

HOMESCHOOL PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOL EXTRACURRICULAR
ACTIVITIES IN TENNESSEE: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The study describes a qualitative collective case study regarding the possibility of homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities in West Tennessee. Literature exists on extracurricular activities but not on the effect on the homeschooled student specifically. The research questions addressed: How do homeschool parents in west Tennessee whose children are involved in one or more extracurricular activities outside of the public school system feel about current legislation regarding homeschool students being excluded from participation in public school extracurricular activities other than sports? Why would homeschool parents in west Tennessee allow their child to participate or why would they not allow their child(ren) to participate in public school extracurricular activities if available? Why are homeschooled students involved in extracurricular activities? Purposeful sampling was used to interview a minimum of five homeschooling parents. Data triangulation was utilized in the analysis of the data collected through surveys and interviews. Both parents that allowed their children to participate in extracurricular activities (outside of the public school environment) and those that do not allow their children to participate in extracurricular activities were interested in the option of being able to allow their child to participate in public school extracurricular activities whether they chose to utilize or not.

Descriptors: homeschool, extracurricular, equal access, partnership

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

While not a new concept, homeschooling is a growing phenomenon in the United States. As a result of the great increase in the number of homeschooling students there is also an increase in the issues and concerns involving the homeschool community (Romanowski, 2006). For the purpose of this study homeschooling will be defined as school taking place outside of the public and private school setting. Homeschooling can take place individually in one's home or as a group of likeminded families. A current issue in many states is the participation of homeschooled students in public school extracurricular activities. Research exists regarding homeschooling and various outcomes such as academic achievement (Cogan, 2010). Research also exists in the benefits and negative effects of extracurricular activities among adolescents (Barnett, 2007; Blomfield & Barber, 2010; Cohen, Taylor, Zonta, Vestal & Schuster, 2007; Dumais, 2009; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Guest & McRee, 2009).

Participation in extracurricular activities should have an effect on one's development as it changes one's world. Self-understanding is enhanced by the understanding of what others have gained by participating with them in joint social interaction. An understanding of how one's society and culture works is what allows one to have authentic selfhood (Martin, 2007). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is the theoretical framework for this study. One cannot understand who one is unless one understands the society and culture they are in (Herrenkhol, 2008).

This issue of the possible participation of homeschool students in public school extracurricular activities will affect homeschoolers, their families, public school students,

their families, and public school teachers and administrators. Research (Fredricks & Eccles, 2010; Mason, Schmidt, Abraham, Walker & Tercyak, 2009; Strapp & Farr, 2010; Wade, Gary, Jenkins, Malqued, & Bainum, 2006) shows that extracurricular involvement is beneficial to adolescents, but the effects have not been studied at great length regarding the specific participation of homeschool students in public school extracurricular activities. Some states have addressed and researched this issue the issues they face in their state, but this is not easily generalizable to the rest of the United States. A doctoral dissertation that was specific to the state of Maryland, Angelis (2008) suggest that each state should survey their homeschooling population to see in what services they are interested. This study addresses this call for future research particularly for Tennessee.

Problem Statement

The problem is Tennessee only allows homeschoolers to participate in public school sports extracurricular activities but no other extracurricular activities such as art, foreign languages, or science clubs and/or labs. According to the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association (TSSAA), homeschoolers are permitted to play or scrimmage any secondary high school in regular season play. There are certain rules and restrictions that must be followed for the student to be considered eligible. The student would only be eligible in the district in which they would attend.

Tennessee is bordered by eight states each of which has different legislation in place regarding homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities. Virginia public schools can receive state funding if a homeschool student participates in two of the following classes: math, science, English, history, social science, career and technical education, fine arts, foreign language, or health education or physical education.

In Missouri the compulsory attendance statute implies that homeschooled students may attend public school part time. (HSLDA, 2011)

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this case study was to understand the thoughts and perceptions of parents who homeschool their high school age child(ren) in Tennessee concerning current legislation regarding homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities in Tennessee, whether they allow their child(ren) to participate in extracurricular activities, outside of the public school system, presently or not. The purpose was not for the study to evolve into a political action plan, but to ascertain the answer as to why parents are not pursuing this option for their child(ren). The reasons why a homeschool parents would allow or not allow their child(ren) to participate in public school extracurricular activities in Tennessee, if they were available, will also be explored.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant as through an investigation of a portion of the homeschooling population in west Tennessee, policymakers could become more informed about homeschooling families and become more open to exploring alternative policies and practices. This study might also alert Tennessee lawmakers that homeschool families are not that interested in involving their children in public school extracurricular activities at all, or only specific ones. The need for policy change may not exist, or, conversely, if only a few homeschoolers want access it will not mean a big adjustment across the state and the homeschoolers might be easily accommodated. The study might also inform homeschool families of options that they might not know are available to them. This study adds to the on-going research on homeschooling students. The study

explored the thoughts and feelings of several homeschool families in west Tennessee, the findings of which lay the foundation for future research.

Research currently exists on various aspects of student involvement in extracurricular activities such as gender differences (Gadbois & Bowker, 2007), and parental attitudes towards extracurricular involvement (Kremer-Sadler, Izquierdo, & Fatigante, 2010). Parental involvement in correlation with extracurricular activities has been researched (Lagace-Seguin & Case, 2010). The connection between students' involvement in extracurricular activity involvement and educational resiliency has been researched (Peck, Roeser, Zarrett, & Eccles, 2008). Research also exists on why parents choose to homeschool (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007). Limited research exists specifically on the involvement of homeschool students in public school extracurricular activities.

If it is seen through the study that homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities is a desired outcome and policy and laws are made to allow the participation to occur, it will have a pronounced impact on the homeschool population of west Tennessee. Options for participation that were not previously accessible will now be accessible. It is possible that the ability to participate in public school extracurricular activities might open doors for homeschooled students and their futures that would not have been so easily opened beforehand. If the study shows that homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities is not a desired outcome, it will allow policy makers to stop discussing this policy for the time being. Fredricks & Eccles (2006) discuss the benefits of extracurricular activities in students' lives. The research

conducted in Tennessee might model further research that can be conducted in other states that are facing similar issues with the rising number of homeschooling families.

The goal of all educators, public, private, and homeschooling is to best meet the needs of the students. All students are created in God's image and should be treated with integrity and respect as fellow image-bearers of Christ. This study assisted in discovering if allowing homeschool students to participate in public school extracurricular activities will help to meet more of the homeschool students' needs. It explored whether homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities is a desire, or a need, and if it should be addressed in the future by policymakers.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study:

Research Question 1. *Why would homeschool parents in west Tennessee allow their child to participate or not participate in public school extracurricular activities if available?* This question established the thoughts and perceptions of homeschool parents regarding homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities.

Research Question 2. *What are the perceptions of homeschool parents in west Tennessee with high school age child(ren) about current legislation concerning homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities?* This was to discover if there was a reason behind the lack of pursuit for this option or if it is because homeschool families in west Tennessee are not aware that homeschool families in other states have the option to participate in public school extracurricular activities, or that they simply are not interested.

Research Question 3. *Why are homeschool students involved in extracurricular activities?* This question established the value homeschool families place on extracurricular activities (HSLDA, n.d). It also established which extracurricular activities are most important to various families.

Delimitations

Delimitations to be taken in the study include only interviewing a set number of participants as well as only allowing a certain number to participate in the focus group. Another delimitation of this study is only interviewing parents from west Tennessee with homeschooled high school age students.

Research Plan

After IRB approval, the local homeschooling organization was contacted and asked to send a survey to all homeschooling families of high school students in west Tennessee. The survey is from the 2005 National Household Education Survey by the National center for Educational Statistics. An informed consent form was also sent with the survey. The survey asked about the family's participation in extracurricular activities. From the responses, families were chosen that are involved in the most extracurricular activities, per child, outside of the public school system. Eight parents were interviewed in this qualitative study utilizing the collective case study design and a list was kept with other families' contact information to interview if saturation or redundancies was not reached. Yin (2009) describes,

One type of case study interview is an in-depth interview. You can ask key respondents about the facts of a matter as well as their opinion about events. In some situations, you may even ask the interviewee to propose her or his own

insights into certain occurrences and may use such propositions as the basis for further inquiry (p. 107).

Yin also states, “The interviewee also can suggest other persons for you to interviews, as well as other sources of evidence” (p.107). Boyd (2001) regards 2 to 10 participants or research subjects as sufficient to reach saturation. A separate group of 8 parents was chosen, for a focus group, from the survey who do not choose to seek outside sources of supplemental activities for their child(ren). The parents who do not choose to seek outside sources of supplemental activities for their child(ren) were chosen for a focus group rather than individual interviews as it was hoped the focus group will encourage rich conversation and though provoking comments among the participants.

A collective case study was the best design for this research due to the desire to discover the thoughts and perceptions of different parents regarding the current legislation of homeschool student participation in public school extracurricular activities in Tennessee rather than just one parent or set of parents. Each parent is a different case in the study. A case study is also appropriate for this research because a contemporary phenomenon is being examined in a real life context (Yin, 2003). According to Yin (2003) a case study design should be considered when: (a) the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions; (b) you cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study; (c) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context. Stake (1995) stated when discussing collective case studies, “balance and variety are important; opportunity to learn is of primary importance” (p. 6).

The parents were called via the phone by the researcher and asked for an interview at a time and place of their convenience. Notes were taken of the interview and transcribed at a later time. Elliot (2010) writes of some of the benefits of taking notes when interviewing as: keeps one more alert to what the interviewee is saying, the act of writing actively engages one's brain with the material, the interview is more interactive due to frequent checking in with the interviewee, ambiguous comments that need clarification are more likely to be identified through note taking, the interviewee feels they are taken seriously when everything is written down, the interviewee can make corrections when they see what is being written, affords the interviewee periodic breathers in which to gather their thoughts, and it allows the interviewee more time to change, augment or improve their answers as note taking engenders more thoughtful answers. Zinsser (1998) writes,

With practice you will write faster and develop some form of shorthand. You'll find yourself devising abbreviations for often-used words and also omitting the small connective syntax. As soon as the interview is over, fill in all the missing words you can remember. Complete the uncompleted sentences. Most of them will still be lingering just within the bounds of recall (pp. 107-108).

The interviews were semi-structured and last approximately one hour. The parents were also asked to fill in a blank month calendar that shows the lessons and other extracurricular activities their child(ren) participate in during a typical month. No follow-up interviews were needed.

A separate group of parents of homeschooled high school students who do not actively participate in extracurricular activities outside of the local public school system

were asked to participate in a focus group. Morgan (1997) describes a benefit of focus groups as providing “direct evidence about similarities and differences in the participants’ opinions and experiences as opposed to reaching such conclusions from post hoc analysis of separate statements from each interviewee” (p. 10). The group’s interaction with one another was hoped to stimulate rich discussion regarding homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities in Tennessee. It was important to include parents who do not choose to find outside sources for their child(ren) for supplemental activities to be included in the study as the reasons were hoped to hold valuable information for the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Exploring the pros and cons of allowing the inclusion of homeschoolers in public school extracurricular or supplemental activities is important due to the growing popularity of the choice of homeschooling to educate one's child(ren). Lips and Feinberg (2009) state, "the establishment of legal homeschooling rights across the country has facilitated strong growth in the number of youngsters being educated at home" (p.22). Lips and Feinberg (2008) define homeschooling as, "an alternative form of education in which children are instructed at home rather than at a traditional public or private school. Children who are homeschooled are instructed by parents, guardians, or other tutors" (p.2). Previous research has been conducted on both the positive and negative effects of extracurricular activities on students. A limited amount of research has been conducted on the inclusion of homeschool students in public school extracurricular activities. Isenberg (2007) writes, "The main barrier to research on homeschooling has been lack of data" (p. 389). This literature review will endeavor to merge the research that has been completed on homeschooling and the research that has been completed on the effects of extracurricular activities on students.

The growing number of homeschool families in Tennessee in the last two decades is bringing legal questions and concerns to the forefront. The fight for the right to have homeschool students participate in public school extracurricular sports activities will be much more effective if research shows that participation has a positive impact on academic achievement. If there is not a positive impact on the academic achievement of homeschool students then there is not a need for their involvement from an academic

standpoint. Research will then need to be completed from another angle. If there is a positive impact on the academic achievement of homeschoolers through their participation in public school extracurricular activities then the steps need to be taken to integrate the homeschool students in the public school extracurricular activities.

Angelis (2008) conducted a qualitative doctoral study on homeschool partnerships in the state of Maryland. Angelis concluded that,

Families, regardless of their reason to home school in the target population, noted that some subjects are easier to teach than others, and they would welcome the opportunity for their children to participate in classes and other offerings by the public school system. This interest in public school offerings is a reflection of a trend nationwide in which home schooling families are partnering with local public schools in order to take advantage of enrolling students in certain academic classes and extracurricular activities (p. 119).

Kilgore (2009) conducted an exploratory case study to ascertain the perceptions of public school administrators regarding homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities specifically in Oklahoma. He found that administrators felt that a partnership must exist between parents and program administrators for any program to be effective. Those interviewed were strong supporters of public school and did not feel that enough accountability was expected of those that choose to homeschool their children. Eley (2006) conducted a study regarding the partnership that exists in Arizona between homeschoolers and public schools. It was found that the number of homeschoolers greatly increased when legislation changed that allowed parents to homeschool their children without taking a competency test. Arizona allows dual

enrollment of homeschoolers into public schools which allows for the public schools to get partial funding that covers the influx of homeschool students. It is important to note that at the time of this study not all of the school districts in Arizona take part in the dual enrollment program for homeschoolers.

Adams (1992) completed a study about a specific homeschool community in Arizona. This study was took place before significant legislation changes in Arizona took place. The participants of the study answered questions such as:

What barriers exist that prevent home schoolers from availing themselves of district resources? What is the level of interest in establishing a county-wide program of home school/public school partnership that makes use of all the public schools have to offer in materials, programs, and personnel? What kind of accountability would these families be willing to accept in order to have that type of program? (p.73).

It is interesting to note that all of these studies have taken place in the past twenty years regarding homeschool and public school partnerships across the nation and yet a clear cut answer has yet to be found that fits the needs of all states and all people.

Theoretical Framework

Using Vygotsky's (1960) sociocultural theory one can see that one's involvement in extracurricular activities is important to one's personal development. Vygotsky (1978),

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies

equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals (p57).

Tharp and Gallimore (1998) write,

This view has profound implications for teaching, schooling, and education. A key feature of this emergent view of human development is that higher order functions develop out of social interaction. Vygotsky argues that a child's development cannot be understood by a study of the individual. We must also examine the external social world in which that individual life has developed (p.6).

Through working in a group an individual can come to understand how a group, culture, and/or society functions as well as learn about themselves as an individual

Tudge and Rogoff (1999) write, “Vygotsky’s theory places a central focus of social interaction as a medium in which children develop, with people who are more skilled in the intellectual technologies of a culture assisting children in learning” (p. 32).

We suggest that shared thinking involving coordination of joint activity is central to the benefits of social interaction. We consider that social interaction does not carry blanket benefits, as is often assumed, but that social interaction facilitates development under certain circumstances that need more specification. One of the most important of these appears to be the possibility for the participant to understand another perspective, or participate in a more advanced skill, either through active observation or through joint involvement in problem solving (p. 32).

