

**THE OPERATION OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATION FOR HOMESCHOOLED
CHILDREN: THE QUALITY HOMESCHOOL COOPERATIVE AS A CASE STUDY**

A Dissertation

by

HANNA MARIA MULDOWNEY

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2011

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

The Operation of Cooperative Education for Homeschooled Children:

The Quality Homeschool Cooperative as a Case Study

Copyright 2011 Hanna Maria Muldowney

**THE OPERATION OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATION FOR HOMESCHOOLED
CHILDREN: THE QUALITY HOMESCHOOL COOPERATIVE AS A CASE STUDY**

A Dissertation

by

HANNA MARIA MULDOWNEY

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Lynn M. Burlbaw
Committee Members,	B.Stephen Carpenter II
	Virginia Collier
	David Woodcock
Head of Department,	Dennie Smith

August 2011

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

ABSTRACT

The Operation of Cooperative Education for Homeschooled Children:
The Quality Homeschool Cooperative as a Case Study. (August 2011)

Hanna Maria Muldowney, B.A., Texas A&M University;

M.Ed., Texas A&M University

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Lynn M. Burlbaw

Homeschooling is a growing trend in America. Studies on homeschooling in the past three decades have focused on the reasons why parents choose to homeschool, the academic and social quality of homeschooling, and the perceptions of public and private school officials towards homeschooling, as well as homeschooling parents' perceptions of public and private schools. The literature on homeschool cooperatives is scarce. A homeschool cooperative (co-op) is a group of homeschooling parents who have gathered to collectively teach their children. Co-ops might teach core subjects, electives, athletics, or just serve as an opportunity for homeschooling families to gather for fellowship and social time. This dissertation is a study of a homeschool co-op in San Antonio, Texas. The researcher for this study attempted to answer two questions: 1) What is a history of the co-op, and 2) What are the daily operations of the co-op? This researcher observed the selected co-op in action, reviewed documents supplied by co-op members, and interviewed four members of the co-op who have varying degrees of participation in the co-op.

Through triangulation of interviews, observations, and documents, this researcher has described a history of the selected co-op, including its founding and daily operations. The co-op, formed in 2005, is a large, Catholic-affiliated co-op that meets weekly for twelve weeks each semester. The teachers, all paid, are either parents of co-op students or individuals hired from outside the co-op. Students in the co-op have twenty to twenty-five courses from which to choose each semester.

The participants in the study are satisfied with their experiences in the Quality Homeschool Co-op. The participants state that the co-op is providing quality academic classes that supplement the curricula used at home. The participants are also pleased with the positive socialization that their children receive while attending the co-op.

This study adds to the literature on homeschooling cooperatives. Although further research on this study is possible based on different research questions, this researcher has presented a history of Quality Homeschool Co-op and has documented the co-op's daily operations.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wonderful husband, Thomas, without whom I would not have had the strength to follow through with this degree. Thank you for your support during the many years it has taken me to complete this paper.

I am also dedicating this dissertation to my children, JT, Jackie, Grace, Gabe, Becca, and Cecilia. You have taught me patience, persistence, and compassion. Thank you for helping me to find my priority: to be the best mother and teacher I can be.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Burlbaw, and my committee members, Dr. Carpenter, Dr. Collier, and Prof. Woodcock, for their guidance and support throughout the course of this research.

Thanks also go to the participants of my study who very graciously shared their stories and school lives with me so that I could document their co-op. Thanks also to all of my friends and colleagues who guided me to the homeschooling community in San Antonio.

Thanks to my parents, who always taught me the value of education and pushed me to do my very best.

Finally, thanks to my husband for his encouragement and to my children, who are glad I can just be Mom again.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
ABSTRACT		iii
DEDICATION		v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS		vii
CHAPTER		
I	INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
	Introduction	1
	Background of Study	7
	Statement of Problem	9
	Purpose of Study	9
	Research Questions	10
	Significance of Study	10
	Limitations and Delimitations	10
	Definitions of Key Terms	11
	Outline of Dissertation	12
II	REVIEW OF LITERATURE	14
	Homeschooling in Texas	14
	Reasons for Homeschooling	18
	Academic Quality	23
	Socialization	30
	Homeschool Cooperatives	35
	Conclusion	37

CHAPTER	Page
III	METHODOLOGY 38
	Research Methods 38
	Sampling 39
	Data Collection 40
	Protection of Participants' Privacy 43
	Role of Researcher 44
	Data Analysis 44
IV	QUALITY HOMESCHOOL CO-OP 48
	Introduction to Quality Homeschool Co-op 49
	Carol's Story and Formation of Quality Homeschool Co-op 49
	Mary's Story 53
	Joanna's Story 56
	Lucy's Story 59
	Co-op Operations 61
	When, Where, and How 62
	Leadership 65
	Communication 68
	Discipline and Parental Responsibilities 72
	Teachers and Teaching Policies 76
	Courses 80
	Safety 88
	Service 91
	Evaluation of Success 92
	Conclusion 94
V	SIGNIFICANCE, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS 96
	Significance 96
	Research Question One 96
	Research Question Two 99
	Conclusions 99

CHAPTER	Page
Recommendations for Future Research.....	108
Summary	110
REFERENCES	112
APPENDIX A	120
APPENDIX B	123
APPENDIX C	126
APPENDIX D	128
APPENDIX E	132
APPENDIX F	134
VITA	137

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Education through a school is compulsory in America, but parents have choices about the type of school in which to educate their children. The four main options for schooling are public school, private school, market-based hybrid policies like vouchers and charter schools (Nemer 2002, 1), and homeschool. Parents who homeschool enjoy that their children's education occurs not only in the home, but wherever a lesson takes the student. Homeschool is not about the "where", but rather about the "what" and "how".

Determining the number of people who homeschool in America is difficult and incomplete. Some states, like Texas, do not require homeschooling parents to register and "check in" with a local public school. In addition, many parents have chosen to homeschool to avoid government or public control of their children and parenting techniques. These people want to fall under the radar and often avoid giving out personal information regarding their educational choices. Consequently, researchers cannot ascertain exact numbers, and sometimes not even close approximations. Still, researchers have attempted to document ballpark figures for homeschoolers in America.

This dissertation follows the style of *American Educational History Journal*.

In 2008, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) under the U.S. Department of Education formed estimates of the number of people homeschooling in America. The NCES based its estimates on the Parent and Family Involvement Education Survey (PFI) portion of the National Household Education Survey Program (NHES) that was conducted by the NCES. According to the NHES, approximated 1.5 million students in the United States were homeschooled in the spring of 2007 (U.S. Dept. of Education 2008, 1). The NHES defined homeschoolers as students being schooled at home instead of at a public or private school for at least part of their education. If such students were enrolled in public or private school, the enrollment could not exceed twenty-five hours a week.

Dr. Brian Ray, founder and president of the National Home Education Research Institute, estimates the number of homeschooled students, as of 2010, to be over two million (2011). Ray compiled data from multiple sources to develop his estimate: published research from the U.S. Department of Education, data provided by thirteen states that collect information on homeschooling families, data from five nationwide and private organizations that serve the homeschool community, and surveys of leaders and constituents of statewide home-education organizations. Ray expects to “see a notable surge in the number of children being homeschooled in the next 5 to 10 years” (3). Ray predicts that some current homeschooling families might find it necessary to go from a single-income to a dual-income earning household, thus giving up homeschooling in compensation. On the other hand, Ray believes that some families with limited means

but a desire not to put their children in public school might opt for homeschooling instead of paying the high cost of private education.

Dissertations concerning homeschooling date back to the 1980s before homeschooling was legal in all fifty states (Rose 1985; Wingert 1989). While the dissertations provide similar insight into the world of homeschooling, comparing them by time period helps to shed light on how prominent homeschooling has become. Homeschooling in the late 1980s and early 1990s, around the time homeschooling became legal in all states, is described as a “fringe movement” (Scott 2002). During that time, little was known about the demographics or methods of parents who chose alternative education for their kids. Dissertations written during the 1990s tend to focus on curriculum and teaching strategies for homeschooling (Maynard Nicol 1993; Stover 1994; Henson 1995; Swanson 1996; Danley 1998; Calhoun 1999) or on parental reasons for and perceptions of homeschooling (Greenberg 1993; Myers 1994; Moss 1995; Harrison 1996; Askew 1998; Hetzel 1998; Valle 1998). Few address the social or academic quality of homeschooling (Moss 1995; Watkins 1997; Mealy 1998). As the years progress from 2000 to present, more is written about homeschooling as a valid education alternative and the social, academic, and familial values of homeschooling (Bellina 2005; Gregory 2005; Horsburgh 2005; Clemente 2006; Eley 2006; Fisher 2006; Nichols 2006; Saunders 2006; Knutson 2007; McKeon 2007; Andrade 2008; Kirschner 2008; Wagner 2008).

For some parents, homeschooling is a response to the inability of public or private schooling to meet their children’s perceived individual needs. Knutson (2007)

discusses the stories of three mothers who pulled their children out of public or private school because the schools could not meet the needs of the children, although the parents, not the schools, determined those needs. The stories reflect their dissatisfaction, their initial struggles, and their overall joy at making the decision to take their children's educational welfare into their own hands. Similarly, Horsburgh (2005) and Wagner (2008) focus their dissertations on the perceptions of homeschooling parents towards public school. Both studies present the perceptions of homeschooling parents towards public schools and address the reasons for making an alternative choice for education.

The response to public or private education is not always negative for homeschooling parents. Eley studies the collaboration of homeschoolers with the public school system. He describes the initial tension between the two and the eventual compromise for the educational welfare of children (2006). Likewise, Bellina's 2005 study addresses the relationship between homeschooling families, public schools, and the superintendents of states participating in the study. Bellina describes the laws and regulations of homeschooling, the limited jurisdiction of the public school system on homeschooling families, and the collaboration that homeschoolers desire with public schools.

Fisher (2006) and Kirschner (2008) focused their studies not on the perceptions of homeschooling parents towards public school, but rather, the perceptions of homeschooling parents towards homeschooling. Fisher researched how homeschooling parents feel about their decision to education their children at home, most being satisfied with the choice. She then researched public school parents and compared the

satisfaction results to those of homeschoolers. Kirschner explored the tensions that homeschoolers perceive with the government and conventional schooling as they diverge from the mainstream and create a countercultural movement, according to Kirschner.

While parents' decision to homeschool is a popular topic for study, another topic that receives much attention is the academic and social quality of homeschooling (Gregory 2005; Nichols 2006; McKeon 2007; Andrade 2008). Critics of homeschooling feel very strongly that homeschoolers are not properly socialized, nor do they receive a quality academic education. Homeschoolers, on the other hand, will attest to their socialization, sometimes too much in the way of extracurricular activities, and to their superior, and well-rounded, education. Researchers have attempted to shed light on the question of quality in homeschooling. Andrade discusses how technology has aided in the rise of homeschooling over the past decade (2008), while McKeon analyzes the styles, instructional practices, and reading methodologies of homeschooling families (2007). Gregory adds to the homeschooling discussion with her study of physical education in the homeschooling home (2005), while Nichols explores how homeschoolers attain music education (2006).

Clemente goes beyond discussing how homeschoolers address academic needs. He details the academic achievements and college aptitude of homeschooled students versus their institutionally-educated counterparts (2006). Clemente compares the Scholastic Aptitude Test scores of 1792 public, 945 private, and 222 homeschooled students to conclude how well homeschooled students perform against their

conventionally-schooled counterparts. The scores reflected that the public school students averaged 1040, private school students averaged 1050, and the homeschooled students averaged 1130. Clemente describes the difference between homeschooled and public and private schooled students as significant and concludes that homeschooling parents are meeting the academic needs of their students. Likewise, Saunders (2006) compares the first year experiences of college freshmen who were previously homeschooled to those who were not. She determines in her study that previously homeschooled students were more committed to higher education and had more positive levels of social integration.

Another portion of this review of dissertations about homeschooling is about locations of previous studies. Pedersen studied South Texas (2002), while Hall examined homeschooling in DeKalb County, Georgia (2007). Other examples of studies on homeschooling locations are New Mexico (Higgins 2002), Delaware (Siebert 2002), Virginia (Brown 2003), New Jersey and Pennsylvania (Bellina 2005), Chicago (Bogner 2006), and Hawaii (Kelly 2008). These dissertations indicate that researchers are studying homeschooling around the United States and not in one geographic location.

Finally, very few researchers have focused their dissertations on homeschool cooperatives. Bellina (2005), Horsburgh (2005), Eley (2006), and Yeager (1999) conducted dissertations on the cooperation of homeschoolers with public or private schools, however, these dissertations did not discuss cooperatives of homeschoolers. Homeschool cooperatives are groups of homeschooling parents who collectively education their children. Upon searching dissertations published between 1963 and

2009, this researcher found one published dissertation that specifically focuses on homeschool cooperatives. Vaughan conducted a case study of three homeschooling cooperatives in New Jersey to determine what the motivating factors are for homeschooling parents who choose to utilize cooperatives (2003). Vaughan concentrated her study on cooperatives affecting parents' choices to homeschool and whether or not parents would still homeschool if cooperatives were not available. Vaughn concluded that a majority of her subjects were satisfied with their experiences in their cooperative of choice and might not homeschool if they did not have the support of a cooperative. Vaughn's subjects stated their cooperative of choice provided the socialization and academic enrichment that a homeschooler might lack at home. Vaughn's study is significant because she acknowledges homeschool cooperatives as more than an option for homeschooling families. She states that homeschool cooperatives are "a new alternative to education" and that homeschool cooperatives have "provided an environment within which this network [homeschooling] can expand" (97). Vaughn notes that homeschooling parents are motivated to continue homeschooling because of their involvement in a homeschool cooperative, however, she only gives a basic operational background of each cooperative without a history.

Background of Study

As the number of homeschoolers in San Antonio, Texas, increases, so do the cooperatives (co-ops). Homeschooling families in San Antonio can choose to join one or more co-ops. If a co-op does not exist that meets the needs of the family, then the

family can start a co-op with other families that share the same values and goals and are often geographically close.

For the purpose of this study, a homeschool cooperative, or co-op, is defined as a “group of homeschooling parents who join together to share teaching duties” (Topp 2008, 1). Parents who form or join a particular co-op share similar values they want the co-op to adhere to, whether those values are religious, social, or academic.

Homeschooling parents form co-ops for the purpose of teaching core subjects (language arts, math), electives (foreign languages, fine arts), extra-curricular activities (athletics), religion, or all the above.

Military families that homeschool have formed co-ops to give educational consistency to their children as they relocate. Co-ops offer homeschooled students a chance to learn and socialize in an academic setting with other students, as well as to learn from different teachers, usually other parents.

Duties required of parents in homeschool co-ops vary, whether it be teaching or assisting the co-op in another way, according to San Antonio Home Education (2007). Co-ops might require fees for supplies or operating costs, while others demand no monetary compensation with the expectation that parents fully participate in the operations of the co-op. Some require interested families to apply and go through an interview process to assure a belief in common goals. Religiously affiliated co-ops might require families to sign a Statement of Faith.

In 2007, San Antonio Home Education (<http://www.homeedsa.com/>) listed nine cooperatives in San Antonio, such as the Laude Catholic Co-op

(<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SALaudeCo-op/>), San Antonio TEAMS Homeschool Co-op (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TEAMS_co-op/), and the San Antonio Military Home Educators (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SAMHE/>). Since co-ops, like Texas homeschoolers in general, are not required to register or become a formal or legal entity, determining the exact number is beyond the scope of this study. This study can, however, bring to light an example of an established co-op in San Antonio.

Statement of Problem

Homeschool co-ops are not a secret. The problem is that analytical literature about homeschooling co-ops is scarce. Information on the history or operations of a homeschool co-op is difficult. *Homeschool Co-ops: How to Start Them, Run Them and Not Burn Out* by Topp (2008), was the only example addressing co-op operations that this researcher could locate.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to learn about the history and operations of one co-op, Quality Homeschool Co-op¹ in San Antonio. The co-op was established in the fall of 2005. This researcher worked as a participant observer in the co-op by observing classes and interactions among families in the co-ops. In addition, this researcher conducted interviews of adult family members in Quality Homeschool Co-op to determine their motivations for joining/founding a co-op. Finally, this researcher interviewed the current leader and founding member of the co-op to learn about the initial and ongoing details of the co-op.

¹ The names of the participants, church, and co-op have been changed to protect identities.

Research Questions

This study has two research questions:

1. What is the history of Quality Homeschool Co-op?
2. What are the daily operations of the co-op, and how have those changed since the co-op's founding?

Significance of Study

Parents who homeschool have chosen not to put their children in public or private school. Parents join homeschool cooperatives in the hopes of giving their children an occasional classroom-like setting with peers similar in age and teachers with different backgrounds.

Scant literature is published on homeschool cooperatives, other than to discuss co-ops as a support option for homeschoolers. This study is significant because it broadens the literature about homeschool co-ops. A graduate student in New Jersey focused her dissertation research on homeschool co-ops (Vaughan 2003). Vaughan's research, however, focuses on parental motivations for joining co-ops, with comparisons to other forms of schooling, such as public or private school. This research is significant because it adds to the literature on the history and operations of homeschool co-ops.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study contains limitations and delimitations.

The study is limited by:

1. Generalization of the study. The study cannot be used to generalize about all homeschool co-ops as only one co-op was studied.

2. The researcher as the participant observer. As the participant, remaining unbiased is difficult. This researcher has attempted to remain unbiased by only reporting what co-op members have stated to the researcher. This researcher has also attempted to describe events observed as a participant as accurately as possible. In addition, to maintain integrity, this researcher has thoroughly documented all dialogues and any issues that may have skewed the results of the study, including misunderstandings about what was said or done (Bogdan and Taylor 1975, 72).

Delimitations of the study include:

1. Age of co-op studied and students involved. This researcher is choosing to study one co-op that is in its sixth year of operation. The ages of the co-op studied range from early elementary to middle school level. The co-op studied does not teach high school students.

Definitions of Key Terms

CORE SUBJECTS: The essential subjects students are required to learn (Encarta® World English Dictionary 2009). Core subjects for this study are determined according to the Texas case law on homeschooling, which states that curriculum must be “designed to meet basic education goals reading, spelling, grammar, mathematics and a study of good citizenship” (*Leeper v. Arlington* 1987). For the purpose of this study, core subjects are reading, spelling, grammar, mathematics, and good citizenship.

HOMESCHOOL COOPERATIVE (CO-OP): Group of homeschooling parents who join together to share teaching duties (Topp 2008, 1). Parents in a particular homeschooling

co-op share similar values and expect a co-op to meet certain needs of their children, such as socialization or academic enrichment.

HOMESCHOOLING: The practice of educating children and youth in a learning environment that is home-based and parent-led (or at least under the authority of parents rather than a state-run public school system or private school) (Ray 2004, 15). Also referred to as *home educated*, *home-based education*, and *home school* in this study.

PRIVATE SCHOOL: Privately-funded education, usually by attending families. Private schools can be selective with regard to gender and socio-economic status (due to the cost of tuition).

PUBLIC SCHOOL: Government-funded education where all students are permitted to attend regardless of socio-economic status, creed, religion, gender, or race.

QUALITY HOMESCHOOL CO-OP: Homeschool cooperative studied in this dissertation. Quality Homeschool Co-op is a Catholic homeschooling co-op in San Antonio, Texas, that teaches academic electives. Academic electives are courses that enhance the instruction a homeschooled student receives at home, but are not considered core subjects in this study.

Outline of Dissertation

This researcher divided this dissertation into five chapters. Chapter I describes the problem and significance of the study. Chapter I also includes the background to the study, including dissertations written on similar topics.

Chapter II is the Review of Literature. In Chapter II, this researcher reviews previously published literature on homeschooling, including parental motivations for

homeschooling, academic and social quality, co-ops, and a brief legal history of homeschooling in Texas.

Chapter III describes the methodology of the study. The methodology includes the chosen techniques for sampling, data collecting, and data analysis, as well as participant and observer roles.

Chapter IV depicts the findings of the case study. This researcher has expressed participants' responses collectively to document a cohesive history and the daily operations of the co-op. This researcher has also described each participant's individual story and her motivations for homeschooling.

Chapter V is the analysis of the findings described in Chapter IV. The analysis includes the significance of this study and the researcher's conclusions about the findings. Chapter V also offers recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Homeschooling has been a hotly debated topic since its growth during the 1970s. Chapter II discusses the literature concerning the homeschooling movement. This chapter will give an overview of Texas laws and regulations on homeschooling. Chapter II also discusses reasons why parents choose to homeschool, including academic and social concerns. This review of literature also documents literature that has been published on homeschooling co-ops with descriptions of co-op operations.

Homeschooling in Texas

Section 25.086 of the Texas Education Code states the statutory law on compulsory education, which requires that

a child who is at least six years of age, or who is younger than six years of age and has previously been enrolled in first grade, and who has not yet reached the child's 18th birthday shall attend school (2009a).

The U.S. Supreme Court decided in 1925 in the case of *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* that use of the word “property” under the fourteenth amendment conveyed a “right to nonpublic school operators to operate their schools” (Kemerer 1982, 17). Therefore, each state could require children to attend school, but could not require children to attend a public school (Walsh 2005). Consequently, Section 25.086(a)(1) of the Texas Education Code provides an exemption to the compulsory school law, stating,

A child is exempt from the requirements of compulsory school attendance if the child: (1) attends a private or parochial school that includes in its course a study of good citizenship (2009b).

