

A COMPARISON OF UNSCHOOLERS AND EVANGELICAL
HOMESCHOOLERS IN CENTRAL TEXAS THROUGH THE LENS OF
RESOURCE MOBILIZATION THEORY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a comparison of unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers in central Texas, in terms of resource mobilization theory. Unschoolers began the modern homeschool movement in the 1960s. They homeschooled in secret, since withdrawing children from school was illegal at the time. evangelicals began homeschooling in the 1980s, and used the courts to get homeschooling legalized nationwide by the early 1990s. In this paper unschool and evangelical homeschool groups in central Texas are interviewed and compared using resource mobilization theory. Specifically, their uses of cultural, human, material, and social-organizational resources are compared. This comparison leads to the conclusion that the resource mobilization of unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers in central Texas are remarkably similar, and they are both part of a larger homeschool movement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Today homeschooling is a legal and widely accepted schooling practice across the nation. Multitudes of families practice this education method across the United States, using methods that range from rigid structured lesson plans to laissez-faire student-led learning. These families are free to educate their children at home with little to no government involvement or intervention. Society has not always been so accepting of homeschool, however. In fact, homeschooling was not even legal nationwide until 1993 (Cooper and Sureau, 2007).

Over just a few decades, homeschool has transformed from an illegal act of truancy to a popular school choice for almost two million students (Smith, 2013). This begs the question, how was this accomplished? Who are these homeschoolers, and how did their movement grow so quickly and cause so much social change in such a short time? This thesis will explore two groups of homeschoolers, unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers, in central Texas. These two groups were chosen because they are some of the earliest distinctive groups of homeschoolers, and they have been researched since the 1990s. These two groups will be compared using resource mobilization theory, a method used to analyze social movements and their uses of resources. Specifically, this thesis seeks to answer four questions. First, what are the similarities between these two groups, and what do they have in common? Second, what kinds of local organizations do these groups have? Third, what resources do these two groups use? Fourth, do respondents think of their group as a movement? What are the movements' perceived goals?

History of Homeschooling

The pioneers of the homeschool movement were hippies on communes in the 1960s. They were living off the grid and had reservations about sending their children to conservative government-run schools. So instead, they opted to educate their children themselves at home. These early liberal homeschoolers referred to themselves as unschoolers, as they were abandoning the idea that learning had to take place in a structured school setting (Gaither, 2008). Several of these unschoolers contacted John Holt, an educator and proponent of radical school reform, and asked him for help and advice. Holt in turn organized a newsletter called *Growing Without Schooling (GWS)* for this new movement. *GWS* was the first community newsletter for homeschoolers, and one of the first ways for these independent and far-flung homeschoolers to interact and build connections with each other. In the newsletter, Holt often recommended more relaxed school practices, such as putting off math and reading education until a later age (Gaither, 2008).

In the late 1970s Holt met Raymond Moore, a fellow educational researcher who believed in putting off formal education until age eight. Moore connected with many homeschool families, and began contributing to *GWS*. Moore also appeared several times on Dr. James Dobson's national Christian radio program to introduce the concept of homeschooling to a whole new demographic, evangelicals. Evangelicals were also motivated to leave the existing school system in the late 1980s. Many private Christian schools had shut down because of tax changes, and public schools were becoming more liberal and losing some of their traditional Christian trappings, such as teacher-led prayer. In response to these changes, evangelical homeschoolers began to withdraw from society

and sought to teach their children in their own homes. Unlike the early unschoolers, the evangelical homeschoolers wanted to maintain the structure of a traditional school, but without the perceived liberal indoctrination (Gaither, 2008).

Evangelical homeschoolers began to fight to legalize homeschool, mainly working through the courts. Building their cases off of previous rulings on the legality of private religious schools, evangelical homeschoolers argued that their rights as parents to choose how their children would be educated extended to the right to homeschool. Taking these cases to court was difficult for early homeschoolers. Some lawyers were willing to accept reduced rates due to personal interest (Gaither, 2008), but most homeschoolers could not afford to defend themselves in court. To solve this problem, evangelical homeschoolers created the Home School Legal Defense Association. The Home School Legal Defense Association was founded in 1983 by a group of attorneys that homeschooled their own children. The organization collected yearly dues from member families and promised to represent and protect them from any antagonism from the state (Gaither, 2008). Early on, courts allowed parents to homeschool only with case-by-case approval from the school board. As time went on, however, evangelical homeschool legal efforts steadily reduced the required amount of oversight (Cooper & Sureau, 2007). Since its early days, the Home School Legal Defense Association has also served as a source of information on national and local policies that may affect homeschoolers. Through this role it has been heavily active in determining the focus of homeschool activism, often emphasizing both explicitly education-related issues such as the No Child Left Behind Act and more evangelical issues like gay marriage. Once they are informed about these issues, evangelical homeschoolers are likely to contact their

representatives and advocate on behalf of themselves and other homeschoolers (Gaither, 2008).

Today evangelical homeschoolers continue to fight to free homeschool from regulations. One study by Andrea Vieux (2014) found that evangelicals are behind almost all lobbying efforts meant to reduce homeschool regulation. Evangelical advocacy is the strongest factor explaining the level of homeschool regulation in an area, stronger than even teachers' influence. She also found that states with a larger population of evangelicals were likely to have less restrictive homeschool regulations (Vieux, 2014). These reduced regulations do not only make homeschooling easier for the families that fought for them, they also make it easier for new families to start homeschooling. A study by Rachana Bhatt (2014) demonstrated this. She found that lowered regulations on homeschool in an area caused the chance that a 5-8-year-old child will be homeschooled to increase, regardless of whether their family is evangelical. Older children were not significantly affected by this, likely because of the additional knowledge and materials required to teach older children (Bhatt, 2014). Even so, these studies prove that evangelicals' efforts to reduce homeschool regulation can cause overall homeschool populations to grow.

Unschoolers versus Evangelical Homeschoolers

This thesis is about the differences between these groups, the unschoolers and the evangelical homeschoolers. Specifically, this thesis is a comparison of unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers in central Texas, in terms of resource mobilization theory. Unschool and evangelical homeschool groups in central Texas will be interviewed, and

resource mobilization theory will be used to compare and contrast them.

