Journal of Unschooling and Alternative Learning, 2022, Vol.16, Issue 32

Increasing Collaboration between Homeschoolers and Counselors

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Abstract

An estimated 1.8 million students are homeschooled in the United States, and interest has only increased during the pandemic. To provide appropriate services, counselors must understand the contexts and characteristics of homeschoolers. The history of homeschooling provides insight into vulnerabilities and mistrust of public systems which may exist. Reasons and methods of homeschooling differentiate the diversity within the homeschool community, while examining known challenges reveals a possible space for counselors. School counseling history and structure can serve as a template for building counseling services within homeschools and can lead to clinical implications for consideration. Children in public and private schools have access to an array of counseling services within their schools, while homeschooled children and families may not. It may be helpful to explore whether there is a desire for greater access to counseling services within the homeschool community. Unfortunately, there is little literature available on the topic of counseling within the homeschooling community. The purpose of this paper is to review the available literature as well as provide clinical and research recommendations.

Keywords: homeschooling, school counselors, counseling

Increasing Collaboration between Homeschoolers and Counselors

Approximately 3.4% of school age children in the U.S., or an estimated 1.8 million students, are homeschooled according to the data gathered in 2012 by the National Household Education Surveys program (Redford et al., 2016; Kunzman & Gaither, 2020). Children in public and private schools have access to an array of counseling services within their schools, while homeschooled children and families may not have access to school counseling activities. Unfortunately, there is little literature available on the topic of counseling within the American homeschooling community. The first purpose of this paper is to review the current available literature on both home schooling and counseling within the homeschooling community. The second objective is to provide recommendations for school counselors and researchers to best serve this community.

The History of Homeschooling

Education patterns in the U.S. have changed across the generations. Homeschooling has gone from a fringe movement of 10,000 children in the 1970s to a mainstream alternative of nearly 2 million (Gaither, 2017; Murphy, 2013). The modern homeschooling movement emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. An overview of the history of homeschooling in the U.S. provides cultural context for understanding the lives and experiences of modern homeschooling families. In 1980 homeschooling was illegal in 30 states (Gaither, 2017; Murphy, 2013). School districts sued and fined homeschoolers, and battles moved through the judicial system, thus many homeschoolers developed a mistrust of government intrusion. Surveys of principals, teachers, and school superintendents from the 1980s have documented the lack of good will towards homeschoolers within public school systems (Gaither, 2017). School personnel expressed fears that homeschooling would be a threat to assimilation into the idea of American pluralism, and

that families opting out of public education reduced the size and funding for districts (Gaither, 2017).

As the fight to legalize homeschooling continued through the courts and in the media, public opinion rapidly improved. In 1985, a Gallup poll revealed that 70% of Americans thought homeschooling should be illegal. A decade later the same poll revealed that 70% thought homeschooling was a valid educational alternative (Gaither, 2017). A Phi Delta Kappa poll showed only 16% of Americans accepting the idea of homeschooling as an educational alternative in 1985, expanding to 28% in 1988, 36% in 1997, and 41% in 2001 (Murphy, 2013). By 1994, homeschooling was legal in fifty states, but the battle over parent versus state rights in a child's education continued (Murphy, 2013; Walden, 2017). The literature on legality in the 1980s focused on parents' rights, later literature on regulation seemed to approach the debate from a focus on children's rights (Kunzman 2012). Walden (2007) suggested the use of judicial bypass to allow a child to ask a judge to override their parents' decision to homeschool. The result of various legal arguments has been a patchwork of laws and statutes which regulate homeschooling to a greater or lesser degree in each state (Johnson, 2013). Homeschooling has become normalized in the U.S. as homeschooled children are now commonly found in neighborhoods, and friend and family networks (Murphy, 2013). The National Education Association (NEA) continues to lobby for legislation to restrict homeschooling, leaving homeschooling as an educational alternative legal but vulnerable in each state.

Reasons and Methods in Homeschooling

As the legality of homeschooling was established, a main research theme to emerge was an exploration of why parents chose homeschooling. Van Galen (1988) constructed the seminal bimodal motivations of ideology or pedagogy. Choices of pedagogy included choosing different

educational methods such as individualized and child-led learning which are not typically offered in public schools. Choices of ideology included religious or political reasons for leaving the public-school system. Some religiously motivated homeschoolers viewed home education of children as a sacred responsibility (Kunzman 2009). Some parents saw themselves as part of a social movement, while others viewed their actions as an individual or practical choice (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007).