Extracurricular activities are indeed a social interaction from which students can learn from others that are more skilled than themselves in the activity before them. It is important to note that the student will be learning more than just the activity though, be it art, science, sports, foreign language, etc; the students will also be learning about interactions with others, self-control, following directions among a plethora of other characteristics.

Review of the Literature

Homeschooling. Parents choose to homeschool (Aasen, 2010; Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007) for several reasons (a) they feel it best fits with their lifestyle, (b) they feel that they are ultimately responsible for their child's learning, (c) and/or they believe that they can academically help their child the best. Montana (2011) wrote, "It seemed to me that with the extra eight hours each day that I could invest in my children, I could teach them many life skills and heritage arts that were becoming rare" (pp. 43-44). Irvine (2009) listed other reasons parents might choose to homeschool as: "worries about school safety, finding the current culture's early sex and drugs not to their liking, or annoyance with the schools' tendency to 'teach to the test' versus a more immersed learning experience" (p. 36).

Homeschooling can take place in many different ways (McReynolds, 2007) and for some: (a) homeschooling is child-led (Wheatley, 2009); (b) use a purchased curriculum; (c) operate under an umbrella of a church; (d) utilize a virtual charter school (Klein & Poplin, 2008); (e) while others are held accountable by their local public school system (Huerta, Gonzalez, & D'Entremont, 2006). Some parents collaborate with other homeschooling families while others do everything school related individually. Some

homeschoolers participate in extracurricular activities on their own through private organizations when it is not possible to participate with one's local public school system (Bentley, 2008). McKeon (2007) conducted a research study on whether a homeschool family's regional location, ethnicity, or religious affiliation influence the style of homeschool operated, the reading curriculum chosen as well as the specific instructional practices implemented. The study found that the demographics of the homeschooling community has changed drastically in the last 10 years, however a family's religion seemed to have the greatest impact on the choices made regarding how to homeschool.

Extracurricular Activities. Extracurricular activities often involve some time commitment outside of the regular school day. Extracurricular activities can include sports, arts, clubs, gifted and talented programs, as well as science labs. Extracurricular activities generally take place after school hours or during a free period, such as study hall, during the school day. Different research has explored which types of extracurricular activities have the most positive impact, which extracurricular activities have the most negative impact, how much time involved in participation in the extracurricular activity is necessary for the impact to take place, as well as the variety of supplemental activities in which an individual participates (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Fredricks & Eccles, 2008; Stanger, 2010; Wade et al. 2006). Reeves (2008) challenges schools to rethink school policies regarding extracurricular activity participation; instead of removing struggling teens from supplemental activities they should be encouraged to participate as this will boost their academic scores as well as attendance.

Positive aspects of extracurricular activity participation. The effects of

involvement in extracurricular activities on the way adolescents feel about themselves has been studied (Fredricks & Eccles, 2010; Mason, Schmidt, Abraham, Walker, & Tercyak, 2009; Strapp & Farr, 2010; Wade et al. 2006). Studies (Ara, Vincente-Rodriguez, Perez-Gomez, Jimenez-Ramirez, Serrano-Sanchez, Dorado, & Calbert, 2006; Dumais, 2009; Gadbois & Bowker, 2007) have shown that there is a difference between males and females and the effects of extracurricular activities on self-esteem. Studies (Barnett, 2007; Goodman & Philip, 2006; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Peck, Roeser, Zarrett & Eccles, 2008; Shi, Nakamura, Kizuki, Inose, Seino, & Talano, 2006) have also shown that specific extracurricular activities have more of an effect than others. The Wade et al. (2006) study examined adolescents 13-15 years of age and found that girls involved in sports had significantly higher self-esteem than those involved in music; there was not as much of a difference in the boys' self-esteem (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). In Fredricks and Eccles (2006) study, it shows that maybe sports ought to be one of the first public school extracurricular activities that are considered for homeschool student participation. It also must be considered that the effects that extracurricular activities might have on homeschoolers might be quite different than the effects on public school students. For example excelling or not doing well could affect public school students throughout their day as they are constantly surrounded by their peers throughout the day. This may not necessarily be the case for homeschooled students who go home after participating in the supplemental activities.

The relationship between involvement in extracurricular activities and math achievement and college expectations has also been correlationally studied (Dumais, 2009). Regardless of gender, students who participated in extracurricular activities were

found to have higher expectations regarding attending college. Students who spent the majority of their time watching television or hanging out with friends did not have as high of a college expectancy score. “There were a few gender differences in the association between activities and math scores, but no gender differences in the association between activities and college expectations” (p. 72) The study suggests that extracurricular activities may be beneficial to students and their college expectations and that homeschool students would also benefit from this interaction (HSLDA, 2007).

Mahoney (2001) wrote that students involvement in school activities helps alleviate some anti-social behavior. This study included 695 participants in the southeastern portion of the United States. They entered the study at ten years of age and were tracked annually until high school graduation. They were then interviewed again at the age of twenty and then again at twenty-four. The results were “found for participants in general but was especially strong in those who had previously displayed antisocial behaviors” (p.6). The study showed there were less drop outs as well as less arrests among the students who participated in extracurricular school activities.

Negative aspects of extracurricular activities participation. Another important aspect to consider regarding extracurricular activities is the potential negative impact on a student who auditions for a competitive team in which there are limited openings, and the student does not make the team. This phenomenon has more of an effect on adolescent girls than on boys (Barnett, 2007; Wade, Gary, Jenkins, Malqued, & Bainum, 2006). It is important to note that this phenomenon may not feel the same to a homeschooler who does not spend large amounts of time with the other students as a public school student would. Barnett (2006) writes,

The depression, anxiety, self-doubt, and withdrawal from social and school relationships, and the loss in some cases of close friends and social networks, would strongly suggest that these types of extracurricular activities are only positive for those who are allowed admission (p. 538).

This phenomenon is not limited to cheer or dance teams alone. Barnett (2007) and Wade et al. (2006) research emphasizes that much planning and continued research needs to take place before allowing homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities.

Drozd, Morgan, & Bohnert (2006) conducted a similar study regarding the way extracurricular activity involvement effects emotions and emotional regulation among adolescents. Drozd et al. (2006) found that adolescents who were involved in extracurricular activities, especially sports, had negative effects on their emotional control. The study stated that these results did not match the results of previous studies conducted, such as the one conducted by Wade et al (2006). Drozd et al. (2006) stated that the results being contrary to previous studies might be due to the selection process, and that future studies should involve a larger sample. It is important that continued research takes place regarding the benefits or non-benefits of extracurricular activities especially in regards to homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities.

Darling, Caldwell, & Smith (2005) found that adolescents who participated in extracurricular sports were found to have increased alcohol consumption, but the same is not true of their counterparts who were involved in other types of extracurricular activities other than sports such as theater, music, and art. According to Darling et al.

(2005) it is hard to control demographic factors in such a study and to justify that the same types of students are involved in different types of extracurricular activities.

Research also shows that participating in a wider range of extracurricular activities minimized the amount of risky peers an adolescent may have (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006).

Types of homeschool extracurricular activities. Homeschoolers often form cooperatives (co-ops) that have their own extracurricular activities. Homeschool parents might want their child involved in special science labs or foreign language labs since these areas may not be personal strengths of the parent, or they do not have the necessary equipment. Willingham (2008) describes educational cooperatives for homeschoolers as:

Homeschool families tap into one another's skills and expertise, often taking turns teaching classes. They may pool financial resources and contract out for teachers or tutors, use community learning programs at local libraries and museums, and organize field trips to a variety of places (p. 60).

It is possible that their homeschooling co-op could provide these opportunities, but it would depend on how many homeschoolers are in the geographical area as well as how many are involved in the co-op itself.

Public school extracurricular activities. It is evident that there are positive and negative effects of involvement in extracurricular activities (Dumais, 2009; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Peguero, 2006; Wade et al. 2006). Boundaries and checks and balances must be placed on the activities for the activities to have a positive effect. There is a fine line between parental encouragement and parental pressure in regard to extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities can have a social benefit to those involved by allowing the students to interact with their peers. Kort-Butler & Hagewen (2011) state

that adolescent involvement in extracurricular activity is “is thought to contribute to these developmental processes by providing important skills, building social networks, and shaping self-concepts” (p. 576). However, extracurricular activities can also have negative effects on students through negative peer pressure as well as dealing with the emotions of not being accepted onto a team because of lack of skill or lack of open positions (Barnett, 2007; Wade et al. 2006).

If homeschooling parents desire their child to be involved in extracurricular activities and sports, they need to stay involved and make sure there are more positive effects on their child(ren) than negative ones. Jackson (2006) wrote

There are home educating families who do not exclude formal education as an option when planning the education of their children, even when experiences have been negative. Positive experiences with education professionals could lead to beneficial relationships with these families and students (pp. 80-81).

It would also be important for a homeschool parent to ensure that their child(ren) are adapting well among their public school peers. Another important aspect that should be addressed by the homeschooling parent is that they instruct their child(ren) to follow the authority that is set in place in public schools. If any special rules and regulations are put in place for the participation of homeschool students, homeschool families should strictly adhere to these guidelines for the continued opportunity.

It is also important to look at the way in which administrators view homeschoolers. Kilgore (2009) wrote a dissertation based on the public school administrators’ perceptions regarding homeschool parents. This is a critical aspect to explore because administrators are often decision makers and set the mood of their

school. The administrators Kilgore (2009) worked with discussed their feelings about homeschooling families in general and not in regard to participation in extracurricular activities. Administrators felt that homeschool parents should work with administrators and teachers keeping their child(ren) enrolled in public school, rather than homeschool their child(ren). It is possible that if the majority of administrators feel this way toward homeschooling families they might resent their participation in public school extracurricular activities.

Partnerships. Terpstra (1994) writes of a unique partnership between homeschool families and public school system in Iowa. This partnership offers dual enrollment which allow for the homeschooling families to enroll in any academic programs, extracurricular activities or special services needed. They view this as a “team effort in alternative education” (p. 57). The majority of the homeschool students who participate in the dual enrollment program utilize art, music, chorus, physical education, band and a few specific classes and labs.

Webb (1997) discusses the growing phenomenon of homeschool students being allowed to participate in public school extracurricular activities in his research. “The essential question to ascertain whether a home-schooled student should be allowed to participate in interscholastic activities or high school sports is: whether that individual has a right to participate or whether participation is merely a privilege” (p.126). Webb begins with an example of a high school junior that is taught the school’s curriculum at home, so his mother can include religious training, but he is allowed to come to school to be on the school’s wrestling team as well as the football team. His mother teaches the school’s curriculum to stay in compliance of the rules of eligibility required for

participation. Webb made an interesting point that there is not usually an uprising among public school parents when a homeschool student wants to be a part of the French club, but there is when an involvement in athletics is desired. Webb also stated that homeschool families often create co-ops to meet their children's extracurricular needs but this does not work when a student wants to pursue athletics seriously.

Dailey (1999) states, "Despite recent improvements in the home schooling curriculum, it is not feasible to conduct various extracurricular activities, such as organized sport, band, or choral groups in the home" (p. 29). The article later states, "a home school cannot replicate sophisticated labs or libraries found in organized schools" (p. 29). Dailey discusses the fact that many parents decide to homeschool because they feel that it is the best educational option for their children but at the same time, they know that they cannot offer all things at home and would like to partner with the local public school system.

Luebke (1999) discusses homeschooling specifically in the state of Washington in his research. Luebke gave many facts regarding the numbers of students homeschooled in the state as well as the reasoning behind their being homeschooled. The debate of their involvement in public school extracurricular activities is in Wisconsin as well.

Homeschool parents feel that if their children are not allowed to participate it is discrimination. School administrators also fear that if they allow homeschoolers to participate it is discrimination. School administrators also fear that if they allow homeschoolers to participate they will be setting themselves up for increases governmental regulations.

Legislation. The number of homeschooling families has greatly increased in the

last two decades. Estimates of the number of home-educated students range from 1.7 % to 3% of the student population (Blok, 2003). Several states in the United States have passed legislation regarding the involvement of homeschool students in the extracurricular activities of the public school systems of the area (HSLDA, 2011). Florida seems to be one of the trailblazers in this journey with the Craig Dickinson Act which became law in May 1996 (Florida Statutes 232.425) which is explained in detail by The Home Education Foundation (<http://www.flhef.org/pdf/Extra%20Curricular.pdf>) . Goodbread (2006) elaborates that the Craig Dickinson Act allows homeschoolers to take part in the extracurricular activities at public and private schools . In order to be eligible for participation, the homeschooler must maintain a minimum GPA of 2.0, cannot be convicted of a felony, can only participate in activities where the student is zoned. The student must show educational progress as decided by the parent and principal and must start the extracurricular activity at the beginning of the season or semester. The Dickinson Act also holds the school district to certain standards including non-discrimination against homeschool participation in extracurricular activities and provision of insurance that covers homeschool students in the same way that it covers public school students. The district is also prohibited from joining any organizations that discriminates against homeschool students. Lebeda (2007) states that “lawyers involved in homeschooling disputes should be familiar with both sides of this argument” (pp. 101-102).

Alabama has legislation that has been discussed the past couple of years regarding this subject, the Tim Tebow Bill Senate Bill 329/House Bill 334. This is described in The State of Alabama “Tim Tebow Bill” (2008). This Bill would allow homeschool

students to participate in extracurricular activities. The Bill was first introduced to the state House and Senate in 2006. The Bill was reintroduced in 2008 in the Senate but failed to make it out of Committee. The Bill failed due to liability concerns, cost, eligibility assessment, as well as the fear that public schools would be overwhelmed by interested students.

At this point twenty-four states currently allow varying degrees of access for homeschool students to participate in extracurricular activities in public schools. The Home School Legal Defense Association (2007) listed these states as Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Washington and Wyoming. Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and South Dakota allow sports participation through athletic associations. Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Nebraska, Ohio, Utah, and Washington require homeschool students to be partially or dually enrolled in public schools.

Pittman (2005) wrote of a specific case in Michigan that denied a homeschool student the ability to participate in extracurricular activities at their local public school. The district stated they must be enrolled 20 hours a week in order to participate and the court upheld this. Pittman ended with a synopsis that courts have routinely upheld the rights of parents to homeschool their children, but have also upheld the right to deny their participation in extracurricular activities within the public school setting. Pittman stated that participation in public school extracurricular activities is not a right as homeschool parents often think.

In 2005, Pennsylvania passed legislation that allowed homeschool students to take

part in the extracurricular activities of their local public schools. These extracurricular activities include “sports, clubs, theatrical productions, and musical ensembles” (Zehr, 2005, p. 25). Before the governor signed the bill into law, over half of the school districts in Pennsylvania barred homeschool students from participating in public school extracurricular activities. Pennsylvania was the fifteenth state to allow homeschool students access to public school extracurricular activities.

Recently, a dissertation was written examining the possibility of homeschool partnerships with public school districts (Angelis, 2008). Angelis (2008) looked specifically at the state of Maryland. The author began with exploring the various reasons parents decide to homeschool their children. The author interviewed eight families to discover what issues they dealt with as homeschoolers and whether interest existed in extracurricular activities in the public schools if available. Charts included in the dissertation showed each family’s responses to the various questions.

