private Christian school became his preferred social arena. Going to movies and playing video games with his school friends was a welcomed social outlet.

Personal interests included drawing superhero cartoons and perfecting judo skills. Apple fritters from Dunkin' Donuts or Starbucks were a culinary delight. A tall glass of ice cold root beer and one of his mother's mouth-watering cheeseburgers put excitement into any dull day.

About six feet tall, Ben manifested a warm smile and gentle sense of humor. A twinkle in his eye was visible through his wire-framed glasses as Ben spoke during the interview. His short brown hair was styled in a spiked fashion. The shadowy beginning of a goatee was noticeable.

Ben attended a private Christian school through his elementary and middle school years. The school was located north of the city. It was his home-away-from-home. The students and parents enjoyed a close-knit community. In this environment, close friendships were the rule and not the exception.

Because Ben wanted to play high school football, his parents agreed to enroll him in a different Christian school in ninth grade. According to Ben, the decision backfired. The football program was understaffed and underfunded. The new school was academically inferior to the previous school. Secular influences infiltrated and permeated the school's historical Christian emphasis. Ben reported that his social studies teacher's socialist worldview did not support the conservative Christian values embraced by Ben's parents. During the two years he remained in the school, Ben developed a lot of acquaintances but they did not mature into close friendships because the classmates did

not share the same level of commitment to Ben's prioritized life convictions.

After two years, it was apparent that a school change was forthcoming. A brief return to the previous school was ended due to the rising costs of the commute and the rising costs of tuition. Public schools in the city, according to Ben, were unacceptable because of their unsafe environment, poor academic quality, and lack of support for conservative social values. A family research project commenced.

Chuck's Story

Hunting is a passion for Chuck. As the leaves begin to drop each fall, Chuck can be found deer hunting during muzzle-loading and rifle seasons. Standing about six feet tall and sporting a full facial beard and mustache, Chuck looks the part of an independently rugged mountain man, but he is gentle mannered, polite, humble, and strongly supportive of his family. As a church man, Chuck earned the highest rating in the Royal Rangers (similar to an Eagle Scout rank in the Boy Scouts) that the church youth organization offered.

Chuck attended a single private Christian school from kindergarten through Grade 11. The school, located just blocks from his house, was sponsored by the church he and his family attended. Chuck's mother was also highly active at the school as a teacher's aide.

During his sophomore and junior years, enrollment at the school began to decline due to the impact of a deteriorating national economy. Student population decreases resulted in faculty reductions. The academic spiral bottomed with a decline in academic quality. Course rigor was not maintainable due to teachers having to teach out of their fields. Elective course offerings were not nearly as profuse as in earlier years. The

efforts of a new school administrator were foiled as he attempted to save the school by increasing tuition. The exodus of families continued. Chuck's rising senior class was down to seven students.

In the interview, Chuck stated that he was greatly concerned as to the strength of his academic preparation for college. Even though the senior year was just ahead, change was inevitable. Chuck's parents were also facing the reality that they could no longer afford the rising tuition. Family discussions and research into educational opportunities began.

Ann's Story

Ann is an outdoor enthusiast. Water activities are her favorite pastimes. Swimming, tubing, or jumping from a favorite high bridge into the deep cool river waters produces thrilling summer afternoon adventures for this petite brunette. Shared times in and on the water with family and close friends contributed to fondly recalled memories for this socialite with a winsome smile. Aquatic times also provided a welcomed change of pace from school and part-time work that consumed much of her busy weekly schedule.

Ann had remained in the same school district throughout her educational experience. Ann enjoyed the social advantages of remaining in the same community throughout the maturation of her early life. Yet, Ann experienced concern for the unknown as she ended her junior year.

I was at that awkward stage of growing up. I was trying to piece everything together. Trying to decide where I'm going in my life. It was a very confusing time. I felt my conventional school was not preparing me

to be ready for my future.

Ann attended a rural public school district similar to that of Leigh, but separated by nearly 80 miles. Like Leigh, she expressed concern for similar school environmental, academic, and social issues. Dissatisfaction with the school environment, lack of support for her life values in the instructional program, and disagreement with the manner in which the administration handled discipline issues led to a desire to make a school change. For Ann, loyalty to the community and to the school system had not been returned in support for her values. Enough was enough. The desire for school change became an internal boiling caldron.

I could not deal with the conditions in the school anymore. I was not a part of all the partying and stuff. One of my best friends got a DUI. A lot of my friends had kids. My school had the highest percentage of pregnant students in the state. The environment was just in chaos all the time. We had several bomb threats. They proved to not be real threats; just people being dumb. We would end up sitting outside in the pouring down rain for no reason. I knew I was going to miss a whole lot of things by leaving, but they were not worth staying in that school situation to enjoy. I spent twelve years in that school system, and I didn't want to spend my last year being miserable all the time.

Ann's parents understood and were sympathetic to her feelings and concerns. Private school and private Christian school choices in the region were plentiful. Tuition costs presented a problem. As Ann searched the private school options, she realized she was not just desirous of a new environment. After talking with a friend enrolled in an

online school, Ann knew that she wanted to break from conventional school altogether. She wanted free from the negative trauma that had been her experience with conventional school. Ann desired a situation in which she had more personal control of her total educational experience.

Themes

Individuals, in each story, experienced personal relational stress with their conventional school as a causal factor for considering school change. Marquise experienced the emotional pain of a public school parentally declared to be unsafe. Ben felt repelled by his private school's academic disconnect with family beliefs. Leigh was confronted with a parentally chosen geographic move that she did not support. Ann and Leigh were repulsed by public school social environments that conflicted with family values. Chuck encountered declining academic and social opportunities due to the deterioration of his Christian school's viability. Ironically, Stephen was faced with his Christian school's inability to adjust to his parentally supported decision to participate in a spiritually-designed travel opportunity.

Stress created through disconnect with the original conventional school-of-choice provided the basis from which school-change considerations materialized. Once school change was determined as conclusive rationale to resolve stress elements, the participants embarked on a thematic trail that richly described their transitional and adaptational experiences. The central themes embedded in their stories described a collective participant path as the students experienced change from conventional school to home-based online schooling.

Theme one, Decision, articulates the experiential process the six participants

undertook in making the choice to change from a conventional school to a home-based online school model. With the decision finalized, their story delves into descriptive school Design (theme two) experiences that they discovered as they transitioned to home-based online schooling. Knowledge gained as the adolescents immersed themselves in their new school resulted in positive experiential Distinctives (theme three) and negative experiential Disturbances (theme four). Their collective transitional path concluded with a rich collection of reflections regarding the impact of their school-change on their Destiny (theme five) that led to high school graduation. Desiring to leave a legacy to other adolescents who might be seeking their own destiny by making a similar school-change choice, the participants concluded their stories by offering parting thoughts that they acknowledged would have greatly helped them in the transitional process and thus may be beneficial to those walking the path behind.

Based on detailed analysis of the participants' data, each of the five themes was divided into two school change experiential categories: school experiences and personal experiences. In essence, what did these individuals experience academically and personally in each of the five path descriptors? To answer the questions, the school experiences were reported in four sub-categories: school environment, curriculum, pedagogy, and cognition. The personal experiences were also described in four sub-categories: maturity, relationships, social activities, and stress. Each of the categories and subcategories advances interrelated truth and meaning that enables the themes to progressively and richly articulate the participants' stories. See Figure 1.

Decision

The common stressors that predicated the decision to change schools were based

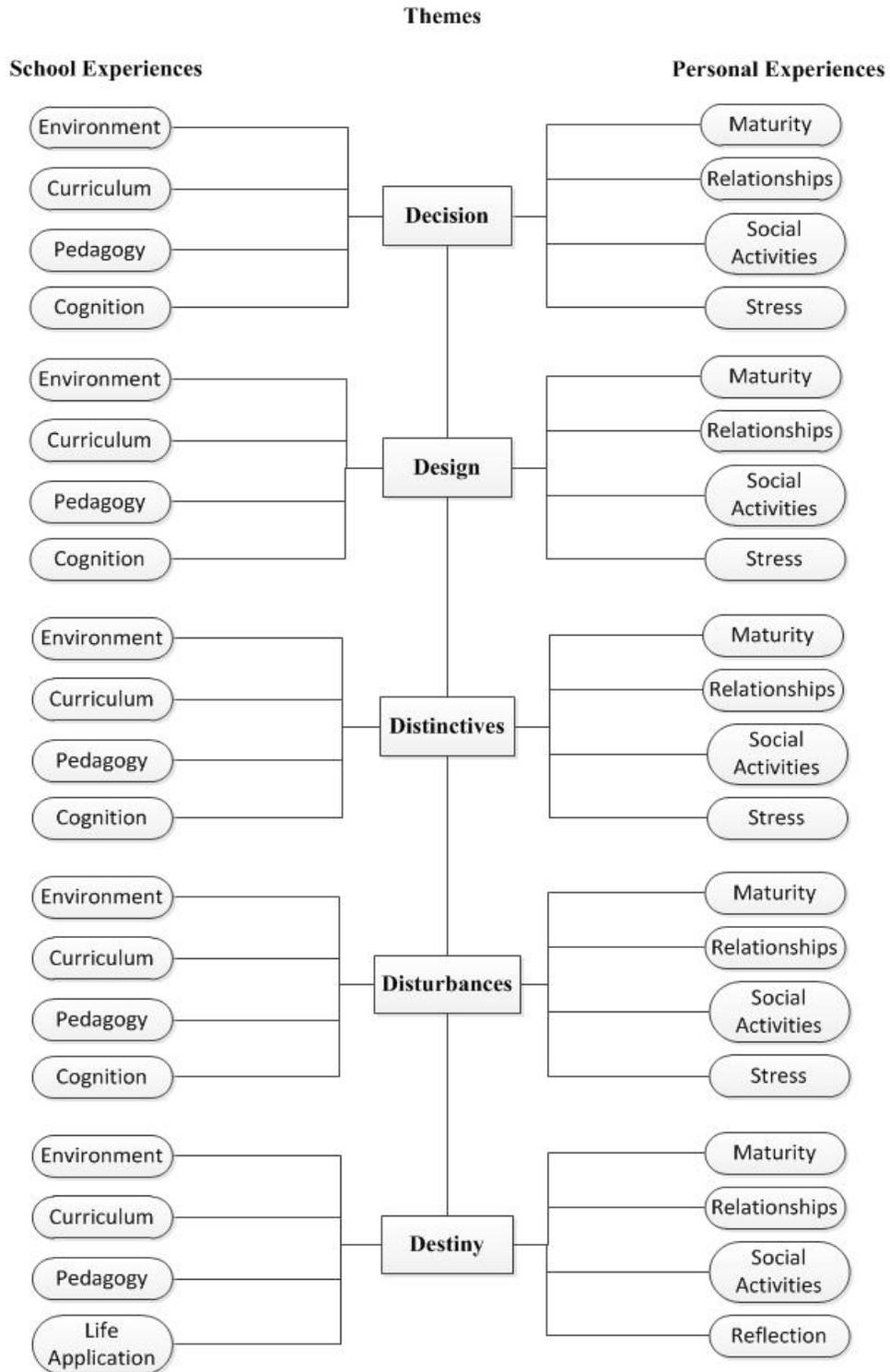


Figure 1. Themes, categories, and interrelated subcategories descriptive of experiences students encountered when changing from conventional school to home-based online schooling.

on conventional school academic quality, safety, spiritual values, and geographic moves. Deciding to make a school change and actually performing the deed was aided by readily available options or compounded by the lack of positive alternatives. In each case, family research that led to rationale for not choosing another conventional school mirrored the reasons the participants first desired to leave their current schools: inadequate academic rigor in the schools available, lack of instructional support for family values, social environment concerns, and travel and tuition costs associated with private education.

As the students and their parents considered home-based online schooling, the perceptual views parted at times. The parents continued to research fundamental qualities such as cost and academic quality. In contrast, the students initially perceived online schooling as an escape from the bonds of traditional educational pedagogy for freedom to individualize their educational experience. Continuing reflexivity brought deeper and broader academic and personal credence to the decision to enroll in an online school.

School experiences. The decision to change from conventional school to online school was strongly influenced by the participants' beliefs' in perceptual educational gains. Decisions' impacting their school lives related to the environment, curriculum, pedagogy, and cognition.