The reasons families gave for homeschooling (in order of importance frequency) were a concern about the environment of schools; to provide religious or moral education; dissatisfaction with academic instruction in schools; to provide a non-traditional approach to education; or to educate a child with special needs (Redford et al., 2016). Research indicated that family time, cohesion, and flexibility are some benefits parents valued in homeschooling (Gray & Riley, 2013). Religious, ethnic, linguistic, or racial minorities sometimes choose homeschooling as a way of preserving their distinctive identity within the dominant culture (Carlson, 2009; Dennison, et al., 2020; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Kunzman & Gaither, 2020). African American and Muslim American families seek alternatives to curriculums that ignore their culture or actively stereotype and oppress their children (Dennison, et al., 2020; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013, 2020; Mazama & Lundy, 2015). Lundy and Mazama (2014) detailed parent reports of low expectations and high special education rates for African American males in public schools as a contributing reason for homeschooling. In fact, there is vast literature on African American males not performing well academically (Moore & Lewis, 2012; Perry et al., 2003). When combined, issues of culture and racism compared with the largest category of quality of education as a motivation for African American parents to choose homeschooling (Mazama & Lundy, 2013). Further, English (2016) interviewed a homeschooling Muslim mother

who reported that the family values in the home were too different from the surrounding community, and that the school environment was perceived as negative. This qualitative study provides a deep dive insight into a single family's choice to homeschool for cultural reasons.

Approximately one-fifth of parents chose homeschooling to meet a child's special needs which might be physical, emotional, or learning differences (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). The child-centered and flexible nature of homeschooling may allow a more comfortable fit for exceptional children (Cheng et al., 2016; Dennison, et al., 2020; Kunzman & Gaither, 2020). However, over 40% of the 19 families interviewed saw homeschooling as a forced necessity rather than a choice (Morton, 2010). Princiotta and Bielick (2006) counted the parents choosing homeschooling due to a special needs child at roughly 30% of the homeschool population. Children with special needs in a traditional school environment that did not fit demonstrated actions of self-harm, suicide attempts, or increasing emotional breakdown which made homeschooling the last resort for desperate parents (Morton, 2010). Rothermel (2005) received parent responses stating that factors involved in homeschooling were in part: bullying (25%), depression, exhaustion, or sickness of child (24%), mismanagement of children with special needs including gifted (20%). This may speak to a further need for counseling services, as counselors are trained to provide individual, group, and family interventions around bullying, mood disorders, and special needs which homeschool families could benefit from.

Yang and Kayaardi (2004) found that religious, demographic, socio-economic, and family structures did not play a statistically significant role in the decision to homeschool. There is some evidence that the educational experience of parents does play a role (Knowles, 1991), and numerous studies indicate there are multiple, complex factors which influence family choice (Anthony & Burroughs, 2010; Kunzman & Gaither, 2020). Spiegel (2010) suggests that the

nature of how questions are asked in multiple choice format, skew results by forcing parents to fit their decisions into pre-designed categories. Additionally, Rothermel (2005) reminds researchers that motivations for homeschooling are not static but change over time. Many researchers still utilize the dichotomy of pedagogy and ideology to try and categorize homeschoolers. Ideologues are considered to be families who homeschool for reasons such as religion, cultural reasons, beliefs about government or other motives derived from ideals and values. Pedagogues are considered to be homeschooling because they believe they provide the process of teaching better, such as use of child-led learning or small student-teacher ratio. Hanna (2011) found that while 25% of respondents identified as pedagogues, and 47% of respondents identified as ideologues, a sizeable 26% identified as both. Rothermel (2005) concurred that the two-class system of ideologues and pedagogues is overly simplistic.