Eight states are currently proposing bills for equal access for homeschoolers (HSLDA, 2011). The concerns regarding this issue include but are not limited to: costs that may be incurred by homeschool student participation, liability issues related to students that are not actively involved in their school district, academic eligibility issues, abuse by those who struggle with attendance and academics in public schools, and an extreme influx of homeschool students using public school services. There are already government restrictions to homeschooling (Cooper and Sureau, 2007; Yuracko, 2008) such as the freedom to homeschool, testing of homeschoolers, special education (Parsons & Lewis, 2010), official monitoring of homeschoolers (Soronen, 2006), use of public school resources, partial public school attendance (Princiotta & Bielick, 2006) . Some

parents with homeschooled children fear greater restrictions will result if homeschool students are allowed to participate. Parents of public school children fear that their children will lose out on positions they think their children are entitled to as a result of attending those schools. School administrators, teachers, and coaches who view extracurriculars as an extension of the formal school community often feel that a dimension will be lost if homeschool students drop in for an activity without having connections and accountability for the full school experience.

A concern also arises that allowing homeschoolers access to public school extracurricular sports activities will increase the number of children home educated (Alexander, 2010). There are many people across the country that choose not to homeschool their children because they or their children want access to specific programs available only at public schools. If the numbers of homeschooling families continue to rise, this could impact school enrollment eventually for public school, possibly causing loss of jobs for teachers and loss of funds for public schools.

Due to the increase in number of homeschooling families more issues are coming to the forefront as these families desire to have more rights for their families. One of these rights is the participation of Tennessee homeschool students in public school supplemental activities. Tennessee General Assembly states that House Bill 1631

This bill revises present law regarding home schools. Under present law, a home school is a school conducted by a parent or a legal guardian for their own children. In the case of special needs courses, such as laboratory sciences, vocational education, or special education, for example, premises approved by the local directors of schools may be used. Public school facilities may be used by

home school participants with the approval of the local director of schools. This bill removes the provisions specifically authorizing the use of premises approved by the local director of schools for special needs courses. This bill specifies that public school facilities may be used by home school participants with the approval of the “principal of the school involved” instead of the “local director of schools. This bill specifies that such use of public school facilities would be at the expense of the party requesting the use.

This bill was passed on May 12, 2011. This bill does not make provisions for homeschool students collaborating with the public school students but rather in using the facilities at their own expense if approved by the principal.

Summary

It is known that extracurricular activity participation has benefits to the students who participate in them. It is not known the benefits specifically to homeschool students’ participation in public school extracurricular activities. It is also unknown why if research shows that extracurricular activity participation is beneficial to the general population, why more homeschool parents are not seeking this as an option for their child(ren). This study sought to answer the questions regarding the thoughts and perceptions of homeschool parents regarding their child(ren)’s participation in public school extracurricular activities. Answering this question helps build the research base regarding homeschool students specifically in regard to participation in public school activities.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the methods used in a qualitative case study regarding possible homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities in west Tennessee. Legislation does not allow full participation by homeschool students in public school extracurricular activities at this point. The study sought to discover the thoughts and perceptions of homeschool parents regarding the current legislation and if they were interested in it changing to allow homeschool participation. Extracurricular activities often involve some time commitment outside of the regular school day. Extracurricular or supplemental activities can include sports, arts, clubs, gifted and talented programs, as well as science labs. Extracurricular activities generally take place after school hours or during a free period, such as study hall, during the school day. The importance and worth of this study was examined. The research questions, research design, participants and setting are described at length. The role of the researcher is given as well as the methods used for both data collection and data analysis. Research is used to support the research design and data collection and analysis decisions made. The limitations and delimitations are also examined.

Research Design

This study was conducted as a qualitative collective case study. Case studies are used to explore the intricacies of a single case (Stake, 1995, p. xi). This study is a collective case study because multiple cases will be studied. Eight parents were individually interviewed and seven parents took part in a focus group for a total of fifteen cases. “Qualitative research aims to address questions concerned with developing an

understanding of the meaning and experience dimensions of humans' lives and social worlds" (Fossey, Harvey, MCDermott, & Davidson, 2002, p. 717). Case study research lends itself to this study because case studies arise out of "the desire to understand complex social phenomena" (Yin, 2003, p. 2). The social phenomenon in this study is the growing number of homeschool families in Tennessee and the current legislation regarding their participation in public school extracurricular activities. Although the researcher understands that with the study of multiple cases the depth is reduced, multiple cases are used in this study for the purpose of adding to generalizability.

The purpose of this study was to seek answers regarding how parents, whose children are actively involved in extracurricular activities outside of the public school system, as well as those parents whose children are not actively involved in extracurricular activities outside of the public school system feel about current legislation regarding homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities. The purpose is not for the study to evolve into a political action plan, but rather, to ascertain the reasons parents are not pursuing the participation in public school extracurricular activities for their child(ren). The parents that are asked already show, through their actions, that they value extracurricular activities by finding opportunities for their child(ren) to participate. The reasons why homeschool parents would allow or not allow their child(ren) to participate in public school extracurricular activities in Tennessee, if they were available, are explored.

Research Question 1: *Why would homeschool parents in west Tennessee allow their child to participate or not participate in public school extracurricular activities if available?*

Research Question 2: *What are the perceptions of homeschool parents in west Tennessee with high school age child(ren) about current legislation concerning homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities?*

Research Question 3: *Why are homeschool students involved in extracurricular activities?*

Participants

Criterion purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) of homeschool parents in west Tennessee who homeschool their high school age children and allow their children to be involved in one or more extracurricular activities apart from the local school system. Each parent was the unit of analysis or case in the study. It was attempted to secure interviewees with children of various genders and ethnicities. Criterion sampling was essential for this study as it is important that the parents be from Tennessee due to the fact that the study is focused on the homeschool parents' thoughts and perceptions regarding the current legislation regarding the inclusivity of homeschool students in Tennessee. Criterion sampling was important because the researcher wanted to investigate parents that meet a certain criteria, specifically allowing their children to participate in extracurricular activities apart from the local public school system. Patton (2002) describes the use of purposeful sampling, "information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry" (p. 230). It is important to use criterion sampling to secure interviews with the parents that allow their child(ren) to participate in supplemental activities as well as secure parents who do not seek out sources for supplemental activities for their child(ren) for the focus group.

Eight parents were interviewed and the interviews stopped at the point of saturation or redundancy. Lincoln and Guba (1985) define redundancy as sampling being “terminated when no new information is forthcoming from newly sampled units (p. 202).” It can be argued that redundancy is subjective but credibility controls can be utilized such as triangulation to ensure that the researchers’ values, etc. are not influencing when the cases are redundant. Eight parents who do not choose to find outside sources for supplemental activities for their child(ren) were asked to participate in a focus group. Homeschool parents with high school aged children filled out a survey. From this survey it was seen whether they allowed their child(ren) to participate in extracurricular activities or not. This discovery placed the parents in the interview group versus the focus group. Those that allowed participation in extracurricular activities were asked to interview and those that did not allow participation in extracurricular activities were asked to participate in the focus group. All parents that participated in the interviews and focus group were mothers. The participants all being female was a surprise to the researcher and not something that had been planned or solicited.

Setting

Memphis-Area Home Education Association (MHEA) was chosen as it was an efficient way to contact parents that met the criteria of allowing their child(ren) to participate in extracurricular activities outside of the local public school system. The website of the organization describes itself (<http://www.memphishomeschool.org/>) as, “a membership-based, Christian organization, dedicated to serving home educators by providing support, encouragement, and assistance; advancing homeschooling; safeguarding and promoting parental authority in education.” There are other independent

homeschool associations in the area but MHEA has the largest membership at this time with over 700 families. The contact information for MHEA was retrieved from a web search. The researcher called MHEA via telephone and discussed the study and need for participants.

This study took place in west Tennessee. The demographics of the area homeschoolers is suburban. The interviews of the homeschool parents took place at times and locations that were convenient to them (see Appendix B). Phone interviews took place when necessary but face to face interviews were preferred. The parents were contacted through a local homeschool organization MHEA.

Researcher's Role

The researcher was the human instrument in this study. As a former homeschooled student who plans to homeschool her own children in the future, the researcher is extremely interested in the thoughts and perceptions of homeschool parents regarding the current legislation in Tennessee regarding homeschool student participation in public school extracurricular activities. The researcher is aware of the reasons the researcher's parents homeschooled the researcher and the researcher's siblings, as well as the reasons the researcher and researcher's husband are planning on homeschooling their children. The researcher is unsure if these reasons are similar to the other parents' motivations in west Tennessee or if this is relevant to the study. As a child, the researcher attended a mega church and had a plethora of extracurricular activities available. The researcher also was not very interested in sports so even if extracurricular had been available through the public school system the researcher would not have been involved as a child. The researcher wants her children to have every opportunity

available to them if it is beneficial to them and want a clear understanding of this issue regarding homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities.

The researcher had no personal relationships to the participants. This is beneficial to the credibility and reliability of the study as the researcher was able to collect and analyze data with minimal bias. The researcher believes that all are created in God's image and should, as a result, be treated with integrity and respect. These values and beliefs guided the researcher in this study when interacting with the participants. Also, as the researcher, truth was sought, whether it was what was expected, or desired, or not.

Procedures

Data collection.

The researcher turned in the expedited application to the IRB (see Appendix A). When necessary changes were made and the application was approved, the local homeschooling organization was contacted. A meeting was scheduled with the president of the organization explaining the proposed research. They were asked to send a survey to all homeschooling families of high school students in west Tennessee that are involved in the organization, 700 families total. An informed consent form was sent with the survey (see Appendix B). The survey (see Appendix C) asked about the family's participation in extracurricular activities, whether they participate, how many extracurricular activities they participate in, which activities they participate in as well as how they would classify themselves ethnically. From the responses, it was attempted to secure interviews with those that have children of various genders and ethnicities. The parents were called via the phone by the researcher and asked for an interview at a time and place of their convenience. Eight interviews were scheduled, with just one parent

present from each family, but a list was kept with other families to interview if saturation or redundancy was not reached. Informed consent forms were signed before. Notes were taken during the interviews and transcribed. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted approximately one hour. The parents were also asked to fill in a blank month calendar that showed the lessons and other extracurricular activities their child(ren) participate in during a typical month. No follow-up interviews were needed. Categorical aggregation as well as discovering correspondence and patterns was used to analyze data.

Survey.

Surveys were sent to the homeschool families in west Tennessee (see Appendix B). The surveys helped to establish if the homeschool families are involved in extracurricular activities apart from the local public school system. This was essential for the criterion sampling used in this study. Yin (2003) suggests that using a survey or questionnaire as part of a case study can “produce quantitative data as part of the case study evidence” (p. 91). It was also a cost effective and a time efficient manner in which to identify possible interviewees among the home schooling families participating in extracurricular activities in the target geographical area. The survey set up Research Question 1: Why would homeschool parents in west Tennessee allow their children to participate or not participate in public school extracurricular activities if available? by establishing if they are actually involved in extracurricular activities currently. Survey question 1 asks, “Is/are your high school age child/children involved in extracurricular activities?” Survey question 2 asks, “If yes, how many extracurricular activities is/are your high school age child/children involved in? Survey question 3 asks, “Which

extracurricular activities is/are your high school child/children involved in? The last survey question is a question of ethnicity which serves to make sure there is as much of an equal representation of ethnicities in the interviews and focus group as possible.

In developing the survey, the researcher took advantage of the 2005 National Household Education Survey by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). This survey was designed to gather information from a national sample of families with children in school. The surveys for this study were sent with a self-addressed envelope. The survey asked questions such as: Are your children involved in extracurricular activities? If so, how many extracurricular activities are they involved in? Are the extracurricular activities fine arts, sports, foreign language, or science labs? The surveys were analyzed and families that have the most extracurricular activity participation will be contacted first to set up interviews.

Interviews.

The second type of data to be collected was personal interviews with one parent representing each family. The interview was semi-structured with the research questions acting as the guiding questions on the interview guide. The researcher was careful not to ask the questions in such a way that guided the interviewees to answer in a particular way. Interviewing helped to answer the research questions: (a) Why would homeschool parents in west Tennessee allow their child to participate or not participate in public school extracurricular activities if available? (b) Why have homeschool parents in west Tennessee whose children are involved in one or more extracurricular activities outside of the public school system, not organized and mobilized to change the law regarding

homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities? And (c) Why are homeschool students involved in extracurricular activities?

Interviewing skills are necessary when conducting case study research such as being a good listener and asking non guiding questions, having the ability of being adaptive and flexible, as well as personally understanding the subject being studied and being unbiased in one's personal research. (Yin, 2003, p. 59). The interviews took place at a time and place that was convenient to the interviewee. This researcher was sure not to use guiding questions. Notes were taken of the interviews and transcribed. The interviews were semi-structured as well as open ended. The interviews included questions such as: Why do you homeschool? Why do extracurricular activities have value and importance in your family's life? Why did you decide to pursue extracurricular activities?

The interviews followed Kvale's (1996) seven stages of an interview investigation (a) thematizing; (b) designing; (c) interviewing; (d) transcribing; (e) analyzing; (f) verifying; and (g) reporting (p. 88). The purpose of the study guided the research design chosen. The interviews utilized an interview guide and a reflective approach was used for future questions. The interviews were then transcribed, analyzed, and verified for generalizability and trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss trustworthiness as having four components involved to be considered trustworthy: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. At the end of the research the results were reported along with suggestions for future research. The interview began with questions such as, "Why did you choose to homeschool your child(ren)?" "Are you

aware that some states allow homeschool students to participate in public school extracurricular activities?”

Confidentiality was provided to the interviewees. Pseudonyms were used in the transcription and reporting. Any identifying information was stored in a password protected folder on a password protected computer. It was requested that the child(ren) not be present for the interview. The purpose of this study was to understand the thoughts and perceptions of the parents regarding their child(ren)’s participation in extracurricular activities rather than their child(ren)’s thoughts and perceptions.

The interviews answered all research questions. Research Question 1: Why would homeschool parents in west Tennessee allow their child to participate or not participate in public school extracurricular activities if available? Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of homeschool parents in west Tennessee whose high school age child(ren) are involved in one or more extracurricular activities outside of the public school system regarding the current legislation concerning homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities other than sports? Research Question 3: Why are homeschool students involved in extracurricular activities? The research questions were on a semi-structured interview guide with large spaces in between to write notes. The research questions were specifically asked if the conversation did not naturally flow in a direction that answered the questions. The researcher used reflective practices to know which questions to ask next to keep the interview naturally flowing but still glean the information needed for the study.

Focus group.

A separate group of parents with homeschooled high school students who do not actively participate in extracurricular activities outside of the local public school system were asked to participate in a focus group. Krueger & Casey (2009) define a focus group as “having a planned discussion using predetermined questions, guided by a skillful moderator, conducted in a permissive and non-threatening environment for the purposes of providing insight” (p. 153). Fern (1982) found that more ideas were generated by a focus group with 8 members rather than one with four. Fern (1982) wrote, “one way to ensure the preferred group size is to overrecruit respondents to replace those that cancel at the last minute” (p.12).