Modern unschoolers are quite similar to the hippie unschoolers of the 1960s. In fact, many modern articles on unschooling still cite Holt's teachings (Ricci, 2011; Kuntz & Petrovic, 2018; Morrison, 2007). Unschoolers' primary goal is to abandon all coercion in schooling and make it more democratic. Unschooled children live their lives with little to no schedule, and are not told what they need to learn. Instead, children have the ability to interact freely with the world and decide for themselves what they want to learn. Though this may seem chaotic and unproductive, when children have all their needs met they are excited to learn new things. Also, unschooled children are better at retaining what they learn since they learn enthusiastically and at their own pace (Ricci, 2011).

Another important trait of unschoolers is that they do not think of unschooling as a plan or activity, but a worldview. They do not distinguish between school and non-school time and they do not take breaks or vacations, because they think of learning as a constant, lifelong process. They also ignore commonly accepted educational milestones for different ages. One case study about unschooling practices observed Christina, a nine-year-old girl who was just beginning to learn to read. Christina's mother Sally did not seem worried about her progress, however. Christina had simply not expressed any interest in reading until recently, when she decided that not being able to read was "getting in her way" (Morrison, 2007). Sally maintained that pushing Christina to learn to read before she was ready or wanted to would cause her to think of reading as a chore, while allowing Christina to decide to do it in her own time made it exciting for her.

The other group considered in this thesis is evangelical homeschoolers. Evangelical homeschoolers today, as in the past, pull their children out of traditional

schools due to dissatisfaction with the required curriculum over issues such as evolution, sex education, and cultural liberalism. Since evangelical homeschoolers' qualms with traditional schools are due to specific content and not the overall teaching method, evangelical homeschoolers do not feel the need to diverge too much from the teaching methods used in these schools. Thus, unlike unschoolers, evangelical homeschoolers tend to give their children a structured, grade-based, traditional education (Van Galen, 1991).

Evangelical homeschoolers' main pedagogical difference from traditional schools is parental control over the content of education. This means control over what is actually learned, like the ability to pick their children's science and health books, but also control over what kind of people their children are exposed to and what kind of experiences they have. In this way they are similar to the unschoolers - they highly value the ability to choose what their children learn and are exposed to based on the children's tendencies and the parents' desires. This is the main advantage of homeschooling over an evangelical private school for these parents - while a private school may espouse the same values as the family, it still ultimately requires the family to relinquish protection of their child for much of the day (Van Galen, 1991).

Pedagogues versus Ideologues

Though members of both these groups are considered homeschoolers, the groups are extremely different from one another. Some may think that homeschool families all share the same values, often picturing a conservative evangelical homeschool family, but homeschool families actually have a wide range of values and motivations. In the early 1990s education researcher Jane Van Galen (1991) sorted homeschoolers into two broad

categories, pedagogues and ideologues, based on their motivations (Van Galen, 1991). Pedagogues follow in the footsteps of John Holt and the hippie homeschoolers of the 1960s; they are most concerned with the method and environment of learning. They tend to be knowledgeable in areas of educational methods and child development. Their teaching methods focus on child autonomy and involvement in the learning process, and they highly value interaction with the larger community. They are also more likely to be socially liberal. Unschoolers are an example of a strongly pedagogical group.

Ideologues, on the other hand, tend to be conservative Christians with a strong desire to instill their own values in their children. They see public schools as unbearably secularized. Unlike pedagogues, they see no problem with the standard methods of education, and tend to use textbooks and workbooks instead of more open-ended methods. Both ideologues and pedagogues highly value parent autonomy. Evangelical homeschoolers are strongly ideological.

Both groups want to do what is best for their children, but they proceed in different ways. Ideologues believe that teaching their children at home is their God-given right. They also believe that the public schools are actively fighting to take away that right and to secularize their children. Ideologues take these threats very seriously, and see themselves in a war against the public schools for the very souls of their children. Any small attempts to regulate homeschool are met with massive dissent from these homeschoolers. In order to protect their rights, ideologues form many support and advocacy groups. These groups fight against any and all homeschool regulations, since all are seen as a breach of homeschoolers' God-given freedoms. These support groups can also provide educational and spiritual guidance to parents who may not have much

experience teaching (Van Galen, 1991).

Van Galen's pedagogues, on the other hand, are only resistant to public schools and regulations because they see them as overly bureaucratic and out of touch with their children's needs. Pedagogues do not see public schools as something to fight against, and do not understand ideologues' propensity to organize and protest. Van Galen quoted one pedagogical parent as saying of more ideological homeschoolers, "everything has to be a cause [for them], and I'm not like that," (Van Galen, 1991, p. 70). Pedagogues do not agree with the methods of public schools, but do not think that they are inherently evil. Most of them also have no problem with a reasonable amount of homeschool regulation. Since pedagogues tend to value independence and individuality, they generally do not form or join large organizations like the Home School Legal Defense Association (Van Galen, 1991).

Resource Mobilization Theory

Resource mobilization theory is a model used to explain the actions and success of a social movement. This thesis will use resource mobilization to examine the differences between unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers. Resource mobilization theory understands social movements and their successes in terms of their available resources. According to this theory, a movement cannot form to address grievances without access to sufficient resources (Sen and Avcı, 2016). It emphasizes the importance of both what resources are used, and where they are sourced from. It involves three classes of people - constituents, adherents, and bystanders. Constituents are people who share the social change beliefs of the movement and contribute resources to it. Adherents

are people who share the social change beliefs of the movement, but do not contribute any resources. Bystanders are people who do not hold an opinion on the movement and simply watch. A successful social movement will turn bystanders into adherents and adherents into constituents in order to acquire more resources (Snow, Soule, & Kriesi, 2004). One way that social movements entice bystanders and adherents is to offer special services and benefits to constituents (Buechler, 1993).

Two important factors in resource mobilization theory are how resources are accessed, and which resources are used. Three important methods of accessing resources are through self-production, aggregation from constituents, and appropriation. In self-production, social movements produce their own resources. Social movements can self-produce resources by forming new organizations and recruiting new members. In aggregation, organizations gain resources from their constituents, either through donations or dues or as volunteers. Social movements can aggregate resources by accepting donations or having experienced members mentor new members. In appropriation, organizations access resources owned by an outside group, like use of a public or church building. Social movements can hold meetings in public parks or restaurants, and use sympathetic non-movement platforms to promote their ideas (Snow, Soule, & Kriesi, 2004).

Four important types of resources are cultural resources, social organizational resources, human resources, and material resources. Cultural resources are the knowledge and conceptual tools needed to act effectively within the movement. These resources are extremely important in homeschooling, since teaching a child everything they need to know through 13 years of schooling is extremely difficult and requires skills and

techniques far outside of common knowledge (Snow, Soule, & Kriesi, 2004).