When homeschooling parents and public-school parents were compared on measures of motivation, Green and Hoover-Dempsey (2007) found that reasons for homeschooling were similar to reasons parents become actively involved in their child's traditional schooling. The constructs motivating parent involvement were the same. Fields-Smith and Kisura (2013) discussed the combination of both push factors that move parents away from traditional school, and the pull factors that attract them to homeschooling. The landscape is further complicated by Isenberg's (2007) findings that families often have one child in homeschool and another in a conventional school at the same time or have a child in both homeschool and part-time conventional school at the same time. Research of homeschooling methods indicates that the initial years of homeschooling are often more structured and like traditional school. Homeschooling parents tend to move towards a less structured and more creative and spontaneous approach over time (Knowles et al., 1992; Kunzman & Gaither, 2020; Lois, 2006;

Van Galen, 1988). Methods of homeschooling range from highly structured traditional curriculum, to unit based, eclectic, or unschooling (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). There is evidence that religiously motivated homeschoolers often utilize a style of education that includes parent-centered decision making rather than promoting child autonomy (Cai et al., 2002).

Many homeschoolers do offer autonomy and supportive education. Anthony and Burroughs (2012) looked at daily operations of homeschool families, which often included offering options from which children could choose. Families often developed learning schedules around children's interests, and maximized the opportunities and resources offered by the community (Thomas, 2016). Mazama and Lundy (2013) examined the use of Afrocentric curriculum by African American homeschooling families, provided with the purpose of grounding children in their own history and culture rather than a Eurocentric curriculum. They noted the approach taken was often holistic, including character development and community-focused values as well as curriculum content. Hanna (2012) did one of the few longitudinal studies looking at curriculum, methods, and materials. It was found that homeschooling families used choices ranging from purchased curriculum and textbooks, computer programs, libraries, museums, field trips, networking opportunities, and community resources. Hanna (2012) reported parents expected to spend $300 to $400 per year for each student. By 2008, at the end of the 10-year study, there was significant growth in the use of technology for both information and output, and in local and online networking among homeschooling families (Hanna, 2012).

Challenges in Homeschooling

Discrimination and criticism against homeschoolers persist (Beck, 2008; Dennison, et al., 2020). Lois (2009) detailed four years of conversations from a homeschool support group, and experiences of stigma that mothers faced emerged in four categories. Homeschool parents were

accused of being academically arrogant, overprotective, self-righteous, and hyper-engaged. They received messages from many family, friends, and professionals implying they were harming their children's futures through the parents' educational choice (Lois, 2009, 2013).

American college admissions offices initially evaluated homeschoolers with a wary acceptance and often extra high demands for outside testing for admissions. As homeschooling became more mainstream and research demonstrated the success of homeschooled students in colleges, college admissions became more welcoming to homeschoolers. Most colleges now have formal admittance policies and actively recruit homeschoolers (Jones & Gloeckner, 2004). This encapsulates homeschool families' experiences; on the surface there is more cultural acceptance, even though stigma and misconceptions frequently remain at the individual level.

Almost 1/3 of parents homeschool due to special physical, intellectual, or mental health needs of their child, parents frequently fill the functions of special education as well as teaching. The Center of Disease Control and Prevention reports that almost 20% of children and adolescents experience mental health problems in the U.S. (Collins, 2014). There is abundant literature on the use of homeschooling to meet the needs of special needs children (Arora, 2006; Carlson, 2020; Kendall & Talyor, 2016; Kunzman & Gaither, 2020). There is also specific research on the effectiveness and difficulties of homeschooling with specific learning differences such as ADHD, autism spectrum disorders, and giftedness (Carlson, 2020; Dennison et al., 2020; Duvall et al., 2004; Hurlbutt, 2010; Kunzman & Gaither, 2020).

School Counseling History

The profession of school counseling spans over 100 years and has been shaped by cultural forces (ASCA, 2019). From the industrialization of society, the progressive movement, wars, cultural revolutions, to the increased reliance on data, the history of school counseling

parallels the history of our country. A report published in the U.S. Bureau of Education Bulletin indicated that in 1914 some 100 public high schools had organized plans for vocational guidance. By 1918 close to 1,000 high schools reported vocational guidance (Gysbers, 2010).

The role of vocational counselors was not yet distinct; teachers took on these responsibilities, with duties defined by individual school administrators. The activities provided by vocational and guidance counselors evolved during the 1920s and 1930s, influenced by the Mental Hygiene movement of the time which focused on child guidance, prevention, and wellness. Schools were seen as ideal locations for providing services in order to reach the most children, and guidance activities begin to include social and educational concerns often called issues of adjustment (Gysbers, 2010).