The focus group answered all research questions. Research Question 1: Why would homeschool parents in west Tennessee allow their child to participate or not participate in public school extracurricular activities if available? Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of homeschool parents in west Tennessee whose high school age child(ren) are involved in one or more extracurricular activities outside of the public school system about current legislation concerning homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities? Research Question 3: Why are homeschool students involved in extracurricular activities? While this question will not pertain to these particular families as they were chosen for the focus group due to their lack of participation in supplemental activities, it is still pertinent to ask as it gives more substance to their reasons for not participating and showing their personal perceptions regarding participation. The research questions served as the focus group questions. The participants in the focus group spurred each other on to provide many details that were relevant to the study in the course of the conversation.

Calendars.

Calendars were sent to the interviewees after they had scheduled their interviews but before the interviews actually took place (see Appendix D). A calendar page was sent to each family to fill in their extracurricular activities for one month. The family brought this calendar to the interview. The parents that participated in a phone interview rather than a face to face interview sent their completed calendar in the mail to the researcher. Calendars were also sent to the parents that participated in the focus group. They brought the calendar to the focus group. Patton (2002) describes documents as providing the researcher “with information about many things that cannot be observed” (p. 293). The calendar served the purpose of helping to triangulate data to ensure trustworthiness. The calendar set up Research Question 1: Why are homeschool students involved in extracurricular activities? by establishing if they are actually involved.

Data Analysis.

Data collection triangulation occurred as there were three sources of data from each interview of focus group participant: the survey, the interviews or the focus group, and the calendar of activities. A misconception regarding triangulation is that the various data sources will yield the same result; whereas, the true point of triangulation is to test for consistency among the data sources (Patton, 2002, p. 248). The notes of the interviews and focus group were transcribed. Categorical aggregation as well as discovering correspondence and patterns were used with the transcriptions. Stake (1995) describes this process, “The search for meaning often is a search for patterns, for consistency within certain conditions, which we call ‘correspondence’” (p. 78). These patterns can be found within each case as well as cross-case. Yin (2009) states, “Case

studies can cover multiple cases and then draw a single set of ‘cross-case’ conclusions” (p.20). Stake (1995) cautions that, “In collective case study, an early commitment to common topics facilitates later cross-site analysis” (p. 25).

Trustworthiness.

Through the use of systematic transcribing of interviews and focus group as well as the use of triangulation, credibility and dependability are established. The multiple artifacts from each interviewee and focus group participant assist in accurately describing reality which establishes credibility. Member checks were included after several interviews as well as following the focus group. Stake (1995) describes member checks,

The actor is requested to examine rough drafts of writing where the actions or word of the actor are featured, sometimes when first written up but usually when no further data will be collected from him or her. The actor is asked to review the material for accuracy and palatability. The actor may be encouraged to provide alternative language or interpretation but is not promised that that version will appear in the final report (p. 115).

Rich details were included regarding the context and setting of the study to assist in establishing dependability. It is hoped that what is discovered in this collective case study is transferable to other homeschooling families in other parts of Tennessee.

Ethical Issues.

Pseudonyms were used on all transcriptions for the parties involved. Data was stored on a password protected computer with a password protected folder. This researcher believes that the way in which one treats others demonstrates one’s worldview. This researcher believes that all people are created in God’s image and

should be treated with respect as a result. This belief will be reflected in the research methods utilized in this study as well as the way in which the data is analyzed and reported.

Chapter Four: Survey, Interview and Focus Group Results

Introduction

This chapter looks at the survey results and comparing them to the national results that were collected by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) when conducting the 2005 National Household Education Survey. This is to show how the answers match up with the national averages. The interview results are discussed to show the thoughts and perceptions regarding the current legislation concerning homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities of parents that have high school aged children they homeschool who are involved in extracurricular activities. The focus group results will also be discussed to discover the thoughts and perceptions regarding the current legislation in Tennessee of parents that have high school aged children they homeschool who do not participate in extracurricular activities. A summary will conclude the chapter closing with the conclusions and how the research questions were answered.

Survey Results

Tennessee allows homeschool families the opportunity to participate in sports in the local public school at the school's discretion. The study was to examine the thoughts and perceptions of the local homeschooling community regarding this issue. The completed surveys was used to divide the participants into two groups: those that should be interviewed because their children were involved in extracurricular activities, and those that should participate in the focus group as their child was not involved in extracurricular activities or if they were they were such that they would not be able to be involved in if they had been enrolled in their local public school. Each parent was a

separate case whether they participated in an interview or the focus group. The dividing factor was the participation or nonparticipation in extracurricular activities. Through the process of receiving completed surveys eight participants, representing eight families, were secured for personal interviews and eight participants were secured for the focus group, representing eight families. A greater response to the surveys had been anticipated, however, the respondents were able to be divided into the focus group or interview group based on the responses received on the survey. The non-participating families were asked to participate in a focus group rather than one on one interviews because it was hoped that in interacting with one another during the focus group they would prod each other to go deeper into the subject thus providing a richer experience for the researcher for the purpose of the study.

The local homeschool association that was contacted advised that it would be too costly to send surveys out to all of their members (700+ families) and instead posted about the study in the newsletter that goes home once a month. Interested parties (22 in total) contacted the researcher via email and the researcher emailed them the consent form as well as survey. The participants either printed the survey and consent form and then scanned and emailed them back, typed and highlighted their answers and emailed them back, or printed the documents, marked their answers, and mailed the documents using the postal service. Depending on the results of survey they were then contacted to either be interviewed or to be a part of the focus group based on their participation or nonparticipation in extracurricular activities. Five of the participants were secured through word of mouth from other participants.

The completed surveys that were received were divided into two groups: those that participate in extracurricular activities and those that do not. This placed the participants in the interview group or the focus group respectively. All participants were Caucasian. This is a representative sample of the sample pool that received the invitation as 95% of homeschoolers in the area are Caucasian. Table 1 indicates the types of extracurricular activities the participants that were interviewed were involved in as well as how many extracurricular activities each student was involved in. The participants also filled out a calendar that detailed the types of extracurricular activities they were involved in as well as when they took part in the activity. This was a way to verify involvement in extracurricular activities as well as the extent of the involvement. If a family had more than one high school aged student they homeschooled the participant was asked to only fill out the survey and answer questions for one child.

Table 1

Types of Extracurricular Activities Involved in

Name	Fine Arts	Sports	Foreign Language	Science Labs
Smith		X	X	X
Brown	X	X		
Henry	X	X		
Johnson	X	X		
Williams	X	X	X	X
Jones		X		X
Davis	X	X		X
Miller			X	X

Comparison with National Survey Results

In developing the survey, the study utilized the 2005 National Household Education Survey by the NCES. This survey was designed to gather information from a national sample of families with children in school. The national sampling reported only 62 percent of the respondents being Caucasian. 100 percent of the researcher's respondents were Caucasian. This is due to a large number of homeschooling families in the area being Caucasian. The national sampling reported 84 percent of the Caucasian students participating in a school activity. 50 percent of the researcher's respondents participated in an extracurricular activity. If the study had been larger it is possible that it would have been found that more families participated in extracurricular activities.

Interview Results

Eight interviews were held over a four month period. Each interview was held with the mother of the family. Personal interviews were designed to delve into a homeschooling parent's thoughts and perceptions regarding homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities. The interviews went in greater depth than could be provided by the survey results. The informal interview guide consisted of three questions to guide the conversation. The following sections describe how the participants were selected, how the interview was administered as well as the participants' responses to the interview questions.

Participants were selected based on their survey responses. Originally the researcher had hoped there would be a large amount of returned surveys to enable the researcher to choose participants based on who was involved in the most extracurricular activities. However, this was not the case and if they had a high school aged child they

homeschooled that participated in one or more extracurricular activities they were asked to schedule an interview or participate in the focus group. Twenty-two potential participants contacted the researcher with only 16 following through with returning survey and scheduling interview or focus group. The researcher desired to have different ethnicities represented from the completed surveys. This was not the case however, as one cannot control who chooses to participate in a study and who does not. The interview process was explained to the potential participants and then they were able to tell the researcher a time and place that was convenient to them for the interview.

Participants were interviewed at a time and place that was convenient to them. Five interviews took place in person while three interviews took place over the telephone. Interviews lasted one hour or less. The researcher listened and took notes which were transcribed and analyzed after the interview. Notes were written very briefly during the interview and immediately transcribed as soon as the researcher could sit down alone and write out the interview from the brief notes taken during the interview.

Pseudonyms are used for each of the participants. The interviews demonstrated there were similarities as well as differences in thoughts and perceptions regarding homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities. Each family, or case, will be briefly described using their fictitious name as way of introduction.

The Smith family has four boys, one of which a high school graduate, one of which is a tenth grader, one is in middle school, and one is in elementary school. Mrs. Smith answered the questions regarding her tenth grade son. Mrs. Smith would allow her tenth grade son to participate in public school extracurricular activities for several

reasons: scholarships and also if a specific sport was not available in the homeschool arena.

At first Mrs. Smith was happy that people could go to the public school they are zoned for and ask for inclusion into extracurricular activities. Then she realized that the majority of the time the school district's answer was no and she was very disappointed. Mrs. Smith even approached a private school and made sure they understood that she would pay all of the extra fees involved and she was turned down there as well. The lack of inclusion in both cases has been upsetting to her. Her oldest son who is now in college attended school his senior year because he wanted to be more involved in sports that was available through local homeschooling organizations.

The Brown family has two high school aged children they homeschool. A son and a daughter who are each involved in two extracurricular activities. The Brown family stated that it depends on which child and what activity as to whether they would allow their children to participate. Their 12th grade son is involved in a club rugby team at a local high school. He has been named team captain and this has helped develop his leadership skills. Being involved in this activity has given the family a taste of what it would be like if all extracurricular activities were available to homeschool students. Their family discusses openly as a family any bad things that come up with the exposure of being on the club rugby team. Being on the team and interacting with coaches, etc. has helped her son to change his ideas of what he wants to do when he graduates. As a result of being a part of this team activity he now wants to study and practice physical therapy. A team sport can count as a Physical Education credit but by the time he is a senior he does not need the credit.

Mrs. Brown felt that she paid taxes and as a result her child should have the right to participate in public school extracurricular activities whether they choose to utilize them or not. They have had to look for extra activities to get the credits they needed. Her son has had to take guitar and band for Fine Arts credits. He has also taken a music theory class as well.

The Henry family has four children and has homeschooled for 11 years. They have a fifteen year old son, twelve year old daughter, eleven year old son, and eight year old daughter. The questions answered in the survey were for the fifteen year old son in tenth grade. The Henry family would allow their children to participate as there are certain sports that cannot be played a part from the regular school setting such as football. Her fifteen year old son is in the 10th grade and has Asperger's Syndrome (on the autism spectrum) and is a struggling learner. Mrs. Henry did state that she does wish there were specific programs such as special services that would help with struggling learners whether it is a support group or classes and extra help. Her son is involved in ballet, baseball, basketball, and an engineering group at a local university. He has been enrolled in a local performing arts group that also taught skills as well as a homeschool cooperative English course to help with writing skills.

Mrs. Henry said her family joined a local church that was very into homeschooling and it was easy for them to find activities as homeschoolers as a result. They have found activities such as ballet, basketball and archery. She does not feel that participating in something such as public school sports is necessary to receive scholarships as she feels that the homeschool league is established and will be participating in

Nationals in March. That being said, she does wish for access to special education classes in the public school for her homeschooled child with disabilities.

The Johnson family has one son a senior in high school. They have homeschooled since the seventh grade. The son participates in two extracurricular activities. Mrs. Johnson stated that it would depend on what type of child if she would allow her child to participate in extracurricular activities at the local public school. It would depend on if the child was deadest on a certain sport or activity? Would allowing them to participate be the only way the child would be eligible for a scholarship? She would personally not allow her son, a senior, to participate because they had a bad experience with the public schools when her son was in the sixth grade. They feel they homeschool out of necessity.

Her son attended private school through the fourth grade at which time his father lost his job. The family moved to a new house specifically for the school district in which they would be zoned. The son had an ok 5th grade year due to the regular teacher being on extended maternity leave and the substitute being a great teacher. In middle school the son was in the Honors program and felt he never fit into middle school. At the end of the school year the son's class had a special field trip as a reward for turning in the most boxtops to benefit their school. Mrs. Johnson decided not to go on the field trip as she wanted to raise a man and part of being that was to push him toward independence. On the field trip her son was beat up by other classmates. When the parents went to go see the principal about this issue he stated that it was school policy to suspend or expel all involved, even the "victim" as part of their no violence policy. Mrs. Johnson stated she

figured out at this point why the school district did not have any violent crimes or behavior problems reported.

Mrs. Johnson felt that the decision of allowing homeschoolers to participate or not participate in public school extracurricular activities should not be left up to the schools. She personally would not be interested unless she had a gifted athlete. She might consider it in any other county in Tennessee than her own after the problems her son had in public school. Her son does participate in a homeschool choir which met a Fine Arts requirement as well as a homeschool bowling league which met a Physical Education credit. The bowling league won a city tournament. She would be interested in there being access to Driver's Education, choir and band. A homeschool band does not exist and she knows a lot of people get band scholarships and would have liked to have had this option for her son. As a result of not being able to receive such scholarships her son will be attending a local community college to receive his Associates degree which will be fully transferable to a university at a later time.

The Williams family has two children a daughter that is a senior and a son that is in middle school. The questions answered in the interview were about her high school aged child. Mrs. Williams is not sure she would let her children participate as she is endeavoring to shelter them by homeschooling them. The one extracurricular activity she would consider would be band as this is only available through a local church but that involvement does not have the same benefits being affiliate with a school does. She has a son that is not in high school yet that is extremely interested in football. Not participating in football and band in the local public school affects scholarships.

Mrs. Williams stated that their tax dollars are paying for schools and her family, as well as other homeschooling families are not getting use for their money. While not sure if she would allow her child to participate she does want her money considered in the equation. If golf was available she would be interested in that for her child.

The Jones family has three daughters one that has graduated and is a freshman in college, one that is a sophomore in high school, and one that is in elementary school. The questions answered in the interview were regarding their sophomore in high school. Mrs. Jones would allow her 10th grade daughter to participate in public school extracurricular activities if they were available to homeschoolers, excluding swimming. She would not consider swimming because as they can already compete as a homeschool league. She has another daughter that is in elementary school at this point who is very interested in basketball and if she continues to excel they will prepare to send her to school if the laws do not change. Mrs. Jones and her husband believe their children are to be light and salt to the world as Christians and they need to be able to deal with living and being apart from the family.

While she did not feel super familiar with current legislation in Tennessee Mrs. Jones did believe that homeschool students should have the opportunity to participate in public school extracurricular activities as their parents are also taxpayers. She also felt it was important for them to have this opportunity to help with scholarships. There are certain sports that you need a school to play such as football. There are fees that all students have to pay to play sports in schools anyway and she would not be asking for her child to be exempt from them. Mrs. Jones also felt that including homeschoolers would legitimize them. For example: when the homeschool swim team competes against

another team the comments heard are, “All they do is swim all day.” This is assuming that since they are homeschooled they can practice their sport all day long. Since students are not allowed to participate in public school extracurricular activities at least they should be allowed to participate in private school extracurricular activities.