Social organizational resources are the social structures set into place by the movement. This thesis will address social organizational resources through its examination of local unschool and evangelical homeschool groups in the Texas Hill Country. The level of activity within and coordination between groups will also be important (Snow, Soule, & Kriesi, 2004).

Human resources include both the presence of people and their skills and willingness to work. Experienced long-time homeschool parents provide a unique and vital set of skills, and their willingness to continue participation in the movement after their children have finished school is a tremendous resource for homeschoolers. People with a variety of skills to share with others and people willing to join groups and attend social events are also important human resources (Snow, Soule, & Kriesi, 2004).

Material resources include money, physical objects, and space. Homeschool curricula and learning tools are resources that homeschoolers constantly need. Gathering spaces and dues money are also important material resources (Snow, Soule, & Kriesi, 2004).

The focus on the flow and management of resources in this theory allows for significant diversity of opinion within a social movement. Members of a social movement can have a variety of goals and motivations and may actively disagree with each other, but if their groups share and use resources together they are considered part of the same movement (Barnes, 2014). Resource mobilization theory is used for this analysis because of the vital role that resources play in homeschooling. When parents decide to homeschool, they lose access to a valuable resource: public schools. Many of

the homeschool parents I interviewed had no background in education and were unsure about how even to begin teaching their own children. Textbooks are expensive, and some schooling resources can be hard to find on your own. Access to homeschool-specific social resources is also invaluable, since many children meet their friends through school. These unique needs of homeschool families make effective resource mobilization within the movement doubly important.

Predictions

Going into this thesis, I had several predictions about what I would find. I predicted that evangelicals would be relatively effective at mobilizing resources, because they already have pre-established connections through their religion. These connections would help them to find and interact with each other in order to produce and distribute resources. I also believed that evangelical homeschoolers would be effective at using resources because they tend to have a more structured lifestyle. The order and structure of their home life would likely transfer over to their organizations, and their orderly organizations would be more effective at systematically obtaining resources.

Conversely, I predicted that unschoolers would be relatively ineffective at mobilizing resources. I thought that independently minded, free spirited unschoolers would not be eager to contribute their personal resources to a formally organized group with its own direction and goals. I also theorized that the less structured lifestyle of unschoolers would hinder their productivity as a movement. Their personal lack of structure would be reflected in their movement, and their groups would become distant and uncoordinated.

In sum, I predicted that the two movements would have markedly different resource mobilization styles, and that the style of the evangelical homeschoolers would be more effective than that of the unschoolers. I expected unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers would mingle and exchange resources infrequently if at all due to their vast differences. These predictions were to some degree informed by my own experience growing up as an evangelical homeschooler in Katy, Texas. I regularly saw many evangelical homeschool groups acquire and distribute a great variety of resources with relative ease. However, my family did not encounter a single unschooler in Katy. In my mind, this lack of visibility implied a lack of coordination and established organizations.

Based on previous research into both groups' histories, I predicted evangelical homeschoolers would have more types of local organizations and types of resources. I also predicted that the goals of the unschool movement would be to provide a more democratic education and instill individuality in their children, while the goals of the evangelical homeschool movement would be to instill their values in their children and protect them from the corrupting influence of the public schools. With these predictions in mind, I developed the questions I asked of my interviewees.

2. METHODOLOGY

Interview Questions

In order to compare unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers, I interviewed seven homeschool leaders in Central Texas and asked each of them nine questions designed to test the predictions described in the preceding section. These questions were designed to bring out each respondent's opinions on and interactions with the two groups,

and to learn about the resource mobilization of their organizations. At the beginning of each interview I explained that I was collecting information for my honors thesis at Texas State University. I explained that I was an evangelical homeschooler myself growing up, and I was comparing unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers using resource mobilization theory. I also explained that resource mobilization theory is used to describe social movements in terms of how they get and use resources like people, groups, and information. Each respondent was asked for their consent to be recorded, and all agreed. The questions I asked were as follows:

1. Why did you first decide to homeschool?

This question was used to understand each respondent's background and goals in homeschooling.

2. What would you say is the difference between unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers, and what do they have in common?

This question was used to discover the respondent's own opinion on the differences between the groups.

3. How often do you interact with either group?

This question was used both to discover the respondent's experience with either group, and to determine how often they use and share resources with either group.

4. Do you consider homeschooling a "movement"? If so, what are its main goals?

This question was posed to confirm whether homeschoolers considered themselves a movement, and to see if their resource mobilization patterns matched their perceived goals.

5. How many homeschool organizations are you a member of?

This question was used to discover how many and what kinds of organizations the respondents were members of, and to discover the varieties in organizations present in unschoolers versus evangelical homeschoolers.

6. What are the requirements to be a member of your organizations?

This question was used both to determine the exclusivity and rules of the organizations, and to find out which organizations aggregated resources from their members through dues and other methods.

7. What kinds of services or events do your organizations provide?

This question was used to uncover what types of resources and incentives that organizations provide for their members.

8. Do your organizations use any public resources, like from a church, public school, museum, or park?

This question was used to discover whether unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers appropriate resources from public sources. Specific notice was applied to whether the appropriation could be compromising to the groups' goals.

9. Are there any other resources that your group uses that I haven't mentioned?

This question was used to ensure that I had not missed any resources that are important to their organizations.

Interviews

For this thesis I interviewed seven local homeschool leaders - Sue, Arielle, Hannah, Kimber, Lily, Shannon, and Lynn. Sue, Arielle, and Hannah are unschool leaders, Lily, Shannon and Lynn are evangelical homeschool leaders, and Kimber is

neither, but interacts with both. All of my respondents are women who have homeschooled their children. All of them are administrators for local homeschool groups on Facebook. I specifically contacted administrators both because they would be more knowledgeable about the specific resources that their groups use, and because as local leaders they would be more likely to know general information about groups in their area. I contacted my respondents through Facebook Messenger, which we used to schedule a place and time for each of the 30-40 minute in-person interviews. Five of my respondents still actively homeschooled, while two had adult children and stayed in the movement to mentor younger mothers. All were interested in my thesis topic and eager to discuss their groups.