Environment. The boys viewed the home-based online school environment as a means to work at their own pace and thus finish school quicker. Sleeping in, working a few hours, and taking the rest of the day off to work a part-time job or engage in play activities was a common perception. Some feared social boredom. Stephen feared

academic weariness, resulting from sitting in front of the computer for hours and hours. Stephen also expressed concern that teaching himself in an online delivery format might require more effort than sitting in class and listening to the teacher. In the final analysis, their passion for greater scheduling control and independence in managing the online school environment suppressed any potential perceptive negative anxiety.

Each of the young ladies was also drawn to the notion of an independent environment. Additionally, the girls viewed the online environment as freedom from social comparisons related to fashion issues. Marquise expressed glee at the thought of attending school in her pajamas. The girls felt a feeling of liberation as they considered being able to study when their body clock was ready to study. They were also drawn to the notions of dictating their own daily schedule, learning at their own pace and not being rushed or held back by the needs of other students in the conventional classroom, having ample uninterrupted time to complete lesson assignments and projects, and being released from the social comparison trauma in which adolescent females often find themselves engaged. None of the girls expressed any fears in making the change to online school. From their vantage point, the online learning environment appeared to resolve their conventional school distress by catering to their desires for self-governance.

Curriculum. Conventional school curriculum was an expressed causal contributor in the academic phase of the decision-making process. All six of the individuals sought a curriculum that was based on spiritually supportive life values. In particular, Ben sought a biblically-based curriculum that taught conservative values instead of political correctness that he believed permeated secular conventional school textbooks and instruction.

All participants desired a curriculum that was college preparatory in design. Ann expressed concern that too many of her conventional school friends often shared that they had entered college unprepared for higher education's academic rigor. Leigh noted that she desired a curriculum that would help her raise her academic learning to a higher standard. According to Leigh, her conventional school courses were too repetitive and too easily mastered. For Leigh, her conventional school experience at the moment was academically boring.

Ben, Leigh, and Marquise expressed a desire for curriculum that was practical and incorporated activities that appealed to their learning styles. Marquise specifically sought a curriculum that interlocked with her need for hands-on learning. She preferred a curriculum that integrated fun activities. Marquise felt that just reading a book and submitting work online would be too one-dimensional, soon leading to boredom that would feed a desire to return to the social world of conventional school. For Marquise, the prospect of participating in a virtual chemistry lab illustrated a means to satisfy her blended hands-on learning with fun, safe, activity.

Pedagogy. Five of the six participants did not fault the instructional skills of their conventional school teachers as a causal factor in the decision-making process. Ann, as the lone dissident in this area, was adamant during her interview that teachers at her school were unprofessional in the manner in which they taught and in the manner in which they relationally communicated with students. Ann was distraught that the teachers did not connect life application to lesson facts. She detested being told to memorize information just because it would appear on the next test. Ann stated, "We never had homework. We had a test every other Friday. School was like brushing your

teeth, it's just something you did every day.”

Stephen expressed support for the quality of teachers under whom he was taught. He stated that his relationship with his teachers was one of mutual respect. His only criticism concerned family knowledge transfer. Stephen stated, “My oldest brother was a troublemaker. All the teachers knew him and they made assumptions that I would be like him. I was already in a crappy spot on the first day of school.”

As a group, the participants voiced concern that the traditional classroom instructional time was too often consumed with the teacher attempting to motivate unmotivated students. Additionally, the participants felt that time spent teaching to the average population decreased opportunity for advanced students to move forward and conversely frustrated students who felt rushed or lost because they needed further assistance to grasp a concept. In considering an online program, independent self-paced learning was highly appealing to the group.

Cognition. Considering a total change from teacher directed learning to independent learning, while appealing, created some cognitive misgivings. Leigh stated, “I think that part of the problem is that we grew up always being taught in the conventional school format. That is the way we were raised to learn.” Leigh further added, “I think students will learn better in online schooling when they get used to self-teaching.” The adolescents felt that a traditional model of independent homeschooling was not in their best interests. They desired a hybrid form of educational offering in which they could have the freedoms associated with homeschooling but, at the same time, enjoy the structured sequential curriculum and teacher support offered in conventional school. In essence they wanted to attend conventional school from home.

Searching for a home-based online school that provided independent learning with secondary live teacher support became the option of choice as these students sought assistance in transitioning from conventional school pedagogy to becoming independent learners.

Personal experiences. The decision to change from conventional school to online school was strongly influenced by the participants' beliefs' in personal gains. Decisions impacting their personal lives related to maturity, relationships, social activity, and stress.

Maturity. Beyond academic considerations, personal life ramifications played an integral part in deciding to make this school change. The maturation of the individuals was tested as they weighed choices in the decision-making process. In all cases, the participants had to factor in the reality that the decision to move to online education would cause them to sacrifice daily connectivity with friends. In addition, the decision would mean that they would forfeit numerous school social activities deemed to be the pinnacle of school attendance for rising seniors. They had to analyze and evaluate the conventional school stresses they were experiencing against the social losses they would incur by deciding to embrace the perceived unique opportunities waiting in home-based online school.

For Stephen, the decision to go to Africa was measured against missing his senior year in total. He determined the immediate and long-term benefits gained by taking the trip outweighed the school social life he would give up by making the decision. Upon his return, Stephen enrolled in a home-based online school, set a goal to complete his academic senior year in five or six months, graduated in the summer, and enrolled in

college as planned the next fall.

Chuck had some experience with online dual credit courses through a partnership his conventional school had with a university. Chuck's goal was to complete his freshman year before entering college. Changing to fulltime online schooling became a natural progression in his educational maturation.

Leigh thought she was emotionally strong enough to stand for her convictions in her new public school environment, but she soon learned that the surroundings were overwhelming. Leigh described her experience as a time of confusion. Antagonism from students in her school environment due to conflicting life values led to feelings of isolation. Close friendships were not being developed. She remained strong in her personal beliefs but the challenges resulting from being the social outsider drew her to desire school change.

Marquise had lived through the trauma of a campus crisis. Being a socialite in nature, Marquise was faced with her own social maturation dilemma. Leaving conventional school would provide safety, but it would severely curtail her love to be in the middle of a crowd of excited friends and acquaintances. For Marquise, a compromise was secured. Until her parents moved to another area of the city later in the fall, Marquise enjoyed a special arrangement with her former school that enabled her to remain in the school choir while she attended home-based online school fulltime.

For Ann, the decision to enroll in a home-based online school was more than an escape from a conventional school environment for which she held disdain. Ann relished the notion that she could move out of the mainstream educational box and engage in learning that complimented her personality. Ann liked to focus on a task and see it

through to completion. The opportunity to work at her own pace infused new life into this spirited young lady.

Relationships. Personal life ramifications in deciding to change from conventional school to home-based online school went beyond testing the maturity of these six individuals. The decision impacted relationships with friends and parents. Relationally, each of the six participants acknowledged that their connections with acquaintances would decrease, but they genuinely believed true friendships would stand the test of school-day separation. The participants acknowledged that the decrease in the amount of time they would spend with true friends would be counterproductive to the lifestyle they enjoyed. Forfeiting the number of friend contact hours which naturally occurred in the conventional school setting was deemed affordable for the opportunity to venture into this new educational venue. The belief that quantity time could be replaced with quality time was discussed and embraced among the friends.

For those making a geographic move and enrolling in an online school, anxiety was expressed that the choice would greatly decrease the opportunity to meet peers in the new community. The reality that the participants were nearing graduation softened this social fear. They rationalized that they were about to soon lose time with acquaintances and friends anyway as they graduated from school and entered into adult life. The participants also understood that the loneliness they might encounter in the short-term would be replaced by new relationships upon entering college.

For all of the participants, the decision-making process impacted their relationship with their parents. Whether initial change concerns were parent or child generated, the task of investigating educational options was most often child initiated and based on

input from friends, siblings, and online research. Family discussions added adult wisdom that was expressly appreciated by the adolescents. In each home, the final decision resulted in mutual agreement. The value of that mutuality would be later tested and become the eventual glue that held the decision together when the excitement and newness of being an online student waned.

Social activity. Deciding to leave conventional school and enroll in home-based online school immediately shifted the social calendar from school events to community events. Church activities, family activities, and previously established community organizational activities no longer conflicted with the myriad of school activities, but the number of event options also greatly decreased. The decreased activity reduced family pressure to juggle scheduling complexities, but, at times, created voids that the adolescents were unaccustomed to feeling.

Stress. In the final analysis, stress created the need for this decision-making process. Stress facilitated a full assessment of the academic and personal challenges that became foundationally critical in making the decision. Stress was proactively used as a catalyst by the members in each family to bring the family to decision consensus. Regardless of the natures of the stress producers, each of the participants, having located an online school that met the academic and personal qualities desired, arrived at affirmative resolution to make the change from conventional school to home-based online school.

Design

The transitional experience to home-based online school design was embarked upon with participant enthusiasm. The environmental setting shifted from a large

institutional building to the confines of each participant's house. The curriculum contained similar content as that in conventional school, but the content delivery was now technologically provided instead of teacher directed. Teachers provided secondary support through an imbedded message system within the curriculum rather than functioning as primary instructors. Learning was now the result of self-disciplined student effort instead of teacher monitored reminders.

School experiences. Descriptive learning experiences were noted by the participants as they interacted with their new school design. Design experiences were reported in regard to environment, curriculum, pedagogy, and cognition.

Environment. In describing their school experiences, the six participants were quick to articulate unique aspects of their home-based environments and their individualized academic day. The length of school day, the value of flexibility in the study schedule, the advantage of working at their own pace, and the comfort in the home environment were the most commonly noted contrasts between conventional school and home-based online school settings. Stephen noted,

In the regular school day, you are spending about seven hours in school, but I am not sure where the time went. It's almost like they've organized the system so much that you waste a lot of time and don't even know it. In online school, you can do your work at your own pace and at times of your choosing.

Stephen scheduled his school time around his part-time job at a major chain restaurant. Leigh and Ann liked to study at night. Marquise was not an early morning person, so she studied in the mid-day. Chuck and Ben, by parental mandate began their

study day at 8:30 AM. All classwork was included as part of the lesson design so that when a lesson was completed no outside-of-class expectations were required, other than completing projects or studying for quizzes and tests. Students normally completed their school day in four to five hours.

Unlike the conventional school classroom with a small desk and defined classroom regulations, the home-based online school environment allowed student freedom to change study locations for the sake of variety and comfort. If desired, students could improve the size of the desk area to accommodate assignment needs by using a kitchen or dining room table. Choice of comfortable seating was a plus and snacks were available whenever desired. No dress code was required. Being late to class was impossible. Listening to music while completing an essay and taking breaks when tired were at the discretion of the learner. There was no requirement to sit still, be quiet, and focus on the teacher. For Stephen, the online environment meant an end to school mischief. “When you have all these people around you in class, it is a temptation to misbehave. I always got in trouble for talking. I was the class clown.”

The biggest adjustment each of the participants noted was that the environment had a sterility of quietness. Leigh summarized everyone’s feelings in reporting that online school is a very isolated environment. Chuck added that his biggest challenge was getting accustomed to being alone.

Curriculum. Online curriculum, like the conventional school curriculum they left, was college preparatory in thrust. Course schedules followed state-mandated graduation requirements. Additionally, students were provided opportunity to augment their core curriculum with community-offered electives. In this specific school design,

the participant's home-based online school curriculum was additionally biblically-integrated with Christian principles which met the desires and definitions for values education desired by each of the participants.

Stephen took advantage of the opportunity to add an elective graphic design course offered in his community. The course had not been available in his previous conventional school. As a part of the course, Stephen worked with a small group of class members to develop a small videogame. That course became the foundation for his choice of a college major. In addition to expanding his school elective curriculum, the community option provided Stephen with additional social contacts beyond those enjoyed in his church activities and part-time employment.

Ann and Marquise reported success in history and English courses without having a teacher as the primary instructor. Four of the participants, two boys and two girls, stated great difficulty with their mathematics studies. Marquise commented that, without verbal instruction and teacher-generated examples, math became a monumental task. Ann agreed.

I would stare at the screen for hours, just wondering how in the world I was ever going to pass it. I tried meeting with friends, getting tutored, using the online school helpline, and absolutely nothing worked. I had been a good math student in my conventional school. At the school I had people show me how to work the problems, and I succeeded. Going from that success to having no idea what I was doing in Inverse Trigonometry was extremely frustrating. I ended up dropping that class and my physics class, which was similarly frustrating, because I wasn't able to complete

the work. I replaced the courses with other electives, but the loss of these courses caused me to not meet my goal of receiving an advanced diploma.