The Davis family has several children but the survey and interview was answered only regarding daughter that is freshman in high school. Mrs. Davis was very hesitant about allowing her children to participate as she did not want to create an inroad for public schools into homeschooling. Mrs. Davis was also concerned about biased students as well. She said that most extracurricular activities were available to homeschoolers such as basketball, baseball and soccer. Football is not available and band is available at a local church.

Mrs. Davis knew that right now it is left up to the school if they will allow homeschoolers to participate in their extracurricular activities. The public schools might need to open their programs up to homeschoolers to make their program stronger. If it was opened up to homeschoolers and she felt like she would allow her children to participate she would want to talk to the coach first. If she did not find the coach to be agreeable she would find somewhere else to participate. She would not want the coach to be forced and thus reciprocate in an undesired manner toward her children. Mrs. Davis also felt like if there is an interest in a certain program other homeschoolers can be rallied and usually a fit can be found in the homeschool arena.

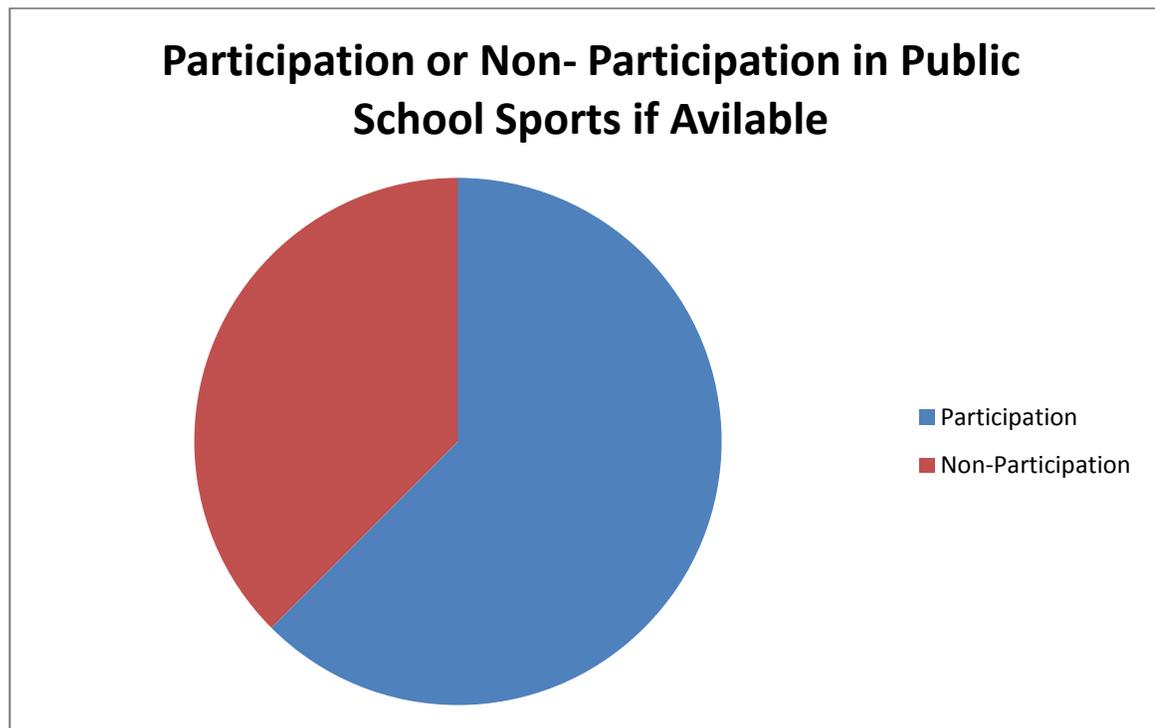
The Miller family has two daughters that are seniors in high school. During the interview the mother chose to answer the question for only one daughter rather than for her stepdaughter as well. Mrs. Miller has a 12th grade daughter that she would allow to

participate in public school extracurricular activities, just not all of them. She felt that her daughter, as well as other homeschool students, could benefit from other people's opinions and views of things. She would particularly like science clubs and swim teams to be available to homeschoolers through the local public schools.

Mrs. Miller stated that she thought the current legislation promotes discrimination because one must go before a hearing to gain access to the extracurricular activities in the public school. That gives a lot of potential to spread untruths. Homeschool parents pay taxes as well as public school students' parents and should have equal access. Mrs. Miller also mentioned it would be nice if textbooks were available to check out for the year.

Figure 1

If public school extracurricular activities were available to homeschool students in Tennessee would you allow your child to participate?



The graph shows that sixty percent of those interviewed would allow their high school age child to participate in extracurricular activities at the local public school if available. Forty percent were not interested in allowing their high school age child to participate in public school extracurricular activities if they were available for homeschoolers.

Mrs. Smith's son is involved in extracurricular sports, especially basketball because he enjoys it. He is involved in two different teams because of his passion for basketball. Mrs. Brown's son participates because he wants to and for socialization opportunities. Mrs. Brown feels it is important for parents to be super involved no matter what the activity in order to know who your child's friends are. Mrs. Henry has her child involved in extracurricular activities for the networking aspect as well as to overcome any fear her son with Asperger's Syndrome might have.

Mrs. Johnson has stated her son began being involved in extracurricular activities because of a need to fulfill credits. He participates in the youth group at his church for social needs. Mrs. Williams allows her daughter to be involved in extracurricular activities because it helps her to be well-rounded, gives her interaction time with friends, and she enjoys it as well as they are activities she is interested in. Specifically being involved in Student Council as well as Honor Society also encourages community service projects. It is good to serve others and Mrs. Williams is glad for this encouragement in her daughter's life.

Mrs. Johnson's daughter participates in extracurricular activities because she enjoys it and it is also a place for social friendships. When her daughter participates in supplemental classes it helps her perform better as she sometimes wants to please others

better than her parents. Her participation in supplemental classes also relieves the parents of the need to nag. Supplemental classes are beneficial to take in the area in which one's parents are weakest. There is one negative to involvement in extracurricular activities Mrs. Johnson has found: when joining in an activity it is often exclusionary if the child has not been a part of the group since the very beginning.

Mrs. Davis' daughter participates in extracurricular activities because it helps develop her talents and gifts. Mrs. Davis considers if her daughter is interested in participating in extracurricular activities as well as if the extracurricular activity is a beneficial outlet for her daughter before she allows her to participate. She cautioned that one must know what they are looking for in an extracurricular activity. There is a difference between a teaching environment and an outlet that serves as a way for your child to make friends and build relationships.

Focus Group Results

From the survey results eight people were asked to participate in a focus group. Those who were asked to participate had high school aged children that are homeschooled and are not involved in extracurricular activities or activities that they would not be able to participate in if they were enrolled in the local public school. It took three attempts to find a time that was suitable for all eight participants to meet. The focus group took place in the party room of a local restaurant. One participant did not show up on the day of the focus group leaving the total number at seven. However, Krueger and Casey (2009) wrote, "The ideal size of a focus group for most noncommercial topics is five to eight participants (p. 67). The amount desired for the focus group left a little padding in case a participant backed out at the last moment. The focus group was chosen

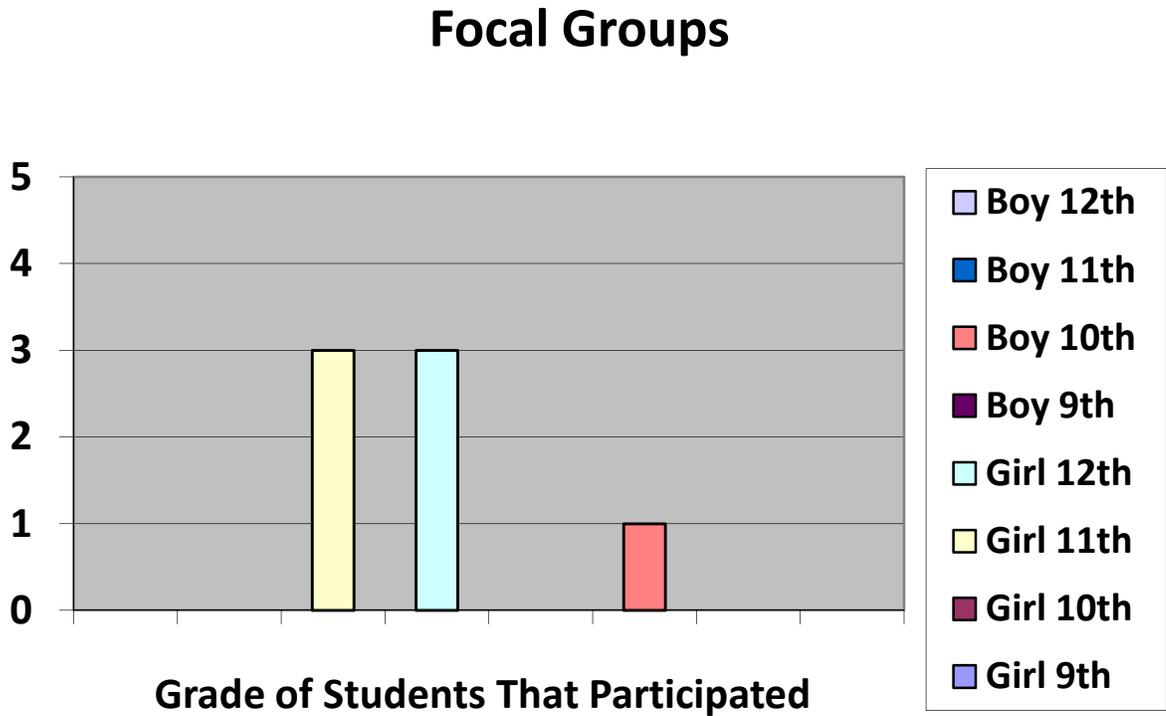
in hopes that being in a group would cause rich conversation to take place on the subject of extracurricular activities and public schools.

Those chosen for the focus group had high school age children they were homeschooling that were either not involved in extracurricular activities or were involved in extracurricular activities they would not be able to be involved in if they were enrolled in the local public school. The researcher desired to have different ethnicities represented from the completed surveys. This was not the case however, as one cannot control who chooses to participate in a study and who does not. The focus group process was explained to the potential participants and then they were contacted with a time that the focus group would be meeting.

A few participants ordered food and/or drinks before they sat down. All sat around two tables pushed together and the researcher introduced themselves and explained the study. The researcher asked the first guiding question and then began taking notes and stopped the discussion after an hour and a half had passed. The participants spurred themselves on in the discussion. All participants were females in their late 40s to early 50s. The table below will act as a reference as to which age each parent was referring to when discussing among themselves.

Figure 2

Grade and Gender of Students Represented by Parents in Focus Group



Responses to Focus Group Questions

The first question posed to the focus group participants was: If public school extracurricular activities were available to homeschool students in Tennessee would you allow your child to participate? Why or why not? Mrs. Wilson said that her daughter would have absolutely no interest in sports. Mrs. Wilson would have an interest in allowing her to participate in science labs. She would still like to teach science and be able to choose the curriculum but just have access to the labs for her daughter. She would also like to have access to AP classes instead of having to pay extra at a local community college. A local university was offering homeschooled students the opportunity for dual enrollment at \$300 a class. When the university realized the

homeschool community would utilize this greatly the university changed the price to \$300 a credit hour. Mrs. Moore commented that the student from the nearby public school can walk to the university and take the classes. Mrs. Wilson also stated that she was not trained to be a guidance counselor so they are trying to find extra help for college planning.

Mrs. Moore's son is very interested in football. They had had struggles when he was in middle school as there is not a program for 6-8 grades for homeschoolers. The Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) has started a football program for homeschoolers in high school recently but it is not as "established" in her opinion as the football programs at the local public high schools. She took her son to tour the local public school as a potential school choice due to his love for football. It was too overwhelming for him. Mrs. Moore has another son that is in sixth grade and she would consider allowing him to participate in the local public school because his personality would prevent him from being overwhelmed.

Mrs. Moore's 11th grade daughter has absolutely no desire to be a part of extracurricular activities. Mrs. Moore said that there has been one thing that has been hard for her to come to grips with but all parents should: know your family and accept them where they are. In other words, what works for one of your children, may or may not work for another. Mrs. Moore also stated that she might have different opinions about extracurricular activities in private school vs. public school. She did think that a coach is a coach wherever they are and uses foul language. She feels it is important to be careful what homeschoolers are barking for and read all of the fine print on being involved in public school extracurricular activities.

Mrs. Harris lives in a different county than the other participants and the local public high school does allow homeschool students to participate in extracurricular activities if they are enrolled in at least 3 hours at the public school. The school does not take up your children's papers or give them a grade; these things are left up to the parents. Mrs. Harris does not want her daughters to be a part of this for fear of negative influences. Even though her daughters do not seek out negative influences, negative influences seem to seek them out. Mrs. Harris is not current on her awareness of recent legislation because of her lack of interest in allowing her daughters to participate in extracurricular activities at the local public school. Her daughters do love basketball but do not want to attend three hours of traditional school hours in order to participate. They would especially dislike having to do this on a daily basis. They love the flexibility of their daily schedule. However, Mrs. Harris would be interested in her daughters attending one class or two that they are weak in at home even if it had to be on a daily basis.

Mrs. Taylor is the mother of eight children the oldest of whom is a daughter in the 12th grade. Her daughter would not be interested in any public school activities extracurricular activities. She does have a son that would be interested when he gets into high school. However, Mrs. Taylor and her husband will not allow this participation as the interaction they have had in the homeschool realm has been too much for him to handle. She is also concerned that if she gets her foot in the public school's door they will start to meddle in her business. If we create a bridge the bridge will work both ways. She was concerned she would lose her rights as she believes parents have lost their rights in the public school classrooms.

Some of Mrs. Taylor's concerns of being involved in public school extracurricular activities were wondering if the homeschool students would even be accepted. Would they be ostracized by staff? Would their child be used on the team or "added on" so as not to upset existing public school parents? The public school is run by the government so participation in public school activities becomes a government issue. Mrs. Taylor felt that public school coaches might find homeschool parents to be a breath of fresh air in regards to how involved they are in their child's life. At the end of the focus group she stated she wished we could keep these types of conversations drummed up. She does believe that God's will will be brought out in our children's' lives.

Mrs. Anderson stated that she and her husband homeschool their children to keep them at home not to have them in classes and activities everywhere. That being said her 11th grade daughter does participate in music to an extreme that she would not be able to if she was enrolled in public school. She does feel that her daughter would be able to handle participation in the public school but that other children might not be able to. Her daughters have all participated in a program in the summer called Master Works Festival. This is when various Christians that participate in the Fine Arts spend a month in the summer teaching various workshops for each of the Fine Arts as well as how to be a strong Christian in that environment. She suggested that it would be very beneficial to have the same type of program available in other aspects of extracurricular activities such as sports. People like Tim Tebow, etc. could drill the kids on skills but also be real with them about what it is like and how to be a Christian in that specific type of environment.

Mrs. Anderson's daughter would not want to be involved in the orchestra in the public schools as they are not on the same level to which she is accustomed. However, it

is hard that she is not eligible for All West or All State because she is not affiliated with a public or private school. While participate in All West and All State look good on resumes, music scholarships are performance based (auditions) and scholarship opportunities for homeschoolers might not be thwarted as much as they would for those that play sports. In regards to scholarships, Mrs. Anderson stated that God will provide a way for students.