3. FINDINGS

Sue

Sue runs an unschool support group called Unschooling Mom2Mom and an unschool bloggers' group. She is also an administrator for the Unschooling San Antonio Facebook group. She began homeschooling her three children in 1995. At the time she had a hard time finding resources on unschooling. She knew some evangelical homeschoolers, but she wanted to homeschool for pedagogical reasons and was not satisfied with their strict replications of school learning. After reading books by Dr. Raymond Moore and unschool advocate Mary Griffith, she settled on unschooling and unschooled two of her children through the end of high school, with one deciding to spend two years in public school. During this time, she became a national unschool advocate with the National Home Education Network or NHEN, an umbrella group like

the evangelical Home School Legal Defense Association, but more inclusive.

Sue strongly advises unschool families against joining the HSLDA. She warns them that this association is patriarchal and causes issues with women in power. HSLDA leaders bullied Cheryl Lindsay, author of the prominent homeschool magazine *Gentle Spirit*, into discontinuing after she divorced her abusive husband. These accusations of sexist behavior are doubly important because mothers are often the most active in homeschooling. She also has some issues with the tactics that the HSLDA used in those early days. She thinks that their relentless activism made homeschoolers appear obsessive. They were, “Proud of jamming up the phone lines, but it made people think we were loons,” Sue explained. She also said that the HSLDA does not support unschoolers. Their website claims that they do, but they also say that they only support families with solid future schooling plans, which unschoolers cannot guarantee. In the past, the association has even published articles claiming that unschoolers were undermining everything that the homeschool movement had accomplished. Sue also warns new unschool families that the HSLDA uses its money to campaign for evangelical issues that are unrelated to homeschooling.

Sue believes that Homeschooling is a splintered movement, with unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers each forming their own structures and goals. She thinks of the two groups as extremely dissimilar in goals and methods. When asked about what the two groups had in common she said, “I think they’re both different from the mainstream, and that really may be all.” One significant weakness she sees in the homeschool movement is its lack of leaders. She said that, “Movements normally have leaders, and that’s always been a problem for us.” The HSLDA has tried to be the leader of the

homeschool movement in the past, but Sue believes that the association is past its prime and no longer has a significant effect on the movement. Yet she does not think that this lack of leaders has hindered the homeschool movement too much. She referred to the homeschool movement as, “An organic movement that is just happening, and it’s not necessarily because the movement wants to grow, it just grows, because the alternative sucks.” In other words, she does not think that the homeschool movement really needs strong leadership or recruitment because people are actively seeking them out. As for goals, Sue said that she wants people, “To know that they have alternatives, and that the alternatives are much more varied than they realize.” These alternatives could include unschooling, student-led private schooling, or even evangelical homeschooling.

Sue’s children are grown now, but she is still active in the movement as a professional homeschooling and unschooling coach. In her free Unschooling Mom2Mom group, she and the other admins provide free advice and regular meetups to both new and experienced unschoolers. On her website she encourages people to contact her professionally if they are considering homeschooling but are unsure of where to start, or if they are already homeschooling and want to try unschooling. She also has a page for her book, “Homeschooled Teens: 75 Young People Speak About Their Lives Without School”, and an unschooling moms’ retreat on Galveston Island April 20th through 22nd in 2018 (Patterson, n.d.-a). At the retreat, she promises to provide unschooling workshops, meditation exercises, and opportunities for relationship-building (Patterson, n.d.-b). This is the first time she has done an event like this, and she thinks that the retreat will give a deeper sense of, “Unschooling immersion” than other shorter events that she has planned. She also regularly speaks at homeschool conferences.

Arielle

Arielle is a founding member of Yawp!, a community center for unschoolers in Austin. Before Arielle began unschooling she worked for the Texas Education Agency, working in schools in Central Texas. In these schools she saw teachers make negative judgements about young children that could follow them for years, and she saw that the students barely got to spend any time outside. She realized then that she did not want to send her children to public school. She began reading about unschooling, including books by John Holt. At first unschooling seemed daunting, and she was unsure if she would be able to give her children all the resources they would need to learn. She also experienced pressures from her family, talking about some who thought she was, “Crazy for doing what we’re doing.” Later, though, she realized how many resources were available to them in their community and it felt more doable. She emphasized to me that she still thinks that public schools are useful and important, but they are not where she wants her kids. Today she has been unschooling for about four years and is extremely pleased with how well her children are learning.

Arielle believes that the homeschool movement is active and growing. The cause of this, she said, is the rapidly deteriorating state of our public schools. Some of her friends also realize this and send their children to private school, but this is something that Arielle and many other homeschool families cannot afford. As movements, unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers share the goal of giving their children the best education possible. She said she relates to evangelical homeschoolers because, “We’re all trying to do the best thing for our kids, from our own perspective.” She also

said that, “We both opted out of the traditional school system because it’s not meeting our needs, and we’re finding our own way outside of the norm of society, and that’s a real tie that binds.” Arielle sees these as fundamental similarities that gave unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers a common goal. Arielle could not speak more specifically for evangelical homeschoolers, but said that unschoolers strive to give their children an active role in the learning process.

She is currently a member of two homeschool organizations: Yawp! and the Austin Area Homeschoolers math team. Yawp! is a donation-based unschooling community center that has existed for about a year. The name itself is a reference to the Walt Whitman poem *Sound of Myself*: “I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world,” (Whitman 1855/2009). They chose this name to symbolize the natural vigor and energy that they wanted to enable their children to experience. They are open to, “Anyone who wants to hang out,” even public school children outside of school hours, but parents must be present and willing to use peaceful parenting techniques. Arielle said that they encourage homeschoolers from all walks of life to join because, “The whole point of Yawp! is to try to expand the circle of people that you know, so that you aren’t just in your own little bubble.” The recommended donation is \$5 per visit, or \$50 per month. The Yawp! building has many resources, including art supplies, a small library, and an outdoor pavilion. They also host events for unschoolers of varying ages. One upcoming event is Unhushed, a sex education program for middle schoolers. The Yawp! team is currently working on expanding to a second location.

The math team is a traditional math class that meets for ninety minutes a week. During the class the teacher gives a lesson, then the students work on activities. This is

not an unschooling class, but Arielle's older child enjoys math and wanted to join.

Hannah

Hannah is also a founding member of Yawp!. She is an administrator for the Austin Unschoolers Facebook group, and a member of about fifteen other groups. Hannah also has a background in teaching. Before she had kids she spent some time as a substitute elementary school teacher in Austin ISD, and said after that she, "Knew I wasn't going to do that to my kids." She realized then that she did not want to send her children into the rigid schedules and rules of public school. She also began to take on a more alternative and relaxed lifestyle over time, and felt that unschooling was a good fit for her and her family.