All six participants agreed that the rigor of the home-based online courses was equal to or superior to their conventional school counterparts. Ann stated that her online government class was her easiest class but added that it was “eight times harder” than any history class she had taken in her conventional school. The amount of assigned reading was greatly increased in Ann’s English class as compared to her previous conventional school courses. Wading through Shakespeare without a teacher was hard until Ann secured a modern version to augment the lesson readings. She added that, in her experience, conventional school courses sometimes seemed segmented and without overall sequential continuity. She admitted that her view may have been more the manner in which the teacher presented the material than a fault in the curriculum. In her online courses, though, Ann found the continuity she desired. Ann reported that knowledge gained in unit one was still being required at the end of the last unit of the course.

Pedagogy. The participants stated that time management was a major challenge. They shared that conventional school teachers laid out the expectations and maintained rigid deadlines. Home-based online school software provided due dates, but meeting or not meeting the due dates was the student’s responsibility. As a result, procrastination became a major temptation. Participants reported the enticement to break from schoolwork and surf the web or play video games was a powerful urge that was often not resisted.

The participants also expressed that self-teaching was sometimes a daunting task.

The participants were accustomed to ready assistance when they had questions or lacked understanding in their conventional school. In the home-based online design, the student had to submerge into the lesson material until mastery was achieved. Marquise stated that she found herself checking over her schoolwork with much more thoroughness than when she attended conventional school. As her own teacher, she no longer just skimmed over her work to let the teacher tell her what to do.

Parental assistance was beneficial at times when knowledge of the lesson concepts was not understood. Chuck and Ben utilized their mothers' strengths in English to proofread essays and help with grammar and spelling. Ben's perception of his father as the academic expert in all subject areas was dampened when the two worked on Calculus. Describing the situation, Ben shared that his father spent a lot of time researching on the internet while Ben spent a commensurate time waiting for assistance. Online teacher instructional support was declared to be effective but, if not utilizing the live call-in options, waiting for a teacher email response was at times beyond the maximum 24 hours declared by school policy.

In conventional school classes, the participants reported that they were accustomed to the practice that not finishing course goals in a 180-day school calendar regularly led to a move to the next grade level regardless of the amount of material covered. In online school, the entire curriculum had to be completed regardless of the time taken. Though the software assigned the course to be accomplished in 180 day increments, the final grade was not issued until all assignments were completed, submitted, and graded. Chuck's father motivated his son by mandating that any failed course had to be paid for by Chuck.

Cognition. Cognitively, the participants stated that their online experiences taught them to take responsibility and ownership for what they learned. In addition, they shared that their experiences improved self-motivation and self-discipline. Leigh stated that she always got a feeling of pride when she finished a subject early and thus did not have to worry about it for the rest of the school year. The feeling of pride was in stark contrast to the feeling she experienced when she procrastinated and let work accumulate.

The participants noted that the pressure to achieve was completely on the student. Discipline measures were simple and intrinsically established: complete the task or you don't move forward. Incompletion was soon learned to be a greater failure than low grades. Incompletion meant extending the school year and extension requests could incur additional financial costs. For seniors, extending the school year meant graduation delay and potential interference with college entrance plans. Incompletion also meant grade-level or course repetition if return to conventional school was reconsidered.

The males and females, as complete groups, differed in learning styles. The three male participants stated that they were fundamentally visual learners. The gentlemen reported that they learned well by reading and watching the animation and video clips imbedded in the online curriculum. They enjoyed independence in deference to teacher lectures and conventional methodologies such as small group learning activities. Math was the lone exception. In math, they expressed the need to hear the information and to see the problems worked. The three females identified themselves as predominantly auditory learners with visual tendencies. The ladies expressed that learning confidence peaked when they had a positive relationship with a teacher who was knowledgeable and who could clearly articulate conceptual information. Leigh added that she enjoyed the

interactive learning gained in small group work.

Without desired close teacher relationships in her home-based online school design, Leigh described a resultant learning reversal. Proficient in study skills, Leigh reported that her independent learning experience dulled her drive to excel. The lack of relational praise from a teacher caused Leigh to begin to finish assignments purely for the sake of completion. She noted that as time progressed her writing skills regressed. Even though she received written feedback from the online teachers, the face-to-face relational disconnect created a motivational void.

The participants noted that the online curriculum was predominantly a visual textual presentation with animation and video aspects embedded in the lessons that appealed to visual learners. All curriculums were available on the computer screen. No textbooks were required for purchase. Textbooks could not be lost or damaged. Access to the curriculum was available from any computer that had strong internet access. Students could print lessons if they desired hard copies, but that was purely optional. All lesson assignments were completed and submitted online. Schoolwork was stored on the school's massive file servers. If a personal computer hard drive crashed, no school work was lost. Neither students nor teachers could claim the other lost completed student work.

Traditional auditory emphasis was relegated to brief video clips. Taped teacher presentations were not included in this particular school's design. The textual presentation did have text-to-voice capability for students who desired to have the information read to them. Live call-in teacher assistance was available for instructional support when auditory explanations were desired. Traditional kinesthetic learning was most often found in science labs and courses such as physical education and health,

music, home economics, business computer, and music theory. All coursework required computer software manipulation and typing skills which added a uniquely universal kinesthetic aspect to the learning process.

To stay motivated, participants rewarded themselves with time to play games, watch movies, listen to music, and meet with friends. Ben found that the freedom to explore online resources in search of information to answer self-initiated questions was enjoyable and often quicker than waiting on teacher responses. Ann found that scheduling her courses in blocks of time was motivational because the practice of concentrated study aided her ability to learn and retain information. At the end of a course, she rewarded herself with a couple of weeks of free time. Her mother often added her support in the celebration by giving Ann a gift card to Starbucks.

Gaps in learning skills quickly materialized when four of the participants first entered the home-based online learning design. Reading for comprehension was not a noted issue, but deficiencies in study skills such as note-taking and test preparation were exposed. Without the conventional school teacher telling the students what to write in their notes or displaying key thoughts in a PowerPoint presentation, the students experienced difficulty making notes from textual material. Without review-days before major tests, during which the teachers identified the specific information for study concentration, the students found they floundered in test-taking readiness. What had been considered by conventional school teachers as methodology to teach students the nuances of note taking and test preparation had become a crutch rather than a learning platform. For these home-based online school enrollees, the crutches broke and the students fell flat.

Ann tried journaling as a note-taking method but expressed that the procedure, while a valuable asset in learning and retaining information, took a lot of time. She found assistance with resources such as Google Notebook and SparkNotes to be quicker reference resource tools. Marquise developed her own organizational procedures through trial and error. Marquise eventually became so proficient in writing and organization that she became the family leader in organizational skill and her father declared Marquise as his home secretary.

Self-teaching made the task of learning in the home-based online school much more challenging than learning under the tutelage of a conventional school teacher, but the participants reported that, overall, their cognitive abilities increased through the complexity of the transitional process. They declared that self-teaching quickened the pace to becoming an independent learner. Self-teaching increased understanding of the importance of time management to meet life goals. They later found that gaining skills as an independent learner and time manager greatly impacted successful transition to self-sufficiency expected in college academic life.

Personal experiences. Descriptive personal experiences were noted by the participants as they interacted with their new school design. Online design experiences were reported in meeting human needs in the areas of maturity, relationships, social activity, and stress.

Maturity. Home-based online school design experiences were not singularly academically oriented. According to participant interview reflexions, home-based online school involvement impacted the maturational growth and social experiences of the adolescents. Personal attributes such as self-understanding, self-discipline, responsibility,

perseverance, and time management were declared by the participants to be direct maturational outcomes from their involvement in home-based online school. The participants noted that these outcomes were also desired results in conventional school programs, but the uniqueness of isolated life away from the influence of peers and direct teacher oversight personalized and individualized their experience, enabling the adolescents to view clear strength and weakness self-portraits as they transitioned to becoming independent learners.

Stephen and Leigh agreed that being away from peers in the conventional school enabled each to better understand their true personage. They postulated that the more individuals are in company with other peers, the more likely their personalities begin to blend. Removing themselves from conventional school provided a means for self-evaluation that led to honest objectivity in determining personal strengths and weaknesses. Stephen and Leigh expressed that the home-based online school experience taught them that self-knowledge and maturational growth is not found in the opinions of other people but in one's level of self-understanding and self-determination. As a result, they began to push themselves toward higher goals instead of just going along with the crowd.

Stephen, Chuck, and Ben reported that involvement in the home-based online school design helped them mature in time management because they became solely responsible and self-accountable for success or failure. Stephen's time-management skills grew as a result of maintaining a daytime work schedule and facilitating school attendance in off hours. Ben and Chuck discovered that consistency in a study schedule and daily routine required self-motivation and self-discipline. The boys asserted that they

learned the value of pride in a job well-done and stated that the process shaped their deepening commitment to manifesting the character quality of responsibility.

Marquise stated that the home-based online school activity contributed to strengthening self-discipline. As she learned to organize her study schedule, Marquise learned that writing lists of goals did not lead to fulfillment without self-discipline to see the tasks to completion. Through the combinational use of organizational skill improvement and self-determination in pursuit of goal attainment, Marquise reported that she grew in her understanding of short-range and mid-range goal setting for successful task accomplishment. Marquise used this learning to avoid over-emphasis in easy assignments and under-effort in difficult assignments.

Relationships. Concern for the impact of home-based experience on peer relationships was an overarching matter of expressed interest by all six participants. Stephen noted that friends in conventional school had been a distraction. Without the distractions, Stephen reported that he was able to focus on his schoolwork, and he completed his assignments more quickly. Ben stated that he used peer competition in conventional school as motivation to excel. The lack of peer contact diminished the comparative challenges and caused Ben to have to seek new avenues for self-motivation. Ann stated that it was difficult to maintain friendships because she was no longer in the conventional school environment. She and her friends continued to communicate, but she soon began to realize that the common ground for much of their conversation had been related to shared school activities. The loss of that common ground created a drift in their affinity and that was a great shock to Ann. With an outgoing personality, Ann thrived in relationships.

The participants reported that they quickly learned that acquaintances contributed to the feeling of a large friend base, but acquaintance relationships dissipated rapidly after leaving the conventional school. True friends remained as true friends. True friends continued to find ways to spend time together. Talking on the phone, texting, emailing, going to the movies, playing video games, hanging out at each other's houses, enjoying sleepovers, attending church activities, and eating at a fast-food location were common previous activities that continued unabated. Marquise stated that she spent four-to-six hours per day communicating with her friends before and after leaving conventional school. Chuck agreed. He stated that the amount of his daily communication time with friends was about four hours and it did not dramatically alter with the school change. The major shift was not in the time spent with friends but in the amount of face-to-face contact lost as a result of this school change. Marquise added, "Online school is nothing like conventional school for social interaction, but not having friends visibly in class is not the end of the world. We still got together on weekday evenings and weekends. If we were not physically together, we talked on the phone."

Four of the six participants remained in their local community so the school change did not have a dramatic impact on their established friendships and outside-of-school social activities. The transitional experience was eased because the educational design setting only involved a change from conventional school to the established confines of home. Close friendships were not uprooted.

Social activity. Geographic moves and adolescent accompanying attitudes regarding the school-change process greatly compounded the social ramifications associated with their transitional experiences. Marquise's family moved shortly after

beginning the home-based online school experience and Leigh's family moved prior to the short period of time Leigh spent in conventional school before changing to online school. In both instances, the adolescents were faced with new environments that lacked the natural use of a school setting to develop friendships. Attitudinal responses were the key differences to the girl's social situations and thus they experienced different social results.

Marquise stated that the geographic move shocked her comfort zone, but she embraced the change as a positive family decision. Marquise described her social life just after the move as being closed in a box. She sought opportunities to become socially active in her church and in gaining a part-time job. Marquise realized that distance limited social activity with her old friends but it did not mean they were no longer friends. She maintained contacts with her previous community of friends through Facebook, phone conversations, email, and texting. She found encouragement as the adjustment period progressed and new relationships were added to her pre-existing friend base.

Leigh described her situation as one of extreme loneliness. Not naturally assertive, Leigh attempted unsuccessfully to make friends at the new conventional school. Alienation in that school environment and a bad attitude regarding the family move led to depression. Leigh tried to establish relationships at church and other community activities but her social void was not satisfied. There was no homeschool coop in the community for peer activity. Leigh stated that she experienced the lifestyle of a social hermit for the two years she was a home-based online student.