According to Walsh, the word “school” in the Texas compulsory education statute is not defined (2005, 45). The confusion over what could be considered a school

led to the case of *Leeper v. Arlington Independent School District* in 1987. Judge

Charles J. Murray stated in the *Leeper* case that

since the original enactment of the compulsory attendance law in Texas in 1915, school-age children have continuously been educated at home with the knowledge of Defendants Texas Education Agency and the public school districts; that until recent years, the earliest record of which is 1981, none of the Defendant school districts nor Defendant Texas Education Agency took the position that these children were not in a private school; that there is no record prior to 1981 of any prosecution of parents who were educating their children at home.

Although not clearly defined, the right of parents to educate their children at home constituted a private school, leading Murray to decide that

in 1981 Defendant Texas Education Agency decided incorrectly that children being taught at home were not in a private school in compliance with the act; that prosecutions against parents of these children were initiated by certain school attendance officers of the public School districts following this change of interpretation of Section 21.033(a)(1) of the Texas Education Code by Defendant Texas Education Agency; that the State Board of Education on April 12, 1986 passed a resolution describing private and parochial schools which is contrary to the literal and historical meaning of those terms as originally enacted.

Based on historical meaning, Murray settled the dispute in the *Leeper* case that a homeschool is considered a private school and therefore exempt from the compulsory education law, provided that a school-age child in Texas under the direction of a parent or parental authority is being educated at home

in a bona fide (good faith, not a sham or subterfuge) manner a curriculum consisting of books, workbooks, other written materials, including that which appears on an electronic screen of either a computer or video tape monitor, or any combination of the preceding from either (1) of a private or parochial school which exists apart from the child's home or (2) which has been developed or obtained from any source, said curriculum designed to meet basic education goals of reading, spelling, grammar, mathematics and a study of good citizenship (*Leeper v. Arlington I.S.D.* 1987).

In 1994, an amendment to the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act required each full-time teacher to be certified in his or her subject area, a statement that aroused “passionate disapproval from homeschoolers” (Isenberg 2007, 389) and would have affected every state, not just Texas. When the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) again came up for reauthorization in 2001, also known as the No Child Left Behind Act, Congress banned any of its provisions from applying to homeschooling. Specifically, the ESEA 2001 states in Section 9506 (b) that

Nothing in this Act shall be construed to affect a home school, whether or not a home school is treated as a home school or a private school under State law, nor shall any student schooled at home be required to participate in any assessment referenced in this Act (ESEA 2001).

Like other private schools in Texas, homeschools are not required to have certified educators, nor do they need to have their curriculum approved (Texas Home School Coalition n.d.). The Texas Education Agency does have the right to make a reasonable inquiry of parents to determine the attendance status of homeschooled children and whether curriculum used at home is “bona fide” (Walsh 2005). According to Robert Scott, Texas Commissioner of Education, parents wishing to withdraw their children from public school in order to homeschool need only to sign a withdrawal form or submit a letter of withdrawal to the appropriate school. “It is not necessary for the parents to make a personal appearance with school officials or present curriculum for review,” Scott writes in a letter to public school administrators throughout the state (2010).

The Texas Education Agency does not “regulate, index, monitor, approve, register, or accredit the programs available to parents who choose to home school”,

according to the Texas Education Agency (2007). The state of Texas does not award a diploma to students who have graduated from a homeschool, however, homeschooled students who wish to enroll in a public school are allowed to transfer credit the same way as “students transferring from unaccredited private schools” (Scott 2010).

Determining which credits to transfer occurs through evaluation of the curriculum used at home, or through appropriate assessments, according to Scott.

In addition to the *Leeper* case, which confirmed that homeschools are considered private schools, Texas homeschoolers find support from the Department of Family and Protective Services. Section 40.002(b)(2) of the 2005 Texas Human Resources Code states that

(b) Notwithstanding any other law, the department shall: (2) provide family support and family preservation services that respect the fundamental right of parents to control the education and upbringing of their children.

The previous section of this review of literature has provided a brief overview of the homeschooling rules in Texas. The following section covers reasons why parents may choose to homeschool in the first place.

Reasons for Homeschooling

Parents cite different reasons for choosing to homeschool their children. According to Van Galen (1988), homeschoolers can be grouped into two broad categories: Ideologues and Pedagogues.

Ideologues homeschool their children because they object to what they believe is being taught in public and private schools and want to strengthen relationships with their children. Ideologues have specific values, beliefs, and skills that they want their

children to learn that schools are not adequately teaching. Ideologues usually want their children to learn fundamentalist religious doctrine and to value conservative politics and family life (1988, 55).

Pedagogues, according to Van Galen, homeschool their children for pedagogical, or academic, reasons. Pedagogues are critical not about what schools are teaching, but rather that what is being taught is done ineptly. Pedagogues value their children's creativity and strive to cultivate an intrinsic desire to learn in their children (1988, 55).

Nemer acknowledges that Van Galen's breakdown of homeschoolers has been the most useful for researchers of homeschooling. Nemer states, however, that while Van Galen's descriptions help others to understand homeschoolers' initial reasons for homeschooling, homeschoolers are in fact multidimensional and rarely fit into one category (2002, 12). Nemer found in her studies that many homeschooling parents fall in between Van Galen's rubric. Some start out in one category and later adhere to elements of the other, while others intertwine both categories from the beginning. Nemer has therefore adjusted Van Galen's categories to better describe homeschoolers based on their motivations.

Nemer transformed "ideologues" to those with "ideological motivations". Most ideologically-motivated parents tend to primarily be fundamental Christians, however, people of other religions and those who are non-religious also homeschool to teach their children their own values and beliefs (13). Whatever their religious beliefs, ideologically-motivated parents feel their children will get a better moral education at

home than in school (14). These parents also feel that schooling at home helps to combat inappropriate government intervention into private issues.

Nemer changed Van Galen's "pedagogues" to those with "pedagogical motivations". Pedagogically-motivated parents feel that schools teach to certain types of students while excluding others (14). For example, many parents oppose tracking in schools, while a growing number of African Americans and Native Americans school their children at home to avoid racism in schools. Some disagree with the entire public school system. These "unschoolers" feel that children should not attend school at all, whether at home or at a traditional school, as schools stifle children and their independent thinking. Other pedagogically-motivated parents do not feel that schools provide quality education. These parents believe that schools merely provide crowd control and cannot meet the needs of students with different learning styles, including those who are either gifted or have special needs (15).

Ideologically-motivated homeschooling parents are concerned about the development of their children in public and private schools. Many parents, according to Taylor, "object to public schools on religious grounds" (1997, 111). For these parents, who make up a large percentage of homeschooling families, schools are either teaching topics they find objectionable, or not teaching certain beliefs and values important in the lives of homeschooling families. This goes beyond prescribed curriculum to include the "hidden curriculum": activities on the playground, attitudes of teachers and administrators, and even a deep concern "about whom their children spend time with"

(Taylor 1997, 111). Homeschooling parents, religious or not, struggle with sending their young children to someone else for many hours a day. An interviewed parent stated that

when considering a childminder, most parents would prefer someone who will be sympathetic to their particular children, someone with broadly the same attitudes. If an arrangement proved unsatisfactory, they might well start to look elsewhere. When it comes to school, however, parents and children usually have to put up with what they get (Taylor 1997, 112).

Romanowski states that “education is not exclusively about a child’s intellect: it also includes character” (2001, 81). He continues by explaining that each child’s emotional and educational needs are complex and varied, and “any attempt to conform the needs of a child to the school or classroom is impossible and possibly detrimental to the student” (81).

School curriculum is a concern for ideologically-motivated parents.

Ideologically-motivated parents do not necessarily believe that schools have poor intentions, but they are concerned that the values of the institutional school system are not those of the family. Some parents object to their children having to celebrate every religious holiday at school to accommodate all people, while others object that their religious holidays are not reflected at all. Others still are not religious, as in the case of Jean, from Knutson’s dissertation, who initially chose public school over private school to avoid religious affiliation (2007).

Regardless of whether homeschooling parents are ideologically-motivated or pedagogically-motivated, they have all chosen not to put their children in public or private schools. Taylor states that “public schools do not serve everyone” (1997, 111). Whether or not homeschooling parents have negative anecdotes about public or private

schools, most agree that schools that are not home-based simply cannot meet the individual needs of every child. Parents feel that their children need instruction or an environment that is not provided in a traditional classroom. Institutions, Yauger claims, are “not designed to meet the needs of individuals. They are intended to deal with groups of people, based on the assumption that most of those people’s needs and behaviors will be the same” (2005, 32).

As an example, Knutson conducted her dissertation research on three mothers who made the choice to pull their children out of private or public school in order to homeschool. One story tells of the bullying that one child received for years with no teacher intervention. Another recalls the extreme boredom a child felt at school after having to begin each year in elementary school starting over again: reading three-letter words and not personally progressing “because the class wasn’t ready” (2007, 8). The final story was about a mother who was told on the first day of kindergarten that her child needed to be in special education classes because he did not sit in a circle, cut properly with scissors, or draw pictures that conformed to every other child’s picture in the class.

Homeschooling offers opportunities that institutional, public or private, schools usually cannot offer due to class sizes, prescribed curricula, state and federal regulations, or even financial considerations. Homeschooling offers flexibility, especially for students who need to be challenged in different areas, usually those regarded as gifted and talented (Ensign 1997, 2). While homeschooling is usually done on a grade level (first, second, third, etc.), when a child is uneven in his or her abilities, such as strong in

reading but weak in math, flexibility can be afforded at home to choose a curriculum that will be more advanced in some subjects and less advanced in others.

Homeschoolers are not bound to seven-hour days broken into times allotted for each subject with little room for additional instruction. According to Romanowski, when traditional time constraints are removed, “instruction is not pitted against the clock and children are not forced to stop what they are doing, pack away their project, change gears, and think about a new subject” (2001, 81).

Homeschooling also offers a more “active learning environment” (Taylor 1997, 111) where everything can be a learning opportunity. Homeschooled students usually have greater opportunities to learn about a subject in the real world, rather than from a textbook, or schooling versus education. Yauger discusses the difference between “learning and being taught” (2005, 28). Her institutionally-schooled child brought up the point that “just because somebody makes me do them doesn’t mean I learned them” (29). She defines “learning” as including knowledge that is actually retained and used, not that which is simply reflected on a report card as a grade but forgotten in the future (29). Yauger is “passionate about learning”, but does not “believe in schools” (28).

Parents might choose to homeschool from the start of a child’s education or after an experience with institutional school, for pedagogical or ideological reasons. They might homeschool for the duration of their children’s school years or temporarily, or with high or low levels of socialization and academic cooperativeness. One thing is true of all homeschooling parents: they acknowledge their rights as parents to be the ultimate decision makers for their children. Perhaps more so than socialization and academic

quality, the topic of parental rights is highly debated in terms of education and a “liberty-loving” society (Ray 2000, 286). Despite what parents feel is best for their children, critics of homeschooling express their own concerns, most often about the academic and social welfare of homeschooled children.

Academic Quality

Studies concerning the student achievement of homeschooled children have been conducted, the most cited of which coming from Rudner in 1999 and Ray in 2000. Collom praises the two studies for their large sample sizes, but criticizes them as being biased or as having response rates that are “problematically low” (2005, 314). Rudner administered a demographic survey to homeschooling parents who had paid to use the testing services at Bob Jones University. Out of 39,607 homeschool students contracted to take either the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) or the Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP), 11,930 families returned the questionnaire, for a total of 20,760 students (Rudner 1999). While the response rate was 52%, Collom’s critique comes from the location of the study (313). All samples came from Bob Jones University, a fundamental Christian institution in South Carolina. According to Collom, the diversity of the homeschooling movement is not represented in Rudner’s study as it might have only drawn data from conservative, Christian homeschooling families (314).

Ray created a sample of U.S. homeschooling families from the lists of various national and statewide organizations. He sent a mail survey to 5,995 homeschooling families and support groups in 1996. 1,657 families with 5,200 homeschooling children returned the questionnaires, a 29% response rate. In 2000, Ray then received

standardized test results from test publishers or administrators for 1,952 (38%) of the children whose parents completed the 1996 survey. Collom criticizes Ray for drawing conclusions based on low response rates, and since Ray obtained student data on only 38% of the 29% of families that responded to the original survey, the likelihood of bias in the study increases (314).

Collom recognizes that just as standardized tests are used to empirically determine the academic achievement of public school students, researchers, such as Rudner and Ray, have also used data from standardized tests taken by homeschooled students to create generalizations about the whole homeschooling population. The problem with this, however, is that not all homeschoolers take standardized tests (314). Standardized tests, according to Collom, are often one of the reasons why parents have opted out of public schools. Standardized achievement tests, therefore, may not represent homeschoolers as a whole (314). Despite the limitations of Rudner's and Ray's studies, Collom believes the two researchers have made a unique contribution to the growing research literature on homeschooling.

In her study of homeschooling families, Taylor found similar results as Collom that standardized tests are not the most decisive indicator of academic success. She notes that homeschooling parents rely heavily on their own evaluations of their children's progress. Taylor states that "indicators—likes the scores from the SAT—are helpful, but they're not the litmus test of success" (1997, 112).

Despite the complexity of having to rely on a one-size-fits-all standardized test, such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), as

evidence for academic achievement, homeschoolers “tend to be successful when competing in the arena of institutional schooling” (Taylor 1997, 112). Homeschoolers are not just successful, according to Ray, but rather are “outperforming the public schooled [students] whether the study has been local, state-specific, nationwide in the United States” (2000, 275).

Duffey writes that the National Center of Home Education found in 1994 that the average score of homeschooled students taking the ITBS was at the 77th percentile, compared to the 50th percentile for conventionally schooled students (1998, 2). Ray, as Duffey reports, learned in 1997 that homeschoolers outscored public school students by thirty to thirty-seven percentile points across all subjects (Duffey 1998, 2). Burns, who is skeptical of homeschooling, has also found that the results of student achievement based on tests are consistent: homeschooled students have a median score typically between the 70th and 80th percentiles, compared to the national median of the 50th percentile. Burns also acknowledges that homeschooled students in grades one through four are “on average one grade level above their age-level publically and privately schooled peers, and this gap begins to widen even more at grade five” (1999, 6).

A second indicator of academic success is college attendance. Farris and Woodruff found in 2000 that 69% of homeschooled students went on to receive a formal education after high school, which is similar to the 71% of traditionally schooled students who attend college. A study at Bob Jones University concluded in 1995 that “home-schooled college students perform ‘as well as, if not better than, their conventionally educated counterparts’” (Farris and Woodruff 2000, 250), although this

study occurred at the same university as Rudner's 1999 study and may not represent the homeschooling population as a whole. Ensign, however, states that "homeschoolers may find the unique experiences and abilities gained through homeschooling make them attractive to competitive colleges" (1997, 5).

Researchers offer different reasons for the academic success of homeschoolers. Romanowski gives four main explanations: 1) Home educators do not have to contend with large classes, thus allowing them to tailor the curriculum to meet the student's needs and give one-on-one instruction; 2) Home educators have flexibility without the "red tape and administrative constraints"; 3) Home educators can easily "seize teachable moments because everyday experiences provide the foundation for learning"; and 4) Traditional time constraints are removed in a home education setting. Learning a particular subject is not bound to a certain time of day and students are free to spend more or less time on subjects that they understand or need more instruction in (2001, 81).

In addition to an educational setting that might be less rigid, parental involvement is a factor in the academic success of students. Fehrmann, Keith, and Reimers state in 1987 that "parental involvement has an important direct, positive effect on grades" (6). Homeschooling parents, according to Burns, are obviously more involved in their children's education, which then leads to the expectancy theory. The expectancy theory argues that children who are expected to excel will surpass those who are not expected to excel (1999, 7). Burns quotes Meehan and Stephenson's 1994 study

of homeschooling saying that since homeschooling parents tend to have higher than average educations, they

tend to see their children as above average, and that they expect them to achieve, both socially and academically. As a result, these children usually fulfill these expectations because of their supportive environment (Meehan and Stephenson as quoted in Burns 1994, 8).

Burns uses this argument to show that homeschooling is biased towards a particular demographic group (mainly white, middle class, and educated) and is not a good indicator of academic success across the board. Ray, however, feels that “parent involvement clearly improves student academic achievement, and minority students and children from low-income families have the most to gain from such involvement” (2000, 277).

Homeschooling opponents argue that since all teachers are to be “highly qualified” (Elementary and Secondary Education Act 2001, Sect. 1119 (a)(1)), homeschooling parents should also be highly qualified, meaning college-educated and certified in the appropriate subject matter. Studies (Rudner 1999; Collom 2005;) of homeschooled students have shown that while academic achievement is influenced by the demographics of parents, it is not dependent on said demographics. Collom claims that the two “great divides” that public children face, race and class, are “inconsequential” for homeschooled children (2005, 329). Rudner concluded in his 1999 study that even children of homeschooling parents with little education or in the lowest specified income bracket scored well above national norms (25).

Romanowski does point out some concerns of critics of homeschooling with regards to parent-teachers. One is the ability to ignore interruptions that often occur in the home (baby crying, phone ringing, etc.). Another is the scope and depth of knowledge required in some content areas and children progress to the secondary level. The last concern is the possibility for learning of skills, or lack thereof, important for success. If organization, study habits, and time management are not taught in the home, students could be at a disadvantage in the work place (2001, 82-3). Romanowski, however, does not provide any suggestions or answers for these concerns, but instead presents them as an overview of critiques to homeschooling.

To compensate for the lack of skills and enhance students' academic experiences, homeschooling families have the option to choose written curricula from publishers. This researcher has not located a comprehensive list of curricula available to homeschoolers, and identifying an exact number of curricula is beyond the scope of this study. Searches for homeschool curricula did yield some popular Christian, Catholic, and secular results, although this list is not exhaustive. Examples of secular curricula include: Saxon Math (<http://saxonhomeschool.hmhco.com>), Shurley English (<https://www.shurley.com/>), K12 (<http://www.k12.com/>), R.E.A.L. Science Odyssey and History Odyssey by Pandia Press (<http://www.pandiapress.com/>), and Five in a Row (<http://www.fiarhq.com>). Examples of Christian curricula using a Biblical approach available are: Abeka (www.abeka.com), Alpha Omega (<http://www.aop.com/>), Sonlight (<http://www.sonlight.com/>), Apologia (<http://www.apologia.com/>), and Tapestry of Grace (www.tapestryofgrace.com). Catholic curricula includes: Catholic Heritage

Curricula (catholichomeschooling.com), Seton Homeschool (<http://www.setonhome.org/>), and Mother of Divine Grace (<http://www.motherofdivinegrace.org/>). Farris and Woodruff state, “the present academic success of home education may owe much to the wide variety of excellent curricula that are available” (2000, 243).

To supplement the academics received at home, homeschoolers also have the option of using resource centers and support groups for homeschoolers, such as the Family Educator Alliance of South Texas (FEAST) in San Antonio, and Traditions of Roman Catholic Homes (TORCH). Homeschoolers use websites and forums to help build a community of people with similar goals. Additionally, some homeschoolers are willing to work with local school districts to receive particular instruction or services, or simply to as a way to reduce animosity between conventional and alternative education advocates (Taylor 1997, 114). Families may be wary of working with public schools, however, because of their desire to be left alone and not be “taken over through assimilation into an established group or culture” (Taylor 1997, 115).

Parents homeschool for different reasons and despite critiques, they have found ways to provide quality academics to their children. Homeschooling parents also believe their children receive adequate socialization and have found avenues for socialization that they feel are appropriate.

Socialization

Socialization is the main criticism from homeschooling opponents (Romanowski 2001, 81). Ray states that Americans “value psychological and social health for their

children in addition to good academic performance” (2000, 275). However, socialization, or the “S word”, as Yauger calls it (2005, 28), is not a hard science. Socialization is a subjective topic whose definition lends itself to multiple interpretations, or is “very dependent on the theoretical orientation of the person doing the defining” according to Ray (2000, 276). The following are definitions of socialization according to different authors.

Medlin asserts that when the word socialization is used, some people mean social activity: giving children a chance to play and interact in traditional activities. Others mean social influence, such as teaching children to conform to majority norms. And others still mean social exposure: introducing children to the culture and values of different groups of people (2000, 107). Medlin goes on to say that while all these things are part of socialization, the term is more accurately defined as “the process whereby people acquire the rules of behavior and systems of beliefs and attitudes that equip a person to function effectively as a member of a particular society” (2000, 107).

Farris and Woodruff, in 2000, describe socialization as being derived from the Latin root *socius*, meaning a companion, associate, or ally, as in *association* or *society*. Socialization, therefore, relates to how people learn to get along with others. Nothing in the root implies that socialization must occur with a peer, an equal, or someone of the same age or status. If socialization is to equip children with the skills needed to function properly in society as an adult, as Medlin implies, then it is “contrary to logic to assert that the social skills a child will need as an adult are best taught in a classroom, where

the child is surrounded only by students of his or her own age” (240). Farris and Woodruff conclude that it makes “little sense to use classmates as teachers”.

Although proponents of homeschooling believe the definition of socialization is subjective, critics of homeschooling, according to Romanowski, argue that children will be “misfits incapable of socializing properly” unless they are exposed to the social life that is found in public schools (2001, 80). Similar to Ray, Medlin, and Farris and Woodruff, Romanowski claims that homeschoolers refute critics’ concerns by arguing against traditional understandings of the socialization process. Homeschoolers maintain that there are both positive and negative forms of socialization. While positive socialization will help a child grow and develop to his or her full potential, negative socialization separates a children from his or her parents and restricts socializing primarily to age mates (2001, 80).

