Homeschooling: A Site of Freedom and Constraints for Black Families

By

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Dedication

To my beautiful son Travis. You are my source of inspiration and my favorite teacher in life.

* * *

To my ancestors who have been a guide on this life journey and give me the courage to be all I can be on this Earth. James Oliver Williams and Mary Elizabeth Johnson, I hope you both are proud of me.

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Abstract

As Black parents continuously search for high-quality and affirming educational opportunities for their Black children, homeschooling has increasingly become a "choice" for Black families. While the research on Black homeschooling has noted racism in schools as a primary motivator for Black families turning to homeschool, less is known about other factors – beyond their motivations – that shape their decision to homeschool. Moreover, the homeschooling practices of Black caregivers are largely understudied. This growing research on Black homeschoolers also privileges the experiences of parents, with Black homeschooled youth overlooked as a focus of inquiry. Black families' experiences homeschooling can reveal what Black parents aim to disrupt and create through homeschooling and how Black youth make sense of their learning experiences outside of traditional schools.

This critical qualitative dissertation study examines the experiences of Black and African American homeschooling families in Wisconsin and Illinois – two states with notable educational inequities for Black people and yet have received less attention in the literature. Drawing from BlackCrit, I explore why and how Black families homeschool through a variety of data collection methods: semi-structured interviews and focus groups with Black homeschooling parents, interviews with Black homeschool youth, and document analysis of homeschooling laws and artifacts from focal Black homeschool families. The data reveals that Black parents' decisions to homeschool were shaped by their motivators as well as factors that facilitate or enable them to "choose" homeschooling. Further, parents decided to homeschool for a variety of reasons based on constraints that pushed them to homeschool and possibilities that pulled them to homeschool. For most parents, antiblackness shaped their decision – albeit in different ways. All parents wanted to provide their children with what they believed was the best educational

opportunities; however, they approached and practiced homeschooling in varied ways. They found homeschooling offered more freedom to learn, and at times, experienced constraints that shaped their practices. Young Black homeschoolers viewed homeschooling as a positive educational experience that affirmed them as learners and offered them more freedom in their learning, especially in comparison to traditional school. Some youth, however, pushed the bounds of their homeschooling as they shared their desires for fewer constraints and more freedom. While race, racism, and being Black were not explicitly central for all youth, a few youth shared that Black-centered learning was an important part of their homeschooling experience.

The findings illuminate the freedom that is afforded with homeschooling, as well as the constraints that Black parents face ensuring their children have affirming educational experiences that make them well prepared for their lives in a neoliberal anti-Black society. The findings also highlight the heterogeneity among Black homeschooling parents in both their decisions to homeschool and their homeschool practice. Through its in-depth analysis of parents' motivations, practices, challenges, and aspirations—as well as the experiences and insights of young Black homeschoolers— this project has implications for efforts to rethink education in and outside of schools and can inform how educators across educational spaces support and practice liberatory learning with young Black people.

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Chapter 1: The Long Tradition of Black Parents' Educational Pursuit in the United States

> Instead of our schools being simply separate schools, forced on us by grim necessity, they can become centers of a new and beautiful effort at human education, which may easily lead and guide the world in many important and valuable aspects.
>
> *Does the Negro Need Separate Schools? Du Bois, 1935*

Schools were one of the first institutions newly freed Black people created in the United States (Shujaa, 1994; Siddle-Walker, 2000). The creation of a public-school system and the emergence of Black common schools in the South were established by formerly enslaved Black people who saw education as a means for liberation (Siddle-Walker, 2000). They resisted laws that prohibited them from learning by pursuing self-education, teaching others (Williams, 2009) and engaging in fugitive learning practices[1] (Givens, 2021). From the antebellum period to the present day, Black people have created and continue to create avenues for learning, which demonstrates a long tradition of Black people seeking education and liberation.

It is evident that education has always been an integral aspect of Black life because, despite white attempts to withhold it, Black people have made various efforts to provide quality education to themselves, their children, and their communities. One such effort was school integration as a means to access resources (Bankston & Caldas, 1996). Another was the establishment of segregated schools, which Black parents, educators, youth, and community members organized. They supported these educational efforts by "founding new schools, providing financial and other support to existing schools, organizing institutions and using existing institutions to support education, petitioning government agencies, convening conventions, participating in demonstrations and school boycotts, and using lawsuits to achieve

[1] Givens (2021) states, "when it came to the pursuit of freedom through education, black people consistently deployed fugitive tactics. Enslaved people learned in secret places. During Jim Crow, black educators wore a mask of compliance in order to appease the white power structure, while simultaneously working to subvert it." (p. 4).

educational equality" (Siddle-Walker, 2000, p. 258). Many valued Black spaces as supportive and safe environments for Black families. Facing disparate and inadequate state funding, Black peoples' resourcefulness and self-determination led them to create their own spaces for Black families to learn. They created Black common schools, Black Independent Schools, Black Supplementary Schools, Afrocentric and African American Immersion schools, and community-based educational organizations with the goal of educating and affirming Black people (Asante, 1991; Baldridge et al., 2011; Dove, 1993; Ginwright, 2004; Holt, 1991; Kifano, 1996; Leake & Leake, 1992a; Leake & Leake 1992b; McKinney de Royston, 2011; Mirza & Reay, 2000; Rickford, 2016; Span, 2002; Thompson & Thompson, 2008). These Black-organized spaces have pushed for Black people to have greater autonomy over their learning. Further, they aimed to implement a different learning experience for Black youth and parents, particularly through the inclusion of curricula that centered political consciousness and people of African descent. Although community-based educational organizations and Black-centered schooling aimed to offer Black families affirming learning experiences, these institutions still faced constraints as they navigated school districts' perceptions of achievement related to testing and competition and the devaluing of Black spaces (Baldridge; 2020; Johnson, 2017). Despite these constraints, the quest for education continues today as Black parents make educational decisions to support their children's learning, especially in the era of neoliberal school choice.

While many of these educational efforts take place in community and institutions, it is important to highlight the home as another site of educational resistance and liberation. Black parents have been teaching, counter-teaching, and reteaching Black children outside of schools throughout history (I discuss this point further in the Literature Review section of this chapter). Scholars note the importance of *homeplace* (hooks, 1990) for Black families and the activism of

Black mothers, in particular, for creating spaces of refuge and care for their Black children living in a racist society. And while these spaces, at times, were created out of "grim necessity," they are also spaces that illuminate how society and education can be re-imagined. It is also important to continue studying how Black families are educating their children at home outside of formal schooling institutions in the United States. Longstanding antiblackness[2] in the U.S. educational system across school types has motivated some Black families to turn to educational options outside of this traditional schooling system and, specifically, to homeschool.

Homeschooling is rooted in this long history of Black people creating educational opportunities for themselves. Yet research on and attention to the "modern homeschooling movement" often privileges the perspectives of white homeschooling families. Homeschooling has become more racially, religiously, and socioeconomically diverse since the 1990s (Levy, 2009), but even with this growing diversity, much of the literature reflects the motivations and interests of white, two-parent, middle-class, conservative, religious homeschoolers (Gaither, 2017; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Lois, 2021; Murphy, 2012; Ray, 2013b; Stevens, 2001). As a corrective, other scholars, including myself, have been intentional in highlighting a more diverse group of Black homeschoolers (Baker, 2013; Fields-Smith, 2015, 2020; Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; Lois, 2021; Mazama, 2016; Mazama & Lundy, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015; Mazama & Musumunu, 2014; Rachid, 2005; Ray, 2015; Taylor, 2018; Williams, 2016).

Nationwide trends show the rise in Black homeschooling and document that it has increasingly become an option for Black families, particularly due to racist school environments

[2] Antiblackness is not simply racism against Black people. Rather, antiblackness refers to a broader antagonistic relationship between Blackness and (the possibility of) humanity, where "Black humanity and human possibility are threatened and disdained" (Dumas & ross, 2016, p. 429).

(Anderson, 2018; Baker, 2013; Fields-Smith, 2015; Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Mazama, 2016; Musumunu & Mazama, 2014). This rise in Black families homeschooling has experienced an even steeper increase during the Covid-19 pandemic. A U.S. Census survey gathered that Black families homeschooling throughout the country increased from 3.3% in the spring of 2020 to 16.1% in the fall of 2020 (U.S. Household Pulse Survey, 2021. See Appendix 1 for Tables from survey). While many sources have cited the Covid-19 pandemic as a motivator for Black families to homeschool, others note how the pandemic was merely the catalyst that pushed Black families to homeschool while anti-Black racism in schools, particularly in the era of the Black Lives Matter movement, was a pre-existing motivator (Miles, 2021; Reid, 2022; Reilly, 2022). This growing attention to Black homeschoolers is changing the public perception of who homeschools and why. Thus Black homeschooling warrants further study.

Whereas a large body of literature on Black homeschooling focuses on Black parents' motivations to homeschool, less is known about other factors that shape their decision-making process and lead them to choose to homeschool. This focus has limited discussion of school choice for Black families. While some studies highlight the diverse backgrounds of Black homeschoolers, few studies discuss these demographics and experiences in relation to their homeschooling decisions and practices (Fields-Smith, 2020). Moreover, the scholarship on Black homeschooling largely focuses on Black parents' motivations while their homeschooling practice remains understudied (Mazama, 2016). Lastly, Black homeschool youth perspectives are essentially overlooked (Puga, 2019).

My dissertation provides opportunity to learn more about Black homeschooling by centering Black families who homeschool in Wisconsin and Illinois – two states largely ignored in the homeschooling literature although both have received national attention for their

inequitable educational and living conditions for Black people. My dissertation explores Black parents' decision-making to homeschool, noting various factors that inform and enable their "choice" to homeschool. Further, I examine the diverse homeschooling practices of these families given these two states have fewer homeschooling regulations on teaching. Lastly, I include Black homeschool youths' perspectives on their learning. My overarching research question explores what Black parents aim to disrupt and cultivate through their homeschool decision and practice, and how Black youth understand their homeschooling experiences. Specifically, this critical qualitative study attends to the following research questions:

1. What factors shape Black parents' decisions to homeschool?
2. How do Black families approach and engage in homeschooling?
3. How do young Black homeschoolers understand their learning experiences?

This dissertation explores Black families' educational choices (or lack thereof), and their homeschooling visions, practices, and challenges.

I argue that homeschooling is a site of both freedom and constraints for Black families navigating anti-Black and neoliberal educational systems. As my research findings show, a range of reasons motivate Black parents to homeschool. Ultimately, the constraints of traditional school options are key motivators. Further, many of these parents view homeschooling as freeing because of their ability to create learning experiences with fewer restrictions in Wisconsin and Illinois. Black parents' homeschooling practices reflect this freedom based on how they approach and engage in homeschooling, yet parents also shared experiencing constraints based on societal expectations, values, and norms. These constraints, at times, led them to reproduce society's gaze in their homeschooling. Black youths' homeschooling experiences illuminate the possibilities for educating Black children outside of schools, particularly in light of their

preference for homeschooling due to the freedom they have in their learning. However, they also note the constraints they feel in their homeschooling practice and their desire to escape them. All the parents in my study had high expectations for their children as they homeschooled and wanted to provide them the best education possible – albeit in different ways. Parents' visions for learning were at times in tension with what youth desired to learn.

Despite the varied motivations and practices of Black homeschoolers, none are immune to broader ideas about what constitutes education. Further, Black parents' homeschooling motivations and their practices shed light on what they understand a "good education" to be. While Du Bois urged us to consider these constraints and possibilities, I believe that centering the experiences of Black families who homeschool can illuminate "a new and beautiful effort" at education. This effort can be a guiding light for redefining education in the current moment. The Covid-19 pandemic has only exacerbated existing, persistent inequities in education. Millions of families have engaged in some form of home learning out of public health necessity, and many others, particularly Black families, have transitioned to homeschool. As the pandemic encourages a reconsideration of what learning looks like, it is paramount that school systems listen to Black families who, historically and currently, experience antiblackness in the educational system and enact alternative education possibilities. My dissertation study on Black families contributes to broader educational scholarship, particularly in the era of the Black Lives Matter movement and Covid-19 pandemic.