Based on Leigh's social experiences, she voiced concern that homeschoolers tend

to be generally branded as awkward children because they have not experienced conventional school life. Having been in both environments, Leigh noted that not all conventional school students are socially adept, even with the conventional environment. She postulated that the power of the home as a critical influence in raising children to have grace and poise in social settings is not being given proper scrutiny. Stephen and Chuck readily agreed. They added that it is the parent's responsibility to shape the social skills of the children. Whether that teaching is tested in the general community or in a conventional school setting does not make the test center responsible for parental success or failure.

Adolescent and parental relationships were experientially impacted in using the home-based online school design. Participants considered themselves to be pioneers in their families because the parents were products of conventional education. Even though some of the parents had online college experience, the adolescents, at times, felt distanced and lacking in emotional support because the parents had no firsthand understanding of high school home-based online education.

Participants reported that their parents attempted to be involved in their child's home-based online school endeavors in differing manners and to varying degrees. Sometimes parents used a close hands-on approach that included assisting in the teaching-learning process when requested by the adolescents. Other parents utilized a more moderate approach by checking daily academic progress in the school's online grade book. The least obtrusive support option was a fully-trusting hands-off approach that left actions and consequences totally up to the student. Ben's parents were reported to be strong motivators. His father mandated consistency in waking every morning at

8:30 to start the school day. Ben knew that poor grades or procrastination would be quickly determined because his parents maintained a constant vigilance of his academic progress by frequently using the online grade book access. Chuck's parents initially trusted him to do his work. After his father received notification from Chuck's online school academic adviser expressing concern that Chuck was behind in his work, life changed and established time and work expectations became the norm. Stephen's parents were accustomed to maintaining a tight rein on his study efforts in conventional school, and they continued the custom in home-based online school. As time progressed, Stephen's parents viewed growing maturity through consistency in work completion, and they began to reduce their external pressure. Stephen responded positively to the change. The rise in parental trust was met with increased self-motivation and self-discipline that accentuated his passion for independence.

Stress. The delicate balance between accountability and overt pressure to succeed was a critical relational stress contributor. Leigh struggled with anger toward her father because of the geographic move. She stated that she and her mother got "sick of seeing each other every day." Leigh's mother often worked from home as a realtor. In Leigh's words, "the constant togetherness put a strain on our relationship and caused constant bickering." To avoid conflict, Leigh chose to do schoolwork at night and to sleep during the day. Not explaining to her parents what she was doing resulted in Leigh's belief that her parents thought she was lazy. Leigh's conflict resolution attempt only further aggravated the situation from her perspective.

Chuck stated that being home every day and needing quiet to study strained his mother's lifestyle. Chuck's work space was at the kitchen table. Performing normal

household duties often created distracting noise that interrupted Chuck's ability to concentrate.

Ann stated that her mother "was on her case all the time about schoolwork." Her parents had a consistent history of pushing Ann to excel and to go further in school. Daily prodding by Ann's mother added stress within Ann to meet the expectation. Ann tried to explain the difficulties she was having in math and physics, but unable to help, her mother continued to resort to the role of cheerleader. Ann appreciated that her mother cared, but the cheering was not always taken in a positive light and "a little stress between us resulted."

In the final analysis, home-based online school design was understood, by these adolescents, to be a technologically-delivered educational tool in the hands of the user. Neither conventional school nor home-based online school automatically ensured positive or negative adolescent experiences. In themselves, they are lifeless entities. Comparison advantages and disadvantages were perceptually brought to life based on the personalities, learning styles, educational goals, and social experiences of the individuals who used the designs. Stress was resolved or created based on the actions of individuals as they interacted with the design of choice.

Based on the experiential statements of the six research participants, time management, self-motivation, and self-discipline were declared as critical personal character traits fundamental to academic success in the home-based online school. Parental involvement in the adolescents' home-based online experience took varying forms and provided diverse support functions. Parental involvement, merged with the maturational student character traits, provided a potentially powerful basis for student

learning. Parental encouragement, though, became adolescent discouragement when caring accountability was perceived as nagging pressure to achieve.

Marquise and Leigh noted that their geographic moves, coupled with initial enrollment in the home-based online school, created major social stress. The ramifications of a geographic move and simultaneous enrollment in home-based online school greatly reduced their social connectivity options for meeting new peers. The situations presented a complexity of significant social challenges. Resultant social adjustment success or failure was greatly influenced by their attitudinal response to the family relocation.

Distinctives

Collaborative decision-making in each home setting determined that enrollment in home-based online school would sufficiently reduce identified educational stressors. Marquise, like the other five participants, reported that she was thrilled with the decision. Excitement continued as classes began. She entered home-based online school with a curiosity as to what school experiences and personal experiences she would encounter. Marquise was not alone. At the moment of the decision to enroll, each of the other five participants expressed similar thoughts. Perceptual understanding, based on research information gathered by the participants, facilitated the euphoria of walking this new educational path. The participants considered themselves to be pioneers in a new hybrid form of education that seemed to have many of their desired qualities of the conventional school world merged with perceived positive qualities of homeschooling.

As graduates reflecting on their experiences, pre-experience questions were now replaced with substantive answers. The participants were no longer naïve novices; the

adolescents were now online school veterans. Analysis of their richly articulated experiences led to a collection of valued positive home-based online distinctives.

School experiences. Participants' celebrated academic decision-making confirmations as they transitioned to online schooling. Lists of distinctive school experiences were formulated as they experienced decision and design positives related to school environment, curriculum, pedagogy, and cognition.

Environment.

- Environmental safety
- Environmental comfort chosen by the student
- Portability of the study area within the home
- Access to school curriculum anyplace the internet is available
- Length of school day reduced
- Open enrollment allows family choices in vacation options
- Flexibility in study schedule controlled by the student
- Increased student free time realized
- Student determined "classroom rules" increases academic ownership

Curriculum.

- Technologically provided textbooks save cost and storage space
- Parentally supported life values integrated
- Sequential continuity provided in the curriculum scope and sequence
- Emphasis on practical life applicability
- College preparatory rigor

- State graduation requirements compliant
- Personal interest and community offered elective choices encouraged
- Vast enrichment internet resources
- Vast research internet resources
- Variety in textual presentation
- Variety in learning activities modalities
- Virtual science lab provides environmental safety and negates the purchase of lab equipment

Pedagogy.

- State certified teacher support provided
- Multiple means of student and interaction offered
- Weekly and daily assignment schedule provided
- Work pace controlled by student learning
- Mastery learning methodology emphasized
- Individualized study methods permitted: Block or traditional formats
- Personal choice in prioritizing daily assignment completion tasks
- Internet is available for research
- Completed student work is electronically submitted and securely stored on the school's file servers
- Non-motivated students in the classroom no longer impeded learning progress

Cognition.

- Independent learning goals emphasized
- Self-paced learning
- Daily school hours could be coordinated with body clock readiness to learn
- Variety in textual presentation
- Variety in learning modality activities provided
- Time management and self-motivation emphasized
- Independent study skills strengthened
- Typing skills improved
- Computer software skills improved

Personal experiences. In addition to school level positives, participants' celebrated personal gain confirmations as they transitioned to online schooling. Lists of distinctive experiences were formulated as personal gains were noted in maturity, relationships, social activities, and stress reduction.

Maturity.

- Adolescent natural desires for independence were ignited
- Completing assignments independently resulted in pride of accomplishment
- Time management skills were strengthened
- Responsibility and self-sufficiency attributes were strengthened
- Self-discipline qualities improved

- Self-motivation improved
- Independent learning skills strengthened
- Self-respect heightened
- Self-teaching quickened the pace to becoming an independent learner

Relationships.

- Peer pressure reduced
- Peer comparison trauma often experienced in conventional school reduced
- Compulsivity to interfere with other peer problems reduced
- Conflicting family social activity schedules were reduced
- True friend appreciation increased
- Understanding that self-worth is not based on other people's opinions was more clearly understood
- Parental trust in student decisions improved
- Social skill decrease did not materialize

Social activity.

- Personal free time to pursue interests increased
- Creativity in developing social activity options increased
- Social understanding that distance can reveal friendship character was tested
- Time to participate in community activities increased

Stress.

- Character was strengthened by managing self-pressure to achieve

- Self-teaching decreased stress by improving time management skills
- Self-teaching increased motivation to excel and thus decreased procrastination
- Visual rewards imbedded in the curriculum software aided student motivation
- Attitudinal response to geographic change was critical to successful transition

Participants were experientially encouraged as they embraced these valued distinctives in their transition from conventional school to home-based online school. Of these elements, the participants were unanimous in declaring the following school distinctives as critically supportive in the school-change process.

- Flexibility and portability of the home-based online school environment
- Academic curriculum that is college preparatory in rigor
- Self-paced instruction
- Self-paced learning

The participants were also unanimous in reporting that personal maturational growth increased as personal experiences were integrated with their school experiences. The change to home-based online school provided fertile ground to actively engage in adolescent passion for independence. The passion was bridled as the adolescents realized the need to accept responsibility for successes and failures. Accepting responsibility, though, led to self-motivation to complete work in a timely manner, which in turn impacted a growing level of self-discipline and the use of improved study skills. The maturational spiral continued upward as self-motivation and self-discipline resulted in

expressed realization that the participants were quickly becoming independent learners.

Disturbances

Common in decision-making, there are good aspects of the choice, and at times there are difficulties. The path to becoming an independent learner and subsequent high school graduate was not always filled with excitement and joy that might be assumed when reading the list of distinctives. The stories of the six participants began with positive anticipation, and each did achieve the goal of high school graduation. The path, at times though, was filled with frustration and serious concern. Negative experiences that they did not foresee prior to enrolling in the online school created new school-related and personal stressors uniquely imbedded in their experiences with the school's home-based online program.

School experiences. Unforeseen school experiences tempered some of the enthusiasm generated by the lists of school experience distinctives. Lists of negative disturbances were formulated as the participants reported their transitions to school environment, curriculum, pedagogy, and cognition.

Environment.

- Sterility of quietness that caused the student mind to wander
- Isolation from people resulted in lack of pressure to perform academically
- Self-teaching was a major challenge
- Opportunities to make new friends online was not technologically provided by the online school
- Parental performance of normal household duties became a distraction in study time

- Geographic move coupled with home-based online enrollment lacked the natural use of the school setting to make new friends

Curriculum.

- Curriculum was predominantly textual presentation
- Reading volume increased due to the curriculum textual design and natural inclusion in lesson assignments
- Online textbooks denied the student the opportunity to underline key thoughts and to make marginal notes
- Traditional auditory classroom instruction was relegated to brief audio clips and animation
- Curriculum was more inclusive and rigorous than conventional school curriculum

Pedagogy.

- Decrease in verbal instruction negatively impacted auditory learning
- Mathematics and upper sciences were highly difficult to self-teach: math tutor sought
- Time management was a major challenge
- Procrastination was a major temptation
- Surfing the web, social networking, and YouTube were powerful time-loss temptations
- Thoroughness in checking completed work became the task of the student
- Parental assistance was limited to the educational preparation of the adults

- Live call-in assistance was not available at all hours and weekends
- Waiting for teacher email response was often the next day or longer
- Small group learning was negated
- Means for peer-to-peer learning interaction was not available

Cognition.

- Pressure to learn was completely on the student
- Inability to complete advanced core subjects due to the difficulty of the content and lack of visual and auditory instruction led to a loss in achieving the desired advance diploma
- Gaps in learning skills quickly materialized and became the responsibility of the student to resolve
- Lack of peer competition decreased motivation to excel

Personal experiences. Unforeseen personal experiences tempered some of the enthusiasm generated by the lists of personal distinctives. Lists of negative experiences were formulated as personal disturbances impacted maturity, relationships, social activities, and stress reduction.

Maturity.

- Maintaining a study schedule required self-motivation and self-discipline that was often lacking without external accountability
- Not succumbing to procrastination was a major character test
- Self-disappointment resulted when the self-challenge to excel was not pursued

- Lack of face-to-face teacher accountability resulted in laziness
- Lack of personal study-schedule establishment demonstrated poor time management skills
- Success in one week caused a feeling that the next week could be taken as a celebratory break

Relationships.

- Face-to-face relational time with friends decreased
- Lack of time with friends was viewed as counterproductive to the preferred social lifestyle
- Lack of school-time shared activity created a decrease in conversational common ground that led to drift in relationships
- Acquaintance relationships dissipated rapidly
- Loss of close teacher relationships decreased student learning confidence
- Constant parent-child togetherness seemed to accentuate relationship stress
- Geographic move created the greatest trauma for maintaining existing friends and developing new friends

Social activity.