Hannah is unsure whether homeschool could be considered a movement. She said she feels that, "It's an individual thing first and foremost, but there are some things happening now that make it feel like a movement." She thinks that homeschool could be a movement, but it is more of an individual choice. However, she has seen homeschool become more visible and less restrictive in recent years, and she thinks that the actions of organizations like Yawp! could propel it to movement status. For now, though, she thinks of it as more of a countercultural group. It would be hard for homeschool to become a movement, she said, because the act of homeschooling already takes so much time and energy. However, she did acknowledge that there are some people like Sue who continue to help and advocate for homeschoolers after their children are grown. As for goals, she said that a major commonality between unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers is, "A shared mistrust for government oversight." Neither appreciates government

interference with their schooling methods, and both just want to teach their children in peace. Another value that she said they share is that, “It’s important for us to be together as a family,” since both groups place a large focus on family relationships. She also said that an important goal of unschooling in particular is, “Eliminating adultism,” or instilling dignity in children and allowing them a voice in their own decisions.

Austin Unschoolers is a Facebook group that is mostly used as a way for unschool families to make friends and plan events. Austin Unschoolers also has a discussion board that serves as, “A space to talk about concerns that people have” over anything related to unschooling. The group also has a connected Free Stuff group where members of the Austin Unschoolers group can exchange resources. Hannah emphasized that having a way for members to meet and share with one another is important for fostering a community in unschooling, saying that the group was set up so that, “People giving things away can give within the community, to support each other more.” Alongside Austin Unschoolers, Hannah is a member of about ten similar Facebook groups including Unschooling Mom2Mom. Her children also attend a co-op called Tuesdays Together. Homeschool co-ops are schooling groups that offer opt-in school-style classes. Most of these co-ops are for homeschoolers, not unschoolers, Hannah explained, and most of them teach specific subjects like algebra or biology. This co-op, however, focuses on the practice of nonviolent communication and attachment parenting instead of academics. Families meet once a week for events and projects that the students choose and coordinate themselves. The group also has monthly parent meetings where they discuss group business and parenting techniques. The tuition for Tuesdays Together is \$150 per semester, or varying by arrangement.

Hannah is also a member of the Alliance for Self-Directed Education. Not specifically an unschool group, this nationwide association provides resources for other types of self-directed education as well, such as Sudbury schools. The alliance currently provides a newsletter and a discussion forum. In the future, they are considering offering educational grants. They are currently in the process of creating a resource page, which would contain a comprehensive, searchable list of self-directed schools, groups, training, and physical resources available around the country. Their dues are \$5 per month.

Kimber

Kimber is an administrator for the San Marcos Homeschoolers group. She is also a member of Yawp! and the Hays County Homeschoolers, among other groups. Her children started their education in public school. However, each of them began to have issues in school, and she did not agree with, “What they’re doing with our children,” taking issue with what she saw as a lack of empathy, family time, and room for independent growth in the public school system. She is a Christian homeschooler, but she interacts with unschoolers much more often than with evangelical homeschoolers, because she wants to allow her children more room for personal changes and expression than she thinks evangelical homeschoolers would approve of. She also does not like that most evangelical homeschool groups in the area make incoming members sign a strict conservative statement of faith before joining. She believes that this is a needless discrimination, both against non-Christians and against Christians with doctrinal disagreements.

Kimber thinks of the homeschool movement as a direct response to the poor

conditions of the public schools, and said that, “People are dissatisfied with the way their children are being taught.” She thinks that public schools force students to make important career decisions too early, and that our culture in general severely undervalues education. As for goals, she personally thinks that the goal of the homeschool movement is to raise, “World-changers without inhibitions,” strong, self-assured young people who have the confidence to succeed in life and to stand up for what’s right. Another goal is to allow children to learn and develop at their own pace without a state-ordained universal timetable.

As an administrator for the San Marcos Homeschoolers group, Kimber interacts with a wide range of homeschool families that want to join her group. Some of these families do not feel at home in her group. She assured me that, “Even if we are not a good fit for them, we make sure that they are supported as a family.” If she does not think that a family will be a good fit in her group, she redirects them to another group that she believes would serve them better. “These different groups each carry something special for each family,” she said, “So I basically just highlight what each group is for them, and what they choose is theirs.” She has close ties to a large variety of different homeschool groups and prides herself on being able to find the perfect group for any family. “If they want to go evangelical, I have a group for them,” she said, and she has no problem placing a family in a group that she personally does not agree with as long as it will be good for that family. She has done this many times, and has formed solid connections with many diverse homeschool groups in the area.

Lily

Lily is an administrator for the Hays County Homeschoolers group. She also runs a homeschool hiking group. Her oldest child was homeschooled on and off throughout his education, and her youngest has been homeschooled since he began school. She chose the path for each child based on their personal needs and desires. She considers herself between evangelical homeschoolers and unschoolers. There are many evangelical homeschoolers in the Hays County Homeschoolers group, and some unschoolers in her hiking group, so she interacts with both groups regularly.

Lily thinks that homeschool is a movement, but does not consider herself a part of it. She said that both evangelical homeschoolers and unschoolers are, “Somewhat radical in their beliefs,” and that, “Both groups care deeply about the education of their children.” She said that these similarities unite homeschoolers. She believes that unschoolers and evangelicals also have distinct and different goals, but felt that she was not informed enough about them to elaborate further.

As an administrator for Hays County Homeschoolers, one of Lily’s main priorities is developing the relatively new *Resources* page on their Facebook group. Since their Facebook group is private, the *Resources* page is only available to group members. The membership requirements are not strict, members only need to live in the Hays County area, have children, and be interested in homeschooling. The *Resources* page lists types of services provided by homeschool families in the area. These services can include a variety of things from a bed and breakfast to a pool care company. The point of these listings is to, “Make [the Hays County Homeschoolers page] a central meeting place for us to come and be able to find resources,” to set up a community meeting place and to

enable local homeschoolers to band together and support each other. The *Resources* page also lists academic and extracurricular services like tutoring and horseback riding. The services listed on this page tend to be reasonably priced, since they come from homeschool families offering their time within their own community. Lily said that access to homeschool classes at reduced rates is important, as most co-ops in her area are extremely expensive and out of the price range of many homeschoolers. So instead of paying the larger tuition for a co-op, families can take smaller less formal classes at discounted rates. It also gives them the chance to experience things like music lessons, martial arts, or horseback riding that they never would have been able to afford otherwise. “It gives people a wider picture of their options,” she explained, “It’s so helpful, especially for new homeschoolers... They come to the groups like, what can we do?” One new resource, an interior design class, seems extremely popular. It is being taught by a former homeschool student who just finished a college degree in interior design. Four of my respondents; Kimber, Lily, Lynn, and Shannon; all brought it up and seemed extremely excited about it.