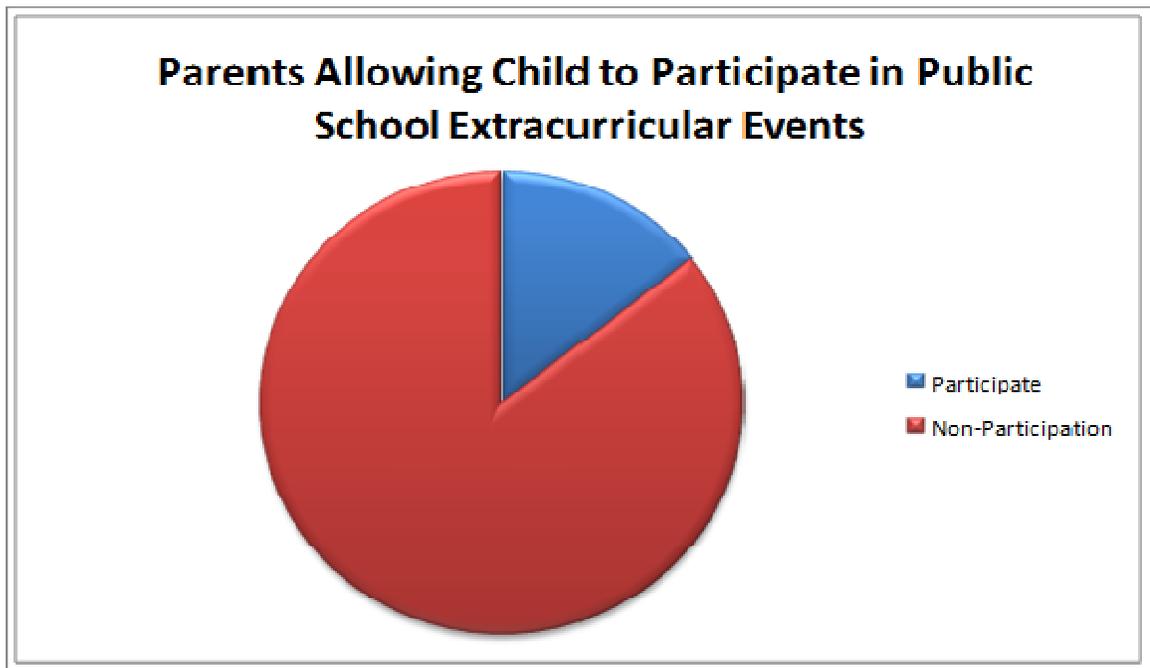
Mrs. Anderson felt it would be good for homeschool students to have the opportunity to be involved in Governor's Schools for Arts as well as Sciences. Her daughter had been able to involved in the symphony on a level that she would not be able to if she was enrolled in the local public school. Mrs. Anderson also feels that the academic level at the public schools in not the same level that her daughter is used to. Mrs. Anderson has heard horror stories from her mother, a retired public school teacher, how some students are passed on to the next grade because of principals changing grades, etc. She would not come to any signed agreement with the public schools unless she had the HSLDA backing her up. She feels that the energy of the homeschool community would be better served to do their own extracurricular activities.

Mrs. Jackson's daughter who is a senior would not ever be interested in being a part of public school extracurricular activities. Mrs. Jackson and her husband are not interested in this option for her either. They might consider private school extracurricular activities if the daughter was interested and that was a viable option. She believes that each child is different. Both of her children were in public school and her son (now graduated) was in fifth grade when they pulled him out and placed him in private school. Their daughter was in third grade when she was pulled out and they began to homeschool

her. Different choices were made for different children. Mrs. White has an 11th grade daughter that is not involved in extracurricular activities and does not have a desire to be involved as a lot of opportunities for socialization exist through church.

Figure 3

If public school extracurricular activities were available to homeschool students in Tennessee would you allow your child to participate?



It can be seen through both the interviews as well as the focus groups that there are differing opinions regarding participation in public school extracurricular activities. Those that were heavily involved in extracurricular activities were more open to participating with the public schools, although not the case for all interviewed. The focus group which consisted of those not involved in extracurricular activities was more hesitant regarding involvement with the public schools. Of the focus group, the interested party was more interested in supplemental classes that would enrich their child's educational experience, such as a science lab. A major concern of interacting

with public schools was the potential of the government’s increased involvement in homeschooling if cooperation took place.

During the interviews and focus group the researcher took notes to transcribe and code later. The researcher first used open coding and from there moved to axial coding. Table 2 shows the major categories found in open coding and then the associated concepts that were discovered during axial coding.

Table 2

Major Categories Regarding Homeschool Parents’ Thoughts and Perceptions Regarding Homeschool Participation in Public School Extracurricular Activities and the Associated Concepts

Major Categories	Associated Concepts
<p>Would Participate if Available</p> <p>Mrs. Smith spoke of this issue, "We have approached our local school district asking permission to participate and have been denied. We sent our oldest son to attend public school due to the fact he was more interested in sports than the opportunities the homeschool organization could provide."</p>	<p>scholarship opportunities,</p> <p>some sports need a school setting, taxpaying citizens, socialization,</p> <p>child enjoys particular activity</p>
<p>Would Not Participate if Available</p> <p>Mrs. Johnsons thoughts regarding participation, personally would not be interested in sending my</p>	<p>sheltering children, bias by teachers, bias by other “I parents, bias by other</p>

son to participate unless he was a gifted athlete or if we lived in a different county due to the problems my son has had in the local public school."

students

Positive Regarding Current Legislation

Harris stated, "I do not want my daughters involved with extracurricular activities in the local public school because of the potential for negative influences. As a result, I am fine with the current legislation.

would not participate Mrs. anyway, appreciate the separation, thought schools would be receptive to partnership

Negative Regarding Current Legislation

Mrs. Williams stated, "My tax dollars are paying for the schools and I am not getting anything out of it. I know this is true for other homeschool families in the area."

extracurricular activities that are not available to their children because of their school choice, lack of scholarship opportunities

Some of the parents had initial positive reactions to the legislation in Tennessee regarding homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities. Their thoughts regarding the legislation changed, however, when they went to their local public schools to seek access and were denied. They wondered if the law was worded in such a way to placate those in the homeschool community who would be interested in the participation in public school extracurricular activities without ever intending to actually grant the access. The parents that homeschooled children that were involved in

extracurricular activities were generally more interested in gaining access to public school extracurricular activities than the parents who homeschooled children who were not involved in extracurricular activities. This was not a hard and fast phenomenon however as several parents interviewed would not allow their child to participate in public school extracurricular activities even though they participated in extracurricular activities separate from the public schools. This was because the parents wanted to shelter their children and were unsure of the type of environment they would be in and the type of people they would encounter. Several parents of children that were not involved in extracurricular activities of any type were interested in supplemental types of activities such as science lab or access to the guidance counselor.

It is unclear if parents would allow their homeschooled children to participate in the public school's extracurricular activities if they were available even if they said they were favorable towards the idea. This is because it was often said it would depend on the individual child. A decision they would make for one child might be a different decision than what they would make for another child. Even those that were positive about the current legislation still would have liked for the option to be there for homeschooled students even though they would not personally be using it. The major idea was that homeschool parents also pay taxes and should have some of the amenities of public school available to them.

Triangulation

Data source triangulation was used. Stake (1995) describes data source triangulation, "We look to see if the phenomenon or case remains the same at other times, in other spaces, or as persons interact differently" (p.112). He continued his explanation,

“Data source triangulation is an effort to see if what we are observing and reporting carries the same meaning when found under different circumstances” (p.113). The three sources of data that were triangulated in this study were the interview or focus group transcripts, the calendars and the surveys. The purpose was to see if the same meaning was found in each of the sources. To provide validity for what was reported.

Thru the triangulation process themes were generated within the cases such as: would participate in extracurricular activities in the local public school if available, or the opposite, would not participate in extracurricular activities in the local public school if available. Some cases had positive responses regarding the current legislation regarding homeschool participation in Tennessee public school extracurricular activities and some cases had negative responses toward the same legislation. These same themes stood out when cross-case analysis took place. It was interesting to note that the thoughts and perceptions were a little different based on the families’ current involvement or non-involvement in extracurricular activities even though separate from the public school’s extracurricular activities.

Summary

The research questions that guided the study are listed below with descriptions of the findings of the study.

Research Question 1. *Why would homeschool parents in west Tennessee allow their child to participate or not participate in public school extracurricular activities if available?* The purpose of this question was to establish the thoughts and perceptions of the parents regarding homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities. Guiding questions were asked in both the interview as well as the focus group to find the

answer to this question. Those in the interview allowed their children to participate in extracurricular activities be it through homeschool groups, church, or other avenues. Those that were a part of the focus group either did not allow their children to participate in extracurricular activities or they participated in activities that they would not be able to participate in if they attended their local public school. Several parents mentioned that they would like to have access to the science labs in the public schools as taxpaying citizens to help them in their endeavor to educate their child(ren).

It was found that the parents who allowed their children to participate in extracurricular activities as homeschoolers were more open to allowing their children to participate in public school extracurricular activities, if they were available, than those parents who do not allow their children to participate in any extracurricular activities even while homeschooling. It was harder for the researcher to find homeschool parents that have children that do not participate in extracurricular activities than it was to find homeschooling families that do participate in some sort of extracurricular activity. Homeschooling has been legal in Tennessee for less than three decades but has come a long way from the beginning as far as what is offered to the homeschool students. There are classes for homeschoolers at the local zoo as well as several local museums. The parents that would allow their children to participate in extracurricular activities at the local public school are concerned about scholarships as well as socialization for their children. It was also mentioned by several parents that they would allow their child to participate if their child was interested in that specific activity and if it was not available in the homeschool arena.

Research Question 2. *What are the perceptions of homeschool parents in west Tennessee with high school age child(ren) about current legislation concerning homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities?* The purpose of this question was to establish if there was a reason for the lack pursuit for this option or if it was because homeschool families in west Tennessee are not aware that homeschool families in other states have the option to participate in public school extracurricular activities, or that they simply are not interested. One parents admitted not being aware of the currently legislation in Tennessee allowing homeschool students to participate in public school sports at the discretion of the local schools and school district, as this was not something that interested her at all for her daughters. Another parent spoke of originally thinking this was good legislation until she tried to act upon it and have her son engage in public school sports and was denied access. The majority of parents stated that whether they would or would not allow their child to participate they wish the access was available. It was better to able to turn the opportunity down than to not have the opportunity available at all.

A major concern among the parents is that they were still paying taxes which were funding the public school extracurricular programs but their own children were denied access based on their parents' educational choices for them. It was also a concern of the parents that their child(ren) would not have access to the same scholarships as the public school students due to a lack of access to the extracurricular programs. While they might be able to play a sport recreationally the possibility of being noticed by a scout it a lot less when playing recreationally than it would be for those playing on a public school

team. It is possible to get a sports scholarship as a homeschooler but a lot more legwork must be done to secure viewership by a scout.

It is important to note that parents felt that even if the legislation was changed that allowing homeschool students to participate in public school extracurricular activities would not be a one size fits all scenario. While parents might allow one of their children to participate in a certain sport or activity they might not allow another of their children to participate. It was also described by the parents that one should be extremely careful when forming a partnership as it might open homeschooling up to more governmental control. Also if one allows their child to participate (assuming it is allowed) that the parents should be extremely involved to ensure they are aware of who is influencing their child.

Research Question 3. *Why are homeschool students involved in extracurricular activities?* The purpose of this question was to establish the value homeschool families place on extracurricular activities (HSLDA, n.d). It also establishes which extracurricular activities are most important to various families. The extracurricular activities that the families were involved in included: basketball, baseball, soccer, ballet, choir, honor society, bowling, yearbook, swimming, and owning one's own business. Several participants were also involved in supplemental classes (classes taught by someone other than their parents) such as: algebra, science labs, and foreign language classes. The parents interviewed often had their child in extracurricular activities to meet a credit requirement. Often what began as a way to meet a credit requirement continued after the credit requirement was met because the child had either begun to enjoy the activity or enjoyed the interaction with others. Some parents allowed their children to participate solely for the social component.

One of the parents involved in the focus group stated that she and her husband did not allow participation in extracurricular activities because they did not decide to homeschool to run

their children all over to take all of these extra classes. They chose to homeschool to actually keep their children at home. Another mother in the focus group made a point that there are still influences to guard against in homeschool extracurricular activities. These have proved to be too much for some of her children so they have pulled back from all extracurricular activities. Homeschool parents appreciate having choices of when and how they want to have their children involved in extracurricular activities even though at this point extracurricular activities in Tennessee public schools is not readily available.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

Introduction

The sections of this chapter summarize the results of this study and discuss their implications. The statement of the problem is revisited to place value on the purpose of the study. The methodology of the study will be reviewed and discussed. The findings will be interpreted as well as connections made between the current study to previous research. Based on these interpretations and connections, recommendations and suggestions will be made for future research. The recommendations that are made will be ones that will make the most impact as well as be actionable. The connection between the current study to previous research is made and elaborated upon. The limitations and strengths of the study are discussed as well as final thoughts from the researcher.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is Tennessee only allows homeschoolers to participate in public school sports extracurricular activities but no other extracurricular activities such as art, foreign languages, or science clubs and/or labs. According to the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association (TSSAA), homeschoolers are permitted to play or scrimmage any secondary high school in regular season play. There are certain rules and restrictions that must be followed for the student to be considered eligible. The student would only be eligible in the district in which they would attend.

Tennessee is bordered by eight states each of which has different legislation in place regarding homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities. Virginia public schools can receive state funding if a homeschool student participates in two of the following classes: math, science, English, history, social science, career and

technical education, fine arts, foreign language, or health education or physical education. In Missouri the compulsory attendance statute implies that homeschooled students may attend public school part time. (HSLDA, 2011).

Homeschooling has been legal for twenty-seven years in Tennessee (“Tennessee Home Education History,” 2011). Homeschooling went from being something that not many people took part in and was not well accepted to something that is a popular schooling choice. It is estimated that there are over 27,000 homeschool students in Tennessee (Zeise, 2011). As a result of there being more homeschoolers, the needs and desires of homeschoolers has also changed over the years. The current legislation allows homeschool students to participate in extracurricular activities at the discretion of the principal of a school. The participants in my study have found that this stipulation is not allowing for much participation to actually take place. While all of the participants were not sure if they would allow their child to participate if the extracurricular activities were available most did think that the option should be there without all of the restrictions that are currently in place.

Homeschooling looks like many different things: super structured with instruction taking place only at home, instruction taking place outside of the home, participation in extracurricular activities to unschooling which is unstructured. The different types of schooling that each family chooses for each of their children will present different needs. Having access to extracurricular activities in the public school setting may or may not meet the particular needs of every family. It needs to be decided however how to meet the majority of the students be they in the traditional school setting or homeschooled. It

should not be an “us against them” mentality in any way regardless of what is decided about extracurricular activities involvement.

Review of the methodology

It took longer than the researcher would have liked to secure participants. This was due to the homeschooling families being so busy as well as being hesitant to be a part of the study. Once it was discovered that the researcher is a former homeschooler, participation was more easily granted. It was feared that the research was going to attack homeschooling in some way instead of endeavoring to find out homeschoolers’ thoughts and perceptions regarding homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities. Although the researcher is a former homeschool student, the researcher has also taught in both the public and private sector so has a little experience in each of the school settings and was able to take an unbiased approach.