Further, I examine Black parents' educational decision-making and practices in a neoliberal school choice context, offering insight into the learning possibilities that Black families enact outside of normative in-school practices. This research is a timely undertaking to further elucidate the possibilities, tensions, and implications of Black homeschooling. In this

chapter, I present the literature review and conceptual framework for this dissertation study to connect my research to a growing body of scholarship that examines Black homeschooling.

Literature Review

In what follows, I briefly review the literature on Black parents' engagement in schools and utilization of schooling options. This is important to highlight in order to contextualize why some Black parents choose homeschooling over other schooling options. The bulk of this literature review, however, focuses on Black homeschooling. In particular, I discuss key features about Black homeschooling at this current moment as a backdrop to my study. Next, I outline Black parents' motivations to homeschool, giving attention to the roles of racism, religion, and family, as well as dilemmas, challenges, and barriers. Then, I outline Black parents' homeschooling practices and Black homeschoolers' academic achievement. I conclude the literature review by highlighting the contributions of this dissertation to the existing scholarship.

Black Parent Engagement in Schools

Many studies examine students' academic success related to parents' engagement in schools, assuming a positive link between parental involvement and student success (Doucet, 2011; Jeynes, 2005, 2021; Latunde, 2018; Patall et al., 2008; Reynolds, 2010; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996; Thompson & Hong, 2011; Yull et al., 2018). While there is a vast range of ways that parents engage in their children's education, studies show that schools and educators typically privilege and prefer middle-class, white mothers' modes of engagement (Bourdieu, 1985; Crozier, 2001; Lareau, 2003; Lawson, 2003; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Lewis, 2003; Reynolds, 2010). Black parents' ways of engaging in their children's education include a range of approaches – both school-based and home-based – including approaches that schoolteachers neither see nor welcome (Delale-O'Connor et al., 2020; Yull & Wilson, 2018). Some of the

parent engagement literature attends to the various ways that Black parents teach their children at home through combating negative images of Black people and teaching Black history (Hughes & Chen, 1997, 1999; Jeynes, 2005, 2016, 2021; Posey-Maddox, 2017; Reynolds, 2010). Traditional schools often overlook or give a cursory lesson on these subjects.

Moreover, Black parents at times experience structural barriers in schools – such as lack of transportation and time – which also shape their perceived engagement in schools (Latunde, 2018; Yull et al., 2018). Even when these barriers are lifted, however, Black parents' engagement in schools is still shaped by anti-Black racism, and scholars disrupt the notion that Black parents' engagement in schools would end racial disparities in education (McCarthy Foubert, 2019). Indeed, Black parents are well aware of the racism that takes place in schools and engage – individually and collectively – to try to ensure their children's academic success (Allen, 2013; Marchand et al., 2019; McCarthy Foubert, 2019; Posey-Maddox, 2017; Rall, 2021; Rall & Holman, 2021; Yull & Wilson, 2018). Black parents also engage in other educational spaces that aim to provide more liberatory educational experiences to meet their Black children's needs, such as African American Immersion schools, Black independent schools, and community-based educational spaces (Bush, 2004; Carter et al., 1989; Posey-Maddox et al., 2021; Shujaa, 1992, 1994).

Teacher perceptions of parents' race, gender, and socioeconomic status shape how they engage with parents and, therefore, the nature of family-school relationships (Cooper, 2003, 2009; Doucet, 2008, 2011; Epstein, 1986; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2016). Anti-Black perceptions of Black parents' ways of engaging lead some schoolteachers to characterize them as combative, uninterested, and uncaring (Cooper, 2003, 2009; Doucet, 2008; Lareau & Horvat, 1999) despite the overwhelming amount of literature that contradicts these assumptions

(Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991; Cooper, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009; Franklin et al., 2002; Malone, 2008). Further, Black parents often endure racism in the form of stereotypes, microaggressions, intimidation, alienation, and exclusion as they engage with school actors (Cooper, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Lewis-McCoy, 2017; McCarthy Foubert, 2019; Posey-Maddox, 2017; Reynolds, 2010). Scholars argue that because Black parents have historically faced racial discrimination in schools, they may engage with schoolteachers and administrators with criticism and suggestions rather than support and praise (Cooper, 2005; Lopez, 2003). Often Black parents face challenges in supporting their children's education in schools due to this racism. Having these negative experiences in schools as they attempt to engage and advocate for their children's education forces Black parents to make decisions that can help them avoid these racist experiences (Stewart, 2020).

Black Parents & School Choice

Neoliberal rhetoric emphasizes individual choice and personal responsibility. In the educational context, this means that parents' school decision-making occurs within a broader educational "marketplace" characterized by competition, "choice," increased testing, and results-based financing for schools (Levin & Belfield, 2003). The illusion is that if parents have a diverse range of private educational options and more information about these options, they will then pick the best school for their children's needs (Scott, 2013). School choice advocates purport that it is a solution for all, especially communities that are segregated and surviving poverty (Levin & Belfield, 2003). While much of the dominant discourse on school choice is race-neutral or race-evasive, these neoliberal policies have exacerbated racial disparities in schools through the increased testing for accountability and divestment of financial resources, resulting in public school closures and charter expansion (Au, 2016; Baldridge, 2014; Kohli et

al., 2017; Lipman, 2011; Waitoller & Super, 2017). This context is important for thinking about Black homeschoolers, particularly those in states like Wisconsin and Illinois that have documented school choice reform efforts that are a product of neoliberal ideology (Lipman, 2011; Pedroni, 2013). Further, critics of homeschoolers often characterize it as a privatized, neoliberal, individual educational effort (Apple, 2000; Hanson-Thiem, 2007; Lubienski, 2007). Indeed, while groups of white, conservative, and religious families homeschool for reasons that fit this characterization, these critics often marginalize Black homeschooling families and therefore do not consider whether their practice constitutes something else.

Black parents have engaged with and enacted a range of educational options throughout U.S. history, as they aimed to provide Black children with culturally relevant curricula and high academic success (Carter et al., 1989). Scholars note the expansion of educational options in the era of school choice, and Black parents' search for quality education can be understood within this broader context (DeAngelis & Dill, 2019). Black mothers, in particular, are burdened with this educational search as they are often the primary parent involved in and responsible for making educational choices for their children (Averett, 2021; Brown, 2022; Herelle, 2022; Posey-Maddox et al., 2021; Stewart, 2020). Within these schooling choices varied public, private, charter, and voucher school options are discussed (Pedroni, 2013; Posey-Maddox et al., 2021; Waitoler & Super, 2017). With the expansion of school-choice programs, there are indeed more schooling options from which to choose. Moreover, many of these choice programs are appealing to families because they emphasize the freedom they offer as they do not operate under the same restrictions as public schools (Levin & Belfield, 2003).

While many of these school choice options emphasize diverse, innovative educational practices and the ability to meet families' educational needs, scholars have challenged the idea

that these programs deliver on these promises (Buras & Apple, 2005; Hanushek et al., 2005; Pattillo, 2015). Paradoxically, school choice options tend to deemphasize race while purporting to be the solution to educational inequities. Averett (2021) notes:

> ...the logic of school choice emerged in the United States as an explicitly white-supremacist project, though these racist origins were obscured when the mantle of school choice was taken up by neoliberalism through the use of the race-neutral language of freedom and choice. Nevertheless...while the language of school choice has been made race neutral, the practice of school choice remains far from deracialized. (p. 183)

Scholars attend to the intersection of racism and neoliberalism in schools.[3] As scholars discuss the expansion of educational options, many also highlight how race and socioeconomic status shape families' school-choice strategies and decisions (Brown, 2022; Lareau et al., 2021; Pattillo, 2015; Scheider et al., 1998). Research finds that school choice policies impact Black parents' school search by both increasing their opportunities to select other school options they previously could not access due to racial and economic barriers and limiting their access to more schooling options (Averett, 2021; Fields-Smith, 2015; Pedroni, 2013; Waitoler & Super, 2017). While some scholars note the additional school choice options as a result of vouchers (Pedroni, 2013), others highlight how school choice programs that base enrollment on a lottery system or neighborhood proximity may limit options for interested families (Fields-Smith, 2015, 2020).

Further, much of the literature on Black parents and school choice highlights the constrained choices that Black parents in working-class and urban settings make as they search for school options (Cooper, 2005; Pedroni, 2013). Scholars have acknowledged the ways that –

[3] While few scholars within the school choice literature have discussed this, scholars such as Turner & Beneke (2019) have used the term racial neoliberalism to refer to how racism is obscured within neoliberal logics and practices that emphasize individual choice and responsibility.

across class and school options – Black parents are making educational decisions in response to anti-Black racism (Posey-Maddox et al., 2021; Stewart, 2020). As previously discussed, Black parents' engagement in schools and their families' experiences with racism shape their school decision-making (McCarthy Foubert, 2019; Posey-Maddox, 2017; Reynolds, 2010), and Black parents often experience tradeoffs in their children's educational experiences as they search for options (Posey-Maddox et al., 2021). More specifically, Black parents' educational decision-making involves a distinct racial calculus regarding the potential for racialized harm and numerous tradeoffs across a range of schools with varied curricular focuses (Posey-Maddox et al., 2021). Posey-Maddox et al. (2021) highlight the centrality of anti-Black racism in shaping Black parents' school decision-making regardless of their socioeconomic status, school type, and region. Moreover, these scholars assert that "for Black parents, school choice decisions are ongoing and ever-present and that no optimal school exists – no choice is the "right" choice within educational systems marked by antiblackness" (pg. 40). Their study disrupts purported ideas about school choice enabling parents to 1) access a range of high-quality schooling options and 2) find the "right" school for their family.

While Posey-Maddox et al.'s qualitative meta-analysis highlights Black parents' varied educational decision-making across school types, fewer studies highlight homeschooling as an educational choice for Black families. The school choice literature generally focuses on their public, private, and charter school options. Some scholars have been intentional about noting Black parents' decision to homeschool within discussions on school-choice (Fields-Smith, 2015, 2020; Puga, 2019; Stewart, 2020), and often, this literature focuses on the limited agency and choices that Black parents have when choosing schools. Stewart (2020), for example, extends

this research on Black parents and school choice by asserting how one approach Black parents take to respond to anti-Black racism in schools is to choose to homeschool their children.

As noted, educational decision-making is an ongoing process for Black parents shaped by their racialized experiences (Allen, 2017; Posey-Maddox et al., 2021). Moreover, this educational decision-making does not always operate under the presumption that families are seeking competitive school options for their children, especially as Black parents in particular make educational choices out of concern for their children's education and safety (Pedroni, 2013; Musumunu & Mazama, 2014). Some scholars aim to include homeschooling within discussions on school choice and note its positive outcomes (Ray, 2017). My study extends this conversation through its focus on why Black parents, in particular, homeschool and what they desire for their children's education. Black parents' decision-making to homeschool is related to their experiences with traditional schooling options and neoliberal education, and thus my study can reveal the "positioned choices" they must make as they navigate anti-Black racism (Cooper, 2005).