Obviously, this *Resources* page is extremely popular within the Homeschool community. Lily has personally invested a lot of time and effort into expanding the *Resources* page into what it is now, and is thrilled that it has become so popular. She takes pride in the fact that having such a useful and widely sought-after resource has brought an increased diversity of beliefs and opinions, saying that, “We’ve actually had people from unschooling groups joining our group for our resources.” The Hays County Homeschoolers group also provides free events where homeschoolers can meet up in person.

Lily runs a homeschool hiking group. This group meets every Monday, with events scheduled a month in advance. They generally meet at state or local parks. She is a member of 3 curriculum groups, Facebook groups where homeschool families can sell or trade textbooks, workbooks, or other schooling resources. These groups are free to join and offer great deals on books that would be expensive to buy new. Lily is also a member of Yawp!.

Lynn

Lynn is an administrator for the Home School Family Support of New Braunfels group. She began homeschooling her oldest son about fifteen years ago. Before that, he was in special education at their local public school. He was not gaining anything from the special education classes, but could not learn quickly enough to keep up with other classes. When Lynn mentioned that she had been considering homeschooling, the special education teacher highly recommended it. At first Lynn had some misgivings because she did not think that she had, “A teaching personality,” but once Lynn started homeschooling her son he began to thrive. She had been told that he would never be able to learn to read, but he began reading in six months. After that, she was committed. She homeschooled both of her sons through the end of high school. Homeschool also allowed her sons to have a seamless education, since her husband was in the military and they moved frequently.

Lynn definitely considers homeschool a movement. Like the previous respondents, she believes that the homeschool movement is a response to current public school conditions. She has seen homeschool students perform far and above their public

school counterparts, and believes that the general public is starting to notice this as well. She said that this improved performance is due to better learning opportunities available for homeschoolers, saying that, “If a child isn’t naturally in the top one percent, then they’re not going to do well [in public school]. Whereas if you homeschool them, the child can do remarkably well with enough attention.” Recently she has seen a tremendous boom in the number of incoming homeschoolers. She believes that evangelicals have their own reasons for homeschooling such as disagreements with sexual education and other subjects they do not want to expose their children to. However, she does not think of evangelical homeschooling and unschooling as mutually exclusive. In fact, she and her fellow administrator Shannon recommend many unschooling techniques to members of their family support group. People with a variety of religions can use a variety of teaching methods, she said, stating that she thinks that a better comparison can be made between, “More legalistic versus more free-minded” groups.

Today both of Lynn’s children are grown, but she uses her position as administrator for the Home School Family Support of New Braunfels group to mentor new homeschool moms. This free Facebook group has one to two scheduled meetings per month where mentors provide advice and members get to make friends and encourage one another. Lynn emphasized the importance of encouragement in the early days of homeschooling, since it can seem extremely daunting to the inexperienced. Lynn also offers free one-on-one mentoring meetings, and administrators give advice in online discussions. The Home School Family Support of New Braunfels group holds most of its meetings at a local Chick-Fil-A restaurant whose owner homeschooled all of his children. The owner is a friend of the group, and always comes by to chat when they are there.

Lynn also still makes regular contributions to the Home School Legal Defense Association. She has no use for their legal services now, but they have helped her in the past in conflicts with public schools and military bases, and she highly recommends that current homeschoolers join as well.

Shannon

Shannon is an administrator for the New Braunfels Home Schooling Group and the Home School Family Support of New Braunfels group. She first began feeling called by God to teach her children when her oldest two were in kindergarten. After three years of prayer and consideration, she pulled her kids out of school and began to homeschool. During this time she was mentored by Lynn. For the first few years she strictly followed curriculum plans, but later on she became more relaxed in her teaching and adopted some unschooling methods.

Shannon shared Lynn's opinions on the homeschool movement, that it is definitely a movement and that it is growing fast. She agreed that evangelism is not a defining trait in any one group, stating that, "We find that in our portion of Texas, no matter how you homeschool you tend to have a very large portion of evangelicals...it can look like many different things." Many homeschoolers also have issues with sex education in public schools, she said, because, "It's not the kind of sex education that we want our children to learn." She also stated that many families decide to join the movement due to downfalls in special education and disagreements with mandatory vaccination rules.

The New Braunfels Home Schooling Group meets every Friday for events that

can include community service, field trips, park meetups, potlucks, and more. They mention other local events on their Facebook page as well, and serve as a platform for members to organize events on their own. They also have a resource page similar the Hays County Homeschoolers’.

As an administrator for the New Braunfels Home Schooling Support Group, Shannon also gives advice to group gatherings and has one-on-one mentoring meetings. She said that her position as an administrator allowed her to exchange resources with many other local homeschool groups, saying that, “They pull resources from me, I pull resources from them, so it works.” Shannon is also a staunch supporter of the Home School Legal Defense Association. She and Lynn both emphasized that a membership with the HSLDA is vital because public schools are against homeschooling. When homeschool parents pull their children out of school the decrease the public school’s funding, they said, so public schools will try to pressure and coerce parents into keeping their children enrolled. Homeschoolers also face risks from nosy neighbors noticing children playing outside during school hours and calling the authorities. Shannon also encourages homeschool families to join the association, “Just in case.”

Resource Mobilization of the Groups

Most of the homeschool groups seen in these interviews fit into one of four categories: support groups, community groups, trading groups, and national groups. The support groups include Unschooling Mom2Mom and Home School Family Support of New Braunfels. These support groups mobilize cultural, social-organizational, and human resources. They aggregate cultural resources like information about homeschool

techniques and available resources from experienced members. These cultural resources are either shared in online forums or are given in person to new members who may not have been able to find them otherwise. The support groups self-produce social-organizational resources by organizing events and creating relationships between new homeschoolers. The groups also aggregate social-organizational resources by directing new members to movement organizations that could meet their specific needs.