Romanowski quotes critics as saying “homeschooled children are seldom exposed to the diversity of beliefs and backgrounds that they would encounter in most public school classrooms” (2001, 81). Other critics believe that homeschooling “shelters children from society”, whereas “traditional schools ensure that children will grow up to be ‘complete people’” (Medlin 2000, 108). However, homeschooled children, Romanowski maintains, are “more frequently exposed to a wider variety of people and situations than could be expected in a traditional classroom environment where their exposure is limited to 25-35 people of similar age and socioeconomic background” (2001, 80). In addition, most parents focus mainly on the advantages of homeschooling as they see it, which includes providing “positive socialization experiences for their

children”, something that is “best achieved in an age-integrated setting under the auspices of the family” (Medlin 2000, 109). In addition, homeschooled children have “significantly fewer behavior problems” (Duffey 1998, 2).

Ray, after analyzing the research of others on social development, concluded that while more social research is needed in the realm of home education, four areas of research on what he calls the “home educated” suggest that they “are doing as well or better than their conventionally schooled peers” (2000, 276). Ray first emphasizes that homeschooling is actually “home-based education” in which the parents are the primary educators and decision makers about daily activities. These children engage in a wide range of activities outside the home and “are nowhere near being socially isolated”. Second, the research shows that home educated children are psychologically and emotionally healthy with positive self-esteem and sound families. Third, Ray asserts that inferences can be made from the research that home educated children are doing well relating to others, building leadership potential, or being in families that are civically active. Finally, Ray cites the research that shows that the home educated are successful as young and older adults with an “unusually strong sense of self” (2000, 276).

Blumenfeld describes a study conducted by Shyers in 1981. Shyers compared the social adjustment of homeschooled children to that of traditionally-schooled students. When starting the study, he believed that traditionally-schooled would fare better. Shyers was surprised to learn that homeschooled children were better adjusted socially than their traditionally-schooled counterparts (Blumenfeld 1997, 71). What

makes his study interesting are his assessment instruments. Shyers used the *Children's Assertive Behavior Scale (CABS)*, the *Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale (PHCSCS)*, and the *Direct Observation Form (DOF)* of the *Child Behavior Checklist*. In other word, as Blumenfeld states, "the study was about as scientific as one could make it" (1997, 72). Socialization is usually subjective, according to the definitions previously provided, but Shyers uses instruments to gain data that is as empirical as possible and still demonstrates that homeschooled children are not socially inept in society.

Since socialization is for the preparation of children for transition into a quality adulthood, some consider the adulthood of previously homeschooled children to be good markers of social adjustment. Ray studied over five thousand adults who had homeschooled for several years as children. He found that a majority are involved in some community service activity, such as coaching, or organization, such as church (2004, 74). Galloway, according to Medlin, conducted a much smaller study in 1997, and although Galloway's results cannot be generalized due to the small numbers, she concluded that the previously homeschooled students "were the leaders on campus" with "exceptional social and leadership skills" (Medlin 2000, 117).

In addition to social skills, researchers also wonder about the civic involvement of previously homeschooled adults. Ray found that adults who had been homeschooled were "much more civically involved than the average adult in the United States" (2004, 75). 74% of homeschooled adults voted in a federal or state election in the past five years, compared to 29% of those nationwide (75). 6% of homeschooled adults, compared to 44% of the general population, felt their families "don't have a say in what

the federal government does” (76). Ray continues by suggesting, based on his evidence, that homeschooled adults have a “commitment to or tolerance of free expression of viewpoints or beliefs”, in roughly equally or sometimes higher numbers than the general public (76).

Despite evidence that homeschooled children are just as, if not more, social than institutionally-schooled children, opponents still use the socialization argument. Yauger states that “in the face of abysmal public school performance and declining academic competence among high school graduates, ‘socialization’ is still the fallback justification for why children should attend school” and that although the two million homeschoolers nationwide that are homeschooling are involved in music groups, 4-H, sports teams, scouts, and religious organizations, “those who put forth the socialization argument are rarely dissuaded” (2005, 28).

Homeschool Cooperatives

Literature on homeschool cooperatives, or co-ops, is scarce. Vaughn wrote a dissertation on the motivations of homeschooling parents who are involved in co-ops (2003). Co-ops are mentioned in books such as *The Unofficial Guide to Homeschooling* (Ishizuka 2000), *Homeschooling More Than One Child: A Practical Guide for Families* (Joye 2005), and *Homeschooling for the Rest of Us: How Your One of a Kind Family Can Make Homeschooling and Real Life Work* (Haskins 2010). In published literature, co-ops are mentioned most often as options for homeschooling families, including the types of co-ops available and how to seek out a co-op.

Topp has published literature specifically about a co-op. In her book *Homeschool Co-ops: How to Start Them, Run Them and Not Burn Out* (2008), Topp describes the details of forming a co-op, operating a co-op, and keeping a co-op running over the years. Topp does not approach the topic of homeschooling in general, but focuses her topic solely on the organization and operation of homeschooling co-ops.

Blumenfeld states that the “point [of co-ops] is that homeschooling families do not live in isolation from one another or the community (1997, 96). According to Topp, one benefit of joining a co-op is that homeschoolers have an opportunity to be around people with similar values since co-ops are formed by parents with likeminded goals. Co-ops also allow homeschooled children to socialize with similar-aged children and to get a “taste’ of group learning without being overwhelming” (2008, 6). Homeschooled students in co-ops gain by learning from adults other than their parents and through group interactions. Co-ops, Topp states, are also beneficial to homeschooled children because the children can learn special skills or talents, depending on the type of co-op. A co-op that specializes in art or music may provide the expertise skills that could be difficult for a parent alone to provide. Co-ops are also beneficial to homeschooling parents. Homeschooling parents who attend co-ops with their children receive support from other homeschoolers and advice on schooling issues at home.

Co-ops are formed to provide a cooperative education to homeschooling students, but each has its own goal and operations. Co-ops might be small (a few students meeting in someone’s home), medium (about five to twenty families), or large (over ten families) (Topp 2008, 23). The larger a co-op becomes, the more structure that

is needed to maintain the co-op, according to Topp. Larger co-ops require a location that is more appropriate to meeting the needs of more families, such as a church with multiple meeting spaces. Co-ops that are medium or large also have to find a way to effectively communicate with all members of the co-op. With larger co-ops, however, more adults are available to delegate the operations of the co-op to. Larger co-ops with more adults also have the opportunity to offer more subjects (Topp 2008, 33).

As with any organization, forming a co-op requires planning. Members and leaders must meet to determine the fundamental details of the co-op: How involved are the parents expected to be? Are the teachers paid? Are the teachers parents or individuals hired from outside the co-op? How often will the co-op meet? How will the leadership be organized? What courses will the co-op offer? What are the requirements for homeschoolers interested in joining the co-op?

Topp writes that in order to avoid “burn out”, a co-op needs strong leadership and delegation of duties to prevent all responsibility from falling on one person (75). To help the leaders run a co-op smoothly, Topp recommends that co-op leaders and members create a policy manual detailing the purpose and all expectations for the co-op. The policy manual should include the purpose of the co-op, requirements for the parents, expectations for students, discipline policies, meeting schedules, bylaws for leadership, and any statement of faith required of families, if applicable.

Conclusion

Despite the hurdles homeschooling parents have had to overcome over the past four decades, the homeschooling movement is strong. The number of homeschooling

Americans grows every decade, and increasing numbers of people with different beliefs are joining the movement. Critics may argue against the academic and social quality of homeschooling, but in the end, homeschooling parents' insistence that their rights as parents and their intentions to provide what is best for their children has trumped even the toughest critics.

The literature reviewed in this chapter has added to this researcher's understanding of homeschooling, both from the proponents' and opponents' point of view. Although co-ops are a popular choice for homeschooling families, little is studied or published about co-ops. The purpose of this study is to add to the literature on homeschool co-ops.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Chapter III describes the methodology of the study. The methodology includes using a case study as a research method. As part of the case study, the chapter also discusses the sampling, data collection, and data analysis techniques, as well the roles of participants and the observer.

Research Methods

The researcher conducted this study using a qualitative methodology. In social science, qualitative research “fundamentally depends on watching people in their own territory” (Kirk and Miller 1986, 9). Qualitative research is naturalistic and participatory. Bogdan and Taylor describe qualitative research as producing “descriptive data” (1975, 4). Descriptive research seeks to see individuals holistically in their natural environment, rather than reducing them to a variable or hypothesis.

Qualitative research, according to Kirk and Miller, consists of four phases. The first is invention, in which the research is designed. The second is discovery, which consists of observation and measurement. Next is interpretation or analysis, followed by explanation, or the communication of the data into a clear message (60). These phases can repeat themselves as the researcher re-evaluates the needs of the study or as new observations lead to new interpretations.

Specifically, the type of qualitative research used in this study is the case study. A case study is a “way of organizing social data for the purpose of viewing social reality. It [case study] examines a social unit as a whole” (Best and Kahn 1989, 92). A case

study involves a researcher who makes a “detailed examination” of a single subject, group, or phenomenon (Borg and Gall 1989, 402). Although case studies seek to learn something of interest from a particular subject or to relate the subject to a larger sample, Stake cautions against over generalizing or theorizing cases. Case studies are not necessarily designed to explain phenomena, but rather to draw attention them (Stake 2000, 439).

Sampling

The target population of this study is the homeschooling community of San Antonio, specifically, members of one homeschool co-op. This researcher has chosen to study one co-op that was established in 2005. A personal contact within the homeschooling community in San Antonio recommended studying a particular homeschool co-op. After two attempts to contact the co-op leader and three more attempts to begin interviews once contact was made, this researcher had made no progress and decided to find another co-op to study. This researcher asked a member of another co-op how long that particular co-op had been in operation, and after learning the second co-op was at least five years old, this researcher asked for contact information for the co-op leaders.

After this researcher’s second contact attempt, the Quality Homeschool Co-op’s co-director responded and gladly accepted the researcher’s request to interview members and observe co-op classes. The current co-director, Mary, volunteered to be interviewed and located the founder of the co-op, Carol, who also consented to an interview. This researcher met a new member of the co-op, Joanna, while observing co-op classes, who

also volunteered for an interview. After the three initial interviews, this researcher decided to interview one last member, so Mary located Lucy, who has been with Quality Homeschool Co-op for five years and has served as a leader, member, and teacher.

All participants were mothers who homeschool and use Quality Homeschool Co-op to supplement the educational needs of their children. Recognizing the researcher as a homeschooling parent, the participants felt less threatened and did not hesitate to give their stories and evaluations of the co-op.

All four participants are white, middle class, college-educated women who consider themselves practicing Catholics. One was in the military, and two more have lived in other parts of the United States because their husbands are in the military. The fourth participant has relocated multiple times due to her husband's job changes. Two of the participants are certified educators in the State of Texas, while a third participant has experience in military logistics. One participant no longer homeschools her children and is teaching at a local parochial school. The other three participants belong to single-income households. Chapter IV provides a more in-depth look at each participant and her motivations for homeschooling and joining a co-op.

Data Collection

The primary source for data collection in this study is through participant interviews, although the researcher also observed co-op classes and operations. Bogdan and Biklen state that interviews can be used in two ways in qualitative research. They can be the “dominant strategy for data collection”, or used in conjunction with participant observation or other techniques (1992, 96). Interviews in this study were the

dominant strategy in that the researcher gained the greatest amount of history and evaluation of the co-op from interviews. Observations of the co-op gave the researcher first-hand insight as to how the co-op is conducted and how the children at Quality Homeschool Co-op perceive their classroom experiences. Observations of the co-op also provided credibility for the participants' testimonies as this researcher witnessed the operations of the co-op as they were described.

Carol, Mary, and Joanna provided this researcher with documents. Carol, the founding member, provided meeting agendas, course offerings for two semesters, volunteer requirements, drop-off and pick-up policies, registration forms, an injury liability waiver, a teacher incidence report, family handbook, a mandatory orientation presentation on Powerpoint, Quality Homeschool Co-op code of conduct and behavior, allergy information for students, and memos advertising for service projects to collect clothing for Iraqi children and the St. Vincent de Paul food drive. Mary, the current co-director, provided course offerings for three semesters, concept schedules that never passed approval of co-op members, and proposed course offerings for the upcoming semester. Joanna, the new member, gave this researcher a copy of the handbook she was provided at orientation, along with a copy of the registration form. This researcher used these documents to confirm the reliability of the participants' interviews. The participants' stories either matched the details of the documents, or the participants referred to the documents when unsure of particular details, such as when a particular event occurred.

During the initial interview with each participant, this researcher used semi-structured interview techniques in which the interview questions are fairly open-ended but still related to a particular topic, in this case, the operations of Quality Homeschool Co-op in San Antonio. Marshall and Rossman further explain that semi-structured interviews are those in which the researcher “explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant’s views but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses” (1999, 108) (See Appendix A for interview questions used in this study).

Best and Kahn add that the interview is often superior to other data-gathering devices. People are often more willing to talk than write. In addition, people are sometimes more comfortable sharing confidential details with another person orally rather than in writing (1989, 201). The interviewer should, however, gain rapport with the participants in order to be trusted with such details. The interviewer must therefore consider the demographics of the participants as many might find it difficult to relate to the interviewer.

In addition to conducting interviews orally, which, as previously stated, is appealing to participants, this researcher maintained excellent field notes. During interviews, which each lasted approximately one hour, this researcher wrote participant responses with as much detail as possible, asking for clarification where needed. The interviewer followed up with questions that arose from the answers, and was able to maintain a conversational approach to the interviews. The interviewer took notes of the environment, including interactions among other co-op members and interactions

between the participant and co-op members, as the interview with Mary, the director, occurred during co-op time on church grounds where the co-op is conducted. After initially writing up the findings, the researcher found gaps in the stories and contacted each participant again for clarification on previous answers, or to ask new questions. Follow-up interviews occurred over the phone, each lasting about thirty minutes, or by email. The interview with Lucy occurred over a series of emails between the researcher and participant. Using observation, documents, and interviews allowed the researcher to most accurately recreate and interpret the participants' stories. Just as scientists record experiment results on charts, the qualitative researcher uses field notes as a source for proving reliability and validity.

Protection of Participants' Privacy

In order to conduct a successful and ethical study, steps must be taken to ensure the protections of participants. The researcher first obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board to conduct the study. Participants signed an Informed Consent Letter (see Appendix B). The letter outlines the purpose and procedures of the study and provides a statement of confidentiality. The letter states that there are no external risks for participation in the study, and participants may withdraw at any time. All data collected is kept confidential, and names of participants have been substituted with a pseudonym in the final write-up. Personal information is not shared with any government or educational entity in Texas or San Antonio.

Role of Researcher

The role of the researcher in the study is that of a participant observer. Bogdan and Taylor describe the participant observer as one whose research is “characterized by a period of intense social interaction between the researcher and the subjects” (1975, 5). The researcher for this study interviewed the participants, one in a participant’s home, one in a classroom used for co-op classes, and one in a participant’s current office. The researcher asked the participants about their decisions to homeschool and find a co-op. Participants were also asked about the operations of the Quality Homeschool Co-op, the future goals of the co-op, and how they would evaluate the success of the co-op.

This researcher observed the co-op on two occasions, each time as second period began and through lunch and recess. On each occasion, the researcher surveyed classes in action, drop-off and pick-up policies, interactions among co-op members and leaders, and troubleshooting techniques of the leaders as minor conflicts arose.

Data Analysis

This researcher endeavored to have valid results. Validity, in quantitative research, is the extent to which a procedure produces the correct answer (Kirk and Miller 1986, 19). In qualitative research, however, the results are based on the interpretations of the researcher or participants, so most answers are “correct” provided the instruments and procedures followed were appropriate and as unbiased as possible. Kirk and Miller describe validity in qualitative research as “not a matter of methodological hair-splitting about the fifth decimal point, but whether the researcher sees what he or she thinks he or she does” (1986, 21). The researcher must therefore be diligent in taking notes and

should not insert what he or she thinks the participant would have said, thought, or done. Lincoln and Guba go on to say that validity in qualitative research is “trustworthiness” or the ability to convince the audience that the inquiry made is worth paying attention to (Lincoln and Guba 1985, 290).

One means of achieving validity in a qualitative study is triangulation. As it is important to reduce the misinterpretation of results, triangulation is needed. According to Stake, triangulation is the “process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation”. Two of the most common procedures are “redundancy of data gathering and procedural challenges to explanation” (2000, 443). Triangulation also clarifies meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is seen (444). In this study, the researcher has recorded results as they were observed or dictated without personal bias on the part of the observer. In addition, the researcher has gathered repetitive data by interviewing all participants of Quality Homeschool Co-op using the same interview questions, although not every participant could answer all questions as some pertain to the founding of the co-op. Discrepancies in participants’ testimonies clued this researcher in that more investigation was needed to determine the exact start year for Quality Homeschool Co-op. Although a conflict arose concerning the co-op’s beginning, observations showed no inconsistencies in how the co-op is currently operated. The documents provided to the researcher by participants and the researcher’s observations of the co-op all helped to triangulate results and create validity.

Another method of achieving validity is member check. This researcher or a third party should be able to take this researcher's written interpretation of findings and show it to interviewed participants to confirm the researcher has not misrepresented the participants' thoughts and words.

Creswell states that although researchers approach each qualitative study differently, the "analysis process conforms to a general contour" (1998, 142). Creswell calls this process the "data analysis spiral". The "spiral" is a continuous loop of data management, reflection, classification, and representation until the final output, or write-up, is complete. Even though case studies are largely stories to be conveyed, researchers still can make generalizations and interpretations, and Creswell's spiral is an organized method for making sense of collected data.

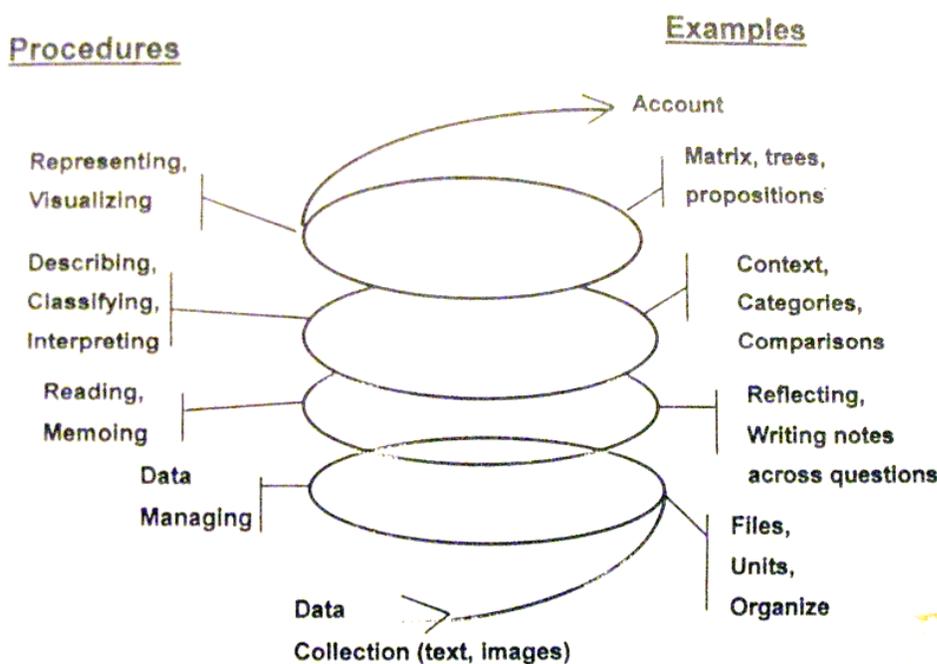


Figure 1. The Data Analysis Spiral (Creswell 1998, 143)

In order to use Creswell's spiral for this study, the researcher has first collected data through interviews of participating co-op members and observations of the co-op in action. The data needs to be managed, so this researcher has organized responses categorically. The categorization of responses has changed as the researcher began writing and realized that certain themes do not flow well in the paper or that more information is needed to present a complete story. The researcher has written up the results of the study, not as line-by-line responses to the questions, but as a story detailing the operations of the co-op and motivations behind those operations, including the motivations of all participants to begin homeschooling. After further reflection, the researcher determined that more information would be needed and contacted the participants for clarification on responses or to ask new questions. New responses caused this researcher to create new classification of topics in order to produce a more complete analysis. All of these steps have helped this researcher accurately represent the beliefs and efforts of the co-op members.

CHAPTER IV

QUALITY HOMESCHOOL CO-OP

Chapter IV details the findings of the study on Quality Homeschool Co-op. I first give an overview of the co-op and the participants who were interviewed. After the overview, I describe the co-op's founder, Carol, and how she formed Quality Homeschool Co-op. I follow her story with the stories of Mary, Joanna, and Lucy, the other interviewed members of the co-op.

After I provide the participants' stories, I describe the co-op's operations, which is then divided into subcategories. The first of these subcategories details when and where the co-op meets, and how families become members of Quality Homeschool Co-op. Next, I discuss the leadership of Quality Homeschool Co-op, followed by how the co-op members communicate with each other, including through a group Yahoo© page and documents provided by co-op leaders. The following section illustrates the co-op's discipline policies, as well as the responsibilities of parents in the co-op. A description of co-op teachers and teaching policies is next, followed by a portrayal of courses offered in Quality Homeschool Co-op. Next, I discuss safety policies of co-op leaders, and finally, services co-op members provide to those not involved with Quality Homeschool Co-op. Following the account of co-op operations, I discuss how all four participants evaluate the success of Quality Homeschool Co-op, followed by a conclusion to the chapter.