Research on Black homeschoolers specifically posits that the increased diversity in homeschooling may be due to the neoliberal policies in education that emphasize individual choice (Fields-Smith, 2015). Scholars note how homeschooling is marginalized in discussion on school choice despite it being an increasingly diverse and popular option for education (Fields-Smith, 2015; Puga, 2019; Stewart, 2020). Puga (2019) further notes how scholars critique homeschooling as situated within the neoliberal educational project. These scholars (Apple, 2000; Hanson-Thiem, 2007; Lubienski, 2007) understand homeschooling from a standpoint that centers whiteness (e.g. families who choose to homeschool related to their desires to shield their children from the "Other" or to "get ahead" academically). Homeschooling indeed can

perpetuate these social inequities even as these social inequities are also the reasons why many Black parents choose to homeschool (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Mazama, 2016; Puga, 2019). While Apple (2006) notes the complexity of Black parents homeschooling due to racism and inequities in public schools, he still encourages an engagement in "long term struggles for a system of public schooling that is worthy of its name…to make it more likely that they [Black parents] will *not* have to leave public schools" (p. 2). Black parents' lack of school options to serve their children and the rebuttals they face when advocating in schools highlight the push and pull factors that shape Black families' homeschooling decisions (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Stewart, 2020). Black homeschooling scholars highlight how homeschooling for Black families is not necessarily a condemnation of public schools, but rather an escape from racism in schools (Fields-Smith, 2015). Studying Black homeschooling families uncovers their diverse motivations and the constraints – specifically anti-Black racism – of traditional schools in the U.S.

While the expansion of charter, voucher, and other school-choice programs have been discussed in the school choice literature, scholars give homeschooling – despite its significant growth –less attention (Fields-Smith, 2015; Puga, 2019). As the research on homeschooling expands, some give their attention to the impact of school-choice policies on families' decisions to homeschool (Cheng & Donnelly, 2019; DeAngelis & Dills, 2019). Scholarship that attempts to insert homeschooling into the broader discussion of school choice draws from legislation to discuss the policy implications of the homeschooling movement (Renzulli et al., 2020). Moreover, this scholarship focuses on the outcomes of this educational choice rather than on the factors that led families to this choice (Ray, 2017). Given the growing interest of Black families choosing to homeschool, their educational-decision making is an important area of research.

Black Homeschooling

Scholars have noted the increased racial diversity among homeschooling families (McDowell et al., 2000). While a large majority of homeschooled children are white, the number of Black children being homeschooled is rapidly increasing (Fields-Smith, 2015; Mazama, 2016; Rachid, 2005; Ray, 2015; Puga, 2019), and these trends continue upward in the Covid-19 pandemic (U.S. Household Pulse Survey, 2021).[4] Fields-Smith and Kisura (2013) assert that the increase of Black homeschoolers "represents a radical transformative act of self-determination, the likes of which have not been witnessed since the 1960s and '70s" (p. 118). This substantial rise of Black families intentionally seeking alternatives to traditional schools for a better education for their children is part of Black people's long struggle for educational freedom (Mazama & Lundy, 2015; Rachid, 2005). This new era in the educational freedom struggle is an urgent and complex research topic in the context of neoliberal school choice, Black Lives Matter Movement, and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Studies on Black homeschoolers showcase diverse backgrounds and experiences, particularly in the Mid-Atlantic, Southern, and Eastern regions of the United States, with less attention to the Midwest[5] (Baker, 2013; Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; Mazama, 2016; Mazama & Lundy, 2015; Mazama & Musumunu, 2014; Taylor, 2018). Many of these studies highlight Black and African American parents who are married, middle-class, and have earned some type of post-secondary degree (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; Mazama & Lundy, 2013). Other studies have made it a point to highlight Black

[4] There are different estimations about the homeschooling rates in the literature. Many base their estimations on other studies as well as U.S. Education surveys; however, given the varied reporting requirements for homeschooling across the country, it is difficult to get an exact number, and some argue that these homeschooling rates may be underestimated.

[5] Homeschooling researchers have studied Michigan, Chicago, and surrounding areas in Illinois.

homeschoolers who have lower levels of "formal" education, have lower incomes, and are single mothers (Fields-Smith, 2020). While Black mothers are typically the primary homeschooling parent, other homeschool educators such as spouses, tutors, grandparents, and older children also contribute to the homeschooling experience (Mazama, 2016).

There has been a growing scholarly interest in Black homeschooling, as documented in published research (Fields-Smith, 2015, 2020; Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2015; Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; Mazama, 2016; Mazama & Lundy, 2012, 2013, 2015; Ray, 2015) and dissertation research (Baker, 2013; Ali-Coleman, 2020; Crum, 2014; Muhammad, 2011; Sherman, 2012; Stewart, 2018; Wells, 2021; Williams, 2016). This research investigates Black parents' determination of their educational needs for homeschooling (Byrd, 2021), Black parents' learning from others and in community as they start homeschooling (Henry, 2017), college preparedness for African American homeschooled children with an emphasis on cultural awareness (Ali-Coleman, 2020), Afrocentric homeschooling practices of a Black homeschool collective (Wells, 2021), and Black parents' pedagogical philosophies (Baker, 2013) to name a few. Further, most of this research explores Black parents' motivations to homeschool. In the sections that follow, I focus broadly on Black parents' motivations to homeschool, their homeschooling practices, and the academic outcomes of Black homeschooling.

Motivations to Homeschool

Some scholars believe that the fundamental reason parents want to homeschool is to have control over their children's education (Murphy et al., 2021). Beyond this primary motivator, there are myriad other reasons why parents desire to homeschool. Previously, many scholars referred to Van Galen's (1988) classification of ideological ("ideologues") and pedagogical ("pedagogues") homeschoolers when discussing motivations to homeschool (Kunzman &

Gaither, 2020; Ray, 2013b). This framework focuses on ideological desires (e.g. religious-based motivations for homeschooling) and pedagogical desires (e.g. teaching approaches that cater to their children's needs). Other scholars frame parents' homeschooling motivations in terms of "push" (negative) and "pull" (positive) dynamics, noting how "pull" factors are often underemphasized in the homeschooling literature (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Murphy et al., 2021). Further, scholars associate "pedagogues" with "push" factors given that their motivations to homeschool are related to their experiences and perceptions of schools' limitations. Although scholars have noted Van Galen's homeschool research in framing homeschooling "types" by motivations, many emphasize the limitations of this framework given the growing diversity in homeschoolers and, accordingly, in homeschooling beliefs and motivations (Hirsh, 2019; Kunzman & Gaither, 2020; Ray et al., 2021).

Homeschooling research that generally focuses on parents' motivations broadly categorizes them in terms of religious-based, academic-focused, school environment-based, and family-focused motivations (Murphy, Gaither, & Gleim, 2021; Kunzman & Gaither, 2020). This scholarship highlights a wide variety of experiences, perspectives, and beliefs that shape the complex reasons why they want to homeschool. Families' motivations can change over time and are shaped by various factors such as their children's age, local school composition and quality, and homeschooling regulations. Over time, parents' motivations may shift as they continue their practice and grow their homeschooling networks (Murphy et al., 2021).

Black homeschooling families "do not form a monolithic group but present a great deal of ideological diversity, ranging from Christian fundamentalists to African cultural nationalists with a myriad of nuances in between" (Mazama & Lundy, 2014, p. 37). Studies that focus on Black families' motivations to homeschool find that many are (1) dissatisfied with the quality of

education in their children's schools, (2) want to customize or individualize their children's education and accomplish more academically, (3) use alternative pedagogical approaches than found in mainstream schools, (4) impart a particular set of values and beliefs, and (5) provide guided social interactions and a safer learning environment for their children (Byrd, 2021; Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2015, Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; Mazama, 2016; Mazama & Lundy, 2013, 2015; Ray, 2013b, 2015; Sherman, 2012). These reasons are not atypical of the general population of homeschoolers; however, many studies emphasize the ways that racism undergirds these motivations for Black homeschoolers (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Mazama, 2016; Romm, 1993). For example, safety is consistently named as a motivator for homeschoolers in general (Ray, 2013b), however Black families specifically state that they attempt to prevent their children from experiencing racial harm and ensure their spiritual, emotional, and physical safety (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2015; Musumunu & Mazama, 2014).

The Role of Racism. In the United States, racism plays a significant role in Black families' motivations to homeschool (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2015; Musumunu & Mazama, 2014). While homeschooling studies focus on race as a demographic marker, other research centers race as a motivating and mediating factor that informs Black parents' homeschooling decisions and practices. Like previous homeschooling studies, scholars have highlighted that push and pull factors related to experiences in schools affect Black parents' decision to homeschool (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Stewart, 2020). These "push" factors can include parents' goal to protect their children from racism in schools; "pull" factors can include parents' goal to foster a positive racial identity through an Afrocentric approach to learning (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Mazama and Lundy 2012, 2014). Mazama & Lundy (2013) identified two types of parents that focus their attention on enhancing the curriculum for their Black children. They

note how these parents fall on a continuum, with the "Protectionists" on one end and the "Culturalists" on the other. "Protectionists" are primarily concerned with imparting to their children self-esteem and self-pride as African Americans (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2015, Mazama & Lundy, 2015). "Culturalists" were primarily concerned with instilling an African sense of identity and responsibility toward a global African community (Mazama & Lundy, 2013).

The vast majority of Black families discuss the racism that pervades schools – both public and private – as either the main factor or one of many that led them to homeschool (Fields-Smith, 2015; Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Lickstein, 2009; Mazama, 2012; Mazama & Lundy, 2013, 2015; Mazama & Musumunu, 2013; Puga, 2019; Stewart, 2020). These Black parents see their racial identity as central to their decision to homeschool given that schools in U.S. society could be unsafe for Black children. They are what Mazama (2012) calls "Racial Protectionists." Mazama's (2012) Afrocentric study on Black homeschooling sought to understand Black homeschoolers' proactive and protective stances: Black parents exercised their agency to homeschool in response to a need to protect their children from experiencing racism. Racial protectionism plays a critical role for Black homeschoolers who feel that racism is destructive to their children's ability to reach their full potential in school.

Racial Protectionists are clear in naming racism as their motivation to homeschool, and we can view many Black parents in other studies on homeschooling through this lens. Other scholars note that Black parents view schools' institutional norms and structures as destructive learning environments for their Black children, and that many of these parents would rather homeschool than deal with the inequities, prejudice, discrimination, and racism in public and private schools (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2015; Lickstein, 2009; Mazama & Lundy, 2013, 2015).

Moreover, Black families share negative school experiences that push them to homeschool, particularly due to the lack of trust and partnership between Black parents and teachers (Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013). This is apparent in Black parents' challenges accessing resources to support their children's learning (e.g. gifted services), which is perceived as racism on the part of teachers. These reasons for wanting to homeschool illustrate how some Black parents are "pushed" to homeschool (Stewart, 2020) and have limited options and constrained agency when exercising school "choice."

While Black parents voice concerns about what their Black children (would) experience in schools, a handful share a specific concern for their Black sons (Fields-Smiths & Williams, 2009; Mazama 2016; Musumunu & Mazama, 2013). Many feel that their Black sons, in particular, would be labeled, subjected to negative stereotypes, and not achieve academically in school. As a result of these negative experiences or anticipation of such experiences in schools, many Black homeschoolers share how they intentionally infuse an Afrocentric focus into their homeschool practice given that schools would not do so. Racial Protectionists who homeschool resist a racist school system and reclaim education for their children. Mazama (2012) states,

> ...one of the critical aspects of homeschooling as a conscious and active exercise of agency is the creation of a liberated and protected space. Freedom and protection are obtained through two main strategies: imparting self-knowledge and imparting self-esteem through teaching about Africa and African Americans (p. 740).

These Racial Protectionists actively resist racism in schools by removing their children from that environment and creating a culturally affirming learning experience for them.