- Social activity void was at times not fully satisfied with community opportunities
- Life seemed boring and colorless at times
- Sitting behind the computer was not as rewarding as social activity

- Going from full school activity to no school activity provided an unexpected culture shock
- Friends and acquaintances continued to expand their friend base as new students enrolled in conventional school and the home-based student was left out

Stress.

- Technical problems such as connectivity losses and exactness in answer format and spelling for the software grader increased stress
- Parental inexperience with home-based online learning caused a relational parent-child gap
- Parental accountability encouragement was at times viewed by adolescents as overt pressure to succeed
- Geographic move decreased opportunity to meet new peers in a school setting and potential social withdrawal
- Lack of hands-on help providing demonstrative learning at the moment of need was frustrating
- Delays in communication with the online teacher were a major source of anxiety
- Procrastination led to massive amounts of work to be completed in short periods of time

All participants acknowledged times that they encountered feelings of discouragement as home-based online students. The enjoyment and comfort of home freedoms were tempered by isolation from peers. The participants described the isolation

as sterility in the social and study environment, much different from the social energy found in conventional school. For some, the lack of peer and teacher face-to-face encouragement contributed to culture shock. The drifting away of acquaintance relationships added to a feeling of loneliness and social loss. The lack of external instructional assistance and accountability, usually provided by conventional school teachers and competitive peers, caused internal self-responsibility pressure that tested the adolescents' skill level for and commitment to self-teaching and self-learning.

Academic rigor did not meet a presupposition that home-based school might be a casual walk in the park. In this particular school, curriculum writers' attempts to appeal to all learning styles in a technological delivery format remained basically textual in presentation, requiring concerted learning effort for students who were auditory or kinesthetic learners. Technological requirement for exactness in objective question answers caused correctly answered content to be graded as incorrect due to spelling errors. Internet connectivity losses slowed assignment completion. Delays in teacher response to student generated questions contributed to hindrances in student assignment completion and submission. Upper level math and science self-teaching was reported to be nearly impossible for several participants and securing face-to-face tutorial support was helpful but not failsafe. Time management was a constant struggle due to the influence of internet distractors. Poor study skills were accentuated. Failure to excel provided feelings of disappointment and strained self-resolve to persevere toward learning goal accomplishment.

Whether a geographic move was or was not involved in the school change to home-based online school, the disturbances described thus far were commonly reported

by the participants. Geographic move associated with simultaneous enrollment in home-based online school greatly accentuated the social impact of the disturbances. The two participants that experienced geographic moves stated that previously established peer relationships were uprooted. Not having the naturally occurring community concentration of peers found in the conventional school setting impeded social contacts and thus delayed new friend accession.

Seeking and utilizing other social opportunities was, in the two cases in this study, controlled by the assertiveness of the personalities of the individuals and their attitudes toward the family relocation. The participant with a naturally outgoing personality and positive attitude regarding the geographic move experienced the establishment of new friends over time. The participant with a more reserved personality and a poor attitude toward the move reported major problems in establishing satisfactory social connectivity. The determination as to which element, personality or attitude, was the greatest causal force in the social adjustment period was not discernible in the views of the individuals involved. They agreed that the geographic move and subsequent enrollment in home-based online school was, in itself, a significant transitional emotional and social contributor, regardless of their personality differences and whether they agreed with the move or not. They also agreed that personality, attitude, and family support accentuated or diffused the influential ramifications associated with the geographic move and this form of school change.

Disturbances, at times, clouded the perspectives for all of the participants. In the down times, they found that self-evaluation and renewed goal setting was important. Chuck summed up their resolve in stating that the lack of full understanding made the

first year a testing of the waters, but a second year would be approached with clearer comprehension of the school nuances and personal demands that were foundational for success.

All four of the non-geographic move participants reported that if they had not graduated, they would have readily enrolled in another year of online school.

Interestingly, even after a difficult geographic move and accompanying personal and social difficulties, Leigh stated that she would re-enroll if she were afforded the opportunity. With attitudinal issues resolved and renewed desire to develop outside relationships, Leigh reported confidence that the quality of the education and resolution with past issues would have brought her closer to the full experience she desired.

Marquise dissented. She stated that home-based school did not satisfy her social needs.

Marquise yearned to get back in the classroom. Her need to interact with peers and teachers was too strong to remain in the home-based setting.

Destiny

Thematically, the story of the six participants has thus far walked an experiential path on which these adolescents richly described the decision process to enroll in home-based online school in response to conventional school stressors. Their stories continued as an articulation of experiential transitions to and interactions with the home-based online school design. In the previous two themes, the adolescents shared the valued distinctives they experienced in making the adjustment to their new school and the unforeseen disturbances they encountered in the experience.

A common thread woven in the participants' shared stories was their desire for self-improvement. The stories of these individuals conclude with a summation of the

life-applicative knowledge they experientially gained during the school-change process. These adolescents considered high school graduation to be their immediate destiny. This theme thus became the participants' shared reflective thoughts regarding their school-change experiences in relation to development of perceived life-skills necessary to fulfill their graduation destiny.

School experiences. As the participants' reflected on school-change transitional experiences, they noted academic life-lessons gained in their pursuit of their precollege destiny—high school graduation. Reflections were reported in regards to school environment, curriculum, pedagogy, and life skills.

Environment. Participants acknowledged that home-based school increases the amount of daily free-time. They stated that skill to manage free time directly improved their study-time efficiency as they learned to set goals and to work within defined time parameters. In the process, they developed self-determination to avoid procrastination to ensure assignment completion.

In addition, the online design provided learning experiences that led to improved participant technological skills as participants logged into the homepage, read assignments, researched information, completed assignments, took tests, and diagnosed and resolved technical problems. Resolving problems provided a natural means for development of independent life-skills. Utilization of online inquiry strategies developed participants' skills in writing and research proficiency that improved learning assessment results and eventually culminated in high school graduation.

Curriculum. Ann stated that online academic rigor challenged her to go beyond basic assignment fulfillment in order to master a subject. The others agreed. They

shared that adjustment to the level of difficulty in understanding and learning text-driven material developed reading skills and pursuit of supplemental information in preparation for completion of assignment questions. Familiarity with the material was soon learned to not constitute mastery of the content.

Pedagogy. Participants stated that their pedagogical and cognitive experiences in conventional school were often test oriented. Information was structured for memorization and basic recall so that test scores could be elevated. Tying facts and concepts to previous learning and life application was often minimized because of time constraints. The adolescents felt unattached information was harder to learn and thus quickly forgotten. When entering online school, the participants realized that they habitually resorted to completing assignments for recall but not mastery. Learning to self-teach for learning mastery became an important transitional experience.

Life skills. Wait time for teacher response to student email questions was a chronic concern for the transitioning participants. Impatience, though, became a motivation to resolve questions without requiring the assistance of a teacher. The life value of patience was strengthened in the process. The participants agreed that the delayed-response frustration became a valued catalyst that impacted their progress in becoming independent learners.

Personal experiences. As the participants' reflected on school-change transitional experiences, they also noted personal life lessons gained in their pursuit of their precollege destiny—high school graduation. Reflections were reported in regards to maturity, relationships, social activities, and parting advice to future students considering making a similar school-change decision.

Maturity. Ann stated that her greatest influence for success in online learning was productively utilizing decision-making independence. The other participants added agreement that the freedom to make daily school and socially related decisions in the home-based environment contributed to learning to accept responsibility for choices and subsequent consequences. They found that responsibility quickened the maturational development of self-motivation and self-discipline. These qualities became the basis from which effective independent study habits were strengthened. Understanding that life success is the result of concerted self-effort was solidified.

Relationships and social activity. For the participants who changed schools without a geographic move, restructuring social activities was not considered a major challenge. Their greatest adjustment resulted in the realization that acquaintances are not true friends. The adolescents cited the reduction in the numbers of social contacts as a negative for the potential development of acquaintances to true friend relationships. The life lesson gained was that close friendships need concerted and substantive time and effort to last. Familiarity is not always an indicator of quality relationship development.

Participants experiencing a geographic move and enrollment in online school suffered the greatest social losses in the transition. Personal attitude during the move, maintaining former friendships from a distance, building new friendships in a new community, overcoming homesickness for the old community, and utilizing personality qualities to adjust to the new environment were identified as critical social adjustments. Negative attitude was reported to produce social isolation. A positive attitude was reported to utilize the new setting as an opportunity to develop new relationships and to expand social opportunities.

Parting participant reflexivity. As noted previously, the adolescents felt like pioneers in their homes and communities because of the newness of the home-based online approach to education. They understood that pioneers face uncertainty because pioneers are among the first to walk the experiential path. Additionally, they expressed joy in being able to share their experiences for the benefit of those yet to follow. From their experiences, the six participants offered the following practical advice, which they wished they had known in their decision-making process. This advice was offered so that future adolescents can be better prepared as they seek to embark on their similar school-change destiny.

- Prepare yourself for a big change. Online school is a very isolated environment. You're going to have to do everything on your own. People are not going to be telling you every little thing you need to know. Mentally know that the change is going to be a big difference. You're going to have to put a lot of effort into it to succeed.
- Let your online experience help you understand how to live in an environment with less external structure. Online school gives you a lot more opportunity to make individual decisions.
- Establish hours to do your work and maintain relationships with your friends.
- Find a proper motivational factor that will keep you focused so that you get your work done.
- Reward yourself for doing good work.
- Time off is a big motivator.
- Make sure that you are very active in your community. If you have outside-of-

school community activities and relationships, the transition is much smoother.

- Keep up your relationships with your true friends constantly. Go beyond Facebook conversations and find ways to hang out together on a daily or at least weekly basis.
- Looking forward to spending time with your friends is a good motivator as you do your school work during the day.
- Use your extra free time to study things of interest that will prepare you for the future.
- Make sure that you have a good computer with a strong internet connection.
- Know how you learn and be prepared to adjust the curriculum delivery to your style of learning.
- Establish good study habits and make use of a quiet home environment to fully focus on learning.
- The Internet can be a really good thing, and it can be a bad thing. It can be bad because it can provide distractions that are easily accessible. Don't give into the temptation to recreationally surf the web during school time. It's a great study tool. Doing searches helped improve personal ability to become an independent learner.
- Really focus on time management.
- Keep a study schedule. Know what has to be done and complete the task without procrastination. The quicker you finish, the more time you have free to do other things.

- Don't procrastinate. Try to get as much done in a day as possible.
- Spend study time actually mastering the lesson material. Do not get trapped by the thought that quickly finishing the assignment assures true understanding.
- When your life has to change, make the best of it. Accomplish what you need to accomplish. Find ways to celebrate the change even if momentarily discouraged.

Summary

The goal of this study was to utilize the participants' reflective lived experiences gained through a series of interviews to provide an understanding of the internal emotions, academic struggles, and environmental adaptations students experienced when changing from conventional schooling to home-based online education. Six participants, 3 males and 3 females, volunteered to participate in this examination and shared their experiential school-change stories. Each story began with life disruption that led to the eventual decision to leave conventional school and to enroll in a home-based online school. The common stressors that predicated the decision to change schools were based on conventional school academic quality, safety, spiritual values, and geographic moves.

A thematic path was utilized to convey the participants' transitional experiences—decision, design, distinctives, disturbances, and destiny. The adolescents utilized decision-making experiences to resolve conventional school stressors. Participants' perceptions were cautiously optimistic. Some feared social boredom and other expressed concerns regarding self-instruction. The appeal of self-governance, learning from a curriculum that supported their life values, and self-paced learning led to the choice of enrolling in home-based online school.

Design experiences produced participant understanding that home-based online

school was a hybrid form of schooling. The curriculum contained similar content as that in conventional school, but the content delivery was now technologically provided instead of teacher directed. Teachers provided secondary support through an imbedded message system within the curriculum rather than functioning as primary instructors. Learning was now the result of self-disciplined student effort instead of teacher monitored reminders. The biggest adjustment each of the participants noted was that the environment had a sterility of quietness.

Gaps in learning skills quickly materialized when the participants first entered the home-based online learning design. Reading for comprehension was not a noted issue, but deficiencies in study skills such as note-taking and test preparation were exposed. Self-teaching made the task of learning in the home-based online school much more challenging than learning under the tutelage of a conventional school teacher, but the participants reported that, overall, their cognitive abilities increased through the complexity of the transitional process.

Home-based online school design experiences were not singularly academically oriented. Personal attributes such as self-understanding, self-discipline, responsibility, perseverance, and time management were declared by the participants to be direct maturational outcomes from their involvement in home-based school. The participants reported that they quickly learned that acquaintances contributed to the feeling of a large friend base, but acquaintance relationships dissipated rapidly after leaving the conventional school. True friends remained as true friends.