Support groups aggregate human resources by using the expertise of their experienced members. The groups provide a space where experienced homeschoolers can share what works for them, and a place where new homeschoolers can easily find advice. Since both of these groups have Facebook groups, they are even easier to find. The administrators of both groups said that they regularly interacted with parents who were beginning to consider homeschool and found their site online. Support groups are essential for turning bystanders into adherents, and adherents into constituents. They turn bystanders into adherents by creating easy to find Facebook pages that offer free advice. Many of my respondents, both Unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers, said they had thought homeschooling would be impossible before they talked to current homeschoolers. These groups gave them the support and techniques that they would need to start homeschooling. By making themselves visible to bystanders and reshaping their ideas of homeschool, support groups turn bystanders into adherents. Support groups also turn adherents into constituents by exposing them to all of the groups and resources that the local homeschool community has to offer. The leaders of support groups are highly active in the homeschool movement, and can direct new adherents to the groups that they will find most enticing. By immediately introducing adherents to their ideal place in the

movement, support groups turn adherents into constituents.

The community groups include Yawp!, Austin Unschoolers, Tuesdays Together, the Hays County Homeschoolers, and the New Braunfels Home Schooling Group. These groups serve a variety of functions, but all of them are primarily used to plan and host social gatherings. The community groups aggregate cultural resources by disseminating information about homeschool techniques and discounts. With discounts and deals like those available on the Hays County Homeschoolers page, these cultural resources can be used to acquire material resources through aggregation from movement members or appropriation from non-members.

Community groups self-produce social-organizational resources by planning meetings and encouraging personal relationships between members. Community groups plan most homeschool activities, which are vital for recreation and socialization for homeschoolers. They can also aggregate social-organizational resources by redirecting new members to groups that would fit them better. Community groups are effective at aggregating human resources because they have a lot of active members. These members are easily contacted and connected through Facebook groups and are easy to mobilize if the group needs their specific skills. The close friendships that community groups foster makes it easier to aggregate and mobilize skilled human resources because group members that are well acquainted with each other will know each other's skills and weaknesses. Community groups transform bystanders into adherents by offering them lots of unique and attractive resources, like discount lists and sex education classes. These groups also transform adherents into constituents by using their Facebook pages to give individuals a platform to plan events themselves. These opportunities allow

adherents to become more involved in the movement and begin to produce resources, turning them into constituents.

Trading groups include the Austin Unschoolers Free Stuff group and the curriculum groups. By nature, these groups deal primarily in material resources; they do not provide much by way of cultural, social-organizational, or human resources. Trading groups aggregate material resources by providing members with a platform to exchange or sell textbooks and other schooling resources. These groups encourage bystanders to become adherents because they lessen the financial barriers to homeschooling. Curricula and other school supplies can be extremely expensive, and a potential homeschooler researching the cost of buying these resources new may become discouraged. The online presence of trading groups on Facebook can encourage these bystanders to become adherents. Trading groups also encourage adherents to become constituents by providing an attractive exclusive resource. Some trading groups like the Austin Unschoolers Free Stuff group do not allow you to join unless you are already a member of an umbrella community group, encouraging adherents to become involved in the movement community. Trading groups also encourage adherents to provide material resources to the group. Both of these processes encourage adherents to become constituents.

All of the previously listed categories are local. Most do not serve anyone outside of their county. National groups are considerably larger work in different ways. National groups include the Home School Legal Defense Association and the Alliance for Self-Directed Education. These national organizations differ widely from each other, and will be dealt with separately. The Home School Legal Defense Association aggregates material resources from its member families via dues. In exchange for their dues, member

families are promised the skilled human resource of legal help in case of emergency. The HSLDA also self-produces exclusive cultural resources in the form of a newsletter, and nonexclusive cultural resources in the form of news updates and other articles available on their public website. The association encourages bystanders to become adherents by providing protection from possible risks involved in joining the movement. They encourage adherents to become constituents by reminding homeschoolers of the many threats that they face from the public sphere. These reminders drive adherents to join the association, and their dues are used by the movement.

The Home School Legal Defense Association is an evangelical organization. Currently, no parallel of this organization exists for unschoolers. For a while the National Home Education Network that Sue worked with tried to fill this non-evangelical niche, but that network only lasted for a few years. A national organization that currently serves unschoolers is the Alliance for Self-Directed Education. Even though the alliance is not exclusively for unschoolers, it still furthers their goals and can be considered part of the movement. This organization is relatively new, it is still in its first year of existence. Like the HSLDA the ASDE aggregates physical resources from its constituents through dues, though the alliance's dues are much lower. The alliance currently self-produces a newsletter, and provides networking opportunities as a social-organizational resource. In the future, they are planning to aggregate more cultural, social-organizational, and physical resources and offer them to their members.

Similarities and Differences

As movements, unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers in central Texas have

a lot in common. One significant trait that they share is the structure of their organizations. Both unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers dealt mostly in support groups, community groups, and trading groups. The functionings and resource mobilization of the groups were also strikingly similar. Organizations in both groups also use Facebook pages for communication and online visibility. Almost every organization mentioned by any of my respondents had its own Facebook page. This commonality makes sense, as Facebook is a free and popular medium that allows for expanded interaction and outreach.

Another reason that the two groups were so similar is that they often share resources. Skilled human resources like the interior design class are shared because many members are interested in them and the skilled people are welcoming towards both groups. Some social-organizational resources are specialized for either unschoolers or evangelical homeschoolers, but many are open to any homeschooler who wants to join. Many groups like the Hays County Homeschoolers do not discriminate between unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers, but instead aim to provide resources for all homeschoolers. Some material resources like local teacher discounts are shared out of necessity, because neither group can exclude the other. Cultural resources like schooling techniques are frequently shared between groups because both groups want homeschool students to succeed. Sharing resources often makes sense to these groups, because the primary goal of both is to provide their children with a happy childhood and a quality education. Sometimes unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers may disagree about the actions that lead to this goal, but in areas where they agree they are more than happy to work together.

A similarity in mentality between the unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers I interviewed is that none of them tend to prioritize recruitment. They are willing to answer questions from people that already want to join their movement and will work to make themselves more visible and accessible to these curious bystanders, but they are far from interested in actively searching out public school parents and converting them to their superior homeschool ways. When asked about their group's recruitment methods, my respondents replied that their groups are already expanding from people who actively sought them out.

Another similarity between unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers is that the member agreements of their more extreme groups often exclude each other. This can come from statements of faith on the evangelical homeschool side, or peaceful parenting commitments on the Unschool side. These barriers prevent the two groups from directly using each other's resources. However, many resources end up shared through a third party, often a more middle-ground group like the Hays County Homeschoolers. Unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers will both be willing to join organizations like these for their resources, and their contributions to these organizations are shared with their opposite.