While the literature on Black homeschooled youth perspectives is very limited, one study examined Black male college students' understanding of their homeschooling experiences

(Williams, 2016). Since many Black parents name racism in education as a reason why they decided to homeschool their children, Williams (2016) aimed to understand how their approach to homeschooling impacted their children's learning experiences. Moreover, by using Afrocentricity as a lens, this scholar pays attention to how schools center European history and distort African and African American culture and history, which contributes to Black students' perceived low performance in schools. The Black youth in William's study shared how homeschool was a nurturing journey of self-discovery that allowed them to explore their interests. Moreover, they saw their homeschooling as a reinforcement of cultural pride as they learned about Black history and culture. Homeschooling provided them with a safe environment, which Black homeschooling parents consistently raise as one of their motivations (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2015; Fields-Smiths & Williams, 2009; Mazama, 2016; Mazama & Lundy, 2015).

Curricular racism, alongside other racist experiences in schools, is also central to Black families' decision to homeschool. The Eurocentric curriculum is another manifestation of racism from which parents wish to protect their children. Many Black homeschoolers believe that a Eurocentric curriculum would negatively impact their children's self-esteem and sense of purpose (Baker, 2013; Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2015; Mazama, 2015; Mazama & Lundy, 2013). In addition to protecting their children from teachers' racist perceptions, language, and behavior, parents also support their children by utilizing an Afrocentric teaching approach in their homeschooling. This means that they provide their children with culturally affirming knowledge that centers Black history, culture, and contributions. These Black homeschoolers challenge racism in education by choosing curricula that foster African/African American historical and cultural knowledge and appreciation and, thereby, racial pride and self-confidence in their children. Further, they choose curricula that foster the development of their children's multiple

talents through the stimulation of multiple dimensions, such as the intellectual, spiritual, artistic, emotional, social, and physical. An important aspect of this approach is that it instills the value of holistic learning (Mazama & Lundy, 2013; See also: McKinney de Royston, 2011).

For other Black homeschooling parents, education quality is a main homeschooling motivator. "Educational Protectionists" (Mazama & Musumunu, 2015) are Black parents "who have opted to educate their children at home, at least in part, in an attempt to shield them from the deleterious effects of the educational system that they saw as lacking" (p. 170). Educational Protectionists decide to create better conditions for their Black children's learning in general; however, they may also view a "good education" as including a sustained, meaningful engagement with African and African American history and culture. Although they do not explicitly name racism or curricular relevance as their motivation to homeschool, they point to their dissatisfaction with schools generally and as a result incorporate this culturally-affirming learning into their homeschooling experience. This illustrates how racism both explicitly and implicitly shapes Black parents' educational choices.

Additionally, Mazama & Musumunu (2016) name another group of homeschoolers "School Protectionists": those who are motivated to homeschool because they are concerned about the school environment. Further, these scholars highlight how although some parents have the financial resources to send their children to private schools, they still choose homeschooling largely because of the ethnocentrism and racism that they believe their children will encounter there. This demonstrates that Educational and School Protectionists are not solely concerned about the quality of education and environment of under-resourced public schools.

In addition to emphasizing negative experiences in schools and the desire to protect their children (Muhammad, 2011; Sherman, 2012), research on Black homeschooling parents

highlights the importance of culturally relevant education and learning collectively (Crum, 2014). Many of these studies contribute to our understanding of Black parents' motivations, first steps, philosophies, and practices within their families and within homeschooling communities. These studies highlight how racism, racial identity, curricular relevance, and safety for Black children are central to Black parents' motivations to homeschool (Fields-Smith, 2015). Alongside race and racism, religion also plays a major role in offering Black homeschooling children an educational experience that can uplift them in different ways.

The Role of Religion. Black homeschoolers do not typically belong to the conservative and religious right that the homeschool research often over-represents. While much of the literature on religious motivations to homeschool center conservative, Christian, white families, religion also plays a major role in Black parents' motivations to homeschool (Baker, 2013; Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; Mazama & Lundy, 2014). Historically, Black churches and religion have been an important part of Black communities. The Black church emerged as a symbol of rebellion and spearheaded numerous efforts to create institutions, including educational ones, committed to the advancement of Black people in the midst of racism. With the persistence of racism, the Black church continues to have a strong place in Black communities today, with high devotion to Christianity among African Americans (Mazama & Lundy, 2014).

Christian religious factors consistently ranked high among Black parents' motivations to homeschool, and Mazama (2016) calls these homeschoolers "Christian Protectionists." Mazama & Lundy (2014) place these Christian homeschoolers on a continuum – fundamentalists at one end and non-fundamentalists at the other. The main concerns of Black Christian Fundamentalists are to impart Christian values to their children. They view homeschooling as their duty to fulfill

God's will. Similarly, Fields-Smith & Williams (2009) conducted a phenomenological study to understand Black parents' decision to homeschool and found that religious beliefs influence most of these families' decisions. Since public schools separate education from religion, these Black parents feel more able to align with their beliefs by educating their children at home. Black religious homeschoolers teach not only about church, the bible, and their religious and moral beliefs; they also participate in church-organized activities that offer socialization such as the choir, dance, and athletics.

Non-fundamentalist Black Christians ranked Christianity as a motivation to homeschool yet displayed a greater concern for other aspects of their children's education, such as including Black history and culture in the curriculum and evading the social and racial climate of schools (Mazama & Lundy, 2014). Black Christian homeschoolers often stand out because their motivations to homeschool diverge from the white-centered religious narrative on homeschoolers. Because demands for racial justice and cultural dignity inform Black Christians' religiosity, they offer a more liberatory form of religious education in their homeschooling (Fields-Smith, 2015; Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009). Further, scholars note the importance of religion providing Black parents empowerment or faith, which helped sustained them when they faced challenges and difficulties homeschooling (Fields-Smith, 2020; Mazama & Lundy, 2014).

The Role of Family. In addition to racism in schools pushing some to homeschool, and religious beliefs and purpose pulling others to homeschool, scholars also note the role that family plays in Black parents' motivation to homeschool (Fields-Smith, 2020; Mazama, 2015; Ray, 2015). While the literature under-discusses this aspect, it is important to emphasize the family as an additional "pull" to homeschool. Mazama (2015) characterizes Black parents who decide to homeschool in order to strengthen their family's bond and shield their children from negative

outside forces as "Family Protectionists." Mazama notes how sending children to school – where they spend most of their time – gets in the way of parents bonding with their children. Moreover, when children come home from school, the family is expected to engage in homework time as well. Family Protectionists view homeschooling as an opportunity to reclaim this time, spend it together as a family, and shape their children's worldview based on their values. Additionally, scholars note the conflicting values between schools and Black families, particularly as it relates to religion and race (e.g., schools ignoring or deemphasizing religious values and instilling anti-Black perceptions with Eurocentric curricula). These parents believe that homeschooling enables them to instill particular sets of values in their children based on their religious beliefs and provide them with culturally affirming learning experiences. This vision highlights how race and religion appear to be central to Black parents' homeschool decision, as noted in previous studies on Black homeschooling families.

Racism, religion, and family motivate Black parents to homeschool. While religion and family can be characterized as pull factors (i.e., the ability to root their learning in religious values and have more bonding time are attractive), racism in schools is a push factor that leads parents to homeschool. It is important to uplift the pull (positive) factors that shape Black parents' homeschool decision alongside acknowledging the push (negative) factors.

Deciding to Homeschool

Scholars note how the homeschooling literature tends to overlook families' transition from traditional schooling to homeschooling (Murphy et al., 2021). While most of the literature on Black homeschooling in particular focuses on their motivations to homeschool, few scholars give attention to the complexities of their decision-making to homeschool (Fields-Smith, 2015, 2020; Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Puga, 2019; Romm 1993). Fields-Smith (2015) also

highlights how school choice policies in themselves limit Black parents' educational options, which can in turn influence their decision to homeschool. Moreover, Stewart's (2020) study inserts homeschooling into the debates on school choice – highlighting the push and pull factors that Black parents experience as they make the decision to homeschool. This study found that mothers are primarily responsible for school decision-making. Black mothers' "choice" to homeschool was shaped by their marital status, education, and religiosity. While half of the Black mothers in Stewart's study homeschooled for religious reasons, the others chose homeschooling as a strategy to avoid experiencing racism in schools.

Scholars discuss Black parents' decision-making to homeschool within the neoliberal school choice debates, emphasizing both the impact of Black parents' experiences in other school options on their decision to homeschool as well as the internal conflict they feel contemplating homeschool. Black parents' decision to homeschool is not an easy calculation; rather, it involves facing a set of barriers, challenges, considerations, and dilemmas (Fields-Smith, 2015; Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; Puga, 2019; Romm, 1993). Parents face logistical challenges such as accessing resources for special education services and extracurricular activities; structuring their homeschooling learning, especially with multiple grade levels; balancing other responsibilities; lacking homeschooling resources (e.g., curricula, networks, information); and doubting their ability to teach and ensure their children's healthy socialization (Fields-Smiths & Williams, 2009; Llewellyn, 1996; Romm, 1993; Ray et al., 2021; Stewart, 2018). Additionally, some parents express feeling tension when deciding to homeschool given the anti-Black stereotypes of Black people as bad parents unconcerned about their children's education (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013) or view homeschooling as an unacceptable educational alternative from family members and friends (Llewellyn, 1996). Some

view Black parents' decision to homeschool as undermining the collective effort of Black people fighting for better school opportunities. Scholars detail the dilemmas that Black parents face in their homeschool decision-making because of their commitment to public education, particularly as it relates to Black peoples' historical struggle for educational equality (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Puga, 2019). Moreover, they may question whether they are able to provide their children with learning experiences that are accepted in society (Romm, 1993).

Despite these barriers and challenges, the multiple motivators to homeschool remain. Puga (2019) focuses on Black parents motivated to homeschool due to racism in schools and the "philosophical, logistical and emotional hindrances that parents experienced when deciding to homeschool" (p. 282). While their experiences with racism in schools push them to homeschool, they still feel "torn" when making the decision. These parents note their attempts to choose schooling options in their neighborhoods because they believe in public schools, while also detailing the race-related challenges they faced in schools (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Puga, 2019). Even with these challenges, scholars note that the ability to use culturally relevant pedagogy in their homeschooling practice makes Black families' difficult decision worthwhile (Mazama & Musumunu, 2015; Puga, 2019).

Scholars note how homeschooling is sometimes the last resort for families after they are unable to successfully meet their children's needs via schools (Fields-Smith, 2015; Murphy et al., 2021). Fields-Smith (2015) highlights Black families who have "nowhere left to go" and decide to homeschool given the pervasiveness of racism in schools. Instead of relying on schooling institutions that have caused Black families harm, they feel compelled to homeschool. Apple (2006) critiques homeschooling for Black families, noting that it is not accessible for most Black families and contributes to the attack on public education. Yet Fields-Smith & Williams

(2009) ask, "to what extent should parents continue to sacrifice their children's education to a public-school system they believe will deficiently instruct and negatively impact their children's learning?" (p. 381). Further, they raise this question with the fact that "many do not believe that equitable education will ever be attainable in public schools" (p. 381).

Despite the variation in beliefs about and motivations to homeschool, it is clear that a vast majority of Black parents are disappointed with public schools and see homeschooling as a way to provide education and personal development to their Black children. Thus, it is important to explore Black parents' homeschooling in practice to understand the ways that they provide their children with educational opportunities they are not receiving in brick-and-mortar schools.

Black Parents' Homeschooling Practices

While the research community has increasingly studied *why* Black parents are choosing to homeschool, they have paid less attention to *how* they homeschool (Mazama, 2016). Black homeschooling families' daily teaching and learning practices remain under-examined, and very few studies detail how they do it (Baker, 2013; Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2015; Fields-Smith, 2020; Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; Mazama, 2016; Mazama & Lundy, 2012, 2013, 2015; Taylor, 2018). These studies do illuminate the heterogeneity of their practices, as some Black families use pre-set curricula at home while others practice unschooling.[6] Parents often utilize a combination of adult-driven and child-driven approaches to learning. These scholars present a diverse picture of what Black homeschooling looks like in practice.