Introduction to Quality Homeschool Co-op

Quality Homeschool Co-op is a Catholic homeschool cooperative in San Antonio, Texas. The co-op, in operation since 2005, uses St. Jude Catholic Church as its location. According to Mary, the current director, thirty to forty families join the co-op each semester, most of whom are returning families. About 97% of the families in the co-op are Catholic, with 60% of those members belonging to St. Jude Catholic Church. Quality Homeschool Co-op offers fee-based courses taught by teachers who are parents or contracted from outside the co-op. Parents drop off and pick up their students and are not required to remain on the premises during class time. Co-op courses fill to capacity each semester. Mary suggests the co-op is popular because up until the fall of 2009 when another Catholic co-op started on the north side of town, Quality Homeschool Co-op was the only Catholic co-op in San Antonio, a draw to Catholic homeschooling parents who would like their children to be with other children sharing their same values. This study of the co-op begins with each participant's story of how she decided to homeschool and how she has used Quality Homeschool Co-op to meet the homeschooling needs of her children, beginning with the founder, Carol.

Carol's Story and Formation of Quality Homeschool Co-op

Carol's background is in education. Her certification is Social Studies Composite for Secondary Education in Texas. Before having children, she taught American History, World Geography, and Texas History for two years, as well as coaching volleyball, all in the public school system. She and her husband moved to California in 1993 for her husband's Air Force training, at which time she stopped

teaching and became the Director of Financial Aid at Menlo College. Carol delivered her first child, a son, after two years in California. “When I had my first child,” Carol said, “I quit and devoted myself to being a mother and a wife.” Between 1995 and 1996, Carol and her family lived in five states. Her second child was born in 1997. The family then moved to South Korea, where she had her third child. In 2000, the family moved to San Antonio, where they enrolled their oldest child in kindergarten in a local parochial school.

Carol and her husband considered their son’s school education unsatisfactory. Carol stated, “My husband decided I should homeschool because he did not believe the education [our son] was receiving at school was worth the tuition and thought I could do better.” After two years, she agreed, feeling she could provide a better education than the one offered to him in school. Carol emphasized to me that she is not against public or private school, nor is she solely in favor of homeschooling. She stated that all have merits, and in fact, she now sends her children to a parochial school. At the time, however, education was her impetus for homeschooling. She did not consider herself torn ideologically, just pedagogically.

Carol experienced a difficult time schooling her son. He demonstrated a lack of motivation to complete his work at home, and without the peer pressure of competition, Carol described herself as fighting a battle with him every day, although she did not have trouble homeschooling her second child. Carol has four children and has homeschooled them all through portions of their elementary years. Carol homeschooled her children for a total of five-and-a-half years.

While homeschooling, she met two mothers through a local Catholic homeschool support group who shared Carol's interest to pool teaching abilities and provide varied instruction (and instructors) for their children. For the first year, these three families met informally at St. Jude Catholic Church once a week to augment their homeschool curricula. Carol taught composition to the children while another mother (Claire) taught science. According to Carol, "We had three families participating, but Claire and I organized it and taught all the classes ourselves, so we consider ourselves the co-founders."

As the first year of their small co-op approached its end, Carol and Claire met other homeschooling families in the Catholic support group who showed interest in the formation of a Catholic co-op. Carol and Claire designed the co-op together with the purpose of providing better instruction in certain subjects to homeschooled students than they might receive at home. Carol did not anticipate offering core classes in the co-op, but rather enrichment to core classes. For example, Carol did not offer a class on Language Arts in general, but she taught Composition the first semester, a supplement to Language Arts. Carol aimed for the new co-op to be a place where homeschooled students had opportunities to learn behaviors that might be overlooked in a home setting, such as raising their hands to ask questions or comment and to receive instruction from adults other than their parents.

Carol described herself as "psychotic", meaning she was extremely particular about every aspect of the co-op she co-founded. She and Claire decided every detail of the co-op's operations before they ever invited other families to join. First, they needed

a location where they could conduct classes. As she was a parishioner of St. Jude Catholic Church in San Antonio and had been using church space for her smaller co-op, Carol asked the priest about the possibility of operating a larger and more formal co-op on church grounds once a week. St. Jude has a multi-purpose hall, a pavilion that the church uses for Boy Scout events, and two portable buildings on the property. Carol felt she could offer multiple classes during one period to students using the multiple meeting spaces available on church property. The presiding priest agreed to let Carol run the co-op on church grounds free of charge. With the location and registration details planned, Carol and Claire began the first year of Quality Homeschool Co-op in the fall of 2005.

Carol ran the co-op until the spring of 2008, at which time she decided to put her children in a parochial school and take a job as a teacher at a local Catholic school. She passed on all materials to the next director and “left completely”. Carol stated to me that she did not check in or ask questions about the co-op because she did not want to feel negative emotions if the group she founded changed in ways she would have disagreed with. She currently works at the church where the co-op is operating, but still chooses to remain unattached and ignorant of the operations of the co-op.

After I interviewed Carol, I met Mary in the multi-purpose hall of the St. Jude where the current co-op leaders carry out administrative matters. Mary introduced me to the other women in the room and briefly explained some of the daily operations of Quality Homeschool Co-op. During interviews conducted at different times and in different locations, I talked to Mary again, as well as Joanna and Lucy, and discovered their impetus for homeschooling, and how they joined Quality Homeschool Co-op.

Mary's Story

Mary was in the United States Air Force for fifteen years. Mary stated, “My primary career field was an aircraft maintenance officer, managing people and production for aircraft and scheduling for aircraft, etc.” She also did “airfreight/mobility and acquisition logistics”. Mary’s undergraduate degree is in math, which she claimed she never really used, and while in the Air Force, she received a master’s degree in Logistics Management. Mary had her first child while on active duty, and retired from the Air Force when her daughter was one.

Mary became one of the two directors of Quality Homeschool Co-op in 2010. Mary has two daughters, ages six and ten. When her older daughter was three years old, before the birth of her second child, Mary and her husband began considering schooling options in San Antonio. Mary and her husband had already decided that public school would not be the best option for their daughter, so they looked for a Catholic school near their home. When their daughter turned four, they enrolled her in a pre-kindergarten program at a local Catholic school that was just five minutes from their home in San Antonio. After a successful year, Mary enrolled her daughter in kindergarten at the same school.

Prior to the start of the school year, Mary’s husband, also in the United States Air Force, was selected for a command position in Florida, effective in November of that year. Mary’s daughter attended kindergarten at the Catholic school in San Antonio until the family moved to Florida in November. Mary was concerned because after doing

some research, she could not find a Catholic school near their new home in Florida.

Mary said, “My husband suggested we look into homeschooling.”

Other factors affected Mary’s decision to homeschool. Early in her kindergarten year, Mary’s daughter was reading above average. Her teacher tried to give her extra work to alleviate boredom, but also reprimanded Mary’s daughter for moving ahead in her studies because she could read the instructions. Mary wanted to provide an environment that would allow her daughter to advance as needed.

According to Mary,

Another factor that influenced me was that despite a very orthodox environment created by the teachers, administrators, and staff at the [Catholic] school and great things like adoration and weekly Mass, not all families shared our values.

Mary was concerned that her daughter was around young children who used language that Mary considered inappropriate, or that the other parents openly did not share tenets of the Catholic faith even though their children attended a Catholic school.

Mary began homeschooling her daughter in December of 2006 after the family had moved to Florida. She found a Catholic homeschool group in Florida that met once a month. Mary drove an hour each way to the homeschool group, but she believed the group was important for building relationships and getting support, and therefore was willing to make the long drive.

Mary’s daughter also attended a “blended school”, a group similar to a co-op that was administered by the local school district. The blended school met once a week and was open to any homeschool student. The primary focus of the blended school was science, with some language arts and physical education enrichment. Mary’s daughter

attended the blended school for two years. Although it provided a great educational experience, according to Mary, her daughter did not develop lasting friendships as the school was not “specifically Catholic or even Christian” based, and therefore did not contain families with all the same values as Mary wanted for her family.

Mary’s family moved back to San Antonio in 2008. Mary decided that she wanted to continue homeschooling her daughter and looked for a group similar to the blended school. After searching on the internet, she found Quality Homeschool Co-op and was thrilled at the prospect of a Catholic homeschooling co-op. She contacted the registrar and registered her oldest child, who was seven, for classes. During her first semester, Mary left campus while her older daughter attended classes since her younger child was not old enough for any offered courses. During the next semester, co-op teachers offered classes for younger children, so Mary remained on the premises during co-op hours since both of her children could attend classes.

Mary met other Catholic homeschooling moms through the co-op and “almost instantly had a network of support for myself and many friends for my children”. Quoting Mary, “It was great to be with families that shared our values and priorities.” Since she had finally found the source of positive influence that she wanted for her children, Mary wanted to be more active in the co-op. She volunteered to serve on the Volunteer Committee (the committee of leaders). She started as the registrar in 2009, and then took over as co-director in 2010. In regards to her service in the co-op, Mary said,

I feel very strongly that for many of us the co-op serves not only as an opportunity for enrichment and fellowship for our children, but also as kind of an

extended family for us and others, particularly those who do not live near family. I feel that I have a bit more time on my hands than some of the families...and this is a good opportunity for me to serve.

Joanna's Story

Joanna started her career after college in 1999 as a secondary English teacher in Texas. As a new teacher, she believed she would teach forever, but she states that “the entire experience was a disenchantment.” She became disheartened at the amount of discipline, classroom management, and administrative work needed each day while at school, all of which she felt hindered her ultimate goal of teaching students the subject matter.

Joanna taught high school and middle school English for two-and-a-half years. In 2001, Joanna and her husband moved from Texas to Michigan so that he could take a job doing fundraising. Since they moved in August of that year, she could not find a teaching job. “Not finding a teaching job the following year was a relief, in a lot of ways, because I did not want to teach anymore,” Joanna said. “But, I kept looking,” she added, “because it was all I knew to do.” She found a job as an assistant director at a youth retreat center and remained in this position for a year. In 2002, Joanna and her husband moved back to Texas so that he could return to his old job. Joanna had her first child, a daughter, in 2002 and quit working altogether. Joanna now has three children, one girl and two boys.

She knew of homeschooling families when her daughter was born, but she did not originally intend to homeschool her children. Joanna describes herself as a person who wants to research all that she can about a topic before making a decision. When her

daughter was still a toddler, she began researching homeschooling, and gained confidence in her ability to school her own child if the need arose. When her daughter was three, Joanna began looking more into homeschooling options, including curricula available to homeschoolers. Joanna taught her daughter at home using a preschool curriculum when her daughter was four.

In 2005, while still in Texas, Joanna had her second child, a son. Joanna and her family moved back to Michigan this same year while her husband studied to become an attorney. After finishing his degree in 2008, Joanna's husband searched for jobs anywhere in the United States, with the potential to move again in a few years. Joanna states to me that public school was not an option in her mind after her experience as a public school teacher, and she and her husband, a single income family, could not afford private school. Joanna started teaching her daughter kindergarten for the 2007-2008 school-year, and she states that she did not like the idea of enrolling and removing her daughter from multiple schools in the future. Joanna and her husband decided that they would continue to homeschool their daughter wherever he found a job.

Joanna's husband accepted a job as an attorney in Miami, Florida, in 2008. Joanna had been officially homeschooling her daughter for a year at this time. Officially homeschooling, in this case, means beginning with kindergarten, not preschool. She belonged to a homeschooling group in Miami, but was not pleased with her experience. Joanna joined the group to give her children classroom experience, but she felt that the other families did not share her family's values. She joined another homeschooling group in Miami that consisted of about eighty Catholic families. These families met for

social time and fellowship, and to teach Little Flowers and Blue Knights, Catholic curricula that focuses on saints and virtues for young children. Joanna admits that “I did not know there were no academics in our Miami homeschool group when I first joined, but it was the only Catholic group in Miami, so I jumped in without asking.” She added that “the social fellowship was fabulous, and we enjoyed it, but I knew the academic component was missing.”

In 2010, Joanna had her third child and started schooling her second child. Her husband told her that same year that the family would be moving again, and he asked for her opinion on locations. One choice was a small town in west Texas, but after some research, Joanna could not find the homeschooling support she desired in the remote west Texas location. San Antonio was the second option. Joanna researched the various homeschooling networks in San Antonio and decided that her children would receive better academic opportunities in the larger city.

Joanna found the information for Quality Homeschool Co-op on the internet and was pleased to find a Catholic co-op. Since her family was due to arrive in San Antonio just days before the start of the fall semester, she contacted the registrar prior to moving to fill out the application and pay the registration fee. Joanna’s two older children, a third grader and kindergartener, are currently in their second semester at Quality Homeschool Co-op. Although she is currently happy with the socialization and academic enrichment her children receive, she is open to re-evaluating her children’s needs each semester.

Lucy's Story

Lucy's husband is in the military. Her first child, a son, attended a preschool two days a week in 1996. Lucy had been pondering the idea of homeschooling to give her son a quality education that would be consistent as the family relocated due to her husband's work in the military. Lucy explained that

I started 'preschool' in 1997. I do count that year, even though it was 'just' preschool because it was a 'test' year for my hubby...he wasn't 'sold' on the idea of homeschooling and I asked him to let me do it for just one year.

After this trial year, Lucy's husband agreed that homeschooling would be suitable for the family. The following year, Lucy schooled her son in kindergarten and her daughter in preschool.

Lucy began homeschooling "to give my children a consistent, quality education while moving from duty station to duty station". She continues to homeschool for other reasons. "We have found that homeschooling has a flexibility of schedule that we enjoy, has encouraged growth in our faith, and has increased our family bonding," Lucy said. Many years after having the first two children, Lucy had two more, who are now nine and ten years old. Lucy has been homeschooling for fourteen years, with two of her children in high school, and two in elementary school. Her youngest child attended two years of pre-school and one of kindergarten at a local public school because he qualified for special needs, although she continued to homeschool the other three children at the time.

Lucy and her family joined Quality Homeschool Co-op in the 2006-2007 school-year, the co-op's second year of operation. She initially searched for a co-op for her children because

we like our children to have an opportunity to play with other children, be exposed to different teaching styles, and enjoy 'social time' in a moral setting on a small scale (only once a week, not five days a week like public or private school).

Lucy learned about Quality Homeschool Co-op through friends who homeschool and were involved with the co-op.

During the first year that her children attended classes at Quality Homeschool Co-op, Lucy describes herself as "just" a member. Her children attended classes, and she performed her required four time slots of volunteer duty. The following school year, 2007-2008, one of the leaders asked her if she would serve on the Volunteer Committee helping to organize the day-to-day operations. Lucy stated to me, "I believe that everyone at some point should help when they can. I was asked to be on committee. I felt my children were old enough that I could volunteer." For two years, 2008-2010, she taught the First Holy Communion class. In the current year, 2010-2011, Lucy has gone back to being "just" a member again. Just as Lucy feels everyone should volunteer at some point, she also believes that "if someone always steps up, no one else will. I think it's good for others to lead and/or take turns leading/volunteering". She has chosen not to be on the Volunteer Committee or teach this year to allow others the opportunity to serve the co-op.

When Lucy first joined Quality Homeschool Co-op, the three oldest children attended classes. The youngest son did not take classes until 2008. Her older two

children continued taking courses at Quality Homeschool Co-op through their middle school years, and then left to join a co-op more appropriate for their high school needs.

The younger two still take classes at Quality Homeschool Co-op. Lucy however, stated to me,

I am taking a ‘sabbatical’ this coming year from Quality Homeschool Co-op (but this has nothing to do with Quality Homeschool Co-op...I am cutting back on most volunteering, extra-curricular activities, etc. I just found with a graduating senior this year, life was very hectic. My oldest daughter will be a graduating senior next year, and I am trying to simplify our lives!)

Lucy implied that she intends to return to Quality Homeschool Co-op after a year and allow her younger two children to continue attending through their middle school years.

Carol, Mary, Joanna, and Lucy all provided insight into the operations of Quality Homeschool Co-op. Through their interviews and the documents they gave to me, I could determine the details of the co-op, including its meeting time, leadership, teacher policies, course offerings, service projects, and discipline policies.

Co-op Operations

The descriptions of co-op operations are divided into eight parts. The first division explains where and when Quality Homeschool Co-op meets, and how families join. Then, I give an explanation of co-op leadership. Next, I detail how co-op members communicate with each and use that communication to propose changes in the co-op. I follow by explaining the discipline policies and parental responsibilities for the co-op, preceded by a description of teachers and teaching policies. I conclude the section of co-op operations by depicting the course offerings in Quality Homeschool Co-op, the

safety measures co-op leaders take, and services that co-op members provide to others outside the co-op.

When, Where, and How

I discovered through the process of interviews a contradiction in the timeline of the co-op. Carol believed that she started Quality Homeschool Co-op in the fall of 2006. Neither Mary nor Joanna contested the start date as each joined the co-op years after its beginning. During Lucy's interview, however, she stated that she had been with the co-op since the 2006-2007 school-year, five years. I followed up by asking if she had been part of the co-op since the beginning, as I understood that the start date of the co-op was 2006. Lucy replied that she joined the year after Quality Homeschool Co-op started. I contacted Carol again to ask for clarification on the start date. After looking over her records again and asking her spouse, Carol responded that she believed the co-op did start in 2005.

Since its founding in the fall of 2005, Quality Homeschool Co-op meets on the premises of St. Jude Catholic Church in San Antonio, Texas. Co-op students meet each Thursday in the spring and fall semesters. Each semester is twelve weeks long. The co-op is in session from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. for classes, lunch, and recess.

When Carol and Claire formed Quality Homeschool Co-op, each class lasted one hour, with a thirty minute recess at 11 a.m., and a thirty minute lunch break at 12:30 p.m. When Mary became director in 2010, co-op parents voted on two changes to the schedule. First, parents and leaders voted to add a five minute passing period between classes to minimize disruptions in class while students entered. Next, Mary and the

other leaders noticed that students became less attentive in the 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. class because they were physically energetic after coming in from recess and anxious for lunch. Co-op parents and leaders voted in early 2010 to combine recess and lunch from 11:05 a.m. to 11:50 a.m. Co-op leaders now require the students to sit and eat for at least twenty minutes before getting up to play because they observed that children would forgo eating lunch in order to play and would then become hungry during afternoon classes.

Members have proposed alternate schedules that might provide more affordable opportunities for families, as most families cannot afford the cost of placing all of their school-aged children in classes for the entire school day (9 a.m. to 2 p.m.), according to Mary. One member proposed a school day with three fee-based periods (instead of four) and one period only for clubs that would be free of charge. This would allow families to remain longer at Quality Homeschool Co-op during the school day. Another member proposed creating a block schedule that would be based on grade levels rather than classes. Lower elementary children would meet earlier in the day and upper elementary would meet later. Proposals for schedule changes must be approved by a majority of members, over 50%, but Mary states that these two scheduling proposals did not receive the majority approval needed. Mary said, “We are always open to reasonable proposals from the parents, but I cannot recall any recent suggestions that have resulted in major changes. For the most part, there haven’t been any major changes.”

Potential co-op members hear about Quality Homeschool Co-op either from current co-op members or by searching for homeschooling co-ops in San Antonio.

Potential members contact the registrar, who then sends the family a registration packet. The registration packet includes the parent and student guidelines for the co-op, the Family Enrollment Form (2009b) (See Appendix C), and class registration form. Parents who are interested return the Family Enrollment Form to the registrar. On the Enrollment Form, parents sign acknowledging that they have read and will abide by the guidelines described in the Parent and Student Handbook (2010b) (See Appendix D). Parents also provide personal information such as their name and address, as well as the names and ages of their children.

Along with the Family Enrollment Form, parents fill out the class registration form. On the class registration form, parents have the opportunity to write in all the classes their children are interested in taking for the following semester. Class enrollment is capped, however, so if a class is filled to capacity by the time a new member signs up, the children must choose different classes or opt out of the co-op for the time being. Returning co-op members also fill out a Family Enrollment Form and class registration form each semester, but as returning members, they have first choice at class offerings for the upcoming semester, increasing the likelihood of being able to register for the classes the children desire. According to Mary, classes for the upcoming semester do occasionally fill up before all returning families can register. In this situation, Mary states that “sometimes the teacher will increase the class size, otherwise kids go on a waiting list.”

Families are required to pay a \$25 registration fee each semester. When Carol and Claire formed Quality Homeschool Co-op, they used the registration fee each

semester to buy overhead items not associated with classes. These items included recess equipment such as balls, first aid kits, cones to block off the drop-off/pick-up area, paper for the Parent and Student Handbook that is provided to the families each semester, and party supplies for the end-of-semester party. Even though St. Jude allowed the co-op to operate on church property free of charge each week, Carol donated money to the church each semester out of gratitude. Current leaders still use the \$25 registration fee for overhead items. They also collect a 5% tuition fee from all teachers to use as a donation to the church.

Leadership

During Quality Homeschool Co-op's first year of operation (school-year 2005-2006), Carol and Claire ran the co-op together with no help from other parents or volunteers. The second year, Claire ran the co-op as director, and Carol was in charge of organizing the curriculum and teachers. She also taught Composition and Texas History. As the 2007-2008 school year started, Claire left the co-op for personal reasons, and Carol became director again. Carol left Quality Homeschool Co-op in the spring of 2008, and Rita took over as director. In the fall of 2008, Nancy became co-director and worked with Rita to run the co-op until the fall of 2010. In the fall of 2010, Mary became co-director with Hilary, and both are still directing as of the spring 2011 semester. In all, six women have directed or co-directed Quality Homeschool Co-op.