As explained in Chapter 3, the study reported here was a case study in which parents that homeschool their high school aged child(ren) in west Tennessee were either interviewed or participated in a focus group based on their child(ren)’s participation or non-participation in extracurricular activities. As a case study, this research primarily used a qualitative perspective, attempting to discern the thoughts and perceptions of the participants regarding the current legislation in Tennessee regarding homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities. The case study relied chiefly on interviews and a focus group, as well as surveys and calendar. Eight interviews were conducted with mothers and one focus group with seven participants, also all mothers. Notes were taken by the researcher during the interviews and focus group. The

researcher then transcribed the notes and aggregated categories as well as discovered patterns both within cases as well as cross-case.

Summary of the results

Table 3 compiles the responses of both the interviews as well as the focus group as to whether each individual family would allow or not allow their high school aged homeschool student to participate in extracurricular activities at the local public school if available. Fifty-three percent of the participants would not allow their child to participate in public school extracurricular activities and forty-seven percent of the participants would allow participation. This is including both those that participate in extracurricular activities and were interviewed as well as those who do not participate in extracurricular activities and participated in the focus group. It can be seen that those who are not involved in extracurricular activities presently and were a part of the focus group, were less inclined to allow their children to participate in public school extracurricular activities if available, than their counterparts who were interviewed because of their families' current involvement in extracurricular activities. Those who were interviewed were already involved in extracurricular activities and thus were interested in the ability to participate in the local public schools if the option was indeed available. Some families are going to multiple locations a week and sometimes in a day to allow their children to participate in various extracurricular activities.

Table 3

Responses of Interviews and Focus Group as to Whether They Would Allow Participation in Public School Extracurricular Activities.

Name	Would Participate	Would Not Participate
Wilson (focus group)	X	
Moore (focus group)		X
Taylor (focus group)		X
Anderson (focus group)		X
Jackson (focus group)		X
White (focus group)		X
Harris (focus group)		X
Smith (interview)	X	
Brown (interview)	X	
Henry (interview)	X	
Johnson (interview)		X
Williams (interview)		X
Jones (interview)	X	
Davis (interview)		X
Miller (interview)	X	

It is important to note that the parents' answer to whether or not they would allow their child to participate in public school extracurricular activities was not a clear cut yes

or no answer. There was a lot of discussion surrounding their answers whether they answered yes, or no. The parents' answers depended on their individual child as well as the specific school in which they would be eligible to participate. Some of their decisions were based on the need to meet an academic credit while some were to meet a social need of their child. All of the parents stated it was important for them as parents to stay super involved in all areas of their child(ren)'s lives to be able to monitor their friends and influences. It is also important to note that just because a family chose not to be actively involved in extracurricular activities at the time they would be interested in allowing their child to participate in public school extracurricular activities if they were available to homeschoolers in Tennessee. Also, just because a family is currently allowing their child to participate in extracurricular activities does not mean that they are interested in allowing their child to participate in public school extracurricular activities if they were available to homeschoolers in Tennessee.

Parents care deeply about decisions made regarding their children. If parents have chosen to homeschool there are a lot of aspects and decisions to be made regarding how best to meet the need of their child. Their child may have academic needs as well as social and physical needs that either influenced the need to homeschool or arose as a result of homeschooling. This study endeavored to discover if there is even a desire or need for legislation to be reevaluated to allow homeschoolers to participate in public school extracurricular activities with greater ease than is currently available.

Interpretation of the Findings

While the study was limited in the amount of participants, it was found that fifty-three percent of the participants who participated in both the interviews as well as the

focus group, would not personally allow their child to participate in public school extracurricular activities. It was found in the interviews as well as the focus group that homeschool parents would like the option available to participate in public school extracurricular activities whether they utilize it or not for their children. The “us against them” mentality on both sides must be combatted. Kunzman (2009) describes this phenomenon,

Most parents (whether homeschoolers or not) see education, broadly construed, as part of their job description: raising a child involves constant teaching and the most important lessons in life general occur outside of school walls. But what I didn't fully appreciate at first is that homeschoolers take this a step further. They don't see any real distinction between this broader -notion of education and formal schooling itself – which makes sense if homeschooling is just woven into the fabric of everyday family life. And if homeschooling is seen as simply part of parenting, then it becomes easier to understand why many homeschool parents view regulations as unjustifiable intrusions into their sacred domain (p. 317).

The needs of children whether they attend public school or are homeschooled should be met as well as be a top priority. Kunzman (2009) stated

Parents obviously have a profound interest in how their children are educated -- what they learn, how they learn it, and the kind of people they become as a result. Children have their own interests at stake as well: not only in learning basic skills and knowledge which will allow them to function independently in society and become economically self-sufficient if necessary, but also in developing personal autonomy. Finally, the state also has an interest in the education of its citizens.

Education necessary to sustain democracy cannot be neutral or indifferent to the value of democracy or the importance of participation in its ongoing maintenance. Democracy depends upon the cultivation of a critical mass of citizens who value and-at least to some degree-participate in shared decision-making (p. 317).

Relationship of the Current Study to Previous Research

Previous studies have shown that the number of homeschoolers increases when there is a partnership between homeschoolers and the public schools (Eley, 2006). If the legislation changed in Tennessee to allow for more homeschool participation in public school participation research shows that the number of homeschoolers would increase as some are not homeschooling at this time because of the loss of ability to participate in extracurricular activities. Homeschool research regarding partnerships has only really taken place in the past twenty years due to the increase in the homeschool population (Adams, 1992; Isenberg, 2007). Much more research must take place in the field of homeschooling and the new issues that are arising as the homeschool population increases as there is not a rich history to study at this time.

The participants that were interviewed or took part in the focus group spoke of a needed partnership between homeschool parents and schools for cooperation between the two to work. While the homeschooling families might choose to homeschool for different reasons (Aasen, 2010; Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007, they stated this because of a concern for possible bias toward their children as well as the need to stay super involved in their child's life. Most decided to homeschool in order to have more influence in their child's life and did not want to have to trade this aspect in if they allowed their child to participate in extracurricular activities at the local public school if

and when they were available). A study done in Arizona showed that school administrators feel that for a partnership to work public schools and homeschool parents must work together (Kilgore, 2009).

Theoretical Framework Findings

It was discovered that although public school extracurricular activities are not readily available to homeschool students in Tennessee due to current legislation, homeschool families are seeking out opportunities for their child to interact with others whether through homeschool sports leagues, science labs, or group field trips. By applying Vygotsky's sociocultural theory to the interaction that takes place when participating in an extracurricular activity the extracurricular activities can be seen as a social interaction from which students can learn from others that are more skilled than themselves. Not just the particular activity will be being learned but also how to interact with others, self-control and following directions among many other characteristics. Tharpe and Gallimore (1998) write, "Vygotsky argues that a child's development cannot be understood by a study of the individual. We must also examine the external social world in which that individual life has developed (p. 6). Extracurricular activities are definitely a part of one's social world.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited due to the facts that generalizability is difficult across the whole nation since different parts of the country have different focuses and acceptances of homeschooling families. Some states allow dual enrollment for homeschooling families, while other states allow for no partnerships between homeschool and public school activities. Only parents of high school aged students were interviewed and asked

to be in a focus group. Expanding to other levels of education at this point would be too exhaustive for this particular study.

The homeschool organization used for the study is made up of Christian homeschoolers and this subset of the broader homeschool population limits the generalizability of the findings. Due to all of the participants being Christians there is a possibility that they held a bias towards public schools that non-Christian homeschooling parents might not hold due to a concern of their children being exposed to a secular culture and its values to which their children are otherwise not exposed. If a Christian homeschool parent chooses to homeschool their children to instill Biblical values they do not want to feel as if the values taught will be undone through interaction with the public schools. In this area of Tennessee 90% of the homeschool population describes themselves as Christians so this sentiment, while a limitation, is the norm for the area homeschool family.

Finding participants was harder than expected as the homeschool families were not overly interested in helping a stranger in their research. Several participants commented that they thought the research would have an anti-homeschooling bias and were hesitant to participate. Once they spoke with me either in an interview or in scheduling to be a part of the focus group they were eager to have their friends help and encouraged participation in the study as they realized the intention of the study was not to harm homeschoolers in any way but rather to seek the thoughts and opinions of homeschooling families. While the number of participants was effective for this study it is an extremely small sampling of the homeschool population in Tennessee and might not

represent the thoughts and perceptions of the majority of the homeschool population in Tennessee.

The study was limited to high school homeschool aged students. It remains to be determined if other age groups should be considered when discussing the participation of homeschool students in public school extracurricular activities in Tennessee. Should middle school students be considered? What about elementary age students? The study was also limited to a small area in west Tennessee and was not able to represent the whole state and it is unclear if homeschoolers would have the same thoughts and opinions throughout the state.

Notes were taken of the interviews as well as the focus group but they were not recorded. This is a limitation as there is then a selectivity in what the researcher chose to note at that time whether intentional or unintentional.

Suggestions for Additional Research

The research design of this study does not provide strong evidence that Tennessee should begin to provide an array of public school services to the homeschool population. The research also does not provide any information on how to begin offering public school extracurricular activities to the homeschool population. The research does however indicate that it may be time to explore greater collaborations between public schools and the homeschooling population. The implications of Tennessee providing these services is unknown at this point although the state does have in place procedures for reviewing educational practices, implications involved, and deciding on an appropriate course of action.

If homeschool policies in Tennessee were to be reevaluated for the possible inclusion into public school extracurricular activities, several things would need to be examined. Are the local public schools capable of the added influx of students? What specific programs are the homeschool community interested in participating at the local public schools? What future demands can be foreseen by both the homeschool population as well as the public school as a result of a change in homeschool legislation regarding participation in public school extracurricular activities? If a decision is made it must not be looked at for only the present point in time.

It would be wise to conduct research on other states that have policies that allow for varying degrees of participation of homeschool students in the public schools. What works versus what does not work and would the same things apply to Tennessee? It would be beneficial to look at different age groups of homeschoolers instead of just high school age. Are the extracurricular activities an issue or concern for elementary and middle school aged homeschool students? If so, what types of extracurricular activities should be considered for homeschool student inclusion?

It would be extremely beneficial to conduct similar research as this study on a much larger scale as this study was only for west Tennessee. If a survey could be sent to all homeschoolers in the state of Tennessee that allowed researchers to understand the involvement in extracurricular activities to determine the amount of involvement as well as the type of activities homeschoolers are involved in. An online survey might generate more responses as people might be more likely to quickly answer a survey online rather than a paper survey. Does this vary by area be it rural, suburban, or urban? As legislation is changing in other states it needs to be reevaluated a couple of years after the

legislation changed to allow homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities. This needs to be done to see if the proposed benefits as well as proposed negative outcomes became a reality and how this might affect or need to affect future legislation in that state as well as other states such as Tennessee.

It would be easier to conduct the interviews by phone if the study was done on a larger scale. Additional interviewers could be trained to follow a script with guiding questions. Instead of meeting with focus groups it would be easier to do online focus groups with representatives across the state. There are several different formats that the online focus groups could follow: online bulletin board in which everyone contributes at their own pace within a designated time period. The online focus groups can also take place in such a way that everyone meets online at the same time and contributes either by text or even by webcam. Both of these options can be recorded for later analysis.

From the statewide interviews and focus groups it can be concluded whether Tennessee homeschoolers statewide are interested in pursuing inclusion in public school extracurricular activities. At that point steps should be taken to connect homeschool directors who know their local homeschool population with local school superintendents to begin dialoguing. The actual dialoguing would be an essential first step to bridge the us against them mentality and endeavor to be on the same page of meeting the needs of all students in a way that is fair to both parties. Having already received the surveys and had the interviews and focus groups conducted each district would know how many families would be utilizing the services if available and what services they would like to have available if this was a viable option. This information would allow decision makers to

see if the partnership between the homeschool population and the public schools in Tennessee would indeed be viable.

Tennessee has recently launched an online public school Tennessee Virtual Academy (TNVA) <http://www.k12.com/tnva>. The virtual academy is based in one school district but is open to all students in Tennessee. It is unclear how this will impact extracurricular activities at the physical public school. Regarding the socialization of students enrolled in TNVA the website states,

Throughout the year, students have the opportunity to participate in school outings, picnics, and other social events. These outings and activities may include trips to museums and parks, student clubs, and more. We expect local clusters of students and parents to get together on a regular basis in their areas. With online discussions and forums, new types of communities can be formed that are based not on geography but on shared interests.

The statements from the website do not account for extracurricular activities such as sports teams that are available to public school students that attend the physical campus. Attending the virtual public school campus is a form of homeschooling and as things continue to change in the educational realm to include more virtual options, there will be many more new issues that must be considered regarding public school extracurricular activities.

The thoughts and perceptions of the public school population must also be considered as they are also stakeholders in this issue. This is the only way to have a balanced approach when seeking the thoughts and perceptions of all stakeholders in the possibility of allowing homeschoolers to participate in public school extracurricular

activities in Tennessee. The public school population would include public school administrators, teachers as well as public school parents. Any issues and concerns must be presented and addressed if any sense of resolution is to be found.

Strengths of the Study

The study discovered the thoughts and perceptions of homeschool families by speaking to them directly. The study used carefully designed guiding questions to get the interviews and focus group started. The questions were designed to glean the information needed but required answers beyond a simple yes or no, which allowed the researcher to get the deeper story about personal thoughts and perceptions of homeschool families in Tennessee regarding current homeschool legislation. The researcher was able to discover the personal reasons a particular homeschooling family might or might not allow their children to participate in public school extracurricular activities if they were available. The researcher was also able to discover which extracurricular activities Tennessee homeschool families would be interested in, if they were available, and why.

Final Thoughts

As a former homeschooler, the researcher has seen a lot of changes in homeschooling in Tennessee in the past two decades. The choice to homeschool becomes a more popular choice as Jack Klenk, director of the Office of Non-Public Education, U. S. Department of Education stated, “It is so much more common than it was 10 years ago or 20 years ago or even 3 years ago for people to know someone who is home-schooling” (As quoted in Kocian, 2007, p. 1). The choice to homeschool can be for various reasons as well as the actual format that is used in the homeschooling can be different as discussed in previous chapters. More research needs to be done on the

growing phenomenon of homeschooling. Often the research that exists is from non-homeschooled researchers that are not personally vested in homeschooling in any way in their life.