Participants who changed schools only, did not experience major social upheaval. Geographic moves and adolescent accompanying attitudes regarding the school-change

process greatly compounded the social ramifications associated with home-based transitional experiences. The ramifications of a geographic move and simultaneous enrollment in home-based online school greatly reduced social connectivity options for meeting new peers. The situations presented a complexity of significant social challenges. Resultant social adjustment success or failure was greatly influenced by the participant's attitudinal response to the family relocation.

Parental involvement in the adolescents' home-based online experience took varying forms and provided diverse support functions. Parental involvement, merged with the maturational student character traits, provided a potentially powerful basis for student learning. Parental encouragement, though, became adolescent discouragement when caring accountability was perceived as nagging pressure to achieve.

Participants experientially embraced four valued distinctives in their transition from conventional school to home-based online school.

- Flexibility and portability of the home-based online school environment
- Academic curriculum that is college preparatory in rigor
- Self-paced instruction
- Self-paced learning

The participants were also unanimous in reporting that personal maturational growth increased as personal experiences were integrated with their school experiences.

Negative experiences that the adolescents did not foresee prior to enrolling in the online school created new school-related and personal stressors uniquely imbedded in their experiences with the school's home-based online program. Major disturbances experienced by the participants included the following:

- Sterility in the social and study environment
- Internal self-responsibility pressure to learn independently increased
- Time management was a constant struggle
- Academic rigor was greater than anticipated
- Poor study skills were accentuated
- Technology problems interrupted planned study time

The stories of these individuals concluded with a summation of the life-applicative knowledge they experientially gained during the school-change process that enabled them to achieve high school graduation—their pre-college destiny. They stated that skill to manage free time directly improved their study-time efficiency as they learned to set goals and to work within self-defined time parameters. The online design provided learning experiences that led to improved participant technological skills. Utilization of online inquiry strategies developed participants' skills in writing and research proficiency. The life value of patience was strengthened as the adolescents waited on delays in teacher responses to student questions. The communication frustration was rechanneled to become a catalyst for greater skill development in becoming independent learners.

Reporting as self-proclaimed pioneers, the participants concluded with two reflective experiential appeals. The first was a list of 20 items of practical advice that the participants felt would have greatly benefited them as they made the transition to online school. They offered the advice with the hope that future students embarking on similar school-change decisions would be better prepared for the transition.

Chapter Four provided insight into the experiential transitions the six adolescents

made as they left conventional school and successfully completed their high school programs. Chapter Five merges the findings in chapter four with the research questions identified in chapter one and the body of knowledge reported in the literature from chapter two. The implications and limitations of the research are discussed and recommendations for future studies are offered.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to explore the lived experiences of adolescents—to extrapolate the valued essence of their transitional encounters in changing from conventional school to home-based online schooling. Answers to the questions were obtained in field research data collecting methodologies: journal writings, interviews, chatroom discussions, and a culminating focus-group activity. Analysis and interpretation of the reflective lived experiences of these recently graduated home-based online students revealed rich truth regarding the internal emotions, environmental adaptations, academic ramifications, and social adaptations encountered when changing from conventional schooling to home-based online school.

Summary of Findings

Human tendency is to maintain the status quo. Life change is, therefore, most often the result of some form of stress-acting catalyst. For the participants in this research, the common stressors that predicated the school-change decision included school academic quality, safety, family spiritual values, and geographic moves.

Embracing a new concept that does not have a history of research becomes a step of faith. As pioneers, the participants found encouraging distinctives and unforeseen disturbances as they transitioned to home-based online school. Positive aspects in the school-change process included environmental safety, flexibility in study schedule, self-paced learning, supportive life values integrated into the curriculum, strengthening of independent study skills, improvement in personal computer skills, and reduced peer pressure. In addition, the participants stated that they enjoyed the flexibility and portability of the home-based online school environment and the college preparatory

rigor in the curriculum.

Unforeseen negative ramifications of the decision tempered some of the enthusiasm expressed as a result of making the transition from conventional school. The home-based online school environment was described as sterile isolation. Curriculum was predominantly textual in design, which created learning challenges for auditory and kinesthetic learners. Technological failures delayed assignment completion. Learning was now the result of self-disciplined student effort instead of teacher monitored reminders. Procrastination was a constant temptation. Poor study skills were accentuated. Lack of verbal and visual teacher instruction made upper math and science conceptual understanding difficult. Parental academic support was generally limited by employment time constraints and previous academic preparation. The delicate balance between parental accountability and overt pressure on the adolescent to succeed was a critical relational contributor.

School change that did not involve a geographic move greatly differentiated the social experiences encountered by adolescents who made a geographic move and simultaneously enrolled in home-based online school. No longer attending the conventional school caused acquaintance relationships to dissolve in both situations. True friends were found to remain as true friends. For the non-geographic move participants, creativity in maintaining social life pursuits in the community with established friends continued without dramatic impact. The ramifications of a geographic move and simultaneous enrollment in home-based online school greatly reduced the adolescents' social connectivity options in the new community, especially the concentration of social contacts that would have been afforded by attending a

conventional school. Resultant success or failure in establishing new social relationships was illustrated by the adolescents to be related to attitudinal response to the family relocation and personality assertiveness.

A common thread woven throughout the participants' shared stories was the desire for self-improvement. Notation was made that experiences in transitioning to home-based online school contributed to gains in cognition through self-teaching, improved study skills, time management, and technology skills. Maturation in self-motivation and self-discipline gained through home-based online school experiences were also reported by the participants to impact the effort, quality, and timely completion of their high school program. Self-motivation and self-discipline also bolstered psychosocial confidence in attaining the participants' immediate destinies—high school graduation.

Discussion

Research studies reported in the educational literature provide theoretical bases and supporting evidences as to why students move from one conventional school to another conventional school (Finn, 1989; Pribesh & Downey, 1999). The literature is void regarding applicability of existing school change theory to movement from conventional school to home-based online school. The literature is also nil regarding theory and illustrative experiences that impact adolescent psychosocial development as adolescents make this form of school change. It was response to Isenberg's (2007) call for homeschool school mobility research that led to the pursuit and fulfillment of this phenomenological investigation.

The general research question for this examination philosophically aligned with

the phenomenological pursuit of experiential knowledge and truth in stating that this examination searched for meaning through the lived experiences of involved adolescents. The general and supportive research questions for this study were designed to align with current adolescent developmental theory that acknowledges adolescence as a definitive, pre-adult, maturational time period during which interplay between the individual and social constructs of home, peer, school, and community relationships is evidenced. The interplay within these strongly influential relationships manifests stressors that, when successfully resolved, produce life skills that translate into maturational independence and productive adulthood (Bryne et al., 2007; McGue et al., 1996; Suldo, S. M. et al., 2009). It was the unresolved stress between the home and conventional school that initially led each of the six research participants to walk a school-change thematic path that began in home-based online school decision-making, transitioned to interactivity in the home-based online school design, led to positive experiences of distinction and negative experiences of disturbance, and culminated with learned life lessons utilized in achieving high school graduation—their pre-college destiny.

Decision

Bryne, Davenport, and Mazanov (2007) reported that adolescence is a time period of rapid physical growth and psychosocial development that is marked by emotional turmoil. As life stress increases, adolescents seek means to reduce crisis and establish stability. During the interview process, participant stories of school alienation richly illustrated the external and internal struggles the participants experienced as they sought to reduce stress by seeking solutions in home-based online school enrollment. Analysis and interpretation of the participants' decision-making process supported conventional

school-change literature that states school change is the result of interplay between social capital theory and the maturational processes of impacted students.

Social capital theorists advocate a correlation between positive student school performance and strong connections within families and the school community. The disruption in established social capital creates social stress among impacted constructs and psychological stress within the individuals (Pribesh & Dowdy, 1999). Finn's (1989) participation-identification school mobility model postulates that school withdrawal is causally impacted by the student's lack of social bond with the institution, a critical element in the child's social community.

In Finn's (1989) model, students who do not find avenues of productive activity and support develop institutional disconnect. This disconnect develops into student feelings of alienation. Findings in this research support social capital theorists' notions. Student and parental concerns for their conventional school's deficiency in academic quality, environmental safety, and spiritual values created stress that grew to eventual desires that led to school change. In each case, family research that led to rationale for not choosing another conventional school within the same geographic area mirrored the reasons the participants desired to leave their current schools: inadequate academic rigor in available schools, lack of instructional support for family values, social environment concerns, and travel and tuition costs associated with private education.

Stress between the school and the adolescent resulted in more than school alienation. The external stress factors also fueled a naturally occurring internal adolescent passion for independence. The burning desire for independence became a critical element as adolescents and parents became cooperatively involved in the

decision-making process. Participants eagerly embraced the perception that the home-based online school learning environment more closely aligned with freedom to utilize adult decision-making skills. That perception included the notions of less environmental structure in the school day, choice in the study schedule, self-paced instruction and self-paced learning. Parental assessment of the fundamental issues creating alienation between the school and the adolescent and the maturational manner in which the adolescents sought stress resolution in choosing to enroll in home-based online school garnered parental support.

Design

Rumberger and Larson (1998) summarized school mobility as the influential product of family factors and school factors. Educational stability and academic achievement are influenced by a school design that provides student engagement with the environment's social capital. Students experiencing school mobility, regardless of negative causal educational constructs, must find support within the institution to help them adjust to the unique institutional culture, to establish positive connectivity, and to facilitate attainment of student goals.

Merging the academic structure and teacher support of conventional school with home safety and individualized learning enjoyed in homeschooling perceptually satisfied the desire for an acceptable educational framework. Flexibility and portability of the home-based online school environment, academic curriculum that was college preparatory in rigor, self-paced instruction, and self-paced learning were appealing environmental, curriculum, instructional, and cognitive factors. The use of a technology-delivered school program that provided family freedom to select the benefits of

conventional private religious school education without incurring travel and high tuition costs solidified the school change choice.

Eccles et al. (1993), Garret (2004), Rumberger (2010), and VanHorne (2010) reported that children feel vulnerable when they leave established friends and enter a new school. Hotton et al. (2004) added that mobile students face five environmental adjustments when making a school change.

- New institutional setting (codes of conduct)
- New informal school setting (establishing peer groups)
- New academic expectations (coping with curriculum changes)
- New social order (establishing status)
- New home and family environment if geographic change caused the move. (p. 2)

Findings in this research added rich illustrative agreement to the adjustments postulated by Hotton et al. (2004). The five school change environmental adjustments which were found to be true in conventional school changes held true in the change from conventional school to home-based online school.

The school environmental setting shifted from a large institutional building with regimented structure to the comfortable confines and study choice freedoms in each participant's home. Community activity provided new opportunities for relational and social activity enrichment. The curriculum contained similar content as that in conventional school. Opportunity to add community-based personal elective courses enabled students to broaden their college preparatory curriculum with studies offering practical life application. Instructional lesson content was now technologically delivered instead of teacher directed. Teachers provided secondary support through a message

system imbedded within the curriculum rather than functioning as primary instructors. Learning was now the result of self-disciplined student effort instead of teacher monitored reminders.

Removing themselves from constant peer comparisons in the conventional school environment provided the participants with a means for self-evaluation that led to objectivity in determining personal strengths and weaknesses. They discovered that self-knowledge and maturational growth should not be controlled by the opinions of other people but in one's level of self-understanding and self-determination. As a result, these adolescents began to push themselves toward self-motivated and self-disciplined higher goals, instead of just going along with the crowd.

Parental involvement in the adolescents' home-based online experience took varying forms and provided diverse support functions. Parental involvement ranged from little accountability monitoring to close accountability daily monitoring. Parental instructional involvement was advantageous but limited by subject area knowledge. Parental encouragement became adolescent discouragement when caring accountability was perceived as nagging pressure to achieve. Constant togetherness of adolescent and parent led, at times, to stress in the relationship.

Distinctives

Swanson and Schneider (1999) and Suldo et al. (2009) reported that the loss of social capital experienced in school change has the potential for negative results, but negativity is not always the outcome. Family attitude and commitment to the change can greatly lessen the negative factors associated with the move. Changing to a school with improved social capital has been found to reverse the potential for negative results and

proactively affect transitional health.