When Carol became the sole leader of Quality Homeschool Co-op in the fall of 2007, she claimed, "I decided we should have committees to help with the running of it [co-op]," and consequently formed the Volunteer Committee. Members of the

Volunteer Committee are parents in the Quality Homeschool Co-op who volunteer their time to assist in running the co-op. The Volunteer Committee consists of the registrar, communications chair, volunteer chair, treasurer, service chair, and director. The registrar is in charge of all registration matters for the co-op. Prospective members contact the registrar to receive information about the co-op and the new registration packet. The communications chair is responsible for assuring that all formal co-op communications, such as those regarding possible closures due to inclement weather, are sent to all members in the co-op. The volunteer chair ensures that each family fulfills its required three or four time slots of volunteer service. The volunteer chair also confirms that volunteers are available in all areas of the co-op when needed, such as at recess to monitor the students, and before and after classes to set up or take down partitions, tables, and chairs. The treasurer is responsible for all money collected from tuition and registration payments. Quality Homeschool Co-op has its own bank account, so the treasurer only has to be responsible for collecting and depositing registration money into the co-op's account. The service chair coordinates the service projects that Quality Homeschool Co-op parents, teachers, and students participate in each semester. The benefits to being on the Volunteer Committee are that committee members do not have to fulfill the required three or four time slots of volunteer service required of parents in a semester, and committee members do not pay the \$25 registration fee. Members on the Volunteer Committee also have first choice at classes offered the following semester.

Members on the Volunteer Committee are not elected. When a need arises to fill a vacant position, the director will ask a parent who tends to remain at the co-op after

dropping off her students, or the communications chair (assuming this is not the vacant position) will post a message on the group's Yahoo© page asking if any parent has any interest in serving in the Volunteer position. The first person to respond gets the position. Volunteer Committee positions are open to any parent in Quality Homeschool Co-op. Even though the members of the Volunteer Committee share a governing role in the co-op, Carol stated that as director and co-founder, she maintained full authority over the operations of the co-op.

The Volunteer Committee meets every semester to discuss co-op operations and future needs for the co-op. Having been several years since Carol was in the co-op, she could not remember how often the Volunteer Committee met while she was director, but she thought they met monthly during each semester. The committee met in the evenings at a restaurant, and Carol brought the agenda with all action items needing to be discussed during the meeting, such as updates from Volunteer Committee members, co-op procedures and reports, proposed courses for the next semester, and the timeline for the mandatory parent orientation meeting held at the beginning of each semester. According to Mary, the committee now meets every six weeks during the semester, just before key times like the start of a new semester and registration for the next semester. Committee members still give reports, and the group discusses budget, proposals that might have been submitted for courses or possible changes, and any issues that need to be resolved before the new semester begins.

Through observations, I noticed that the leaders demonstrated the ability to work through minor issues that arose during the school day. During my first visit to the co-op,

co-op leaders had been informed by the staff at St. Jude Catholic Church that church members were conducting a funeral at the church that morning and that they needed the main hall for a reception around lunch time. Co-op leaders and members use the main hall as the administrative center for the co-op. A table is set up for parents to sign their children in and out, and leaders and parents who stay while their students are in class use this area to do prep work for the co-op. Co-op leaders also partition this area to form classrooms. After Mary was told this space would be needed for church use in the early afternoon, Mary and the other leaders scrambled to make adjustments for afternoon classes. Recess and lunch is usually held outside, and Mary decided to move classes that would normally be held in the main hall outside as well. Co-op members and leaders adapted easily without animosity for the sake of the church that offers the co-op operation space free of charge.

Besides fulfilling their respective designated duty as a Volunteer Committee member (i.e. the registrar takes care of registration matters), the leaders also help the co-op to run smoothly on a daily basis. Mary stated that “we have a Committee member on duty at all times to monitor sign-in, answer questions, and resolve any problems.” A leader collects attendance from each class at the beginning of each period. I accompanied one leader as she walked from portable to portable collecting the attendance at each location.

Communication

Co-op leaders advertise for Quality Homeschool Co-op each semester through word of mouth and through Traditions of Roman Catholic Homes (TORCH), a local

Catholic homeschooling support group. The leaders also promote the co-op in St. Jude church bulletins and through the co-op's Yahoo© group page.

Since most of the parents in Quality Homeschool Co-op do not remain on the premises during class time, co-op leaders are not able to give parents updates or registration forms in person. Carol knew that the co-op needed a form of communication that would effectively reach all members of the co-op. Carol and Claire established a Yahoo© group so that all members could post and receive announcements. According to Quality Homeschool Co-op's Communications Policy (2007a) (See Appendix E), parents are expected to check the group's Yahoo© page every Thursday morning for any pertinent announcements related to co-op classes on that particular day. For example, if co-op leaders determined the weather was too inclement to hold classes that day, parents would be informed through the group page.

Parents and co-op leaders also use the Yahoo© group page to poll members about possible courses and co-op changes. If parents or leaders would like to propose a future course or present a possible change in co-op operations, they must first start a poll on the group page to determine how many co-op members are interested in the proposal. If enough members show interest, the person suggesting the course or change submits the proposal in writing to the leadership committee. The leadership committee then discusses and comes to a decision about the proposal during the committee's planning meeting that occurs around mid-semester.

The Yahoo© group page is valuable for keeping all members informed about co-op operations. The Communications Policy states that the group page is to be used

strictly for the “distribution of pertinent information” and not for a chat room. Mary noticed when she became director that co-op members had started using the group page to talk about matters that might have been co-op or homeschool related, but were not relevant to the daily operations of the co-op. Mary recognized a need to the homeschoolers in the co-op to have an outlet for networking with other homeschoolers, so she formed a second Yahoo© group for questions and comments not directly related to Quality Homeschool Co-op. The original Yahoo© group is still used for co-op business and is available only to currently enrolled members. The second group is available to any homeschooler in San Antonio and is not limited to official business. Mary hopes that homeschoolers in San Antonio will use the second group to build a stronger network of support and socialization with each other.

Returning members receive the course descriptions for classes being offered the following semester, as well as the enrollment forms and parent handbook for each semester through the Yahoo© group page. Co-op parents are required at the beginning of each semester to attend an orientation meeting so that each member is aware of the policies of the co-op. Parents also have the opportunity at the meeting to ask questions, pay tuition, and meet the teachers. During the orientation, parents receive documents detailing the policies of Quality Homeschool Co-op. One document is the Parent and Student Handbook, which lists the supervision required during class time for students, the illness policy, inclement weather policy, tuition policy, student discipline guidelines, rules, dress code, and information related to the church facility and parking lots. Parents also receive the drop-off and pick-up policy with a map of church grounds, the

Communications Policy, an example of an incident report, prayers that are said at the beginning of each class period, the class schedule for each student, a tuition invoice, the service opportunities calendar, the volunteer responsibilities for each family, and a membership card for Quality Homeschool Co-op. After receiving documents and paying tuition, parents have the opportunity to meet the teachers and ask them any questions pertinent to the upcoming classes.

Quality Homeschool Co-op leaders provide parents with all the documents they will need for each semester, but all the forms are loose and not part of one cohesive policy manual. Carol described the co-op documents during her tenure as a “work-in-progress and needed by the first year because of the quick way in which the co-op grew”. Carol and Claire had determined which information was most necessary to give to the parents and created documents clearly stating their policies. When Carol left the co-op in 2008, she passed on all documents to Rita, who took over as director. Mary received documents from Rita when she took over as director in 2010. Mary has been with Quality Homeschool Co-op since 2008 and has served on the Volunteer Committee. Although she did not become director until 2010, in her understanding, the documents did not change between the time Carol left and Mary took over. Mary’s goal for summer 2011 is to create one policy manual for the co-op. The policy manual would include all of the policies, procedures, and contact information in one document.

Parents are asked to complete an evaluation form at the end of each semester. Parents provide their feedback on the courses their children took and provide any suggestions for co-op leaders to consider. Parents are always free to make suggestions

throughout the semester to co-op leaders, but the evaluation form allows the parents to take their time and provide thoughtful answers, whereas, a suggestion in person to a co-op leader during class time might seem rushed and distracted as other parents are coming and going, and co-op leaders are dealing with the daily operations of the co-op.

Discipline and Parental Responsibilities

Part of the purpose of the mandatory orientation is to make parents aware of Quality Homeschool Co-op's discipline policies and parental responsibilities.

According to the Student Discipline Policy listed in the Parent and Student Handbook, the student rules are:

- Office phones are for emergency use only.
- Each person is responsible for picking up his/her trash in the classrooms and lunch area.
- Food and drinks are only allowed in the lunch area. Food in classrooms is reserved for special class parties with permission from the teacher.
- Show respectful obedience to all Quality Homeschool Co-op staff, parents, teachers, any adults present, and St. Jude staff.
- Inappropriate language, conversations, and boy-girl situations are not acceptable and will be subject to discipline.
- Electronic equipment is not allowed (headphones, tape players, walkmans, electronic games, radios, etc.). No knives, guns, water guns, rollerblades, skateboards, scooters, laser pointers or any other dangerous or distracting items are allowed at Quality Homeschool Co-op or on St. Jude property. These items will be collected by teachers.
- Dress code must be followed at all times. (2010b)

The co-op's Student Discipline Policy states if a student who is reprimanded by an adult responds respectfully and corrects the problem, no further action is needed.

However, if the student reacts disrespectfully or an adult notices a serious problem, the student receives greater discipline (Parent and Student Handbook, Appendix D). If the problem is a first offense, the teacher or parent volunteer notifies the director and issues

an incident report to the parent. If a student commits a second offense of a serious nature, the parent must accompany the child at all times, even while in class. If the parent does not accept this discipline measure with a good attitude, the family is asked to leave the co-op without a refund. If a parent drops off or picks up a student in an area other than the designated drop-off/pick-up location, the child receives an infraction. Likewise, a child will receive an infraction if he or she is playing on the railing of the stairs. Two infractions result in the immediate expulsion of the family from the co-op. Carol believed these rules were essential for the safety of the children, parents, and volunteers, thus she created harsh penalties in the event of their abuse.

Teachers begin each class period with a Catholic prayer designed for that time of the day, such as the Morning Offering, Guardian Angel, the Lord's Prayer, Prayer to St. Michael, and the Angelus. Parents are told at the orientation meeting that teachers and students recite prayers each class period but that students are not required to say the prayers as long as they remain respectful of others who do. None of the Quality Homeschool Co-op documents state that prayers are said each class period and what the student expectation is for those prayers. Mary asserted that if a student is disruptive during prayer time, a warning is sent to the parent. After two warnings, the family is asked to leave the co-op. Mary maintained that discipline for prayer disruption has never been an issue during her time as director. The one or two families that are not Catholic have entered the co-op each semester with the understanding that Catholic prayers are recited each class period. Mary described a situation of one family who was not Catholic and initially thought the prayers would not be a problem. During the

orientation meeting, however, the parent felt uncomfortable and chose to leave the co-op before classes started.

As a homeschool co-op, parents are expected to be involved in some aspect of the co-op. Therefore, parents in Quality Homeschool Co-op have responsibilities as well as the students. If parents are dropping off students at the beginning of first period (9 a.m.) or picking up students at the end of fourth period (2 p.m.), the parents do not have to enter the main hall to sign their students in or out. During these two times, the parents can pull up to the drop-off/pick-up lane outside the main hall and not leave their vehicles. If parents drop off or pick up students during any other period, they must walk into the main hall and sign their students in or out. Whether they are able to drive through to drop students off or must enter the building to sign students in, parents are not required to stay on the premises during class time. Most parents take advantage of the drop-off policy to leave the church during class time in order to take care of their own business or teach other children at home who are not in the co-op. As the location of St. Jude Catholic Church is a long distance for some families for drive, some parents choose to remain in their vehicles if their children are only taking one class. Parents are also welcome to remain in the building if they choose not to leave while classes are in session. During one class period, I noticed three adults who appeared to be sitting in their vehicles, while two or three remained in the building, in addition to co-op leaders. The parents who did not intend to stay quickly signed their children in or out, said hello to the other adults in the vicinity, and left. Some chatted with the director, while others sat down with co-op leaders at a table to offer assistance if needed.

Parents are required to contact the teacher if a student is going to be absent from class and to collect all make-up work in a timely manner. Parents are also responsible for their children's actions and must adhere to the Student Discipline Policy. For the health and safety of others, parents are asked to keep children at home who have had fever or diarrhea in the past twenty-four hours, or who exhibit other signs of having a contagious illness, such as flu.

Even though Carol and Claire designed Quality Homeschool Co-op like a private school in that parents drop their students off and leave, each family is required to volunteer three or four times in the semester, depending on how many families are enrolled that semester. These volunteer requirements help the leaders run the co-op smoothly as the leadership committee is not able to be at all areas of the premises at once or to perform all the labor that is required for the co-op's daily operations. The volunteer positions are divided into "time slots", and certain positions fill more time slots than others. Parents choose which volunteer positions they want to fill each semester.

Mary states, "We have a total of forty-eight slots for recess, twelve for breakdown, and four for parties per term." Recess duty and lunch duty are worth one time slot each, requiring three or four in a semester to fulfill the volunteer requirements. Another job is to set-up and take-down the tables and chairs used in the main hall of the church where teachers conduct some classes. Volunteers working on set-up and take-down also put up partitions in the hall to separate class areas, and well as put cones in the parking lot to designate drop-off and pick-up areas. The set-up and take-down

position requires arriving early or leaving late for six weeks and involves more physical work, therefore, this volunteer job fulfills four time slots on its own. The last volunteer opportunity comes from planning the end-of-semester party. Those working on the preparation of end-of-semester parties fulfill four time slots with the one activity.

Teachers and Teaching Policies

Teachers at Quality Homeschool Co-op, according to Mary, “are chosen two ways: co-op moms who have a particular class they would like to present and outside teachers who have a particular expertise such as music, art, Spanish, etc.” Teachers hired from outside the co-op are “usually recommended by an existing family,” as quoted by Mary. Mary further stated that “we occasionally get solicitations from outside instructors unknown to us, but we have never accepted one of these unless it is someone known to a family in the group.”

Teachers hired from outside the co-op are not required to be members of the co-op. The science teacher at Quality Homeschool Co-op does not have any children in the co-op but was a science teacher in the past and homeschooled her four children. She returns each semester to teach science and travels to other co-ops around San Antonio teaching science and conducting science camps.

According to Mary, teachers from outside the co-op must provide references and submit to a criminal background check. The co-op director gives any parents or adults outside the co-op who are interested in teaching a Prospective Teacher letter (2011) (See Appendix F). The Prospective Teacher letter details the expectations for potential teachers. Adults interested in teaching are told in the letter to submit a course proposal

to the director by a certain date, in time for co-op leaders to make a decision and offer the course in the Course Descriptions (Quality Homeschool Co-op n.d.) document available to each family for the upcoming semester.

The Prospective Teacher letter is the only document devoted to describing the requirements for teachers, however this letter does not list teaching qualifications required for teachers. When Carol formed Quality Homeschool Co-op, she wanted all teachers to be either certified educators or experts in their field. The person who taught art the first year, for example, was not a trained educator, but an artist by profession. Mary agrees that certification and expertise are ideal, but she states that educator certification is not required by co-op leaders in order for an adult to be eligible to teach. Mary estimated that half of the teachers in the co-op are certified educators, while the other half are skilled in their subject area. Joanna's two school-aged children are taking classes from certified and uncertified teachers. I asked if she felt the quality of instruction was better with one than the other. In Joanna's opinion, the quality of instruction is equal. She stated that the quality of the subject matter varies, but that the uncertified teachers' delivery of instruction is level with the certified educators.

Teachers determine the fees for their courses, which are paid directly to the teacher and not to the co-op leaders. To determine fees, the teacher considers the supplies needed for each course and compensation that is needed for the time and skills he or she has to commit to the course. According to Mary, robotics and art are courses with higher fees because teacher expertise and preparation time are greater. In the

Prospective Teacher letter, teachers are encouraged to offer reduced fees if multiple students from one family register for a particular course.

The Prospective Teacher letter states

With the growth of the Quality Homeschool Co-op, it is necessary to ensure continued administration of the co-op and continued support from St. Jude parish. To facilitate this, teachers will be required to pay the co-op 5% of all funds generated from tuition as an administrative fee.

For example, if a teacher charges \$60 each for fifteen students, he or she must then give \$45 back to the co-op. Mary expressed to me that co-op leaders are also using the teacher fee to build a scholarship fund to aid current families who are unable to pay their full tuition due to circumstances such as the loss of a job. This is a newer policy that was not in effect during Carol's tenure as director.

The Prospective Teacher letter also provides teachers with the basic guidelines expected of Quality Homeschool Co-op teachers. Teachers are expected to lead the class in the designated prayer at the beginning of each period, however, the letter states that "these prayers are provided and may be led by a student".

Teachers must take attendance in the first ten minutes of each class. The purpose of attendance is to account for all students going from class to class and to assure that students have not wandered off between classes. When I accompanied the leader who was collecting attendance, all the teachers had their attendance ready for the leader, indicating to me that the teachers were aware of the attendance policy and that co-op leaders fulfilled their requirement of collecting attendance during each period.

Finally, teachers are required to join Quality Homeschool Co-op's Yahoo© group page to keep updated on co-op announcements. Co-op leaders also provide the teachers with the email addresses of the students in their courses.

Joanna and Lucy enjoyed that their children learned from teachers with different teaching styles. Carol's son, who resisted the style of teaching his mother used at home, excelled in the co-op classroom when he competed against other children who were also doing well. He recognized his peers' determination and did not want to be left behind, so he worked harder to be on the same level of academic quality.

Through observations of classes, I noted that the teachers at Quality Homeschool Co-op are working to foster appropriate classroom behavior and excitement for learning in their classes. I observed a theater class for younger elementary students. The young students, ages five to nine, enthusiastically talked about their parts in the upcoming play *The Little Red Hen*, while the teacher, a co-op parent, guided the students and kept them on task. Since the students in this class are younger and prone to speaking out, the teacher encouraged them to raise their hands to be recognized and wait until the teacher was close enough to ask questions, rather than calling out across the small classroom space.

I then viewed a geology class designed for middle school students. Although I intended to remain in the back of the room and simply watch, the teacher and students encouraged my participation by asking me to sit with them and inspect the rocks and minerals the teacher had brought from her own collection to examine. The students

showed excitement at the teacher's materials and were enthusiastic to teach me about the latest geological discoveries they made while doing their prescribed homework.

Courses

Teachers at Quality Homeschool Co-op offer courses that supplement the instruction students receive at home. Carol, for example taught Composition designed to enhance a Language Arts curriculum that parents might use at home.

Leaders of Quality Homeschool Co-op do not require specific courses, nor do co-op members expect particular courses to be offered each semester. Parents may submit proposals each semester for courses they would like taught at Quality Homeschool School for the following semester, whether they want to teach the course or find another teacher skilled in the subject. Before a parent or committee member may submit a proposal, he or she must first post a poll on the co-op's Yahoo© group page asking how many members would be interested in a potential course. If enough members show interest in a prospective course, the member may propose the course in writing, which is then discussed during the Volunteer Committee's planning meeting at mid-semester. Mary stated that the required number of interested members can vary from three to four members for some potential classes, to a minimum of ten for others. She explained that the number of interested members depended on the potential class size of the new course, a detail that is left to the teacher's discretion. If a course requires a larger number of students, then a poll has to yield a larger number of interested members in order to move forward with a proposal. A theater class, for example, might require more participating students to delegate all necessary roles. Mary explained that proposing

classes “is a tool for us to prioritize class offerings based on what classes would be most desirable for the families”.

Although teachers are not required to offer the same courses each semester, particular classes have been offered consistently over the years. Art, Spanish, and Home Economics are examples of courses that teachers tend to offer each semester because parents consistently request these, or the teachers are interested in presenting them each semester. Mary states that when a course is repeated from semester to semester, the course is either progressive, or a duplicate of the previous semester’s course. A progressive course, such as Spanish II, requires a pre-requisite for students continuing the next semester as the course is intended to pick up where last semester’s course left off. A duplicate course will provide the same instruction and information and will not be as useful to students repeating the course.