During the 1960s and 1970s, the organization of Pupil Personnel Services had increasing impact on school counseling (Cinotti, 2014; Gysbers, 2010). The federal government expanded counselor training and salary funds to elementary schools, which expanded the profession. As the profession expanded there was a greater need to define exactly what the profession was. ASCA launched a national committee and study to clarify school counselor roles, vocabulary, and constructs (Gysbers, 2010). Models for school counseling programs that were developmental and accountable were devised, and states were encouraged to begin implementing models on the state level (Gysbers, 2010).

The social forces of the 1960s and 1970s including diversity, multiculturalism, sexual orientation, gender equity, and social class, continued to play a role in shaping the profession of counseling in the 1980s and 1990s (Cinotti, 2014; Gysbers, 2010). Many reports, including A Nation at Risk, published in the 1980s questioned the quality of American education in public schools (Cinotti, 2014). Counselor training was funded to support closing the achievement gap of

low-income and minority youth and programs. Counseling began to form more solidly around the idea of developmental, preventative, and comprehensive services (Gysbers, 2010). Discussion of counselor roles/functions and the debate over counselor identity and purpose continued in the literature. In the late 1990s, ASCA developed a set of National Standards and Competencies to clarify the role of the school counselor (ASCA, 2004, Gysbers, 2010).

The No Child Left Behind Act was passed in 2001 and additional federal funding was provided to close the achievement gap for low-income and minority students, which became a central goal for education and for school counseling (Gysbers, 2010). ASCA began building a national model for school counseling: The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs (ASCA, 2012; Cinotti, 2014; Gysbers, 2010) which provides a framework to create comprehensive, developmental school counseling programs. Comprehensive programs include a foundation, the delivery of services, program management, and stress the importance of accountability. School counselors meet the needs of students via indirect and direct services. Then, school counselors manage programs via various assessments and tools. School counselors advocate for their positions and the profession through program evaluation, improvement, and accountability encompassing data analysis and program results. The foundation contains the focus of the program, student competencies, and professional competencies. Previously devised National Standards continued as the foundational content for academic, social emotional, and academic development (ASCA, 2019). Currently, the use of the ASCA National Model and accountability methods to understand the impact on student achievement are prominent in school counseling literature (Gysbers, 2010). Studies of school counselors' roles and perceptions of teachers, administrators, and parents about school counselor roles are also a part of the recent

literature (Dodson, 2009, Reiner, 2009). The most recent fourth edition of the ASCA National Model was updated in 2019, with the inclusion of the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors Standards.

Homeschool Counseling Domains

Using the 2019 ASCA National Standards and Competencies for a guide, it is possible to identify the domains of academic, career, and personal-social development as elements found in a comprehensive, developmental, and preventative school counseling program. Academically, numerous studies over decades have indicated that homeschool students perform at least as well as traditionally schooled students in standardized tests (Cogan, 2010; Neuman & Guterman, 2016). However, there may be differences in outcomes depending on the organizational structure of homeschooling. Martin-Chang (2011) demonstrated that parent choice of academic structure in homeschooling may matter for achievement outcomes. Other factors associated with academic achievement in homeschools include parent involvement and student intrinsic motivation (Berg & Corpus, 2013).

Career development is typically only mentioned in the homeschool literature in terms of college outcomes. Research demonstrates that homeschoolers do at least as well as traditionally schooled students in terms of standardized entrance exams, grade point average, retention, graduation, and social integration on college campuses (Boulter, 2017; Cogan, 2010; Jones & Gloeckner, 2004). Parents typically serve as career and college counselors for their children, with homeschool parent networks providing support and little research on whether other types of support for career planning might be preferred.

Social-personal development of homeschooled students has been compared with traditionally schooled students on measures of social adjustment with positive outcomes (Brady, 2003; Ray, 2013; Riley, 2016). In a review of 72 studies on social interactions, Kunzman and

Gaither (2013) found homeschoolers compared favorably to public and private school students across a range of skills. Additional studies have examined and favorably compared homeschool student motivation for learning (Cai et al., 2002; McColluch et al., 2006).