Further, this scholarship highlights where and with whom Black homeschoolers learn. The various homeschooling settings include but are not limited to their homes, homeschooling

[6] Gray & Riley (2013) note how "unschooling is often considered to be a branch of homeschooling. While other homeschoolers may do "school at home" and follow a set curriculum, unschoolers learn primarily through everyday life experiences – experiences that they choose and that therefore automatically match their abilities, interests, and learning styles" (p. 2)

collectives, organizations, clubs, churches, community colleges, zoos, museums, and parks. While Black mothers are primarily in charge of teaching, tutors and other family members also help homeschool. Critics of homeschooling emphasize the privatization of education and describe it in practice as a singular and individualized effort (Apple, 2006); however, the communal nature of Black homeschooling has potential to rearticulate these critiques. Further, the literature on Black families homeschooling practices documents that Black parents utilize both private and public spaces, and they homeschool in communities with others. These findings negate the critique of Black homeschooling as an individualized educational approach (Fields-Smith, 2020; Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2015; Mazama, 2016; Murphy, 2012; Puga, 2021). Black families have developed strong networks and adopted collaborative instructional methods such as homeschooling co-ops, which require shared teaching among parents (Fields-Smith, 2015; Mazama, 2016).

These studies contribute to the scant research on the homeschooling practices of Black families. This area of inquiry requires expansion in order to provide more insight into Black homeschoolers' varied individual and collective learning practices as well as to contribute innovative practices to teaching and learning with Black youth. While these studies begin to account for daily practices, few studies contextualize these practices through the lens of concerns about Black parents' homeschooling. These concerns, though often based on the perceptions of others, can shift Black parents' homeschooling practices (Romm, 1993; Puga, 2019, Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Mazama & Musumunu, 2015). Although scholars emphasize that Black families' approach to homeschooling is not more rigid or structured than other groups of homeschoolers, fewer studies name the nuanced reasons that can inform Black homeschooling parents' rigidity and structure (McDowell et al., 2000). McDowell et al (2000), for example,

explains the "unhappy paradox" that Black parents sometimes find themselves in with homeschooling:

> Although home schooling by its very nature offers participants a great deal of freedom both in implementation and curriculum, the majority of African American home schoolers believe that they must adhere to a more standard, "tight" curriculum so that their efforts—and their children—will be accepted by society in general. In essence, then, even though the experience of homeschooling is a freeing one in theory, in actuality it still can retain elements of "bondage" for those African Americans participating in it. (p. 130).

This "bondage" that Black parents experience when homeschooling stems from the neoliberal educational context that emphasizes grades and competitiveness for college and labor. Further, one reported barrier to homeschooling was parents' concern about colleges accepting their homeschool educational records (Ray et al., 2021). While there have been some documented concerns from Black homeschoolers about how their children will fare in society, less scholarship examines the tensions that Black parents experience as they homeschool. Moreover, there are fewer studies that examine the "academic achievement" of Black homeschool children. It is important to acknowledge these findings in the literature review while also problematizing the value of measuring "academic achievement."

Black Homeschoolers' "Academic Achievement"

Very few studies examine the academic achievement of Black homeschool children. One study utilized a standardized academic achievement test to measure Black homeschool children's skills (Ray, 2015). Ray (2015) found that Black homeschool children scored at or above the 50th percentile in reading, language, and math, subtests compared to Black public-school students

who scored at or below the 30th percentile in reading, language, and math. This study highlights that Black homeschool children academically outperform their public-school counterparts and perform as well or better than their white public-school counterparts. They note that this finding is consistent with research on homeschooling and "academic achievement" (Murphy, 2012; Ray, 2010; Ray, 2013a). As discussed earlier, Black parents also view homeschooling as a better educational option, given the ability to provide individualized, challenging, and culturally relevant instruction to their children; evade teachers' biased perceptions, expectations, and disciplinary practices; and shield their children from experiences with racism that can limit their academic and spiritual growth.

It is important to critique the use of standardized tests as a measure for how Black homeschool children are faring academically, not only because of bias in testing, but also because of Black homeschooling parents' motivations to homeschool. As they discuss their desire to provide safety and racial affirmation for their children in their homeschooling, it is possible that academic preparation for successful test-taking does not rank high on their priority list. Thus, it is important to learn about Black parents' motivations, practices, visions, and goals for homeschooling before deciding how to measure the children's "success."

Opportunities to Learn More

The growing literature on Black homeschooling showcases diverse images of Black homeschooling families, while emphasizing the significance of racism, religion, and family to their homeschooling motivations. This scholarship extends the literature on Black parents in education as well as disrupts racist ideas about Black families' engagement in and perceptions of education. The Black homeschooling literature largely focuses on Black parents' motivations, practices, and challenges, centering the experiences of Black mothers living in the Atlantic Coast

and parts of the Midwest. The scholarship thus far focuses heavily on Black homeschooling parents – with very little research to date that focuses on Black children's homeschooling experiences. These few studies have examined Black homeschool children's former learning experiences and critiques of schools (Puga, 2019), the impact of homeschooling on their identity and college preparedness (Williams, 2016), and their academic outcomes (Ray, 2015). We need young Black homeschoolers' perspectives on their learning as they homeschool.

My research contributes to the literature on Black homeschooling through expanding our knowledge about the various factors that shape Black parents' decision to homeschool. In addition to discussing their motivations to homeschool, I also illuminate other factors that enable them to homeschool and their thoughts about their "choices." Moreover, this study extends the literature on Black families' homeschool practices through the perspectives of both parents and young people. This study introduces Black homeschool youths' opinions and understanding of their homeschool learning. In addition to interviews, focus groups, and feedback sessions, my study uniquely contributes to the scholarship by including these families' homeschool artifacts that illustrate their practice. Lastly, I explore these topics with Black homeschoolers in Wisconsin and Illinois, thus contributing more insight into homeschooling in this region.

Through this literature review, I explained the importance of expanding on the extant literature on Black homeschooling to better understand Black families' decision-making to homeschool, their homeschooling experiences, and the implications of homeschooling for educating Black youth. Next, I introduce Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit) as my conceptual framework, highlighting how this theory enables an understanding of homeschooling for Black families in the current sociopolitical context.

Conceptual Framework

I draw from scholarship on BlackCrit, antiblackness and Black liberatory fantasy to help me understand Black families' homeschool decision-making, their homeschooling visions and practices, and young Black homeschoolers' understanding of their experiences learning at home. Together, these theoretical constructs provide a layered framework that allows me to consider the tensions that Black parents navigate as they decide to homeschool as well as what they aim to disrupt and create in their homeschooling practices.

Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit)

Dumas and ross (2016) put forth a theory of Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit), in response to Critical Race Theory (CRT),[7] arguing that BlackCrit will better interrogate the specificity of Blackness and antiblackness. Scholars argue that in its use and examples, CRT focuses specifically on anti-Black racism without pointedly calling these experiences anti-Black. Dumas & ross (2016) write, "CRT enters the field of education as a decidedly *Black* theorization of race. That is, even as CRT is offered as a tool to analyze race and racism in general, it is, at its inception in education (and arguably, in legal studies as well), an attempt to make sense of and respond to institutionalized racism, as this racism is experienced and endured by Black people" (p. 416).

BlackCrit is especially relevant to the study of educational institutions and imaginings. Dumas (2016) writes, "a theorization of antiblackness allows one to more precisely identify and respond to racism in education discourse and in the formation and implementation of education policy" (p. 12). Drawing from the work of Afropessimists (Hartman, 1997; Wilderson, 2010,

[7] CRT is a lens used to understand race and challenge racial inequality in society. One of the main tenets of CRT is the centrality of race and racism in every aspect of society. CRT acknowledges that race and racism are always present, and always will be present in our society (Bell, 1992). Although CRT focuses on race, it also acknowledges that racial inequality does not operate outside of other forms of oppression (Collins, 1989; Crenshaw, 1990).

2020), Dumas and ross (2016) argue that "antiblackness is not simply racism against Black people. Rather, antiblackness refers to a broader antagonistic relationship between Blackness and humanity, where Black humanity and human possibility are threatened and disdained" (p. 429). A growing number of educational researchers have drawn from and built upon theoretical work on antiblackness across areas of study (See also: Baldridge, 2020; Busey & Dowie-Chin, 2021; Caruthers et al., 2021; Coles, 2020; Coles & Powell, 2020; Nxumalo & ross, 2019; Ohito & Brown, 2021; Shange, 2019; Smith, 2019; Smith-Purviance, 2021; Tichavakunda, 2021; Warren & Coles, 2020) to "incisively analyze the more detailed ways that Blackness continues to matter" as well as to "create space for Black liberatory fantasy" (Dumas & ross, 2016).

BlackCrit in Education

Scholars studying antiblackness in schools and education give more attention to the experiences of Black students and Black educators in white educational institutions. Dumas (2014) focuses on the cultural politics of school desegregation and its impact on Black educators and school leaders. He points to the "Black suffering" in schools that these educators face due to racial desegregation policies and practices. In another study, Dumas (2016) utilized school (de)segregation as an example to show how antiblackness informs policies and practices that cause harm to Black students. Within his research he demonstrates the ways in which rhetoric, policies, and practices shape Black students', specifically Black boys', experiences in schools. For example, he highlights the ways neoliberal and multicultural rhetoric reinforces the narrative that Black people are uninterested in education and do not take responsibility for their school and educational choices (Dumas, 2013). Moreover, Dumas & Nelson (2016) focus on the public discourse of Black males being in "crisis" and examine how Black boys are constructed inside and outside of schools.

Connie Wun's scholarship articulates how the specific experiences of Black girls are shaped by antiblackness, recognizing that the critical conversation tends to overlook girls' experiences while highlighting the adverse experiences of Black boys and boys of color in schools. Wun (2016a, 2016b) and Morris (2016) point to the punitive practices and school process that excessively discipline and punish Black girls in schools (in the forms of disproportionate rates of suspension, expulsion, and arrest). Further, their research finds that formal discipline policies and informal punitive practices subject Black girls to constant surveillance, limiting their access to agency, autonomy, and self-defense against the multiple forms of violence inflicted by school staff. Moreover, Wun (2018) highlights the multiple and intersecting forms of violence outside of school to which girls of color and Black girls in particular are subjected. She also elucidates how schools participate in sites of control that elicit these girls' anger and resistance.

Numerous studies on Black parents' engagement in schools highlight educators' deficit-based perceptions of Black parents as disengaged, uncaring, and devaluing education. Notable examples of antiblackness abound in the literature, even when not explicitly named as such (Cooper, 2003, 2009; Lareau, 1989; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Posey-Maddox, 2017; Reynolds, 2010). A growing body of literature on Black parent engagement names antiblackness as a school-contextual factor that shapes their engagement in schools – from their ability to access resources to how they attempt to advocate for their children to how they are pushed out of these environments (Aguayo, 2022; Baxley, 2022; McCarthy Foubert, 2019; Posey-Maddox et al., 2021; Powell & Coles, 2021; Watson & Baxley, 2021). Relatedly, scholars bring attention to the ways that racism shapes Black parents' educational decision-making in and outside of schools (Posey-Maddox et al., 2021; McDowell et al., 2000); however, this framework

is limited in research on Black homeschooling. Previous studies emphasize how Black homeschoolers' motivations and practices diverge from those of white families because of racism. For example, McDowell et al. (2000) state that "the decision to homeschool for African American parents contains a great many critical and diverse elements that are simply not a factor for white-Americans" (p. 130). It is important, however, to center the knowledges and experiences of Black families who homeschool – not in comparison to white families – to illuminate the ways they understand Blackness and antiblackness shaping their experiences.