Carol recalled that the courses offered during Quality Homeschool Co-op’s first year included Composition, Science, Art, Spanish, Latin, Texas History, and pre-school classes for students who were not yet school-aged. Carol and Mary gave me the Fall 2007, Fall 2009, Spring 2010, and Fall 2010 class schedules. In the fall of 2007, Quality Homeschool Co-op teachers offered:

- Art I (ages five to nine)
- Art II (ages ten and up)
- Beginning Latin
- Advanced Latin
- Botany (ages nine and up)
- Plant Power (ages five to eight)
- Fun with Theater (ages seven to eight)
- Basic Theater Explorations (ages nine to ten)
- Theater Explorations (ages eleven and up)

- Physical Education (ages seven to twelve)
- Tell Me About It (ages seven to eight)
- Spanish I (ages five to eight)
- Spanish II (ages six to nine)
- Intermediate Spanish
- Advanced Spanish
- Photography (ages twelve and up)
- History of Writing (ages nine and up)
- Home Economics (ages seven and up)
- Improving Visual and Listening Skills (ages seven to ten)
- Mini Explorers (ages five to six)
- Imagination Exploration (ages five to six)
- Physics (ages twelve and up) (Quality Homeschool Co-op 2007b)

In fall 2009, class offerings were:

- Robotics (ages ten and up)
- Spanish (ages six to nine)
- Spanish Tutor
- Excellence in Writing (ages eight and up)
- Pond Life (ages five to eight)
- Ecology for Kids (ages nine to twelve)
- Ecology Lab (ages twelve and up)
- Preschool (ages three to five)
- Kindergarten (ages five to six)
- Art (ages five to eight)
- Art (ages nine and up)
- First Communion
- Apologetics
- Theater: Production Design (ages nine and up)
- Theater: Play (ages seven and up)
- Early Music Class (ages seven and up)
- North American History (ages eight to ten)
- Inventions and Discoveries Timeline Class (ages nine and up)
- Problem Solving (ages nine and up)
- Basket Weaving (ages eleven and up)
- Physical Education (ages five to eight)
- Putting the World Together: Geo-History (ages six to eight)
- Home Economics (ages eight and up)
- New Testament (ages five to eight)
- Number Sense (ages nine and up) (Quality Homeschool Co-op 2009a)

In the spring of 2010, Quality Homeschool Co-op teachers offered:

- Robotics (ages ten and up)
- Spanish (ages five to ten)
- Spanish (ages eleven and up)
- Art (ages five to eleven)
- First Communion
- Beginning Latin (ages five to eight)
- Continents and Cultural Art (ages seven to twelve)
- Art for Math (ages five to seven)
- Magic School Bus: Human Body (ages five to eight)
- Anatomy (ages nine and up)
- Gymnastics (ages five to eight)
- Number Sense (ages nine and up)
- Crafts for Kids (ages four to six)
- Excellence in Writing (ages eight and up)
- Home Economics (ages seven to ten)
- Little Flowers Girls' Club (ages five to seven)
- Little Flowers Girls' Club (ages eight to twelve)
- Blue Knights Boys' Club (ages five to nine)
- Pre-kids for Jesus (ages three to six) (Quality Homeschool Co-op 2010c)

Table 1 shows the course offerings for the fall of 2010 (Quality Homeschool Co-op 2010a). Each class offering includes the title of the class, the registration code, the appropriate age level of the class, the fees required for each class, and the minimum and/or maximum number of students allowed in each class. An asterisk (*) after the second fee amount indicates the reduced price if more than one family member registers for the same class. The co-op's schedule also includes the name of the teacher who will lead the class, which has been omitted in this table for the purpose of confidentiality.

Table 1. Fall 2010 course offerings

	Room 1	Room 2	Room 3	Room 4	Room 5	Room 6	Room 7
Period 1 9:00 to 10:00	<i>An Evening w/ Saints (ES) Ages 8 and up \$80, \$60* Class Limit 15</i>			<i>Spanish (S1) Ages 5-10 \$100, \$90*, \$80* Min. 4 / Max. 12</i>	<i>Expressive Arts of the Famous (EA) Ages 7-12 \$95, \$90*, \$85* Class Limit 12</i>	<i>Magic School Bus- Geology (MG) Ages 5-8 \$110 Class Limit 15</i>	
Period 2 10:05 to 11:05	<i>Little Red Hen (RH) Ages 5-9 \$80, \$60* Class Limit 15</i>		<i>Home Ec (HE) Ages 9 and up \$95, \$90* Class Limit 8</i>	<i>Spanish (S1) Ages 5-10 \$100, \$90*, \$80* Min. 4 / Max. 12</i>	<i>Art (A2) Ages 5-11 \$132, \$120* Minimum 10</i>	<i>Geology (GEO) Ages 10 and up \$135 + Book Fee Class Limit 15</i>	<i>Historical Figures (HF) Ages 7-12 \$70, \$60*, \$50* Class Limit 15</i>
<i>11:05 to 11:50 LUNCH AND RECESS</i>							
Period 3 11:55 to 12:55	<i>Robotics (RO) 2 hour class Ages 10 and up \$140 + \$50 supply fee Class Limit 8</i>	<i>American Girl Book Club (AG) Ages 8-12 \$50 + Book Fee Class Limit 8</i>	<i>Five in a Row (FR) Ages 5-7 \$75, \$70* Class Limit 12</i>	<i>Conversational Spanish (CS) Ages 11 and up \$90 Min. 3 / Max. 6</i>	<i>Art (A1) Ages 5-11 \$132, \$120* Minimum 10</i>	<i>Business Math/ Setting up Shop! (Pet./Book/Sports) Ages 8-up \$85/\$75* Min. 4/ Max. 12</i>	<i>Learning w/ Legos (LL) Ages 7-12 \$100, \$95*, \$85* Class Limit 12</i>
Period 4 1:00 to 2:00	<i>LEGO WeDo Robots (WD) Ages 7-9 \$120, \$110* + \$50 supply fee Class Limit 12</i>	<i>Conversational Spanish for Mothers (SM) \$70 Min. 3/ Max. 6</i>	<i>Little Flowers (LF) Ages 5-12 Girls \$32 new students \$28 returning Class Limit 25</i>		<i>Speech Boot Camp/Public Speaking Ages 11-up \$85/\$75* Min. 4/ Max. 8</i>		<i>Drumming Around (DA) Ages 4-7 \$80 Class Limit 12</i>

Mary aims to broaden the age levels of students for whom classes are currently offered. When Carol and Claire founded the co-op, teachers offered courses for elementary and middle school students, with Carol herself teaching Texas History to middle school students. Teachers determine the age levels appropriate for each class, and some, like the contracted science teacher, offer a course each semester separately for elementary and middle school students using the same theme. In the fall 2010 semester, the science teacher offered Magic School Bus Geology for students ages five through eight and Geology for students ages ten and up, although I have not determined which class a nine-year-old would take. I approached Mary about this discrepancy, and she

admitted that it was just an oversight. She commented, however, that if a nine-year-old were in this situation, the parent would choose which course to enroll her child in. An advanced nine-year-old could take the class designed for older children, while a nine-year-old who was not as advanced could enroll in the class designed for younger students.

Although co-op leaders offered classes for elementary and middle school students, in the fall 2010 semester, teachers designed only four out of the twenty-two classes for children over ten years of age. In Mary's experience, when a co-op cannot accommodate the needs of all the school-aged children in a homeschooling family, the family tends to leave the co-op rather than have one child with unmet educational needs. On the other end of the spectrum, families come with children who are not school-aged, but whose parents would like them to participate. Mary wants to offer more classes for middle school students and preschool classes for those under five to allow mothers to stay at the facility during class time and meet the needs of all ages of children. So far, the co-op has not offered classes for high school students, but Mary stated to me that the future leaders and members will approach that need if parents request higher level courses.

Lucy understood that the current leaders of Quality Homeschool Co-op had talked about adding classes for older children, but she disagrees with the notion. Lucy feels the co-op is geared for younger children, and is actually a "perfect fit" for the younger ages. She said to me that if classes are added for the older children, then fewer classes might be available for the younger students. Lucy's younger children still attend

Quality Homeschool Co-op, but her two older children have moved on to another co-op that provides a high school experience, such as working on a yearbook and attending prom.

The teachers at Quality Homeschool Co-op strive to instruct and assess students in ways that are sometimes difficult to achieve in a standard classroom where class sizes are larger and teachers have more administrative and testing demands placed on them. Joanna is pleased with the differentiated instruction and assessment that her children receive in their chosen classes and shared examples with me. In geography class, the students made relief maps of a chosen state and presented their state. Students were encouraged to dress up (her daughter was a palm tree to represent Florida), and the presentations were filmed for parents to watch. They also “interviewed” famous people from the northeast region of the United States. Joanna’s daughter interviewed Ben Franklin. In geology, her daughter played rock bingo until all types of rocks and minerals studied had been identified. In another science class, Joanna’s son brought home an airplane model to explain to his parents how flight worked. In theater class, the final assessment is the production of the play that the students worked all semester to perform, including learning the script, creating costumes, and building the set. Finally, in the historical figures class that Joanna’s children participated in, the students created projects to represent the figures they have studied over the semester.

Quality Homeschool Co-op leaders try to offer courses for mothers to take while the students are in class. Mary indicated that the desire to offer classes for mothers did not come from requests on member evaluation forms at the end of each semester, but

rather as an idea that generated from some mothers who chose to remain at St. Jude while their children attended classes. Some mothers choose not to leave while their children are in class because St. Jude is such a long drive from their homes. Others stay in the hopes of building some social relationships with the other mothers who remain. Mary stated that in past semesters, the co-op offered courses such as Spanish and Nutrition for the Family to mothers. In the fall of 2010, co-op leaders offered Spanish for Mothers, but due to low enrollment, the course never started once the new semester began.

In the spring of 2011, the co-op offered a Catholic women's series called Women of Grace. Joanna has taken advantage of the Women of Grace course to enrich her own spiritual life and build relationships with other Catholic homeschooling mothers. Joanna explains that the mothers' class is small, with only five mothers and four to five volunteer committee members attending. She believes that most parents in the co-op do not desire to participate in an activity during co-op time since the original design of the co-op was for parents to drop students off. Joanna feels that the mothers in the Women of Grace course are not there just to "fill the time", as Joanna describes it, while their students are in class, but rather to enrich their own lives, spiritually and academically.

While Carol was director, she wanted to train students to participate Private Schools Scholastic Association (PSIA) competitions. According to PSIA's website, PSIA is a "nonprofit education organization serving all privately schooled grade 1-8 students in Texas" (Private Schools Interscholastic Association 2011). Areas in which a student may compete depend on the grade level of student. Lower grade levels offer

fewer subject areas for students to compete in. For example, a second grader participating in PSIA competitions may only compete in spelling, storytelling, and creative writing. A fifth grader, on the other hand, can compete in prose/poetry interpretation, ready writing, art memory, music memory, mathematics, number sense, maps, graphs and charts, spelling, vocabulary, dictionary skills, and listening (PSIA 2011). Training for PSIA would not have been a course. Carol wanted to work independently with a group of interested students who were willing to prepare for competition, but the demands of running the co-op kept her from forming a team.

Safety

According to the Quality Homeschool Co-op Orientation presentation on PowerPoint, “Safety is our number one priority” (Quality Homeschool Co-op 2007c). When designing the co-op, Carol and Claire took careful measures to assure that all students, parents, and teachers remained safe while on church grounds during co-op time. Quality Homeschool Co-op does offer the option for parents to drop off and pick up their students, but parents are required to drop off and pick up only in one area. Not picking up students in this designated area results in a penalty for the family. Parents dropping off or picking up students other than at 9 a.m. or 2 p.m. must sign their students in or out. With students coming and going, co-op leaders want to account for students at all times, especially since the students are in the care of adults other than their parents during class time.

Children are not to be anywhere on church grounds during co-op time without adult supervision. During class, the teacher serves as the adult supervision. During

passing periods, an adult monitor stands outside to watch the students as they go from building to building. Four parents who have volunteered for lunch and recess duty monitor the children to assure they do not wander to areas of the church not in use for the co-op.

According to Carol, the students all ate and played together in one field during the first year of the co-op. She and Claire noticed that with about sixty students plus family members eating and playing in the same location, safety started becoming an issue. Carol stated that “we had so many kids at recess that we had to divide them by age on the fields to ensure the little ones did not get hurt by the middle school students who were playing football”. Current leaders have continued this practice.

Teachers take attendance in their classes at the beginning of every period. A leader walks to each classroom at the beginning of class to find out from the teachers if any students who have been signed in by a parent are missing. In one instance, a six year old decided he did not want to be in class that day and went behind the portable to play in the dirt. Upon completing attendance, the teacher and leader noticed the child was missing and searched for him. The system has helped to keep the volunteers accountable and children safe. Attendance has no bearing on the status of the children as parents choose whether their students will attend that day or not. According to Mary, absenteeism is not common as parents pay for all classes they choose at the beginning of each semester. Each class that is missed means money that is wasted for the family that semester.

Co-op leaders take precautions to keep their students safe while at co-op, but Mary would like to add more safety measures. Mary states that about one half of the teachers are parents of the children attending the co-op. The other half are women and men who are asked to teach at Quality Homeschool Co-op. These teachers are acquaintances or friends of current and past members and receive high recommendations by co-op members and complete a criminal background check. As these teachers are skilled in their subjects and believe in the practice of homeschooling, teacher retention is high and consistent. However, Mary would still like to safe guard the co-op and its members from child predators. Mary described an incident at a co-op in another city in which the teacher came recommended, but still ended up abusing some of the children (KXAN 2010). To help prevent a similar situation and protect the co-op and St. Jude, Mary is working to implement the Archdiocese of San Antonio's mandatory training policy for all adults working with children. This policy, called OVASE, or Office of Victim Assistance and Safe Environment, includes completing a criminal background check, Safe Environment training, and viewing a video on sexual harassment and misconduct (Archdiocese of San Antonio 2010). The OVASE program is required for all adults in the Archdiocese of San Antonio who are working with children. Quality Homeschool Co-op is not associated with St. Jude, but since Quality Homeschool Co-op is a Catholic co-op operating on church property, Mary feels it is better to be safe than sorry. While she understands that the program does not prevent all undesirable actions, she hopes the training will at least provide awareness and accountability for the safety of the children. Mary stated that, as of the fall of 2011, "all teachers and parents will be

required to have a background check and OVASE training based on new diocesan guidelines”.

Service

The leaders of Quality Homeschool Co-op want to foster a desire in the students and parents to perform service for others. Leaders try to implement service projects to accomplish their goal. While Carol was director in 2007, co-op members collected clothing for Iraqi children. The Service Chair on the Volunteer Committee asked co-op members to donate clothing for children of all ages that would be brought to the St. Jude on the first day of classes for the fall semester.

Quality Homeschool Co-op donates food each month to St. Vincent de Paul Society, a food bank located next to the church. The Communications Chair posts an advertisement on the co-op’s Yahoo© group page reminding members to bring in food donations on the second Thursday of the month. Food donations are placed in a box by the door of the main building where parents must sign students in. The box of food is then taken to the St. Vincent de Paul office on the same property at the end of the co-op day.

Even though St. Jude allows Quality Homeschool Co-op to operate on church grounds free of charge, Carol offered a monetary donation to the church during the co-op’s first year out of gratitude. All subsequent directors have continued this practice and use portions of the \$25 registration fee and 5% teacher fee to donate to St. Jude each semester.

Few changes have occurred over the years in Quality Homeschool Co-op. The leaders and parents, however, evaluate co-op operations each semester to determine if the status quo is still desirable for the majority of members. Carol, Mary, Joanna, and Lucy each had their own determinants for evaluating the success of Quality Homeschool Co-op.

Evaluation of Success

When asked how they evaluated the success of Quality Homeschool Co-op, Carol, Mary, and Joanna all answered that they use the end-of-semester evaluation form to receive or give feedback about the co-op. I clarified my question, asking each participant how she personally evaluated the success of the co-op based on her own and others' perceptions. Each lady stopped to think before answering. Mary admitted that she had not formally thought about that question before. Carol, Mary, and Joanna feel Quality Homeschool Co-op is a success, with each participant providing similar reasons.

Carol stated to me that the co-op was successful during her tenure as director because the same families returned each semester. She asserted that families occasionally did not return because the distance of the church was too far from their home, or because parents chose to put their homeschooled children in traditional schools and no longer needed the co-op. Carol also deemed Quality Homeschool Co-op successful because the teachers offered courses that the children might not receive at home, and the co-op is still operating over five years later.

After pondering how she evaluates the success of Quality Homeschool Co-op, Mary narrowed her answer down to four questions that she asks herself: 1. Are the

parents happy? 2. Are the children happy? 3. Are they children receiving good peer interaction? 4. Have the leaders accomplished their goals for the co-op? Co-op leaders do not have a checklist of goals for each semester, but Mary asserted to me that they have accomplished their goals if issues that arise throughout the semester are solved and all necessary planning for semester occurs. Like Carol, Mary also stated that the retention of families is a good indicator of success.

As a new member who has not been in a leadership role through the co-op, Joanna did not answer the question of evaluation based on how the other members perceive the co-op, but rather how she experiences it. While she expressed that she felt like an outsider her first semester in the co-op, overall, she is pleased with Quality Homeschool Co-op. Joanna said Quality Homeschool Co-op is “well structured” and that a “variety of courses” are offered each semester. She likes that her children are around families of the same faith, and considers the co-op to be a suitable outlet for her children’s social interactions. She intends to put forth a better effort to meet other mothers and to build relationships at the co-op, but she maintains that her children are happy with the peer relationships they are developing.

By the time I interviewed Lucy, I had modified the question so that she would not answer that evaluation is based on the end-of-semester form. Lucy deemed Quality Homeschool Co-op successful because her children are “happy and thrilled to return year after year and week after week”.

Conclusion

Quality Homeschool Co-op in San Antonio, Texas, is in its sixth year of operation. Carol, the founder, joined together with other likeminded homeschooling mothers to offer classes that homeschooling students might not otherwise receive at home in an environment similar to traditional classrooms. Carol and her co-founder Claire structured the co-op so thoroughly from the start that few changes have been made by subsequent leaders and members.

Mary and the other current leaders at Quality Homeschool Co-op continue to provide academic elective courses designed to supplement any curriculum used at home. In addition to the academic quality, Mary is trying to add to the social quality of the co-op. She is attempting to build a stronger network of homeschooling families and provide support and enrichment for the adult members of the co-op. All of the participants interviewed indicated that their children are happy in their selected courses, and whether parents take advantage of the drop-off policy to take care of their own business during co-op time or stay to receive their own social enrichment, Quality Homeschool Co-op is providing a positive experience for all involved.

Lucy provided a unique perspective on Quality Homeschool Co-op. Lucy has been in the co-op almost since the beginning and has been both a leader and member. She has older children who have moved on from the co-op and younger children who still attend Quality Homeschool Co-op. I asked her to reflect on the co-op through all those years. Has the co-op improved? Has it remained stagnant? She replied,

Each year is different. It is definitely not stagnant, and although each year the formula might be similar, there are small differences...new kids, new leadership,

etc. I wouldn't say it's improved or not improved...each year, like homeschooling, has its own style.

Lucy's statement, "each year, like homeschooling, has its own style," exemplifies Quality Homeschool Co-op. The co-op does have its own style that is subject to change, but one thing remains the same: Quality Homeschool Co-op is not showing any signs of ending in the near future, and the continued determination of its leaders and members will assure its continued success in the future.

CHAPTER V

SIGNIFICANCE, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter IV described the findings of the study on Quality Homeschool Co-op. This chapter, Chapter V, first explains the significance of the study and how this researcher has answered the research questions. After the significance, this researcher discusses her conclusions of the study based on the findings in Chapter IV. Following the conclusions, this researcher describes her recommendations for future researcher based on this study of Quality Homeschool Co-op.

Significance

Scant literature is published on the formation, operations, and history of homeschool co-ops, despite the popularity of co-ops among homeschooling families. The purpose of this study was to observe a homeschool co-op in San Antonio, Texas, and to interview founding, leading, and new members in an effort to document a history of the co-op. This study has attempted to answer two questions:

1. What is the history of the co-op, including how and why the co-op formed?
2. What are the daily operations of the co-op?

Research Question One

The first research question was to learn the history of Quality Homeschool Co-op, including how and why the co-op formed. This researcher interviewed four women involved with Quality Homeschool Co-op who collectively provided the details necessary to document a history of the co-op. The first interviewee, Carol, was the founder of the co-op, who no longer homeschools. Carol gave the background of the

formation of Quality Homeschool Co-op, in addition to documents created during her tenure as leader for the first two-and-a-half years the co-op operated. The second interview was with the current director, Mary, a member of Quality Homeschool Co-op for three years, as of the fall of 2010. Mary provided the researcher with documents that current leaders use to inform members of the expectations required at the co-op. The third interview involved a member, Joanna, who was new to the co-op in the fall of 2010. She provided the insight of a person not in a leadership position who stated that she initially felt like an outsider because she had to make a greater effort to build relationships with other adults in the co-op, however, she “feels better now”. The final interview came from a member, Lucy, who has been with the co-op since nearly the beginning. Lucy provided a unique reflection through all years of the co-op as a member, leader, and teacher.

Through the interviews and follow-up phone and email conversations with all four participants, this researcher has documented a history of Quality Homeschool Co-op. Carol described her reasons for forming a co-op, courses offered in the first year, and the leadership structure in the first three years. Carol also detailed the modifications that she had to make in the first three years of the co-op, including separating older and younger students for safety, forming a Volunteer Committee, and creating a set of documents as necessary to inform parents of the requirements of participation in Quality Homeschool Co-op.

Mary, the current director, added to the documentation of Quality Homeschool Co-op’s history by describing to this researcher the organizational changes that have

occurred in the co-op since she became a leader. These changes include adding a passing period between classes, and combining lunch and recess into one block of time. Another organizational change was the addition of a 5% administrative fee that is now required of all teachers. Although not part of the history, Mary also described to this researcher goals that she has for the future of the co-op, which will become a part of the co-op's history if this study is revisited in the future.

Lucy's testimony helped to bridge the gap between the time that Carol left Quality Homeschool Co-op and Mary took over as director. Lucy served on the Volunteer Committee, taught a First Communion class for two years, and is now "just a member". Lucy also has two high school-aged children who attended the co-op through their middle school years, and two elementary-aged children who currently attend. Lucy's story added to the history by providing first-hand knowledge of the co-op experience for younger and older children, for a teacher, for a leader, and for a parent without additional participation in the co-op.