All stakeholders should be concerned about best meeting the needs of the children in Tennessee whether the children are homeschooled or attend public school. These stakeholders include policy makers, public school educators and administrators as well as parents who choose to homeschool their children. This study is recommending that all involved stakeholders work together to form a partnership of sorts that would provide the best possible educational and extracurricular opportunities for all of the students in Tennessee. This study does not identify what the best choice or path is for the future of all Tennessee students but rather identifies the need for further research at a broader range.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

11/06 Ref. # _____

APPLICATION TO USE HUMAN RESEARCH SUBJECTS
Liberty University
Committee On The Use of Human Research Subjects

1. Project Title: Homeschool Participation In Public School Extracurricular

Activities In Tennessee: A Case Study

2. Full Review Expedited Review

3. Funding Source (State N/A if not applicable): N/A

4. Principal Investigator:

Elizabeth Dawn Rockholt doctoral candidate (901)230-2105,
edrockholt@liberty.edu,
4675 Yum Yum Road; Somerville,
TN 38068

5. Faculty Sponsor (if student is PI), also list co-investigators below Faculty Sponsor, and key personnel:

Erik Mullinix

School of Education
(434)582-2445,
enmullinix@liberty.edu

Assistant Professor

6. Non-key personnel:

Name and Title

Dept, Phone, E-mail address

7. Consultants:

Name and Title

Dept., Phone, E-mail address

8. The principal investigator agrees to carry out the proposed project as stated in the application and to promptly report to the Human Subjects Committee any proposed changes and/or unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others participating in approved project in accordance with the Liberty Way and the Confidentiality

Statement. The principal investigator has access to copies of [45 CFR 46](#) and the [Belmont Report](#). The principal investigator agrees to inform the Human Subjects Committee and complete all necessary reports should the principal investigator terminate University association. Additionally s/he agrees to maintain records and keep informed consent documents for three years after completion of the project even if the principal investigator terminates association with the University.

Elizabeth Dawn Rockholt _____

Principal Investigator Signature

Date

Faculty Sponsor (If applicable)

Date

Submit the original request to: Liberty University Institutional Review Board, CN Suite 1582, 1971 University Blvd., Lynchburg, VA 24502. Submit also via email to irb@liberty.edu

APPLICATION TO USE HUMAN RESEARCH SUBJECTS

10. This project will be conducted at the following location(s): (please indicate city & state)

- Liberty University Campus
- Other (Specify): Memphis, TN

11. This project will involve the following subject types: (check-mark types to be studied)

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Normal Volunteers (Age 18-65) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Subjects Incapable Of Giving Consent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | In Patients | <input type="checkbox"/> | Prisoners Or Institutionalized Individuals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Out Patients | <input type="checkbox"/> | Minors (Under Age 18) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Patient Controls | <input type="checkbox"/> | Over Age 65 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Fetuses | <input type="checkbox"/> | University Students (PSYC Dept. subject pool ____) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Cognitively Disabled | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other Potentially Elevated Risk Populations_____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Physically Disabled | | |

Pregnant Women

12. Do you intend to use LU students, staff or faculty as participants in your study? If you do not intend to use LU participants in your study, please check "no" and proceed directly to item 13.

YES NO

If so, please list the department and/classes you hope to enlist and the number of participants you would like to enroll.

In order to process your request to use LU subjects, we must ensure that you have contacted the appropriate department and gained permission to collect data from them.

Signature of Department Chair:

Department Chair Signature(s)

Date

13. Estimated number of subjects to be enrolled in this protocol: _____40_____

14. Does this project call for: (check-mark all that apply to this study)

Use of Voice, Video, Digital, or Image Recordings?

Subject Compensation? Patients \$_____ Volunteers \$_____

Participant Payment Disclosure Form

Advertising For Subjects?

More

Than Minimal Risk?

More Than Minimal Psychological Stress?

Alcohol

Consumption?

Confidential Material (questionnaires, photos, etc.)?

Waiver of

Informed Consent?

Extra Costs To The Subjects (tests, hospitalization, etc.)?

VO2 Max

Exercise?

The Exclusion of Pregnant Women?

The Use of Blood?

Total Amount of Blood _____

Over Time Period (days) _____

The Use of rDNA or Biohazardous materials?

The Use of Human Tissue or Cell Lines?

The Use of Other Fluids that Could Mask the Presence of Blood (Including Urine and Feces)?

The Use of Protected Health Information (Obtained from Healthcare Practitioners or Institutions)?

15. This project involves the use of an **Investigational New Drug (IND)** or an **Approved Drug For An Unapproved Use**.

YES NO

Drug name, IND number and company: _____

16. This project involves the use of an **Investigational Medical Device** or an **Approved Medical Device For An Unapproved Use**.

YES NO

Device name, IDE number and company: _____

17. The project involves the use of **Radiation or Radioisotopes**:

YES NO

18. Does investigator or key personnel have a potential conflict of interest in this study?

YES NO

EXPEDITED/FULL REVIEW APPLICATION NARRATIVE

A. PROPOSED RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is to seek answers regarding the thoughts and perceptions of parents whose children are actively involved in extracurricular activities outside of the public school system specifically concerning current legislation regarding homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities. Answers will also be sought regarding the thoughts and perceptions of parents whose children are not actively involved in supplemental activities outside of the school system. The reasons why homeschool parents would allow or not allow their child(ren) to participate in public school extracurricular activities in Tennessee, if they were available, will also be explored. Limited research exists specifically on the involvement of homeschool students in public school extracurricular activities.

The goal of all educators is to meet the needs of the individual students in the best way possible. All students are created in God's image and should be treated with integrity and respect as fellow image-bearers of Christ. This study will discover if allowing homeschool students to participate in public school extracurricular activities will help to meet more of the homeschool students' needs. It will also be explored whether homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities is a desire, or a need, and if it should be addressed.

B. SPECIFIC PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED

- First, the local homeschooling organization will be contacted and a meeting set with the president asking to send a survey to all homeschooling families of high school students in west Tennessee involved in their organization. The survey will not be anonymous as this is how participants will be contacted for interviews or the focus group. The survey is from the 2005 National Household Education Survey by the National Center for Educational Statistics. An informed consent form will also be sent with the survey. The survey will ask about the family's participation in extracurricular activities. From the responses, families will be chosen for interviews that are involved in the most extracurricular activities, outside of the public school system. A minimum of eight parents will be interviewed but a list will be kept with other families to interview if saturation or redundancies are not reached. The researcher will conduct the interviews at a time and place that is convenient for the participants. Saturation is reached when no new information is being

found that adds to my understanding of the category or concept. A separate group of eight parents will be chosen, for a focus group, from the surveys that do not choose to seek outside sources of supplemental activities for their children. Participants will be advised as to the time and place that the focus group will take place. The focus group will be scheduled at a location that is central to the majority of participants. All parents will also be asked to fill in a blank month calendar that should show the lessons and other extracurricular activities their child(ren) participate in during a typical month. When parents agree to be participants in either the focus group or interview they will be sent the blank calendar to fill out and bring to either their interview or the focus group depending upon which they have been asked to participate in.

The parents will be called via the phone by the researcher and asked for an interview at a time and place of their convenience. The interviews will be scheduled within two weeks of receiving the completed surveys. Notes will be taken of the interviews and transcribed by the researcher. The interviews will be semi-structured and last approximately one hour. A separate group of eight parents of homeschooled high school students who do not actively participate in extracurricular activities outside of the local public school system will be asked to participate in a focus group. The focus group will be scheduled within two weeks of receiving the completed surveys. Notes will be taken of the focus group by the researcher and transcribed for data analysis by the researcher.

Pseudonyms will be used for all transcriptions. Open and axial coding will be used after transcription has taken place of both the interviews and focus groups.

C. SUBJECTS

- I would like to include parents of homeschooled high students that both participate in extracurricular activities outside of their local public school system as well as those who do not participate in supplementary activities.
- Families who do not have any high school aged homeschooled children will be excluded.
- Parents will be the only ones interviewed or asked to participate in the focus group as I want to know why they have made and are making the decisions they do regarding participation in extracurricular activities.
- The maximum number I will interview is 30 individual/15 couples and ten participants in the focus group. The survey will be sent to 75-100 families. It is not expected that the researcher will receive them all back.

D. RECRUITMENT OF SUBJECTS AND OBTAINING INFORMED CONSENT

- The local homeschool organization will be contacted in person by the researcher. The researcher will briefly explain the purpose of the study and the contents of the informed consent letter that explains the study in brief and why I need participants as well as the possible benefits to the local homeschooling community as a whole. The organization will be asked to send home the surveys to the families that meet the profile of having at

least one high school student. The survey will explain that I am a doctoral student conducting research. There will be an informed consent form included as well as a self-addressed envelope for the survey and informed consent form to be returned to me. My contact information will be included for parents to call or email me with any questions regarding participation.

E. PROCEDURES FOR PAYMENT OF SUBJECTS

- The participants will be entered into a drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift card for their participation.

F. CONFIDENTIALITY

- Pseudonyms will be used in the notes as well as the transcriptions.
- Any identifying information will be stored in a password protected folder in a password protected computer. A key will be kept for the pseudonyms and will be stored separately from the rest of the data on the researcher's computer in another password protected folder.
Open and axial coding will be used while analyzing the data. Open coding will be the initial classification and labeling while axial coding will make connections among the categories and subcategories.
The research related data will be stored for a minimum of three years from the end of the study per federal regulations. The data will be permanently deleted from the computer at the end of that time period.

G. POTENTIAL RISKS TO SUBJECTS

- The research is of minimal risk as the participants will be speaking of their thoughts and feelings regarding their child(ren) and participation in extracurricular activities.

H. BENEFITS TO BE GAINED BY THE INDIVIDUAL AND/OR SOCIETY

- The results of this study might show that there is a need for legislation to change in Tennessee to allow for the homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities. This would benefit all homeschool students in Tennessee.
- Extracurricular activities have many benefits to students. Society will benefit from the students being benefitted, as the students will have higher college expectations, as well as increased self-esteem. Both of these outcomes will act as a benefit to society as a whole.

I. INVESTIGATOR'S EVALUATION OF THE RISK-BENEFIT RATIO

The benefits are greater than the minimal risks raised by this research. The study has the potential to effect the homeschooling community as a whole in the state of Tennessee whereas the only foreseeable risks that can be found is minimal as the participants will be speaking of their children's involvement in extracurricular activities.

J. WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT FORM *(Please attach to the Application Narrative. See Informed Consent IRB materials for assistance in developing an appropriate form. See K below if considering waiving signed consent or informed consent)*

L. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS *(to be attached to the Application Narrative)*

M. COPIES:

For investigators requesting **Expedited Review** or **Full Review**, email the application along with all supporting materials to the IRB (irb@liberty.edu). Submit one hard copy with all supporting documents as well to the Liberty University Institutional Review Board, Campus North Suite 1582, 1971 University Blvd., Lynchburg, VA 24502.

CONSENT FORM

Homeschooled Participation in Public School Extracurricular Activities
Elizabeth Dawn Rockholt
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of homeschooled high school students' participation in public school extracurricular activities. You were selected as a possible participant because you have a high school aged homeschool student. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Elizabeth Dawn Rockholt, School of Education at Liberty University.

Background Information

The purpose of this study is: The purpose of this study is to seek answers regarding the thoughts and perceptions of parents whose children are actively involved in extracurricular activities outside of the public school system specifically concerning the current legislation regarding current legislation regarding homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities. Answers will also be sought regarding the thoughts and perceptions of parents whose children are not actively involved in supplemental activities outside of the school system. The reasons why a homeschool parent would allow or not allow their children to participate in public school extracurricular activities in Tennessee, if they were available will also be explored.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things: This study will involve the use of a brief survey (included with this letter), interview or focus group participation (one hour duration for each) and a filled out blank calendar of your homeschool child's extracurricular activities for a typical month (if any). Notes will be taken during the interviews and focus group and transcribed by the researcher.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study

The risks to participation are here: The risks of this study are no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life.

The benefits to participation are: If the study shows that homeschool participation in public school activities is a desired outcome it will have a pronounced impact on the homeschool population of west Tennessee if and when policy changes are made. Options for participation that were not previously accessible would now be accessible. It is possible that the ability to participate in public school extracurricular activities might open doors for homeschooled students and their futures that would not have been so easily opened beforehand. If the study shows that homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities is not a desired outcome, it will allow policy makers to stop discussing this policy for the present.

Compensation:

Each returned survey is entered into a drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift card.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. Any identifying information will be stored in a password protected folder in a password protected computer. A key will be kept for the pseudonyms and will be stored separately from the rest of the data on the researcher's computer in another password protected folder. The research related data will be stored for a minimum of three years from the end of the study per federal regulations. The data will be permanently deleted from the computer at the end of that time period.

There are limits to the confidentiality. For example, the researcher cannot assure that other participants will maintain the subject's confidentiality and privacy in the focus group.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time with out affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is: Elizabeth Dawn Rockholt. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact them at 4675 Yum Yum Road, Somerville, TN 38068, (901) 230-2105, edrockhcolt@liberty.edu. *Erik Mullinix is my dissertation chair and can be reached at enmullinix@liberty.edu*

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1582, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at fgarzon@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Interview Guide

Semi-Structured Interview

Research Questions to Be Addressed in Conversation of Interview

1. If public school extracurricular activities were available to homeschool students in Tennessee would you allow your child to participate? Why or why not?
2. What are your thoughts and opinions about current legislation regarding homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities?
3. Why is your homeschooled child involved in extracurricular activities?

Focus Group Guide

Questions to Be Addressed in Focus Group

1. If public school extracurricular activities were available to homeschool students in Tennessee would you allow your child to participate? Why or why not?
2. What are your thoughts and opinions about current legislation regarding homeschool participation in public school extracurricular activities?
3. Why is your homeschooled child not involved in extracurricular activities?

Parent Survey

Please circle the correct answers or write the answers on the lines for your family and return in the self-addressed stamped envelope along with the signed informed consent form.

1. Is/are your high school age child/children involved in extracurricular activities?

Yes/No

2. If yes, how many extracurricular activities is/are your high school child/children involved in?

3. Which extracurricular activities is/are your high school child/children involved in?

Fine Arts

Sports

Foreign Language

Science Labs

4. How would you classify your ethnicity?

Caucasian

African American

Asian American

American Indian

Appendix B
Informed Consent

Liberty University

Dawn Rockholt

4675 Yum Yum Road

Somerville, TN 38068

(901) 230-2105

edrockholt@liberty.edu

Homeschool Participation in Public School Activities in Tennessee: A Case Study

Dear Participant,

My name is Dawn Rockholt and I am an Educational Leadership doctoral student at Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA. I am conducting research on the extracurricular activities of the high school homeschooled students. If you are interested in assisting me with this study, please complete the enclosed survey and return it with the signed informed consent form in the self-addressed stamped envelope. Each returned survey is entered into a drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift card.

From the returned surveys, ten respondents will be contacted for interviews. The interviews will last approximately 1 hour. Another interview will be scheduled if it seems necessary. The interview will be recorded for transcription and data analysis and pseudonyms will be used for all records. After the recording is transcribed the recording will be erased.

Some survey respondents will be asked to participate in a focus group. Each focus group will have eight participants. The focus groups will be recorded for transcription and data analysis and pseudonyms will be used for all records. After the recording is transcribed the recording will be erased.

I give my permission to be contacted for this study

Signature

Printed name

Appendix C

Parent Survey

Please circle the correct answers or write the answers on the lines for your family and return in the self-addressed stamped envelope along with the signed informed consent form.

5. Is/are your high school age child/children involved in extracurricular activities?

Yes/No

6. If yes, how many extracurricular activities is/are your high school child/children involved in?

7. Which extracurricular activities is/are your high school child/children involved in?

fine arts

sports

foreign language

science labs

8. How would you classify your ethnicity?

Caucasion

African American

Asian American

American Indian

Appendix D

Calendar

Month

Sund ay	Mond ay	Tuesd ay	Wednes day	Thursd ay	Frid ay	Saturday

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