Mental health needs may at times have reduced prevalence within the homeschool community. Research has shown less alcohol and drug use by adolescents, and less depression and externalizing behaviors at all ages (DeRish, et al., 2020; Guterman & Neuman, 2016; Hodge et al., 2017). However, other types of mental health issues such as internalizing, and attachment were similar to the general population (DeRish, et al., 2020; Guterman & Neuman, 2016). A study of homeschooled LGBTQ youth reported perceptions that the homeschooling community may have been more receptive and tolerant than youth in the local public school. Though there was not bullying at home, bullying was reported both in homeschool organizations and within traditional schools (Riley, 2018). Mental health needs of homeschooled students are likely similar to publicly schooled students.

Parent Roles

The U.S. Department of Education National Household Education Survey provides statistics on who is homeschooling. The adjusted statistics combine responses on the Parent and Family Involvement homeschool form and the Parent and Family Involvement school form when respondents indicated at least part-time homeschooling. These statistics indicate that approximately 1/3 of homeschoolers reside in suburban/town settings, 1/3 reside in cities, and 1/3 are rural. Ethnic composition roughly parallels that of the country, with 68% White, 15% Hispanic, 8% Black, 4% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 5% other. Parent education levels are 38% with a college degree, 30% with some college, and 32% with a high school degree or less.

Income levels for the adjusted statistics indicate 20% of homeschoolers live in households with income below the poverty threshold (Redford et al., 2017).

Most home educators are women, with some support roles filled by partners (Morton, 2010). Research has revealed that mothers who homeschool may experience intense stress due to role ambiguity, role strain, role overload, and role conflict (Lois, 2010). To reduce the negative stress of role ambiguity, many first-year homeschoolers rely heavily on purchasing packaged curricula and structuring homeschool after a conventional classroom. Role conflict occurs when a parent tries to keep the teacher and parent roles separate, with the parental role tending to emotional needs, but the teacher role not tolerating behaviors (Lois, 2006). Significant transitional processes occur when parents first decide to homeschool and move children from traditional school to homeschool. Stresses also occur when returning to traditional school from homeschool, or when transitioning from homeschool to college (Anthony & Burroughs, 2010; Jackson, 2007). Given these stressors, there must be some counseling function occurring within homeschools. Each of these transition points represents a significant change in lifestyle for the family and a significant restructuring of roles for the primary homeschooling parent.

Challenges for Parents

There are numerous challenges that homeschool parents face. According to data from the 2012 National Household Education Survey, almost 1/3 of parents said special physical, intellectual, or mental health needs of their child was an important reason for choosing to homeschool. This means that not only do homeschool providers fill the teacher role, but frequently fill the functions of special education and most likely the counseling role. There is abundant literature on the use of homeschooling to meet the needs of special needs children (Cheng et al., 2016; Kendall & Talyor, 2016). There is also specific research on the effectiveness

and difficulties of homeschooling with specific learning differences such as ADHD, autism spectrum disorders, and giftedness (Hurlbutt, 2010; Rivero, 2002).

Criticism, discrimination, and stigma by some against homeschoolers still persists (Gray & Riley, 2013; Romanowski, 2006). Lois (2009) illuminated the experiences of stigma that mothers face such as being accused of academic arrogance, overprotectiveness, self-righteousness, and hyper-engagement. Romanowski (2006) explained myths that homeschooled students are not well socialized, fail to make good citizens, have difficulty entering college, and that they only homeschool for religious reasons.

Support Systems

Homeschooling families frequently rely on social networks, support groups, children's social circles, and co-ops, as informal providers of knowledge, resources, and emotional support (Hamlin, 2020; Hanna, 2012; Kunzman & Gaither, 2020). Partnerships with community resources often exist as well. Some of the earliest public institutions to explore potential partnerships with homeschoolers were libraries. More recently museums and park districts often include homeschool planning during weekday hours that are less utilized by traditionally schooled students (Hanna, 2012). During the recent pandemic, libraries provided homeschooling support through access to databases, online support groups, even library created videos on learning options (Robertson, 2020). It seems the teaching, administrative, and counseling roles that occur within homeschools are often shared between parents and other members of the wider community. In a 10-year longitudinal study of homeschoolers, an increase in the use of social networks such as learning cooperatives and community resources occurred (Hanna, 2012). As homeschooling became more mainstream, some homeschoolers began to seek access to public school extracurricular activities and a scholarly debate ensued as to whether they should be

welcomed or excluded. This resulted in a complicated patchwork of rules by state, district, or school (Johnson, 2013; Kunzman & Gaither, 2020). Some states offered homeschoolers the option of taking state-funded part-time classes at their local public school, and charter and cyber options also appeared (Dennison, et al., 2020; Huerta et al., 2006; Johnson, 2013).