As a new member, Joanna's story did not help to form the history of Quality Homeschool Co-op back to the days of its foundation. Her experience did, however, raise questions about operations in past years that this researcher addressed with Mary, Lucy, and Carol. These questions included details about classes for mothers that have been offered in previous semesters and whether or not the goal of the co-op has ever been explicitly stated in co-op documents.

This researcher cannot claim to have documented a full history of Quality Homeschool Co-op. This researcher has documented a history of Quality Homeschool

Co-op based on the knowledge of the four participants and documents provided. The participants provided their testimonies to the researcher as accurately as possible from their points of view. Details might have been omitted, or other members might have insights into the co-op that differ from the participants. In addition, the history will continue to grow with each year, rendering this study incomplete in the future.

Research Question Two

The second research question was to determine the operations of the co-op. This researcher learned about the daily operations of the co-op based on what the participants stated in interviews, the documents provided to the researcher, and through observations of the co-op.

This researcher has learned when and where the co-op operates, as well as the time changes that have occurred in the co-op's school day. This researcher has also discovered how leaders, teachers, and courses are determined for the co-op, and what the teaching policies are. Based on documents and interviews, this researcher knows what requirements are expected of parents and students, and how problems with members are resolved. Additionally, this researcher has learned how co-op members attempt to keep students, parents, and leaders safe by taking attendance regularly and requiring adults to attend training through San Antonio Archdiocese's Office of Victim Abuse and Safe Environment.

Conclusions

Determining whether the parents in Quality Homeschool Co-op homeschool for pedagogical or ideological reasons was not a research question and beyond the scope of

this study. However, when documenting each participant's story and her reasons for homeschooling, this researcher determined that two of the participants (Mary and Joanna) began homeschooling for ideological reasons. Carol initially homeschooled for pedagogical reasons, and Lucy homeschooled at first for both reasons, but has become more ideologically-motivated as she has continued to homeschool.

Understanding the reasons why the parents in the co-op have chosen to homeschool has helped this researcher to understand more fully the history of the co-op. Pedagogically, Carol wanted the co-op to serve as a place where homeschooled students received instruction that lacked at home. Ideologically, Mary, Joanna, and Lucy want the co-op to serve as a place where their children can learn and socialize with families who share their values. The motivations of the founders and continuing members have shaped what the co-op is today, and will continue to influence the co-op in the future.

Quality Homeschool Co-op meets the non-core academic needs that each participant expects from a co-op. Carol stated that she originally taught composition in the co-op because the other founding mother could not teach her own children composition at home. Lucy and Joanna enjoyed that their children learned from teacher with different teaching styles.

Teachers in the co-op are able to offer differentiated instruction and assessment that can be difficult to achieve in public and private schools due to large numbers of students in the classroom and administrative and testing demands placed on teachers (in institutional schools). Co-op classes remain small, which Romanowski writes is a reason for the academic success of homeschoolers (2001, 81). The learning and

evaluation also occurs in an environment appropriate to the subject. Joanna described examples in which the teachers of the courses her children attended used alternative methods to assess the students, other than standard paper tests. Joanna was pleased that her children enjoyed their learning environment and could share their learning experiences with her after each class.

The ability of co-op teachers to offer alternative instruction and assessment leads to a more “active learning environment” in which everything can be a learning opportunity, according to Taylor (1997, 111). The students are learning, rather than just being taught (Yauger 2005, 28), and are excited to retain and share their knowledge.

Romanowski describes the concerns of homeschooling critics who think that parent-teachers might have the inability to ignore interruptions that occur in the home, such as the phone ringing or a baby crying (2001, 82). Students in Quality Homeschool Co-op attend classes with students of a similar age in a classroom setting. The parents, siblings, and outside distractions are usually not present. Using a co-op for academic enrichment helps to dissuade the critique about interruptions.

Romanowski also cites critics who believe that if organization, study habits, and time management are not taught in the home, then students will be at a disadvantage (2001, 83). Teachers in Quality Homeschool Co-op assign weekly homework, as well as projects for evaluation purposes. The teachers set goals each semester for the students to accomplish, such as working on all aspects necessary to perform the final play at the end of a theater class. Students in the co-op are learning to manage their time, prioritize their academic activities, complete work assigned to them, and study for their evaluations,

whether that means learning their lines for a play or researching the information needed for a project. The participants like that their children learn organizational and study skills while attending Quality Homeschool Co-op.

The students in Quality Homeschool Co-op demonstrated an excitement for learning. While this researcher observed the geology class, the students eagerly passed around the rocks and minerals that the teacher had brought. They talked enthusiastically about the characteristics of the rocks, and eagerly shared their findings with this researcher. The students in theater class anxiously waited for their chance to continue work on the play they would be performing at the end of the semester. Joanna asks her children after each co-op day what they learned, and they willingly describe their classes with enthusiasm. Lucy states that her children are “happy and thrilled to return year after year and week after week”.

Quality Homeschool Co-op is meeting the social needs of the students in the co-op, as well as the academic expectations. Lucy stated that Quality Homeschool Co-op has given her children the “opportunity to play with other children” and to “enjoy ‘social time’ in a moral setting”. When Mary first joined the co-op, she “almost instantly” found “many friends for my children”. When Joanna moved to Texas and sought out Quality Homeschool Co-op, she was “thrilled to find” a Catholic group providing both academic and social support.

The students at Quality Homeschool Co-op are learning how to get along with others, which Farris and Woodruff state is the purpose of socialization (2000). Not only are the students at Quality Homeschool Co-op learning to be social, they are learning

positive socialization with other children who share similar values, which, according to Romanowski, “will help a child grow and develop his or her full potential” (2001, 80).

Opponents of homeschooling believe that homeschooled students will not be exposed to a diversity of backgrounds like they would in a traditional classroom setting, however Romanowski (2001) feels homeschooled children are exposed to more diversity in backgrounds because they are not committed to being around the same twenty-five to thirty-five children of similar age and socioeconomic status each day. At Quality Homeschool Co-op, the students are exposed to people who have different worldly backgrounds, especially since several members are military families who have moved around and experienced living in different parts of the country. Before moving to San Antonio, all four participants interviewed lived in other areas of the United States and world due to job relocations, three of which while in the military.

All of the participants are white, middle-class, educated women who consider themselves practicing Catholics. This researcher does not know the backgrounds of all the members of the co-op, and consequently cannot say with certainty if the students at Quality Homeschool Co-op are exposed to a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. While at co-op, the students are not exposed to people of different religious beliefs. The founders of Quality Homeschool Co-op designed the co-op to provide academic enrichment in a Catholic environment where people with similar values and beliefs could gather. Subsequent leaders have maintained this goal, and members are drawn to Quality Homeschool Co-op because it is Catholic. Homeschooling parents have the prerogative to determine which values and beliefs their children are exposed to,

religious, political, or otherwise. The parents at Quality Homeschool Co-op have chosen this particular co-op because it meets their moral standards.

The students at Quality Homeschool Co-op are not exposed to diverse beliefs during co-op time, but they do have the opportunity to learn with children of different ages. Co-op courses are not designed on a grade level basis, but rather with an age-range in mind. Magic School Bus Geology, for example, is for children ages five to eight. The teacher adapts the lessons to suit each age. The younger students have the opportunity to learn from their older counterparts, while the older children learn to serve others while assisting the younger students with their studies. Medlin (2000) believes that proper social skills cannot be learned among peers of the same age, so at Quality Homeschool Co-op, the younger students can develop social skills from the interactions with older students who have previously learned such skills. The older kids enhance their own social skills by being positive models for the younger children.

This researcher concludes that the founders of Quality Homeschool Co-op formed the co-op with a structure that has allowed the co-op to reliably continue each semester, even when members leave and leadership changes. Quality Homeschool Co-op is a large co-op with thirty-forty families enrolled each semester. Carol found a location suitable for fifty to sixty students before asking any families to join, which Topp indicates is one of the first matters of founding a large co-op that homeschoolers should consider (2008). Large co-ops have the advantage of offering a variety of courses for the enrolled students, according to Topp. Based on the class schedules from previous semesters that were given to this researcher, Quality Homeschool Co-op offers twenty to

twenty-five classes each semester, some repeats and some new. The class choices create an advantage for the homeschoolers in the co-op wishing to supplement their core subjects taught at home.

Topp cautions against any co-op leader taking on too much responsibility, which, in her experience, leads to “burn out”. Carol and her co-founder Claire took turns leading the co-op and managing teaching responsibilities for the first two years of the co-op. When Claire left the co-op and Carol became sole leader, she knew she needed to delegate roles to others to avoid the burn out that Topp describes. Carol formed the Volunteer Committee to spread out the responsibilities of running the co-op, and subsequent leaders continued to use the Committee for delegation of duties. When Rita took over as director after Carol left, she added a co-director to further divide the responsibilities of running the co-op.

The addition of leaders in the co-op has helped to prevent burn out, and since each leader has specific duties assigned to her, operations of the co-op are carried out effectively. Having multiple leaders in place also prevents the co-op from falling apart if one integral member leaves. In the case of Quality Homeschool Co-op, each director has taken over after another left. The Volunteer Committee also changes, but since an established set of guidelines is in place, each new leader has been able to run the co-op smoothly. The leaders also meet twice a semester to plan and evaluate the operations of the co-op, another recommendation from Topp.

In addition to leadership, communication and documentation have helped Quality Homeschool Co-op to operate as Carol intended. When Carol left, Rita took over. Rita

was a new member that year without experience in the Volunteer Committee. Carol claimed that she gave all of her documents to Rita, who was then able to run the co-op using the policies stated in documents. Current leaders continue to use these documents, making changes only where necessary to apply to each semester.

These documents make up the policy manual, the purpose of which is “to avoid problems before they come up as well as give all co-op members guidelines on how to deal with problems” (Topp 2008, 89). Quality Homeschool Co-op’s documents describe the discipline policies of the co-op, as well as student and parent expectations. The documents do not, however, explicitly state the goal of the co-op or the expectation that Catholic prayers are recited each period. Each participant stated to me what she believed the co-op’s goal is, but without a written statement, leaders and members have the potential to operate the co-op in ways that are contrary to the original purpose. A written mission statement helps to keep the purpose of the co-op in perspective. Lacking an explicit expectation for prayers each period potentially creates a situation where leaders enact discipline measures for expectations that members are unaware of. Co-op families are told each semester that prayers are recited, participation is voluntary, and disrespect will not be tolerated. However, without this policy in writing, a member in the future might claim to be ignorant of the policy, leaving the leaders without grounds to discipline. Co-op members are asked to sign the Parent and Student Handbook each semester indicating that members understand the expectations and discipline policies, so this researcher recommends co-op leaders add the prayer policy to the handbook.

Although co-op leaders have a set of documents that make up their policy manual, Carol and Mary admitted that they do not have some of the forms created in past years, such as course offerings. This researcher recommends that the co-op leaders create an organizational archive. The organizational archive is not a policy manual that details the current expectations and policies of the co-op. The organizational archive is a record of all the co-op's documents and decisions made from the co-op's foundation to current day. Not only does an organizational archive serve as a history, but co-op leaders have a reference for learning which procedures co-op leaders used in the past that might or might not have been effective. Co-op leaders could determine why those procedures are no longer used or whether they want to modify and implement such procedures in their current operations.

By recording the history of a co-op, co-op leaders participate in what Kyvig and Marty call the "new social history" (2000, 8), a form of historical research in which local and common history is recorded. The leaders and members of Quality Homeschool Co-op are doing their best to operate and participate in a co-op that serves the needs of the Catholic homeschool community in San Antonio. While the students are learning to behave as respectful members of society, the homeschooling families attend Quality Homeschool Co-op for their own benefit, and once the co-op no longer meets their needs, they move on. Mary wants to build a network of support for the homeschooling community in San Antonio, but otherwise, this researcher thinks that Mary does not feel that Quality Homeschool Co-op serves any educational purpose beyond the education of the co-op members. What Mary may not realize is that while living in the moment of

each semester is important for the operation of the co-op, historians or researchers may value the history and evolution of the co-op for other reasons.

Kyvig and Marty state that the study of the “nearby history” of an organization or community reveals “the origins of conditions, the causes of change, and the reasons for present conditions” (11). Historians and researchers can use the history of a co-op to continue piecing together the homeschooling puzzle. Researchers in education will not be able to ignore the growing numbers of homeschoolers in America, and the implications for public and private education. Studying the history of a co-op can help researchers examine the organizational structure of the co-op, successful or otherwise, with possible applications in the larger educational community.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused one aspect of a homeschool co-op: the history and daily operations of Quality Homeschooling Co-op from the perspective of four adult members. Although obtaining permission to conduct research on minors is more difficult than researching adults, interested researchers would benefit from interviewing and observing the students of Quality Homeschool Co-op to learn if their perceptions are the same as their parents. Are they really as happy in the co-op as the parents claim? Do they feel satisfied with their socialization, or do they request more? Researchers of homeschoolers have studied parents and their motivations for homeschooling. Rudner (1999) studied the academic results of homeschooled minors, but used standardized test scores without knowing the identities of the subjects. Ray (2004) interviewed previously homeschooled students, but at the time of interview, all students were in college and no

longer minors. Interviewing students at Quality Homeschool Co-op would add to the literature about homeschooling from the point of view of children.

Another area of research is a longitudinal study of Quality Homeschool Co-op students. As the students age, do they want to continue with the co-op through their high school years or find other co-ops that suit their needs better? How many of the students in the co-op stop homeschooling and enter private or public school when they reach high-school age? How many of the previous students in the co-op attend college in later years?

This study focused on the history and operations of Quality Homeschool Co-op. Future research on this study might include an in-depth look at the pedagogical or ideological motivations of parents in the co-op. One participant initially homeschooled for pedagogical reasons, two homeschooled for ideological reasons, and one homeschooled for both. A future study could learn what the motivations are for all the parents in the co-op and whether a particular type of motivation prevails at Quality Homeschool Co-op. Learning the motivations of previous members of the co-op could also help to determine whether members have left in the past because their expectations for homeschooling have not been met through Quality Homeschool Co-op.

This study was limited to one religiously affiliated co-op in San Antonio, Texas, that focuses on academic electives. Researchers can study homeschool co-ops as organizations throughout San Antonio, as well as throughout the country. Researchers can start by learning the history and operations of the different types of co-ops in San Antonio: the academic co-ops, military co-ops, athletic co-ops, fellowship or playgroup

co-ops, or co-ops providing high school experiences, such as prom, yearbook, and graduation. What is the purpose of each co-op? What are the motivations of the families in each co-op? Are there similarities among co-ops or among families that join particular co-ops? Are there similarities in the organizational practices of the co-ops that make them successful or not? Researchers can expand this study to apply to co-op through the United States to learn more about the motivations of homeschooling parents and their reasons for using co-ops.

Researchers outside of the homeschooling field could also find interest in future studies on Quality Homeschool Co-op or other homeschooling co-ops. Educators working to improve the structure of public education or to foster an excitement for school in children could look at Quality Homeschool Co-op for examples. All participants expressed a high level of satisfaction with the academics and socialization provided by the co-op, so future researchers could look at what is working for homeschoolers in the co-op and implement those techniques in public schools.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to learn about the history and operations of Quality Homeschool Co-op in San Antonio, Texas, which is in its sixth year of operation. This researcher interviewed four members of Quality Homeschool Co-op: the founding member, the current co-director, a new member, and a member who has been with the co-op for five years in the capacity of a member, leader, and teacher. This researcher also observed the co-op in action and collected documents from participants, all of which helped to piece together a history of the co-op.

Each participant is satisfied that Quality Homeschool Co-op provides academic enrichment for students that might be difficult to provide in the home. Each participant also states that the co-op is meeting the social needs of the children in the co-op. Co-op classes are continuing to fill to capacity each semester, and although some families leave each year, new families join, allowing Quality Homeschool Co-op to operate as it has from its foundation and adding to its history year after year.

REFERENCES

- Andrade, A. 2008. An exploratory study of the role of technology in the rise of homeschooling. Ph.D. diss., Ohio University, Athens, OH.
- Archdiocese of San Antonio. 2010. Creating a safe environment. http://www.archsa.org/to_protect/documents/columns/CreatingSafeEnvironment.pdf.
- Askew, T. M. 1998. Parents' perceptions of the role of curriculum in nonpublic schools of choice. Master's thesis, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.
- Bellina, L. 2005. Homeschool families, public schools and the superintendent: an analysis of interactions in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Ed.D. diss., Fordham University, New York, NY.
- Best, J.W., and J.V. Kahn. 1989. *Research in education*. 6th ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Blumenfeld, S.L. 1997. *Homeschooling: A parent's guide to teaching children*. Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing Group.
- Bogdan, R., and S.J. Taylor. 1975. *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A phenomenological approach to the social sciences*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
- Bogdan, R.C., and S.K. Biklen. 1992. *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bogner, F. J. 2006. Home school students and the IHSA: An analysis of current suburban Chicago high school policy. Ed.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IL.
- Borg, W.R., and M.D. Gall, eds. 1989. Qualitative research. In *Educational research: An introduction*. 5th ed., 379-410. White Plains, NY: Longman, Inc.
- Brown, T. R. 2003. Primary and secondary public school superintendents' perceptions of the homeschooling movement in Virginia. Ph.D. diss., Capella University, Minneapolis, MN.
- Burns, J. 1999. The correlational relationship between homeschooling demographics and high test scores. Opinion Paper, Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, OK.

- Calhoun, S. D. 1999. The classical trivium in contemporary contexts: receptions and reformations of an ancient model of schooling. Ph.D. diss., Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH.
- Clemente, D. F. 2006. Academic achievement and college aptitude in homeschooled high school students compared to their private-schooled and public-schooled counterparts. Ed.D. diss., Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA.
- Collom, E. 2005. The ins and outs of homeschooling: The determinants and parental motivations and student achievement. *Education and Urban Society* 37(3):307-35.
- Creswell, J.W. 1998. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Danley, E. B. 1998. The use of scaffolding agents in homeschool learning environments of early adolescents: a case study conducted in Tallahassee, Florida. Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL.
- Duffey, J. 1998. Home schooling: A controversial alternative. *Principal* 77(5):23-6.
- Eley, M. G. 2006. Homeschool-public school collaboration. Ed.D. diss., Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.
- Encarta® World English Dictionary. 2009. "Core subject".
<http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/features/dictionary/DictionaryResults.aspx?lextype=3&search=core%20subject>.
- Ensign, J. 1997. Homeschooling gifted students: An introductory guide for parents. *ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education*. Reston, VA: Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI).
- Farris, M.P., and S.A. Woodruff. 2000. The future of home schooling. *Peabody Journal of Education* 75(1/2):233-55.
- Fehrmann, P.G., T.Z. Keith, and T.M. Reimers. 1987. Home influence on school learning: direct and indirect effects of parental involvement on high school grades. *Journal of Education Research* 80(6):330-37.

- Fisher, H. L. 2006. Satisfaction and perceptions of parents who choose public school and parents who choose to home-school. Ed.D. diss., Union University, Jackson, TN.
- Greenberg, D. B. 1993. Growing up in community: children and education within contemporary United States intentional communities. Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.
- Gregory, E. R. 2005. Curriculum and the status of physical education in homeschooling. Ph.D. diss., Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY.
- Hall, S. R. 2007. Choosing the substitute: a profile of homeschooling in the Dekalb County “premier school district” within Georgia. Ph.D. diss., Capella University, Minneapolis, MN.
- Harrison, S. M. 1996. A qualitative study of motivational factors for choosing to homeschool: Experiences, thoughts, and feelings of parents. Ph.D. diss., Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA.
- Haskins, S. 2010. *Homeschooling for the rest of us: How your one of a kind family can make homeschooling and real life work*. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers.
- Henson, R. J. 1995. Collaborative education through writing across the curriculum. Ph.D. diss., Ball State University, Muncie, IN.
- Hetzel, D. J. 1998. Factors that influence parents to homeschool. Ph.D. diss., The Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, CA.
- Higgins, J. B. 2002. Home schooling in New Mexico: A case study of one family’s experience. Ph.D. diss., University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM.
- Horsburgh, F. B. N. 2005. Homeschooling within the public school system. Master’s thesis. Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada.
- Isenberg, E.J. 2007. What have we learned about homeschooling? *Peabody Journal of Education* 82(2-3):387-409.
- Ishizuka, K. 2000. *The unofficial guide to homeschooling*. Foster City, CA: IDG Books Worldwide, Inc.
- Joye, C. 2005. *Homeschooling more than one child: A practical guide for families*. Lincoln, NE: iUniverse.

- Kelly, A.E. 2008. *Pioneers on the homes front: An exploratory study of early homeschoolers in Hawaii*. Ph.D. diss., University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Honolulu, HI.
- Kemerer, F.R. 1982. *Texas teachers' guide to school law*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Kirk, J., and M.L. Miller. 1986. *Reliability and validity in qualitative research*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Kirschner, D. H. 2008. *Producing unschoolers: Learning through living in a U.S. education movement*. Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.
- Knutson, A. 2007. *Mothers' experience of pulling their children out of school in order to homeschool*. Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.
- KXAN. 2010. APD: Home-school teacher molested child, October 13.
<http://www.kxan.com/dpp/news/crime/apd-home-school-teacher-molested-child>.
- Kyvig, D., and M. Marty. 2000. *Nearby history: exploring the past around you*, 2nd ed. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.
- Leeper v. Arlington Independent School District*, 17-88761-85 (17th D.C. 1987).
- Lincoln, Y., and E. Guba. 1985. *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Marshall, C., and G.B. Rossmann. 1999. *Designing qualitative research*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Maynard Nicol, J. E. 1993. *Keeping alive the curiosity: A phenomenological study of the pedagogical practices of a non-sectarian homeschooling support group*. Master's Thesis, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada.
- McKeon, C. C. 2007. *A mixed methods nested analysis of homeschooling styles, instructional practices, and reading methodologies*. Ph.D. diss., Capella University, Minneapolis, MN.
- Mealy, J. C. 1998. *Admission requirements for home-schooled students at member institutions of the Coalition for Christian Colleges and Universities*. Master's thesis, University of Sarasota, Sarasota, FL.