There are also some differences between unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers. One difference is that the evangelicals tend to place more focus on curriculum and textbook-related resources. This can limit the trade of material resources between the two groups, since unschoolers do not use textbooks as often. Many evangelical homeschoolers also favor textbooks with an evangelical slant that unschoolers may not agree with.

Another difference between these two groups is that although the categories of organizations present for unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers mirror each other in many aspects, there is no modern unschool equivalent of the Home School Legal Defense Association. The National Home Education Network may have served as a minor rival in the past, but currently the evangelical association is the only group of its kind. The Alliance for Self-Directed Education, the national unschoolers' group, is not even specifically for unschoolers, but it still provides a method for their mobilization of resources by connecting them to similar groups and resources around the country.

Goals

The consensus of the respondents was that homeschooling is, in fact, a movement. Only Hannah disagreed, since she was unsure whether homeschooling counted as a movement. Sue, Arielle, Lynn, and Shannon all agreed that the movement was growing quickly. Among those who said that homeschooling was a movement, Sue believed that it was sharply divided between unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers, while all others agreed that many goals could be contributed to the homeschool movement overall. The most common of these goals was a better education. Lynn, Shannon, Kimber, Lily, and Arielle all mentioned an improved education as a goal of the homeschool movement at large. Both groups also had their own unique goals. The evangelical homeschoolers stated that one of their main goals was to protect their children from unhealthy and unwanted secular influences, like public school sex education classes. They also said that some homeschool to avoid standardized vaccinations, and stated concerns with how the public schools handle special education classes. The unschoolers stated that their unique

goals included giving their children an active role in their education. Sue also wanted to inform parents of their schooling options.

Discussion

This analysis found mostly minor differences between unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers with respect to resource mobilization, and many major similarities. These similarities include vital factors like primary goals, types of resources used, and organizational structure. In fact, in Central Texas, these two groups are so similar that they cannot reasonably be called separate movements. They should instead be considered two branches of a single movement: the homeschool movement.

This is a far cry from the predictions presented at the beginning of this study. evangelical homeschoolers did have the effective mobilization methods present as expected. However, the unschoolers were far more effective at resource mobilization than expected. I predicted unschoolers would have a few small, poorly-connected groups and few shared mobilized resources. Instead, unschoolers in the Austin area have groups and resources that easily rival those of evangelical homeschoolers. Yawp!'s use of shared human and material resources to maintain a permanent rented community space is an impressive feat. The free-spirited nature of unschool philosophy does not seem to impede their organizational abilities whatsoever. Even more surprising was the level of cooperation between the two groups. Far from avoiding all interaction, many evangelical homeschoolers and unschoolers embrace their ability to share resources in order to better educate their children.

Both the level of cooperation between unschoolers and evangelical

homeschoolers and the resourcefulness of unschoolers in central Texas are nothing like what I saw in the homeschool community in Katy. I suspect that this is due to the level of diversity in the Austin - San Antonio area. Here, liberal unschool groups in Austin and conservative evangelical homeschool groups in New Braunfels are barely an hour's drive apart. While my hometown Katy is not far from Houston, Houston is not as liberal as Austin and the Katy homeschool groups that I encountered tended to be geographically isolated. Hays County, on the other hand, includes a great variety of people and places. Thus it is possible that this level of similarity between unschool and evangelical homeschool groups is somewhat unique to this area. Sue has homeschooled in many states around the country, and she found that some areas had many more unschooling resources than others. This seems to confirm the idea that the level of equality in Central Texas is unique. In the future, the difference between unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers should be evaluated in different areas to test this.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this thesis found that unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers in central Texas are so similar that they cannot reasonably be considered separate movements, and should instead be considered two ideological branches of a single homeschool movement. Both groups' organizations can be sorted into four categories: support organizations, community organizations, trading organizations, and national organizations. The homeschool movement aims to provide a better education for their children. Some of the most common resources used are local organizations, school supplies, and skilled human resources.

Right now we are living in an age of cultural polarization. Political conversations have become battlefields, and have been quickly amassing casualties. People from opposite sides of the political aisle seem to be speaking different languages, completely intolerant of anything that doesn't match their personal beliefs. In this environment, two groups as disparate in values as unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers could be expected to despise one another. Indeed, in the larger American society disagreements over parenting styles can spark enormous arguments on anything from spanking to breastfeeding. Against all odds, however, unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers not only tolerate each other but often actively seek out each other's company.

One possible explanation for this amicable relationship is that the two groups have a common goal: both of them want the freedom to homeschool their children without government interference. Both have their individual desires, but these needs cannot be met without some cooperation. Their common goal also elicits a common understanding of one another. While many groups that disagree try to demonize their opponents, all the homeschoolers I interviewed looked at all other homeschoolers and saw fellow invested parents trying to do the best thing for their children. Their shared family values humanize them and help them to see themselves as all working toward the same goal.

Another factor that makes it easier for unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers to get along is that their interactions are optional. Homeschoolers have no hard and fast obligations to be members of any group, and have the freedom to skip any meeting or event for any reason. If a major disagreement broke out between unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers, they could just avoid each other until it blew over. This

freedom of isolation also allows the most extreme members of either camp to stay on the fringes with their own group without ever having to interact with others. While in other circles the most militant members may be seen on the battle lines attacking one another, the more partisan homeschoolers usually make a concerted effort to only associate with people who agree with them. When the more extreme, less forgiving members of a movement stay on the edges, the members closer to the middle are less likely to argue.

A last facet of this relationship that necessitates cooperation between unschoolers and evangelical homeschoolers is their size. In order to create an environment where families can pull their children out of school and give them a full enriched education and childhood, a lot of pieces have to fall into place. There have to be community groups, and social groups, and trading groups so that parents can manage this enormous load of work. Unique cultural resources must be available to help parents transition into this largely foreign lifestyle. All of these resources take a tremendous amount of time and effort to produce. If each group had to procure all of its resources separately with no communication, it would cause tremendous waste. With the current size of the homeschool community, this is a waste that they simply cannot afford.

But the homeschool movement may not stay small forever. The homeschoolers interviewed for this thesis all said the homeschool movement is growing rapidly. As shortcomings of the public schools continue to occupy our national conversation, the number of parents dissatisfied with the public school system is likely to grow. What these parents decide to do as an alternative will depend on what options they are presented with and what resources they are made aware of. With so many inexperienced newcomers, effective resource mobilization within the homeschool movement is crucial for its

continued success, and is likely to shape the face of American education.

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