Arora (2003) wrote an article on the potential role for education psychologists in the homeschool community. She noted the growth of children receiving education at home and the lack of professional support especially for families with special needs. She also challenged the educational establishment to consider that the type of learning occurring in homeschools might be informative to schools, and that the wider community - not just schools - might be seen as a resource for education (Arora, 2003). Carlson (2020) wrote about the role for school psychologists within the homeschool community. Parents who homeschool are entitled to free disability evaluations if desired for their children. School psychologists may play a role in assessment and the development of IEP's. Psychologist can also provide additional types of evaluations and assessments as requested by homeschooling families. In addition to inviting voluntary use of assessment within traditional schools, it was suggested that psychologists may want to provide outreach to homeschoolers within their community. Currently, the literature is scarce but the counseling profession, which is client centered, wellness centered, developmentally and culturally sensitive, would seem an ideal source of support for the homeschool community.

Clinical Implications

Due to most home educators being women, with some support roles filled by partners, (Dennison et al., 2020; Morton, 2010), mothers who homeschool may experience intense stress (Lois, 2010, 2013). As discussed, significant transitional processes occur when parents first

decide to homeschool and move children from traditional school to homeschool. Each of these transition points represents a significant change in lifestyle for the family and a significant restructuring of roles for the primary homeschooling parent. Due to limited research related to counseling in homeschools or counseling of parents or families who homeschool, little is understood about the potential of the counseling role in relieving stress and transitions within homeschools.

Counselors are in a prime position to bridge the gap between community resources and the needs of children and families. School counselors are obligated under the ASCA Code of Ethics to provide a list of resources in their community to student(s) and parents/guardians when students need or request additional support. It is typical for school counselors to have a list of referrals to hand out to parents and students, however, it may be difficult to determine what specific referrals and services are needed. A school counselor would be able to point the parent/ caregiver in the right direction based on their professional assessment of what is needed. Mental health counselors have expertise in supporting youth in individual and group settings, working through issues such as anxiety, depression, grief, and interpersonal dynamics. Marriage and family counselors can provide support for families struggling with changes in roles and dynamics as they transition into or out of homeschooling. Career counselors can provide college and career counseling throughout the K-12 education as well as support for mothers who may be returning to work after being out of the job market due to homeschooling (Contos, 2021). Counseling as a profession is well- suited to providing services to homeschoolers due to the wellness, strengths-based, and respectful approach.

Carlson (2020) decried the lack of research on homeschooling students with disabilities. This study provides data indicating that when providing counseling for a family which

homeschool due to a special needs youth, it may be helpful to assess for individual counseling needs around behavioral issues, and provision of small group and family counseling for personal issues such as divorce or loss. These were the two counseling activities which were preferred with a small but significant correlation when homeschooling due to special needs youth. The behavioral consultation approach utilized by DeRish (2020) increased homeschooling parents' feelings of efficacy around their child's behavioral issues and might be an appropriate tool for parents homeschooling due to special needs, given the unmet preference for individual counseling around behavioral issues. Families with special needs students often arrive at homeschooling as a last effort with the child already experiencing significant mental health issues (Carlson, 2020). This will likely require the counselor to provide an informal or formal assessment for depression and anxiety when working with these families.

Perhaps consultation with homeschool parents could provide tools for inclusion of counseling activities in the home. Individual youth counseling activities such as personal, relational, and academic counseling were the most frequently preferred activities. Counseling activities in the domains of academic development, career development, and personal-social development take place in homeschools, but are not filled by professional school counselors. Mothers primarily take on the responsibility for home education in America, including multiple roles as teacher, counselor, administrator, and parent (Gysbers, 2010; Redford et al., 2017). In addition to the parent filling these roles, at times an extended friend and family network or community resources may be utilized. Academic, career, and personal-social development activities are often integrated into moments of practical need, using teachable moments rather than providing as an isolated curriculum. Many families homeschool due to special needs of the

child, therefore, each family's requirements may be unique. In addition, the homeschool community faces specific types of stigma and support that must be considered and addressed.