Self-teaching made the task of learning in the home-based online school much more challenging than learning under the tutelage of a conventional school teacher. Time management, self-motivation, and self-discipline were declared as critical personal character traits fundamental to academic learning success. Self-teaching and self-learning appealed to the participants' growing passion for independence. As the adolescents matured in their use of independent academic decision-making, they began to accept responsibility for successes and failures. Accepting responsibility led to self-motivation to complete work in a timely manner, which in turn impacted a growing level of self-discipline and the use of improved study skills. The maturational spiral continued upwards as self-motivation and self-discipline resulted in expressed realization that the participants were becoming independent learners.

Disturbances

Rumberger and Larson (1998) reported that school change in the upper high school grades reduces the time potential to rebuild lost social capital and thus increases the potential for social and psychological withdrawal. Students experiencing school mobility, regardless of educational construct disparity, must find support within the institution to help them adjust to the unique institutional culture, to establish positive connectivity, and to facilitate attainment of student goals.

The experiences reported by the participants in this study lend credence to Rumberger's and Larson's (1998) findings. Negative experiences that the participants did not foresee prior to enrolling in the online school created new school-related and personal stressors. All participants acknowledged times that they encountered feelings of

discouragement as home-based online students. For some, the lack of relational teacher face-to-face encouragement contributed to culture shock. The lack of external instructional assistance and accountability, usually provided by conventional school teachers and competitive peers, caused internal self-responsibility pressure that tested the adolescents' skill level for and commitment to self-teaching and self-learning.

The enjoyment and comfort of home freedoms was tempered by isolation from peers. The participants described the isolation as sterility in the social and study environment. True friends remained throughout the school change transition, but the drifting away of conventional school acquaintance relationships added to a feeling of loneliness and social loss. Contact hours per day were reportedly not significantly decreased among friends due to electronic means for communication. The amount of face-to-face contact lost without conventional school activity strained the relationships but also led to concerted efforts to seek and utilize outside of school social activity opportunities.

The technologically-delivered curriculum offered some variety in presentation, but it was basically textual in design, requiring concerted learning effort for students who were auditory or kinesthetic learners. Internet connectivity losses slowed assignment completion. Delays in teacher response to student generated questions contributed to hindrances in student assignment completion and submission. Upper level math and science self-teaching was reported to be extremely difficult for several participants, and securing face-to-face tutorial support was helpful but not failsafe.

Time management was a constant struggle due to the influence of internet distractors. Procrastination was a constant nemesis. Poor study skills were accentuated.

Failure to excel provided feelings of disappointment and strained self-resolve to persevere toward learning goal accomplishment.

Simpson and Fowler (1994) and Pribesh and Downey (1999) reported that school change not involving a geographic move did not disrupt social capital bonds and social networking to the negative depth and breadth associated with long distance relocations. Eccles et al. (1993), Garret (2004), Hotton et al. (2004), Rumberger (2010), and VanHorne (2010) reported that children feel vulnerable when they leave established friends and enter a new school. Child attitude and commitment to the change can greatly lessen the negative factors associated with a move. The experiences of the participants who did not make geographic moves compared to the experiences of participants who transitioned to home-based online school as a part of a geographic move illustrated agreement with the theorists. The social impact of a non-geographic move and change to home-based schooling was negligible compared to the impact of a geographic move associated with simultaneous enrollment in home-based online school.

Adolescents not experiencing geographic move experienced a change in school locations, but they were able to maintain community familiarity and previously established relationships. Differentiation occurred because geographic moves uprooted previously established peer relationships. Not having the naturally occurring community concentration of peers found in the conventional school setting impeded social contact facilitation and slowed new friend accession.

Seeking and utilizing non-school related social opportunities in new communities were controlled by the assertiveness of the individuals' personalities and their attitudes toward the family relocation. The participant with a naturally outgoing personality and

positive attitude regarding the geographic move experienced the establishment of new friends over time. The participant with a more reserved personality and a poor attitude toward the move reported major problems in establishing satisfactory social connectivity. Both of the adolescents agreed that the geographic move and subsequent enrollment in home-based online school was, in itself, a significant transitional emotional and social home-based online school adjustment contributor, regardless of personality differences and whether they agreed with the move or not. The participants also agreed that personality, attitude, and family support either accentuated or diffused the influential ramifications associated with the geographic move and this form of school change.

Destiny

As was stated previously, modern theorists view adolescence as interplay between the individual and social constructs primarily including home, school, community, and peer relationships. Within the interplay in these relationships, stress is a natural manifestation that when successfully navigated produces life skills that translate into productive adulthood (Suldo, et al. 2009). Maximizing the distinctives and working through the unforeseen disturbances became the foundation for successful completion of the participants' high school program and attainment of their desired graduation destiny. Time management was reported as one of the greatest transitional adjustments. Participants stated that developed skill to manage free time in the home-based setting directly improved their study-time efficiency. Technological familiarity and improved technology skills gained in the online experience assisted students in meeting expectations for assignment completion and writing and research proficiency. Learning to self-teach for learning mastery in the home-based school was reported to improve

student ability to succeed in higher level thinking regimens. Having learned in the home-based experience, during times of teacher response delays, to read for deeper understanding and application and to do independent searches to answer personal questions improved the participant's ability to transition to becoming an independent learner. The freedom to make daily school and socially related decisions in the home-based online school environment maturationally contributed to responsibility acceptance in making choices and reaping consequences. Understanding that life success is a direct result of wise choices and concerted self-effort was intensified.

Implications

The participants' school change stories were rich with personal, academic, and social experiences. Imbedded within responses to interview questions, participants often referred to personal needs, interactive parental involvement, social adjustments, and desires for online school improvement. Analysis of the data produced a gleaning of student, parent, and online school administrator implications.

Students

Students considering a transition from conventional school to online school should be cognizant that truths and myths abound. The participants initially perceived online school as offering easier academic requirements while providing freedom from conventional school stressors. The adolescents reported truth in the notion that they would enjoy the environmental comfort of home and have the freedom to regulate study times. Ease in academic expectation was a myth. The rigor of a college preparatory curriculum and utilization of self-teaching methodology presented academic challenges. The challenges were greatest in upper level math and science courses.

Participants reported that transitional success required adolescent strengths in self-awareness, self-discipline, self-motivation, perseverance, and time management. The solitude of the home-based online school educational setting tends to magnify immaturity in these personal qualities. Students who have poor academic skills, who are deficient in self-motivation and self-discipline will need a lot of initial support as they transition to online school. If students have poor relationships with their parents and if they are unwilling to accept close adult supervision and academic assistance, the transition to online schooling will be missing a critical component that is needed for success.

For students needing a lot of adult supervision and assistance, relational stress, may increase due to the greater amounts of time the parents and student spend together. Participants reported that they resolved stress between themselves and their parents by honest assessment of their situation and acceptance of external accountability measures provided by the school's online teachers and assignment calendar. Adolescents who proactively demonstrated a willingness to meet goals improved relationships with their parents. As parental trust increased, adolescents noted a subsequent increase in opportunity for desired independent decision-making.

Open dialogue between the student and parents is critical to successful school-change transition. From the very beginning of the decision-making process, participants reported that family unification in purpose and direction was a strengthening element that improved the adolescent's ability to succeed when unforeseen issues emerged. Continued open family communication throughout the transitional process was vital in resolving problems. Silence between the adolescent and the parents signaled the

beginning or continuance of the slope to transitional peril.

Peer relationships and social activities change as the student leaves the environment of the conventional school and enters home-based online school. Participants reported that they soon lost contact with acquaintances. True friends remained. Student attitude integrated with proactive efforts to maintain previous friendships and develop new relationships in the community are keys to social transition.

Parents

The decision process to undertake school change can be a unifying family activity. Participants reported that initial stressors which led to the decision to leave conventional school increased the bond between the adolescents and their parents. The investigative processes utilized to determine school change options resulted in a closer relational bond that enhanced mutual respect between the parents and the adolescent. That respect grew or diminished as parents and adolescents interacted in their newly acquired roles of instructor and pupil.

Online school requires greater parental commitment to the instructional process as parents function as first instructional responders to student needs. Participants reported that parental knowledge was considered advantageous when adolescent's had questions regarding lesson information or concepts. Adolescents also noted that they respected parents when they admitted a lack of knowledge and deferred questions to the supporting online instructor. Parents did not increase favor by consuming extended amounts of time attempting to research answers.

The amount of time required for parental academic assistance will be based on the student's ability to function as a critical thinker and independent learner. Parents should

carefully evaluate the child's past study habits during the decision-making process—the weaker the adolescent's readiness for academic independence, the greater the parent's role will become as instructor and counselor.

The parent's role as an accountability agent requires empathy and wisdom. Participants reported a perceived relational disconnect because the parents lacked firsthand understanding of the nuances of home-based online education. As a result, some parents did not apply enough academic pressure and others applied too much. Participants added that parents who utilized effective listening skills were able to empathize with the adolescents, analyze needs, and construct goals with practical means for accomplishment. Most often, adolescent needs included strategies for improving skills in time management, self-motivation, and self-discipline. Deficiencies in study skills, such as note-taking and test preparation, were common. Upper level courses, at times, required additional tutorial services which the parent had to secure. According to the participants, parental assistance in developing plans to address identified needs provided the greatest means for adolescent encouragement.

Social experiences dramatically change as students' transition to online schooling. Participants reported facing new environments that lacked the natural use of a school setting to develop and maintain friendships. Describing online school as a very isolated environment, participants stated that their biggest challenge was getting accustomed to being alone. As a result, participants communicated a greater need for parents to understand the need for and to assist in increasing opportunities for family and peer interaction and social activity.

Participants, who did not experience a geographic move, stated that close

friendships continued. Without the advantages of social contact in the conventional school day, the need to increase the quality, and at times quantity, of social activity became a vital school transitional component. Parental reward of social time privileges was communicated to be a strong academic motivator among the participants.

For adolescents experiencing a geographic move, positive attitudinal responses regarding the move greatly increased the potential for social reconstruction. Embracing the move as a positive family choice was directly attributable to the adolescent seeking opportunities to maintain old friendships and initiating new outlets to build new relationships. Negative attitudes toward the family move can lead to adolescent depression and greater social isolation in the new community.

Parental sensitivity to the feelings of the adolescent in the decision process and throughout the relocation becomes critically important. Determining the right timing for enrolling in an online school must factor the full impact of the geographic move on the child and parental availability to assist the child in the transitional process. Establishing a firm family relational base and proactive parental involvement in helping the student locate social opportunities in the new community improves the potential for academic and social transitional success.

Online School Administrators

Self-paced learning, flexibility in the study schedule, and portability in the study environment greatly appealed to the study's participants. Curriculum that integrated and supported parental worldview beliefs was an encouragement. Mastery learning methodology helped students increase in subject knowledge and study skills. Self-teaching, though, was considered to be a daunting task that required online instructor

sensitivity to student concerns and required timeliness in communication.

Just as communication between the adolescent and the parents was vitally important, communication between the online school and the students was reported to be critical in meeting students' transitional needs. Messaging systems within the curriculum were effective when used as designed. Teacher time delays in communicating with students led to student frustration and institutional criticism. Teacher communication that lacked instructional substance impeded student success.

Participants noted frustration that the online school curriculum was predominantly a visual textual presentation that appealed to visual learners. Traditional auditory emphasis was relegated to brief video clips. Online opportunities for social connectivity were not technologically provided. Technological delays, due to loss of internet connectivity, became an added source of student frustration.

The participants expressed desires for improvement in institutional social capital connectivity, new student online orientation, and improved pedagogical practices. The findings of this study provide a basis from which online school administrators can assess institutional program effectiveness and develop school improvement planning in the following areas.

- Introducing prospective students to the positive and negative nuances of the environmental, cognitive, and social changes they are about to experience.
- Providing safe opportunities for peer-to-peer interaction that enables online students to engage in academic and social interaction.
- Developing curriculum design, content, and delivery to meet diverse student learning styles.

- Building school community through activities programs that unite students according to identified interests and facilitates students' involvement in their local community.
- Developing and implementing synchronous and asynchronous methods to improve teacher and student communication, instructional assistance, and relationship building.

In summation, successful transitional student experiences from conventional school to online schooling require an integrated effort between the student, the parents, and the online school. Student academic skills and maturational preparedness to succeed in an independent learning environment are fundamental for student success. Parental involvement, merged with maturational student character traits, provides a potentially powerful basis for successful student transition to online learning. Disconnection in this fundamental component greatly reduces the student's ability for a positive transitional experience.

Online school, while resolving many of the conventional school social negatives, produces an environment that contains social concerns of its own. As a result, students, parents, and teachers must work cooperatively to ensure adolescent community connectivity. As online schooling moves from its pioneer phase, school administrators must address student expressed concerns for improvements in broadening curriculum design, methodological delivery, and social interaction.