BlackCrit, Black Homeschooling, & Black Liberatory Fantasy

BlackCrit enables me to consider my Black homeschoolers' racialized experiences as Black; how their experiences in schools and society shape their decision to homeschool; and how their identities and societal position shapes how they approach and engage in homeschooling. While the Black homeschooling literature does not utilize this framework when studying Black families, scholars still highlight how their identities and experiences as Black shape why and how they homeschool. As the findings in this study show, many Black parents are responding in various ways to antiblackness in education, which shapes their educational decision-making to homeschool and their homeschooling practices.

Further, BlackCrit allows for an exploration of the Black liberatory fantasy (Dumas & ross, 2016) and what Black parents reject and aim to re-imagine through their homeschooling visions and practices.[8] Homeschooling for Black families has potential to be understood as Black

[8] While BlackCrit posits society's dependence on antiblackness and the irreconcilability of this, it also encourages a radical imagination and fantasy for Black people – similar to Afrofuturism (Dery, 1994). Afrofuturism, as described by Toliver (2022), is "a cultural aesthetic in which Black authors create speculative texts that center Black characters in an effort to reclaim and recover the past, counter negative and elevate positive realities that exist in the present, and create new possibilities for the future" (p. xxi). Moreover, "fantasy" is an element. I utilize theorizations from BlackCrit rather than Afrofuturism because of the notion that antiblackness is a critical function of our current world, and because of this reality we must imagine Black Liberatory Fantasy. This lens enables me to consider both the anti-Black lived experiences of Black families as well as how they imagine new possibilities in their homeschooling. It also enables me to analyze the tensions between what some parents described as being "free" in homeschooling yet constrained by societal norms and expectations, particularly for Black people.

liberatory fantasy, as Black parents and youth "conjure various scenarios that may disrupt total subjugation and serve as a ray of hope for larger systemic change" (ross, 2019, p. 3). Scholars and communities have conceptualized and practiced liberatory education, often noting how these spaces view Black youth as capable of reaching their highest academic potential and support both their academics and overall wellbeing. Further, liberatory learning includes raising young people's political and critical consciousness and incorporates culturally affirming and nurturing learning practices that can lead to societal transformation (Abioye, 2019; Freire, 1970; Hill, 1986; hooks, 1994). Viewing schools as irreconcilable for Black children given antiblackness, many are adamant that this type of liberatory education cannot take place within the confines of traditional schooling (Martin et al., 2019; Woodson, 1933), therefore it is important to imagine Black futurity outside of schools (Dumas & ross, 2016; Grant et al., 2019). While many speak and write about this practice of liberatory education, the viewpoint of young Black people is largely missing (Coles, 2020, 2021; Griffin & Turner, 2021). Thus, young Black homeschoolers' perspectives offer greater imagination and realization of what Black liberatory fantasy can be for Black families' education. Using the lens of BlackCrit to explore Black families' homeschooling experiences allows us to deepen our understanding of the specificity of Blackness and antiblackness, what Black homeschooling disrupts or escapes, and what it re-imagines and creates.

Outline of Chapters

This chapter highlighted the educational tradition of Black people in the U.S., particularly focusing on the many educational strategies that Black people have pursued throughout history. Racism often shapes Black parents' engagement in schools and reflecting on these experiences enables us to understand how they make educational "choices" for their children. Further,

understanding Black parents' educational "choice" deepens our understanding of Black homeschooling as an option. This dissertation highlights the educational decision-making of Black parents who "choose" to homeschool in Wisconsin and Illinois. Through a variety of research methods, I explore their decisions to homeschool, their homeschooling practices, and what their children think about their homeschooling experiences.

In Chapter Two, I present my research approach and context to explain how I conducted research with Black homeschoolers to understand their homeschool decisions, visions, practices, and challenges. In this chapter, I narrate how my positionality as a Black homeschooler informs the various aspects of my research. Further, I contextualize homeschooling in Wisconsin and Illinois for Black families.

In Chapters Three through Five, I detail the main findings from this dissertation research. In Chapter Three I examine Black homeschooling parents' educational decision-making. I highlight the motivators – reasons why parents want or have to homeschool – and the facilitators – factors that enable them to homeschool – as key components of their decision-making process. I extend the literature on Black homeschooling motivations by giving attention to facilitators that make homeschooling possible for Black families. I outline the varied motivators and facilitators for the focal parents in this study and discuss the themes from their stories as they relate to all of the parents in the study. In highlighting these motivators, I note both push and pull factors that shape their desire to homeschool and how antiblackness explicitly shapes most, but not all, Black homeschooling parents' decision-making.

Chapter Four explores Black parents' pedagogical visions and practices, as well as the challenges they face homeschooling. In this chapter, I detail the varied pedagogical approaches and engagement of the families in this study, with additional insight from parents who shared

their homeschooling artifacts. I demonstrate how the educational goals they have for their children as well as their challenges inform the diverse range of approaches that constitute their homeschooling practices.

Chapter Five uplifts young Black homeschoolers' perspectives on homeschooling. In this chapter, I explain with whom, where, and what youth learn in their homeschooling using their interview data and homeschooling artifacts. Next, I discuss their perspectives on homeschooling – particularly their likes, dislikes, and desires – through three composite narratives: the Agreeable, Politicized and Visionary Homeschoolers. I highlight young Black homeschoolers' much needed perspectives on their homeschooling experiences and how they envision their learning.

In Chapter Six, I conclude this dissertation with a discussion of the empirical and theoretical contributions of this research to Black homeschooling. This dissertation provides additional insights into this growing research field through highlighting Black homeschoolers in Wisconsin and Illinois and young Black homeschoolers' perspectives. The study highlights the heterogeneity of Black homeschoolers in terms of their motivations and practices. Further, this research deepens our knowledge of Black homeschooling by attending to the multiple factors that shape Black parents' decisions to homeschool, as well as how young Black homeschoolers youth understand their experience. This study has implications for encouraging educators everywhere to center young Black people and create spaces where learning itself enacts a Black liberatory fantasy.

Chapter 2: Research Methodology & Context

Positionality & Research Approach

I began thinking about homeschooling for Black families early in my graduate school career as I studied Black caregivers' experiences, engagement, and advocacy in schools. Through this research, I started to question the limitations of schools for the Black families I had read about and interviewed. They described feeling disregarded, excluded, and blamed for perceived problems in school. My son, who was a four-year-old at the time, was soon going to be enrolling in school, and these Black parents' stories pervaded my thoughts as I prepared for the transition. Like many Black parents, I remained hypervigilant as my son started school. Disappointingly yet unsurprisingly, we had similar negative experiences in schools, which fueled my desire to be "involved" at the school and push for "change." After my efforts were rebuffed countless times, I wanted to divest from a school that so clearly did not invest in Black families.

Homeschooling piqued my interests both professionally and personally. I wished I could homeschool to avoid these harmful experiences and to foster in my son a strong sense of identity as a Black boy and a lifelong learner. However, as a single parent, graduate student, and part-time worker, I did not consider it as a possibility. As I learned more about homeschooling, I shifted my energy from trying to appeal to the school to thinking about homeschool as an alternative. I connected with Black families who had homeschooling experiences and others who, like me, were interested in doing it. I began to see the possibilities for our family. I realized that I did not have to continue this uphill battle within the school. I could refuse schooling for our family. I could pursue something unknown but undoubtedly better than what schools were offering us. In 2018, we officially started homeschooling in Milwaukee, WI. As we homeschooled there, I was able to build community with other Black homeschoolers.

My transition to homeschooling was filled with contradictions. I felt free and hopeful but also unsure and conflicted. We were able to make the decision to homeschool and subsequently feel reprieve from antiblackness in school. Sometimes if I told another Black parent that we homeschooled, their response would be, "I wish I could homeschool, too." There are barriers – both real and perceived – that prevented them from doing so. I recognized the privilege we had. In addition to the fact that not everyone could homeschool, I acknowledged the various reasons why families do not want to homeschool. I reflected on my own experiences and shared my stories about homeschooling with others. This personal endeavor coupled with my research interest in education for Black families led me to study Black homeschooling for my dissertation. My study of Black homeschooling in Wisconsin and Illinois[9] was guided by the following research questions:

1) What factors shape Black[10] parents' decision to homeschool?
2) How do Black families approach and engage in homeschooling?
3) How do young Black homeschoolers understand their learning experiences?

Using a critical qualitative approach (Denzin, 2017), aspects of narrative analysis (Clandinin & Caine, 2008), and a variety of research methods, I explored homeschooling from the perspectives of Black parents and young people. Learning from Black parents and youth about their homeschooling experiences has broadened my understanding of their varied motivations, practices, challenges, and aspirations. Through this research I have deepened my existing connections with other Black homeschoolers and formed new ones. As I considered the "ethical tensions, obligations, and responsibilities" (Clandinin & Caine, 2008, p. 543) I have with the families who participated in my study, I intentionally navigated the research process in ways that aimed to disrupt traditional research approaches.

[9] In the Research Context section of this chapter, I elaborate on why Wisconsin and Illinois are my research sites.
[10] In the Note on Language section of this chapter, I elaborate on what I mean when I use the term "Black."

Humanizing Research & Decolonial Methods

As a researcher, I strive to utilize practices that are rooted in dignity, relationships, reciprocity, collaboration, care, respect, transparency, and social justice. These goals led me to humanizing and decolonial research methods. Paris and Winn (2013) "conceptualize humanizing approaches as those that involve the building of relationships of care and dignity and dialogic consciousness raising for both researchers and participants. Furthermore, we view such a research stance and its processes as involving reciprocity and respect" (p. xvi). While there remains a power imbalance, I aimed to "disrupt" the "relationship between researcher and researched" (Smith, 2012, p. x) as I engaged with the families in my study. While the study did not fully employ community-engaged and collaborative research practices, I incorporated these aspects at different points in data collection and analysis.

Given the colonial and exploitative roots of academic research, it is important for me as a researcher who studies Black families in education to continuously seek to evade damage-centered research (Tuck, 2009) and aim for families to feel valued. I aim to write about their experiences without speaking from a place of lack or pain (hooks, 1990) and instead uplift what they experience and create in homeschooling. It is important to center Black parents' and youths' knowledge, particularly without a comparison to other racial groups. I aim to uplift their knowledge by using their own words. This was especially important for the young people who participated in the study given the additional power dynamics at play (i.e., both researcher-researched and adult-child) and my goals to center their perspectives and to affirm that they matter (Schelbe et al., 2015). Additionally, I believe in transformative research practices (Denzin, 2017) and aimed to highlight the ways that homeschooling offers innovation and creativity to educational practices.

This chapter details the various methodological approaches I utilized throughout the research process to center and humanize Black parents and youth. For instance, because I hope to re-present[11] these families' stories in a way that is true and accessible to them, I shared my findings with them to gather their feedback on my analysis. I hope this dissertation reflects their diverse experiences and honors their unique perspectives.

A Note About Language. Language matters in all contexts including in research and writing. The families in my study trusted me when sharing their experiences, and I aim to use language that is affirming for and resonant with them. Below, I explain the various terms that I use in this study to help readers understand how I aim to re-present these families' stories.

Black/African American. I center Black and African American people in this dissertation. I often use the term "Black" generally in my writing to refer broadly to those who belong to the African diaspora. I capitalize the letter B in "Black" to recognize a group of people who have shared ancestry, history, and culture. "Black" includes those who are U.S. born Black/African American, African immigrants to the U.S., Afro-Latino/a/x, Indigenous, and Black biracial/multiracial individuals.[12] Those who participated in the study were asked some demographic questions, including their racial identity, and I used their stated racial identity to describe them in my writing. Therefore, you will see some parents described as "African American" and others as "Black." When referencing the Black homeschooling literature, I used the terms from those studies.

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[11] This is a nod to Dillard's (2000) research approach on Endarkened feminist epistemology. I use the word "re-present" to emphasize the co-constructed nature of the stories I have written. The narratives included in this dissertation are re-presented to readers based on my analysis and interpretation of their lived experiences.