Romanowski (2006) examined myths about homeschooling, he found literature that perpetuated myths that homeschooled students are not well socialized, fail to make good citizens, have difficulty entering college, and that they only homeschool for religious reasons (Romanowski, 2006). Therefore, school counselors can advocate to demystify these claims and educate the public which will in turn destigmatize homeschooled students. Counselor educators may have a role in helping students dispel myths and misconceptions about homeschoolers, and to challenge awareness and bracketing of bias in order to prepare counselors to serve this community. Dennison, et al. (2020) states that clinicians must take a culturally attuned role with homeschooling families and examine internal biases as well as being aware of external biases that may exist for homeschoolers. Since many families choose to homeschool due to unmet special education needs, or cultural marginalization and discrimination, there may be opportunity for counselors or other clinicians to have a role in advocacy and systemic support (Carlson, 2020; Dennison, et al., 2020). Further, counselor educators are advised to include homeschool families and youths in course case studies and in the classroom discussion of counseling needs and interventions with special populations.

Future Research Directions

During the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, almost the entire school-age population began school at home with parents supporting their learning. Most of these families were not homeschooling but rather they were engaged in home-based-education that continued to maintain a connection to their traditional public and private schools. Home-based-education was not independent homeschooling and parents were not in charge of curriculum and overall pace.

However, some families did opt to homeschool independently and in learning pods and the possible long-term changes to the homeschool population are unknown (Hamlin, 2020; Horn, 2020; Prothero & Samuels, 2020; Watson, 2020). With the widespread emergence of school-at-home during the pandemic, it would be reasonable for counselors to use their growing understanding of counseling homeschooling families to help conceptualize services for families educating at home during a pandemic or during any future social disruptions. Goodrich, et al. (2020) suggest that the experiences school counselors gained using Zoom, Skype and other platforms during the pandemic, could serve as a model for providing services to homeschool, home hospital, and rural students. In addition, school counselors moved to technology for traditionally schooled students which might indicate a delivery system for counseling support to homeschooling families who desire this type of connection to traditional school systems (Goodrich, et al., 2020). Thus, future research is needed to not only explore what methods would be helpful for delivering remote learning, but also how school counselors could best assist in times of crises such as the recent pandemic.

A special section on homeschooling appeared in the APA School Psychology journal in 2020 which indicates a newfound interest in the topic of providing culturally competent, strengths-based services to the homeschool community (Carlson, 2020; Dennison et al., 2020; DeRish, et al., 2020; Guterman & Neuman, 2020). An exploration of the preferred and actual counseling activities reported by parents of homeschooled children could shine a light on counseling preferences, factors that impact counseling preferences, and an exploration of gaps between preferred and actual services that would indicate unmet needs. This information would enable professional counselors to better serve homeschooled clients and to understand what counseling activities and services may be desired by homeschooling families.

Historically, homeschool research has proceeded through these phases; legality and regulation, why and how parents choose to homeschool, its academic and social effectiveness, access to public school resources, and use with special needs populations (Gaither, 2017; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Murphy, 2013). Much of the research is politicized and funded by homeschooling advocates or homeschooling critics who have a definite point of view. The literature on homeschooling law probably accounts for one of the largest areas of scholarly writing on homeschools (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). The focus has often been on trying to prove or disprove the legitimacy and effectiveness of homeschooling, with little attention to research that benefits the homeschool community. In reviewing the literature, no research was found that examined counseling activities occurring within homeschools, thus, we argue that research is done with the goal of showcasing the benefits of counseling for this population.

Counseling roles filled by homeschool parents should be further explored. Does a parent serve the college counseling function in homeschool families? Does a parent serve the social emotional and wellness training function in homeschool families? The benefit of professional counselors as consultants to homeschool parents and groups might be explored. Further research on the access and benefits of college and career counseling within homeschool communities would be welcome. Research on the existing knowledge or the benefits of training homeschool parents to recognize mental health issues within their family. Understanding if there is a greater need for mental health services during the transition from traditional school to homeschooling would be valuable, and periodic assessment to find out if the homeschool environment changes the severity or frequency of anxiety and depression. Finally, research can be done around the transition periods and counseling needs when moving from traditional school into homeschool or moving from homeschool into traditional school, college, or career. The counseling profession

has much to offer the homeschooling community by being client-centered and culturally sensitive as well as focusing on wellness, developmental needs, relational growth, and career and college counseling.

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