Limitations and Recommendations

Limitations

The findings of this exploration of adolescent lived experiences as they

transitioned from conventional school to home-based online school were limited in generalization and trust. Generalization was limited by the numerical size of the pool of participants and by their homogeneous grouping. The study used six self-selected volunteers. The participants attended the same home-based online school. They philosophically held similar fundamental life values. Graduates of the school were not included if they were had graduated more than 18 months prior to accepting the invitation to participate. Invitations were only issued to individuals who had not had any form of homeschool experience prior to making the change from conventional school to home-based online school. The pool of potential participants was limited to those living within 150 miles of my community. The use of purposeful selection in securing volunteers created a potential sampling error in that the six participants may not represent the true characteristics of the entire population.

Trust limitations resulted in unknowing and undesired personal bias that may have influenced questioning strategies and interpretation of findings. The participants' school was the institution I administer. Even though the participants were no longer at the school and the knowledge and depth of our prior relationship was limited to a casual greeting at graduation, participant responses may have been influenced by the fact that I was the head-of-school.

Recommendations for Future Research

It is my hope that this research will be the beginning of additional studies which will increase greatly the depth and breadth school mobility understanding. The size of the population participating in this investigation was small. The findings are thus limited to that population and cannot be generalized to all home-based online school enrollees.

Given that the findings were true for these adolescents, repetition of this research in other home-based online schools and utilizing currently enrolled students would continue to add valuable input to the void in the body of knowledge. Of interest would be findings based on transitional experiences of students who had previous homeschool experience to learn of their transitional experiences from homeschooling to online school. A valuable study could also be undertaken with former home-based online students who returned to conventional school to hear their return rationale and adjustment experiences.

Conducting research to determine the crossover values of transitional online experiences as preparation for transition to the college academic and social environment would have merit as a follow-up to this study. Using this study and findings as a basis for developing a broad-ranged quantitative study would be recommended to improve significance and generalization of the results.

Conclusion

For the six participants in this study, home-based online school design was a viable, technologically-delivered, educational option that responded well to educational and social stressors they experienced in conventional schools. After gaining experiences in conventional school and home-based online school, the adolescents concluded that neither conventional school nor home-based online school automatically ensures positive or negative adolescent experiences. In themselves, the designs are lifeless entities. Comparison advantages and disadvantages are perceptually brought to life based on the personalities, learning styles, educational goals, and social experiences of the individuals who use the designs. Stress is resolved or created based on the actions of individuals as they interact with the design of choice.

The adolescents gained cognitive, maturational, and social skills in the move from conventional school to home-based online school. Time management, self-motivation, and self-discipline were reported as critical personal character traits fundamental to academic success in the home-based online school. Parental involvement, merged with the maturational student character traits, provided a potentially powerful basis for student learning. Parental encouragement, though, became adolescent discouragement when caring accountability was perceived as nagging pressure to achieve.

For these adolescents, gender was not a distinctive factor in successful transition to home-based online schooling. Male and female experiences were generally similar in transitional application. Previous attendance at a private or public conventional school did not comparatively impact the students' transitional experiences. Participants were experientially encouraged as they embraced valued distinctives such as flexibility and portability of the home-based online school environment, academic curriculum that was college preparatory in rigor, self-paced instruction, and self-paced learning.

Maintaining social capital balance was the critical stabilizing force as these students sought to experience school fulfillment. Regardless of the specific reason for school change or for the type of school selected, mobile student transitional school success was dependent upon quickness and quality in the re-establishment of social capital. The magnitude of the loss in social capital was accentuated in the geographic move. Adolescent attitude in accepting the rationale for the move became a further defining element that led to re-establishment of new social capital connectivity or lack thereof and resultant social and psychological withdrawal.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS GROUNDED IN THE LITERATURE

1. How did the idea of changing from traditional school to online school come to be?

With the turn of the millennium, school safety and deficient academic quality became increasingly persuasive parental catalysts for changing schools. The plethora of educational options created the potential for numerous student moves during a child's educational career as parents sought to determine a best academic and cultural fit. Pursuit of nurturing learning environments, improved academic standardized test scores, increased curricular options, and improved extracurricular activities have caused parents to treat educational choice like a shopping spree, choosing to move children between public, private, and home schools in an effort to gain the advantages of all academic worlds (Barker, 2010).

2. What were your thoughts and feelings during the decision-making process?

McGue et al. (1996) concluded that genetic contribution, parental support or parental favoritism, peer relations, and school experiences are the strongest influencers in adolescence.

Research by Finn (1989) theorized two models to explain why students use school mobility to reduce stress and improve social capital. The frustration—self-esteem model postulates that academic failure reduces student self-esteem which creates feelings of learning inadequacy within the child. The institution becomes the personification of negative learning causality. Self-defeatism leads to absenteeism and misbehavior. Changing schools is viewed as an opportunity to improve social standing by developing new friends. Improving academic

performance is thought attainable through new teacher relationships.

The participation-identification model views school withdrawal as causally impacted by the student's lack of social bond with the institution. In this model, students who do not find avenues of productive activity develop institutional disconnect. This disconnect develops into student feelings of alienation. Students experiencing this alienation tend to become isolationists or they may seek to develop social capital with students suffering from like experiences. The lack of participation in academic activities grows from the lack of overall school activity. As a result, negative behavioral manifestations develop which lead to emotional unrest until school change is realized.

3. Describe the differences between your old and new school experiences.

In 2004, Hotton et al. reported that mobile students face five environmental adjustments.

- New institutional setting (codes of conduct)
- New informal school setting (establishing peer groups)
- New academic expectations (coping with curriculum changes)
- New social order (establishing status)
- New home and family environment if geographic change caused the move. (p. 2)

4. Describe your feelings about the change in school design and curriculum delivery.

5. Compare your traditional school day with a typical day as an online student.

The growth of virtual schools and cyber schools has created a subtle distinction between the traditional homeschooling and home-based education. In home-

based online education, parents act as academic coaches, certified teachers offer support for student learning, and most offer periodic live or taped classes in which online students can view instruction taking place on campus (Bazin & Burke, 2010; Calvert, 2009).

Ott (2009) reported that online programs are often designed similar to conventional school in that curriculum content and sequence are predetermined. Teacher support is provided through various forms of email, instant messaging, online white boards, visual conferencing, and the telephone. These programs are often referred to as home-based education because the student is enrolled in a traditional school model but his attendance is in a home setting rather than on campus.

6. How did using technology affect the way you learn?

“Technological tools are designed to situate learning in more authentic contexts. Technological tools are also designed to emphasize the exchange of ideas between participants, and they are designed to rely actively on the engagement of the learner” (Hartley & Bendixen, 2001, p. 22).

The use of podcast classes, collaborative interaction with peers using webcams, video streaming technology to view documentaries, and digital science equipment in virtual laboratories became just a few of a myriad of enhancements that homeschool children can now integrate into their learning environment (Jones, 2010).

7. Describe how participation in online school affected your family and peer relationships.

Rumberger and Larson (1998) summarized school mobility as the influential product of family factors and school factors. Educational stability and academic achievement are influenced by student engagement and social capital. School change in the upper high school grades reduces the time potential to rebuild lost social capital and thus increases the possibility for student social and psychological withdrawal. Students experiencing school mobility, regardless of educational constructs, must find support within the institution to help them adjust to the unique institutional culture, to establish positive connectivity, and to facilitate attainment of student goals.

8. Compare the pressures to achieve academic success between your experiences in traditional and online school.

Modern theorists acknowledge adolescence as a definitive time period, but they now view adolescence as interplay between the individual and social constructs primarily including home, school, community, and peer relationships. Within the interplay in these relationships, stress is a natural manifestation that when successfully navigated produces life skills that translate into productive adulthood (Suldo, et al. 2009). The navigation process is a dynamic learning tool that uses real life experiences to accomplish maturational change.

“When adolescents perceive an emphasis on improving their ability rather than proving it compared to others; when they feel they have a voice and some choice in classrooms; and when they perceive supportive and respectful teachers, they are more than likely to bond with school and are less likely to bond with peers who are alienating from school and social institutions” (Roeser et al., 2000, p.

464).

9. What online experiences contributed to developing personal values that you feel will best prepare you to achieve life goals?

Medlin (2000) reported that homeschooled children are not isolated from society.

They are active community participants who associate with and feel close to a diversity of people. Homeschooled children have positive self-esteem.

Homeschooled children are taught values that will enable them to be successful adults. Adult members of society who were homeschooled appear to be highly functional and socially effective. To date, no studies have been undertaken to determine why homeschooling is successful as a social development entity. Troy

Parish (2007) theorizes that socialization success is because children in homeschooling settings never leave their environment, so training is continuous.

Because the environment is continuous, parents are not bound by 8:00 – 3:00 traditional school constraints and thus see every opportunity as a teachable moment. Social learning thus becomes associated with real life application.

10. What personal experiences were significantly influential in your transition to online schooling?

11. What advice would you offer to other students who are considering enrolling in an online school?

APPENDIX B: OPEN CODING – PHASE ONE

Identifying Classifications for Development of Codes

(Based on interpretations during initial readings of participant interview transcripts)

Constructs

Academic Quality	Online School Benefits
Accountability	Online School Detriments
Accreditation	Organizational Skills
Advice for student online success	Parental Relationships
Attitude	Pedagogy
Auditory Learner	Peer pressure
Block Scheduling	Perceptions
Cognitive Development	Personal Family Choices
College Preparation	Pride
College Success	Private school to online school
Communication: peer-to-peer methodology	Procrastination
Communication: teacher-to-student	Public school to online school
Conventional School Benefits	Safety
Conventional School Detriments	School Activities
Curriculum	School Day
Decision-making	School Environment
Dedication	School violence
Determination	Self-discipline
Distractions	Self-understanding
Family Time	Sibling Relationships
Fear	Social environment
Flexible Scheduling	Social Life
Friends	Spiritual Formation
Geographic move and school change	Study Skills
Independence	Teacher Relationships
Independent Learning	Technology
Initiative	Time Management
Kinesthetic Learner	Timing of school change
Learning Style	Traditional Scheduling
Life Skill Preparation	Travel distance
Loneliness	Tuition Cost
Maturity	Values
Motivation	Visual Learner
No geographic move in school change	

APPENDIX B: OPEN CODING – PHASE ONE CONTINUED

Identifying Classifications for Development of Codes

(Based on interpretations during initial readings of participant interview transcripts)

	Demographics
Christian School	Homeschool
Conventional School	Male
Ethnicity	Online School
Family Income	Parent homeschool involvement
Favorite Foods	Parent Marital Status
Female	Parent Occupations
Hobbies	Personal Interests
Home Location	Private School
Home Ownership	Public School

APPENDIX C: OPEN CODING – PHASE TWO

Codes Determined for Use in Textural Analysis and Deconstruction Process

(Result of analytical interpretation of primary classifications)

Advantages	Maturity
Advice for Student Success	Motivation
Christian School	Online School
College Preparation	Organizational Skills
Communication	Parent Educational Background
Conventional School	Parent Relationships
Curriculum	Parent School Involvement
Decision Making Process	Pedagogy
Disadvantages	Perceptions
Ethnicity	Personal Interests
Female	Private School
Final Analysis	Procrastination
Friends	Public School
Future Plans and Goals	School Day
Home Environment	Social Life
Homeschool	Spiritual Formation
Independence	Stress
Independent Learning	Study Schedule
Learning Style	Teacher Relationships
Life Skills	Technology
Loneliness	Time Management
Male	

APPENDIX C: AXIAL CODING

Axial Coding: Interpreting Open Codes by Linking to Central Categories

(Result of analytical interpretation of primary codes)

Demographic Codes

Christian School
Conventional School
Ethnicity
Female
Future Plans and Goals
Home Environment
Homeschool
Male
Online School
Parent School Involvement
Personal Interests
Private School
Public School

Decision Making Codes:

Decision Making Process
Educational Background
Perceptions
School Environment

Academic Codes:

Advantages
Communication
Curriculum
Disadvantages
Independent Learning
Pedagogy
School Day
Stress
Study Schedule
Teacher Relationships
Technology

Personal Growth and Development Codes:

Independence
Learning Style
Life Skills
Maturity
Motivation
Organizational Skills
Procrastination
Spiritual Formation
Time Management

Social Codes:

Friends
Loneliness
Parent Relationships
Social Life

Life Impact Codes:

Advice for Student Success
College Preparation
Final Analysis