- Medlin, R.G. 2000. Home schooling and the question of socialization. *Peabody Journal of Education* 75(1/2): 107-23.
- Moss, P. A. 1995. Benedictines without monasteries: Homeschoolers and the contradictions of community. Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.
- Myers, A. 1994. Family relationships and parenting styles of homeschooling and non-homeschooling families. Master's thesis, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, Canada.
- Nemer, K.M. 2002. Understudied education: Toward building a homeschooling research agenda. Occasional Paper 48, National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education, Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Nichols, J. 2006. Music education in homeschooling: A phenomenological inquiry. D.M.A. diss., Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.
- Pedersen, M. W. 2002. Differentiation schools: A study of parental choice in a South Texas school district. Ed.D. diss., Texas A&M University at Kingsville, TX.
- Private School Interscholastic Association. 2011. "Private School Interscholastic Association". <http://www.psiaacademics.org/index.html>.
- Quality Homeschool Co-op. 2007a. Communications policy. San Antonio, TX: Quality Homeschool Co-op.
- Quality Homeschool Co-op. 2007b. Fall 2007 course offerings. San Antonio, TX: Quality Homeschool Co-op.
- Quality Homeschool Co-op. 2007c. Quality Homeschool Co-op orientation. San Antonio, TX: Quality Homeschool Co-op.
- Quality Homeschool Co-op. 2009a. Fall 2009 course offerings. San Antonio, TX: Quality Homeschool Co-op.
- Quality Homeschool Co-op. 2009b. Family enrollment form. San Antonio, TX: Quality Homeschool Co-op.
- Quality Homeschool Co-op. 2010a. Fall 2010 course offerings. San Antonio, TX: Quality Homeschool Co-op.

- Quality Homeschool Co-op. 2010b. Parent and student handbook. San Antonio, TX: Quality Homeschool Co-op.
- Quality Homeschool Co-op. 2010c. Spring 2010 course offerings. San Antonio, TX: Quality Homeschool Co-op.
- Quality Homeschool Co-op. 2011. Prospective teacher letter. San Antonio, TX: Quality Homeschool Co-op.
- Quality Homeschool Co-op. n.d. Course descriptions. San Antonio, TX: Quality Homeschool Co-op.
- Ray, B. 2004. *Home educated and now adults*. Salem, OR: NHERI Publications.
- Ray, B.D. 2000. Home schooling for individual's gain and society's common good. *Peabody Journal of Education* 75(1/2):272-93.
- Ray, B.D. 2011. 2.04 million homeschool students in the United States in 2010. Research Paper, National Home Education Research Institute, Salem, OR.
- Romanowski, M.H. 2001. Common arguments about the strengths and limitations of home schooling. *The Clearing House* 75(2):79-83.
- Rose, A.B. 1985. A qualitative study of the characteristics of homeschooling families in South Carolina and the perceptions of school district personnel toward homeschooling. Ph.D. diss., University of South Carolina, Columbus, SC.
- Rudner, L.M. 1999. Scholastic achievement and demographic characteristics of home school students in 1998. *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 7(8):1-33.
- San Antonio Home Education. 2007. Types of homeschooling organizations. <http://www.homeedsa.com/Texas/Homeschool%20Group%20Types.asp>.
- Saunders, M. K. 2006. Comparing the first year experiences and persistence rates of previously homeschooled college freshmen to college freshmen who were not homeschooled. Ed.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN.
- Scott, L. A. 2002. One day at a time: Factors that help and/or hinder homeschooling families' daily routines. Ph.D. diss. University of California, Los Angeles, CA.

- Scott, R. 2010. TEA correspondence regarding homeschools.
<http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/taa/homeschools03232010.html>.
- Siebert, E. B. 2002. *Homeschooling: A comprehensive study of practice in Delaware and the Milford School District*. Ed.D. diss., University of Delaware, Newark, DE.
- Stake, R.E. 2000. Case Studies. In *Handbook of qualitative research*, ed. N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln, 435-54. Thousand Oak, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Stover, D. M. 1994. Five proposed characteristics of academically successful homeschooling. Master's thesis, San Jose State University, San Jose, CA.
- Swanson, K. B. 1996. The curriculum and instructional strategy choices made by homeschooling parents. Master's thesis, Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, Kutztown, PA.
- Taylor, L.A. 1997. Home in school: Insights on education through the lens of home schoolers. *Theory into Practice* 36(2): 110-16.
- Texas Education Agency. 2007. High school information letter.
<http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/home.school/homeltr.html>
- Texas Education Code. 2009a. *Public education: compulsory school attendance*. S 25.085. <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.25.htm>
- Texas Education Code. 2009b. *Public education: exemptions*. S 25.086.
<http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.25.htm>
- Texas Homeschool Coalition. n.d. Homeschooling in Texas: Yes, it's legal!
http://www.thsc.org/Categories3.aspx?Id=Its_Legal
- Texas Human Resources Code. 2005. *Department of Family and Protective Services*. S 40.002(b)(2). <http://law.justia.com/codes/texas/2005/hr/002.00.000040.00.html>
- Topp, C. 2008. *Homeschool Co-ops: How to start them, run them and not burn out*. San Diego: Aventine Press.
- U.S. Department of Education. *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001*. 107th Cong., S 1119. <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg2.html#sec1119>.

- U.S. Department of Education. *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001*. 107th Cong., S 9506. <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg111.html>.
- U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Research. 2008. *1.5 Million homeschooled students in the United States in 2007, NCES 2009-030*. Washington, D.C.
- Valle, J. P. 1998. Their choice: How home schooling makes sense to fundamentally Christian parents. Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.
- Van Galen, J. 1989. Ideology, curriculum, and pedagogy in home education. *Education and Urban Society* 21(1): 52-68.
- Vaughan, P.A. 2003. Case studies of homeschool cooperatives in Southern New Jersey. Ph.D. diss., Widener University, Chester, PA.
- Wagner, T. J. 2008. Parental perspectives of homeschooling: A qualitative analysis of parenting attitudes regarding homeschooling as opposed to public schooling. Ph.D. diss., Capella University, Minneapolis, MN.
- Walsh, J. 2005. *The educator's guide to Texas school law*, 6th ed. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Watkins, M. A. C. 1997. Are there significant differences in academic achievement between homeschooled and conventionally schooled students? Master's thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.
- Wingert, H.D. 1989. Educational philosophies and locus of control in homeschooling and schooling parents. Master's thesis. University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.
- Yauger, M. 2005. She's got to learn. *Pathways of Learning* 23(Winter):27-32.
- Yeager, E. T. 1999. A study of cooperation between home schools and public and private schools, K-12. Ed.D. diss., Texas A&M University-Commerce, Commerce, TX.

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

1. What was the initial goal of your co-op? Is the goal the same now?
2. When was the co-op formed?
3. How many families formed the co-op?
4. Where did you first meet?
5. Where do you meet now?
6. How often do you meet? Has this changed over the years?
7. What subjects do you teach? Has this changed?
8. What are the methods of instruction? Have these changed? Do you rotate teachers, subjects, or curricula?
9. What is the procedure for families who wish to join? Has this changed?
10. Are their fees associated with your co-op? Has this changed?
11. Are you religiously affiliated, and if so, do you require a Statement of Faith?
12. Do you have documents such as a mission statement, code of conduct, or procedural guidelines? If you have documents, have they been modified over the years? What prompted you to create these documents?
13. How is leadership determined?
14. How do you communicate with other members of your co-op?
15. How would you evaluate the success of your co-op?
16. What goals do you have to the future of your co-op?
17. Are there plans or changes that have been discussed in the past but not implemented?
18. How does the planning for your co-op occur?

19. Are you now, or have you ever been, a leader? Why did you choose to work with the co-op in a leadership role? If you are no longer a leader, why did you step down?

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
A Study of a Homeschool Co-op in San Antonio, TX

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you (as a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research and to obtain your formal consent for participation.

You have been asked to participate in a research study about homeschool co-ops in San Antonio, TX. The purpose of this study is to learn about the history a homeschool school co-op, including the operations and changes over the years. The co-op is one that has been in operation for at least 5 years.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to sit down with the researcher as she interviews you. See attached interview questions. The researcher might also ask to observe your co-op in action on one or more occasions. This study will take approximately one (1) hour of interview time per participant, plus the amount of time needed to observe a co-op session, usually three (3) hours.

Your participation may be audio recorded only for the researcher to refer back to for dictating accurate responses.

What are the risks involved in this study?

The risks associated with this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life. Your identity will be kept confidential through the use of a pseudonym.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, the possible benefit to society is to learn how homeschooling parents value a cooperative setting for educating their children.

Do I have to participate?

No. Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with Texas A&M University, your co-op, and any state entity being affected.

Who will know about my participation in this research study?

The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher, Hanna Muldowney, will have access to the records.

If you choose to participate in this study, you may be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only the researcher, Hanna Muldowney, will have access to the recordings. Any recordings will be kept for the duration of the study (6-10 months) and then erased.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Hanna Muldowney at 713-822-4680 or hmuldowney@gmail.com

Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

Signature

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to participate in this study.

_____ I agree to be audio recorded.

_____ I do not want to be audio recorded.

Signature of Participant: _____ **Date:** _____

Printed Name: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____ **Date:** _____

Printed Name: _____

APPENDIX C

QUALITY HOMESCHOOL CO-OP ENROLLMENT FORM

Fall 2009

Updated April 2009

(Please retain a copy of this signed contract for your records)

Family Name _____
 Last name _____ Mom _____ Dad _____
 Mailing Address _____ City _____ Zip _____
 Home Phone (including area code) _____
 Cell Phone (including area code) _____
 Emergency Contact (including area code) _____
 E-mail address _____ Are you a parishioner at St. Jude? Y N

Please list all children that are participating in co-op:

NAME	BIRTH DATE	AGE and GRADE	ALLERGIES

Will you be dropping your children off for co-op and leaving the church grounds? YES NO (If yes, contact number _____)

I have read the entire registration packet. I have also reviewed the **PARENT/STUDENT GUIDELINES FOR LAUDE CO-OP** with my children. I agree to abide by the rules and expectations as presently listed or as may subsequently be amended. I understand that if anyone in my family violates the rules, it will jeopardize our participation in the co-op and that Laude reserves the right to deny participation to any student or family. I agree to be responsible for the behavior of the children in my charge. By signing this agreement and submitting my non-refundable enrollment fee check, I establish my family's registration in the Laude Co-op held at St. Anthony Claret Catholic Church from Aug 28, 2009 to May 1, 2010. Furthermore, in the case of an accident that results in injury to my children or me, I agree to hold harmless Laude Co-op members, St. Anthony Mary Claret Catholic Church, and/or the Diocese of San Antonio for any damages or medical care/expenses. I further agree to pay for any item that my children damage or break at St. Anthony Claret Catholic Church.

Parent's Signature

_____ Date _____

APPENDIX D

QUALITY HOMESCHOOL CO-OP PARENT AND STUDENT HANDBOOK

Please read carefully. You are responsible for knowing and abiding by the following guidelines.

The primary purpose for the Quality Homeschool Co-op (QHC) is to provide additional options for parents as they continue to provide for their children's education. It is not the purpose of QHC to undermine the authority or confidence of parents in any way. It is very important that we demonstrate a good example of homeschooling by following these guidelines for dress and behavior. Observance of the following guidelines will ensure we meet these objectives.

At all times, show thoughtfulness and respect toward the QHC and St. Jude staff, teachers, parents, and other students.

SUPERVISION

QHC is not a typical school situation. The parent is completely responsible for their child/children at QHC.

- You are the parent of your children and are responsible for their actions at all times, whether or not you are present while your child is in class.
- While at QHC, all registered children must be in class, at supervised recess, or accompanied by an adult.
- Unregistered children must be supervised at all times by responsible adult.
- No student is allowed in the sanctuary, the church office or any other building without an adult.
- Classes are held on Thursdays and begin at 9:00 am and end at 2:00 pm. Please be prompt in picking up your child from Area A.
- If a student arrives after class starts, the parent must sign the student in at Area A. Students leaving before 4th period **MUST** be signed out by adult.
- Students may be dropped off no earlier than 10 minutes *before* their first class and must be picked up no later than 15 minutes *after* their last class and **dropped off and picked up ONLY in Area A**.
- QHC is not a babysitting service. Negligence may result in your family being dismissed from QHC.

ILLNESS POLICY

It is the parent's responsibility to inform the teacher if the child will be absent.

- Please do not bring children to QHC who have had fever, diarrhea, vomiting, or other contagious conditions in the last 24 hours.
- If your child requires any medication, please keep it with you and administer it yourself.
- Teachers are not required to make up classes that your child may miss.
- Parents should request make up work from the teacher and work with the child at home to insure that they are caught up by the next class.

WEATHER POLICY

If the weather is bad enough for schools to close, we will be closed. Check the QHC yahoo group or call the teacher for the latest on closings.

TUITION POLICY

Registration fees are per child, per class, per semester. Enrollment fees are used to cover some of the costs of operating the QHC.

- Non-refundable enrollment fee of \$25 per family is due at time of registration.
- Tuition is due Sept. 1st in the Fall and Jan. 15th in the Spring.
- Tuition must be made payable to the teacher.
- Please register for classes carefully. Our teachers are making a commitment to teach your children for the full time frame and you need to make the same commitment.
- **All Tuition fees you have paid are non-refundable.**
- We have a very strict discipline policy. Parents must read, agree, and sign a policy statement.

QUALITY HOMESCHOOL CO-OP STUDENT DISCIPLINE POLICY**Student accountability begins here.**

If an adult tells a student of a problem and he/she responds respectfully and corrects the problem, no further action will be taken. If the student is corrected by a teacher and he/she responds disrespectfully and/or does not correct the problem, or if the observant adult considers the offense serious, the following procedure will be implemented:

First Offense: The teacher will inform QHC and an Incident Report will be sent to the parent.

Second Offense: The student will be required to have a parent or adult guardian with him/her at all times. The student and parent or adult guardian must accept this discipline measure with a good attitude or be dismissed from the QHC without refund.

INFRACTIONS: Infractions are given if a parent picks up or drops off a child in *any* area besides AREA A, or if any child is found playing on the metal railings near stairs. *Two infractions result in expulsion. This is for the SAFETY of all children present.*

At the discretion of the QHC Committee, some offenses can result in immediate dismissal from QHC, with **no refund of tuition fees**. The QHC Committee reserves the right to make final decisions.

RULES OF CONDUCT:

- Office phones are for emergency use only.
- Each person is responsible for picking up his/her trash in the classrooms and lunch area.
- Food and drinks are only allowed in the lunch area. Food in classrooms is reserved for special class parties with permission from the teacher.
- Show respectful obedience to all QHC staff, parents, teachers, any adults present, and St. Jude staff.
- Inappropriate language, conversations, and boy-girl situations are not acceptable and will be subject to discipline.

- Electronic equipment is not allowed (headphones, tape players, walkmans, electronic games, radios, etc.). No knives, guns, water guns, rollerblades, skateboards, scooters, laser pointers or any other dangerous or distracting items are allowed at QHC or on St. Jude property. These items will be collected by teachers.
- Dress code must be followed at all times.

DRESS AND GROOMING CODE

Clothing should be neat and modest. The following dress code should be observed at QHC. This listing is not all-inclusive.

- Parents and students should dress modestly
- Shorts and skirts must be to mid-thigh.
- Overly loose, baggy pants MUST be worn with a belt.
- Boys are to remove hats when in the building/classroom.
- A clean and neat appearance is required.

The following are inappropriate and not allowed:

- Muscle shirts, tube tops, tops that reveal midriffs, or skimpy, mesh, form-fitting or low cut shirts or blouses.
- Visible undergarments (including sports types)
- Biker shorts, skin tight pants or shorts
- Body piercing (other than girl's earrings).
- Tattoos
- Clothing with inappropriate pictures or slogans

Due to so much variety in clothing styles, QHC reserves the right to make final determination of what dress is considered inappropriate.

FACILITIES AND PARKING LOTS

Treatment of facilities will be in accordance with their existing rules (where to sit, where to bring food, where to allow children, etc.).

- Parents must watch over their children not in class or supervised recess at all times.
- Be good stewards of the facilities and parking lot by leaving each in a better condition than it was found. (Put the chairs back, trash in trashcans, etc.) Each person needs to take a personal interest and responsibility for keeping the facility clean.
- QHC is not responsible for personal belongings. Lost and found items will be donated to a needy charity at the end of year.
- "Horseplay" is prohibited.
- Electronic equipment is not allowed (headphones, tape players, walkmans, electronic games, radios, etc.) on the premises.
- No skateboards, scooters, rollerblades, etc. on the premises.
- Loitering or hanging out in the facility or parking lot is not allowed.
- Advertising, surveys, or printed materials may not be distributed or left in any QHC facility or QHC sponsored activity, without permission from the St. Jude Office.
- Inappropriate language, conversations, and boy-girl situations are not acceptable and will be subject to discipline.

APPENDIX E

Quality Homeschool Co-op Communications Policy 2007-2008

- Only enrolled QHC members are authorized to access the Yahoo group site. All un-enrolled families will be deleted.
- Postings on the group site must be directly related to QHC. The QHC group site is **not** a chat group, but a group for the distribution of pertinent QHC information.
 - If you are unsure about posting a message on the QHC group site, please contact the communications chair for approval.
 - **Check the *Word of the Day* every Thursday morning prior to leaving for Co-op.** It is possible that the facility could experience an unscheduled closing due to inclement weather or facility problems (e.g. power outages, water problems, etc.). The *Word of the Day* or unforeseen closings will be posted by 7:30 a.m. Thursday mornings.

APPENDIX F

March 15, 2011

Dear Prospective Teacher:

Quality Homeschool Co-op's Spring semester is not quite halfway through, and, yes, it is already time to start thinking about planning for the 2011 Fall semester. The QHC committee is currently reviewing class proposals for the 2011 Fall semester. If you are interested in teaching at the QHC **or know someone who might be**, please submit the attached proposal to Mary by March 24, 2011.

With the growth of Quality Homeschool Co-op, it is necessary to ensure continued administration of the co-op and continued support from St. Jude parish. To facilitate this, teachers will be required to pay the co-op 5% of all funds generated from tuition as an administration fee. This fee will help offset the administration cost of the co-op and is also used to make a contribution to St. Jude Church for use of the facilities. This fee will be due to the co-op **no later than one week after the teacher has been paid in full by the families.**

Here are some basic guidelines/additional information for our Quality Homeschool Co-op teachers:

Teachers are expected to lead the class in the designated reverent prayer at the beginning of each period-these prayers are provided and may be led by a student.***

**Please take attendance and have attendance noted on your clipboard list within 10 minutes of class beginning.*

**Teachers are required to join the Quality Homeschool Co-op group on Yahoo.com where they are welcome to post messages on the site relating to their class lessons/assignments, etc. Teachers will be sent an invitation via e-mail. Please be sure to check the yahoo site for Quality Homeschool Co-op announcements and/or communications that may be of interest to the teacher. Teachers will also have the e-mails of their students.*

Proposals will be reviewed and teachers will be notified by April 5. Our goal is to have the schedule ready before Holy Week and open registration the last week of classes.

*Thank you and God bless!
Quality Homeschool Co-op*

Fall 2011 Class Proposal

Instructor		Phone	
Age group	[Type age group: PK, K, 6-8, 9-11, 12 and up]	E-mail	
Experience	[Type any prior experience, credential, educational background, certification, etc]	Time preference	[Type class period in order of pref:} We will try to accommodate, but must meet age group needs per period.

Price:

[Type price here. Due to the large numbers of siblings who participate in our co-op, we ask that you consider offering reduced fees for each additional sibling enrolling in your class(es).

Text:

Class Description:

Goals:

Class size (not to exceed 15):

[Type preferred class size here]

Requirements:

[Type any special requirements. E.g. read at a certain level, previous class, etc]

Facility needs:

[Enter any special classroom needs, such as sink, area to run, etc]

References:

[Type two references and phone numbers and email addresses for both.]

VITA

Hanna Maria Muldowney
26814 Redstone Hill
San Antonio, TX 78261
hmuldowney@gmail.com

Education

B.A., History; Minor, Classical Studies, Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas, 2003

M.Ed., Curriculum and Instruction, Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas, 2004

Ph.D., Curriculum and Instruction, Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas, 2011
Dissertation: The Operation of Cooperative Education for Homeschooled
Children: The Quality Homeschool Cooperative as a Case Study.

Professional Experience

Veritas Catholic Homeschool Co-op Founding member, leader, teacher	2009-present
Curriculum Development Specialist, Texas Engineering Extension Services Developed curriculum for State of Texas public works programs	Spring 2008
Instructor of Latin, Texas A&M University	2006-2008
Teaching Assistant, Texas A&M University Assisted in teaching History of Education	Spring 2007
Graduate Assistant, Texas A&M University	2006-2008
Secondary Teacher, Spring Independent School District Taught World History, U.S. History, Latin	2004-2006

Certifications

Secondary History (8-12)
Secondary Latin (8-12)