[12] Recruitment flyers used the terms "Black" and "African American" to describe homeschool parents invited to participate in the study (discussed in more detail in the Recruitment section of this chapter).

Parents[13]. While at times I use the term "parents" to describe the adults who participated in this study, it is important to note that in both the literature on Black homeschoolers and the data from my research, mothers are often responsible for homeschooling. I do not want to overlook the Black homeschooling fathers in this study, nor do I want to minimize or erase the labor of Black homeschooling mothers. Therefore, I use "parents," "mothers," and "fathers" depending on the context.

Young People. The terms "child" and "children" often carry negative connotations.[14] Further, the term "youth" is often used to refer to older adolescents and young adults between 14-25 years old (Youth Policy Factsheet, 2014). Given this context, I adopted the term "young people" to describe the homeschoolers who participated in this study (aged 7-15). "Young people" is found in the literature on adultism[15] (Bell, 1995). As a researcher and an adult, I strive to disrupt the power dynamics of adultism. Further, beliefs about young people are also shaped by their perceived race and gender as well as their socioeconomic status and abilities, among other things. Black young people are often viewed in schools and society as "problems" and therefore surveilled by teachers, security guards, police, and other adults. Antiblackness negates the imagined "childhood innocence" and associated treatment that nonblack young people receive (Ferguson, 2000; Gilmore & Bettis, 2021; Morris, 2015). I do not use the term "young people" over "children" to contribute to this adultification. I use the term, and incorporate research practices, in an effort to describe them in affirming ways that are also rooted in their

[13] While I utilized the term "caregiver" in my dissertation proposal and recruitment strategy to include a range of family structures beyond biological parent-child relationships (e.g. grandparents, aunties, uncles, etc.), those who participated in the study described themselves as a "parent," "mother"/"mom," and "father"/"dad."

[14] For example, someone's behavior being described as "child-ish", or them being told to "grow up!" Or someone shares how they were spoken to "like a child" which meant spoken to in a condescending or disrespectful tone. This language implies harmful underlying beliefs about young people.

[15] Adultism is prejudice or discrimination against people based on their age, particularly young people (which differs from ageism, which is discrimination against older people) (Bell, 1995).

own perceptions of themselves (described in more detail in this chapter). I use the term to uplift their perspectives and reject the idea that young people do not have opinions and experiences that are worthy of documenting.

Homeschoolers/Homeschooling. I use the term homeschooler to describe parents who educate their children at home and to describe the young people who learn at home. I use the term "homeschooling" as an umbrella term that encompasses families who worldschool, roadschool, unschool, deschool – or practice any combination of these modalities – to educate their children outside of traditional schooling systems.

Research Context

While I considered the unique educational backdrop and homeschooling laws in Wisconsin and Illinois as well as Black people's historical and current lived experiences – including state-sanctioned violence against us – I could not have foreseen the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. This global public health crisis shaped the context of this study and created an opportunity for heightened engagement with the Black Lives Matter Movement. I discuss these contexts in turn: first, I detail the educational reform efforts and homeschooling laws in Wisconsin and Illinois; next, I discuss the Covid-19 pandemic and Black Lives Matter protests of 2020 given their impacts on the world and the families in my study.

Education in Wisconsin and Illinois

Wisconsin and Illinois both have notable educational histories that are relevant to studying homeschooling. Both states have received national attention for their educational conditions, particularly as sites of reforms and disparate options for Black students. There are massive funding gaps in education in both states, resulting in students, parents, educators, and community members protesting to demand more resources, investment, and support to provide

quality education to Black and Brown students (Conniff, 2022; Smith & Davey, 2019; Taylor, 2014). Further, educational reform efforts resulting in differentiated and stratified educational experiences, coupled with the voucher and choice programs to give Black parents more "choice," highlight the inequitable educational landscape (Farrell & Mathews, 2006; Lipman, 2004; Pedroni, 2013; Stovall, 2013; Witte, 1998, 1999). Wisconsin has consistently ranked as one of the worst places for Black people to live based on disparities in education, housing, incarceration, and employment (Goldstein, 2018). In Wisconsin, Black students are often labeled as "failing" based upon various reports[16] and district report cards.[17] In Illinois, these statistics are similar as Black students across school districts are deemed below basic and failing to meet expectations (Eads, 2019).[18] While research highlights these educational experiences in both states, the research community has given less attention to homeschooling in the region. It is important to study Black homeschooling in Wisconsin and Illinois to understand these families' homeschooling experiences in different racial and educational contexts.

Homeschooling Laws

Scholars within the "modern homeschooling movement" note how, in the 1970s and 80s in the U.S., homeschooling was treated "as a type of truancy, claiming that children, by law, must be in school."[19] Homeschooling advocates lobbied for the legalization of homeschooling across the country, the achievement of which in the 1990s (Geary, 2011) prompted an increased racial, religious, and class diversity of homeschooling families (Ray, 2009). This study examined Wisconsin's and Illinois's homeschooling laws to contextualize the process and practice of

[16] Race to Equity Report: A Baseline Report on the State of Racial Disparities in Dane County (2014)
[17] Wisconsin Accountability Report Cards (https://dpi.wi.gov/accountability/report-cards)
[18] Illinois Report Card (https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/)
[19] As discussed in the Introduction chapter of this dissertation, the framing of the "modern homeschooling movement" centers whiteness and disregards Black education efforts taking place simultaneously (e.g. integration efforts). Further, references to home education in colonial times ignores the self-education of Black people (Gaither, 2009). Black homeschooling scholars rectify this omission in their writings (Fields-Smith, 2015).

homeschooling for Black families in these states. Homeschooling policy entails homeschool notice, homeschool options, parent qualifications, instruction/subjects, and assessment and intervention. It is important to analyze the laws that regulate home-based private education in Wisconsin and Illinois since these laws vary by state (See Appendix 2 for further details on Homeschooling Laws across the U.S.). The homeschooling laws situate Black homeschoolers in Wisconsin and Illinois, two states with the "minimally" restrictive and "least restrictive" homeschooling laws (Bales, 2018). I was curious about whether homeschooling laws were a barrier or constraint for some, so through the course of my study I learned more about these laws and how they mattered for Black homeschooling parents.[20] This educational policy context make Wisconsin and Illinois unique states in which to study Black homeschooling as they offer insight into how parents can provide their children with learning experiences under fewer restrictions.

Wisconsin. Wisconsin is considered an "early mover" in first passing homeschooling laws in 1983 (Renzulli et al., 2020).[21] Additionally, Wisconsin is categorized as a "notice only," "low regulation," and "minimally restrictive" state in terms of homeschooling laws.[22] Wisconsin state statute declares that, "a parent or guardian has the right to select a home-based private educational program, commonly referred to as homeschooling, for his or her child or children, in order to comply with the compulsory school attendance law" (WI Act 512 1983).[23] Further, this statue states, "home-based private educational program means a program of educational instruction provided to a child by the child's parent or guardian or by a person designated by the

[20] The significance of these laws to parents' homeschool decision is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3 and how it informed parents' homeschool practices are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.
[21] Scholars view the 1972 U.S. Supreme Court case *Wilson v. Yoder* to be significant in shaping homeschooling regulation in Wisconsin. In This case the courts rule in favor of a family being able to homeschool for religious purposes. This case is seen as a precedent for families to claim religious, social, and academic reasons for homeschooling which helped pass legislation on homeschooling in the 1980s and 90s.
[22] Various support groups such as the Home School Legal Defense Association, Coalition for Responsible Homeschooling, and Wisconsin Homeschooling Parents Association describe homeschooling laws in these ways.
[23] 1983 Wisconsin Act 512 (https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/1983/related/acts/512)

parent or guardian." Parents are solely responsible for ensuring that their homeschooling meets the "private educational program" requirements and for providing the education unless they designate someone else to do so (although "an instructional program provided to more than one family unit does not constitute a home-based private educational program.") Further, there are no minimal education, teaching certificate, or licensing requirements for homeschooling parents in Wisconsin.

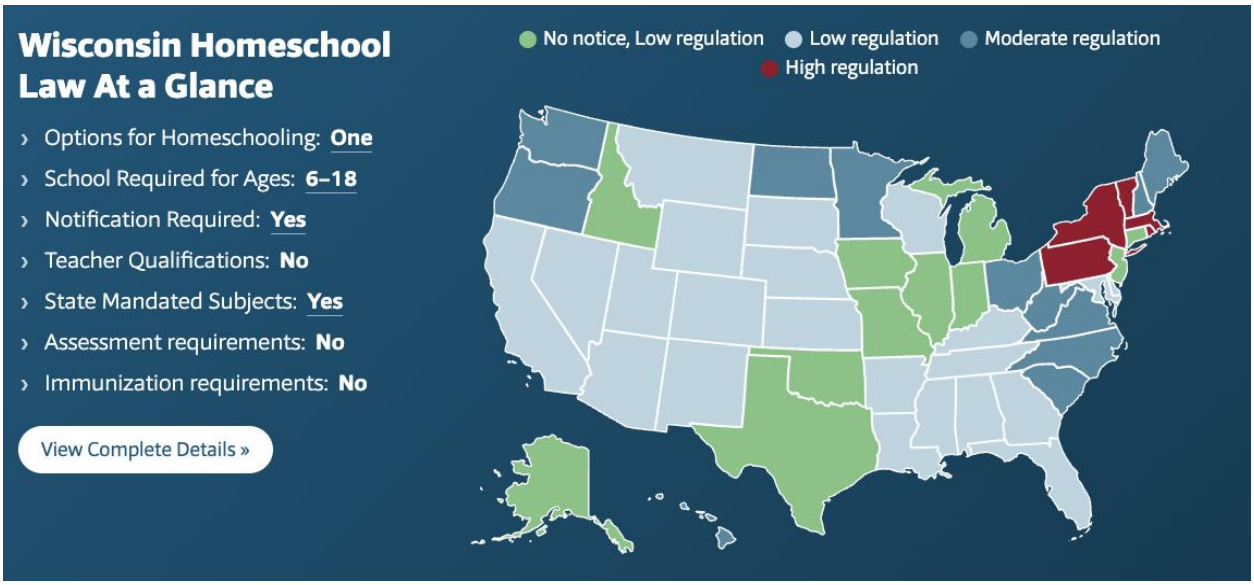
The criteria for homeschooling, as noted in the WI Act 512 (1983) statute, state that the program is not intended to avoid or circumvent the "compulsory school attendance requirement." The purpose of homeschooling is "to provide private or religious-based education program" that is "privately controlled"; therefore the Department of Public Instruction does not provide instruction or curriculum to homeschoolers, nor do they recommend or approve homeschooling curriculum or provide funding to parents. Further, the "program provides a sequentially progressive curriculum of fundamental instruction in reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science and health" for "at least 875 hours" each year. While parents are required to meet this criterion in their homeschooling, there is no "express authority for any agency or school district to monitor home-based private educational programs or to verify the hours of instruction provided or the use of a sequential curriculum."[24] Parents are not required by law to test their children but may do so at their own expense. Lastly "homeschooling parents are required to file the online PI-1206 homeschool report annually, on or before October 15" (with the earliest date being July 1 to submit and at any point during the school year before they withdraw their child to homeschool).

[24] Parents are encouraged to maintain their own records for their homeschool-based private educational program for prospective employers, the military, or college.

In the image below from the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), Wisconsin is mapped as a "low regulation" state given that there are no immunizations, assessments, and teacher qualification requirements.

Figure 1

Wisconsin Homeschool Law At a Glance



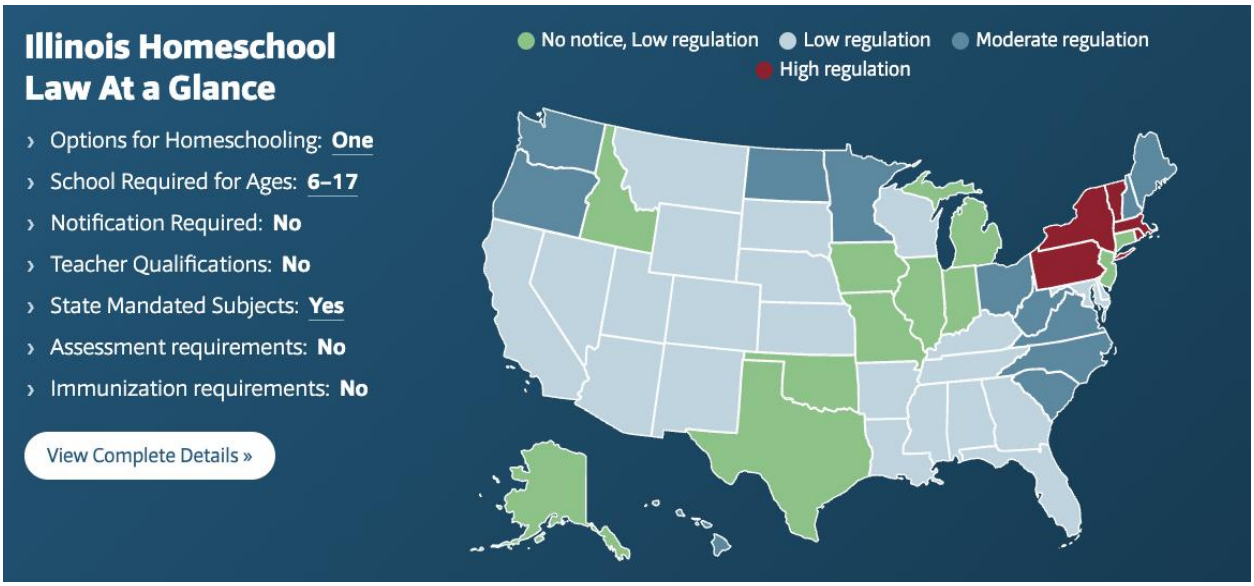
Note. Source: Homeschool Laws by State from the HSLDA, https://hslda.org/legal/wisconsin

Illinois. Like Wisconsin, Illinois is also categorized as a "low regulation" homeschooling state. Additionally, homeschool support groups label homeschooling in Illinois as "no notice" and "least restrictive." In the image below from the HSLDA, the Illinois homeschool laws are like Wisconsin in that immunization, assessments, and teacher qualifications are not required. Unlike Wisconsin, Illinois does not require by law that parents notify their local school districts or the state that they are homeschooling (though some homeschool organizations encourage this notice be given to avoid any attendance confusion that could lead to truancy if a child was previously enrolled). Further the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) notes that there is "only one voluntary form related to homeschooling" that would send notice to the child's previous school that the parent is withdrawing to homeschool.

The ISBE outlines that "the only specific requirement is that certain subject areas be taught" in the English language: Language arts, Mathematics, Biological and physical science, Social science (social studies), Fine arts, and Physical development and health. Further, they note that "there are no requirements for the number of school days or the length of a school day for homeschool students. Classes can occur any day of the week and at any time during the day."[25] While there is only one requirement for homeschoolers in Illinois, the ISBE and other homeschool organizations also encourage detailed record keeping for their own purposes, such as future educational and labor opportunities. Like Wisconsin, the ISBE does not recommend or review any materials to be used in a homeschool program; however, they provide a list of resources for parents to research for their homeschooling.

Figure 2

Illinois Homeschool Law At a Glance



Note. Source: Homeschool Laws by State from the HSLDA, https://hslda.org/legal/illinois

[25] ISBE- Homeschooling (https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Illinois-Homeschooling.pdf)

Table 1

Breakdown of Wisconsin and Illinois Homeschooling Requirements[26]

	Wisconsin	**Illinois**
Notification of Homeschooling	Annual	None
Parent Education Minimum	None	None
Criminal Bans	None	None
State-Mandated Subjects	Yes	Yes
Assessment Requirements	None	None
Vaccination Records	No	Yes (no records submitted)[27]
Compulsory Attendance	Ages 6-18	Ages 6-17

In Wisconsin and Illinois, it is relatively easy to start and practice homeschooling. This is not to say that homeschooling as a practice is "easy"; however, neither state has strict regulations for homeschooling parents to follow regarding teaching and testing. These states diverge from the regulation levels of states previously studied in the homeschooling literature. There is very little interference from the local school districts and state when it comes to homeschooling in Wisconsin and Illinois. This allows for homeschooling families in those states to have more autonomy over their learning experiences. This context in Wisconsin and Illinois provides a backdrop for understanding homeschooling for Black families in the study. The following section considers the added context of the Covid-19 pandemic with its attendant unprecedented increase in homeschooling throughout the country.

The COVID-19 Pandemic and Black Lives Matter Movement

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, nationwide homeschooling trends showed that educating children at home was becoming a more popular option for Black people in the United States (Rachid, 2005). News media coverage and the growing scholarship on Black homeschooling

[26] I developed this table using homeschooling law information provided from each state's Department of Education as well as organizations such as ProPublica and HSLDA. Most sources noted similar requirements.
[27] A few sources state that immunization records are not required while others state that they are, however, there is no requirement *to submit* these records to local school districts or the state.

highlighted that the rise in homeschooling among Black families was due to racially hostile school environments (Anderson, 2018; Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; Mazama & Lundy, 2012; Mazama & Musumunu, 2014). The U.S. Census Bureau's ongoing Household Pulse survey found that these upward trends continued in the Covid-19 pandemic (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021), specifically noting a substantial increase in homeschooling from the spring of 2020 to the start of the 2020-2021 school year. The public health crisis paired with the subsequent school closures and virtual/distant learning led families across the nation to homeschool, with a dramatic increase among Black families. While some news sources identify the Covid-19 pandemic as the cause for homeschooling, other news sources emphasize how anti-Black racism in schools also played a role (Miles, 2021).

Scholars and organizers have exhaustively documented the persistent systemic antiblackness in the form of police murders (Alexander, 2020; Gruber, 2021; Kaba, 2021). The continual and hyper-visible anti-Black violence sparked the Black Lives Matter movement, and amid the Covid-19 pandemic George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery were the victims of police and white vigilante violence that led to a "summer of racial reckoning" (Chang et al., 2020). These murders alongside the pandemic's exacerbation of health and economic disparities across racial and class lines prompted millions across the country to protest. Wisconsin and Illinois are not immune from this anti-Black violence – as made devastatingly evident in the murders of Rekia Boyd in Chicago, Illinois in 2012; Laquan McDonald in Chicago, Illinois in 2014; Tony Robinson in Madison, Wisconsin in 2015; Sylville Smith in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 2016; Alvin Cole in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin in 2017, and the attempted murder of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin in 2020. The state-sanctioned violence against Black people from the Milwaukee Police Department and the Chicago Police Department

impacts Black people's daily experiences living in these states (ACLU Illinois, 2021; ACLU Wisconsin, 2020). This sociopolitical moment of Black Lives Matter is always relevant, especially in a global health crisis, and can further contextualize Black homeschooling in this region at this time.

Eligibility For Study

I acknowledge that all Black parents are educators who provide a wide range of learning experiences to their children – whether they help with homework, reteach school topics, supplement their children's educational experiences with topics not traditionally taught, impart life skills, and everything in between. This study, however, excluded Black families who had their children enrolled in school and did not opt into homeschooling "officially." When identifying Black homeschoolers, I used additional language in the screening protocol to clarify study eligibility and ensure that parents willing to participate were not remote schooling in the Covid-19 pandemic. People were invited to participate in my dissertation research if they a) Identified as Black/African American; b) Lived in Wisconsin or Illinois; c) Currently homeschooled a 6- to 18-year-old; and d) Had been homeschooling for at least six months.

When recruiting people to share their stories and expertise, I used the terms "Black" and "African American" in flyers[28] and encouraged those who identified as such to participate in this study. In addition to recruiting homeschoolers that identified as Black/African American, I also aimed to recruit Black homeschoolers from a wide range of backgrounds – in terms of religion, family structure, socioeconomic status, neighborhood demographics and more – to provide

[28] As noted earlier in this chapter, this could include those who are U.S.-born Black/African American, African immigrants, Afro-Latino/a/x, indigenous, and Black/African American biracial/multiracial individuals. However, this was not specified on recruitment materials. Literature on U.S-born Black and Black immigrant educational experiences is written about in traditional school settings and largely absent from homeschooling literature. While there may be differences in the approach or motivations for U.S.-born Black and Black immigrant people to homeschool, this is not documented in the literature. Including Black people from diverse backgrounds could allow for the similarities and differences between the groups to emerge as another contribution to the literature.

additional perspectives from Black homeschoolers across demographics (See Appendix 3 for Parent Demographic Questionnaire). This study intentionally excluded non-Black homeschoolers. Although families of color and white families may have adopted Black children or share similar motivations for homeschooling as Black parents, this study was most interested in understanding the ways that Black families experience education and homeschooling as individuals who are racialized or identify as Black.

Recruitment

From August 2020 to August 2021, I carried out varied recruitment efforts for this study. This included connecting with other homeschoolers with whom I shared community, relying on personal contacts, snowball sampling, social media posting on personal pages, public pages, and in homeschooling groups, and outreach to local and national homeschool support groups. I will discuss each of these in turn, detailing the factors I believe shaped the effectiveness of each recruitment strategy.

Black Homeschooling Relationships

As a Black homeschooler, I am a member of the group that I aimed to recruit for my study. My interest in homeschooling and some of my homeschool relationships predate my dissertation research. These relationships began in 2017 when I started to think about homeschooling my son. As I considered this educational option for our family, I connected with other Black families, locally and on social media, who either had been homeschooling or were also considering it. As a Black homeschooler in Milwaukee, I have personal relationships with other Black homeschoolers in both states, though most are in Wisconsin. Additionally, as I have been homeschooling for four years, I have connected with more families who were considering homeschooling for themselves, including those contemplating it during the Covid-19 pandemic.

I have been in homeschooling spaces where I facilitate activities with other families, attend field trips with other families, and arrange meet-ups for people to connect and ask questions about homeschooling. Through these various interactions over the years, I have built relationships with others in a local Black homeschooling community, specifically in Wisconsin. My established relationships provided me with an opportunity to invite parents to participate in my study. I was not a random researcher inviting them, but someone with whom they had established a relationship. While I did not recruit Black homeschooling parents in person for this study, I connected with potential parents via email, text, and Facebook Messenger. I sent them a personal message introducing my dissertation study and shared the recruitment flyer I invited them to participate in my study and emphasized that their participation was voluntary and that all study-related communication regarding their participation would be conducted privately rather than in group settings.

Social Media Recruitment

Given the Covid-19 pandemic and virtual nature of data collection, I posted recruitment flyers for interviews and focus groups on Facebook and Instagram. I belong to Black homeschooling Facebook groups that offer support to families throughout the United States and in both Wisconsin and Illinois cities. For the private groups that I am in, I asked group administrators for their permission to post recruitment flyers and solicit parents for my study. Parents who were interested either commented on my posted flyer or sent a direct message to me on Facebook Messenger. If someone commented on the flyer, I followed up with them privately through Messenger. The contact I initiated via social media included introducing myself, describing the purpose of my dissertation study, and offering to respond to any questions or concerns. If families were interested, I then screened them to make sure they met the inclusion

criteria. Consent was an ongoing process that involved checking in with parents during our initial contact, while scheduling the interview, and before conducting the interview to ensure they were still interested in participating.

I posted on my personal Facebook page (with the setting on Public so others could share) four times. I also posted flyers on my personal (private) and homeschool (public) Instagram pages, twice and four times respectively.[29] In order to recruit Black homeschoolers beyond my social network, with administrator permission I posted my recruitment flyers in 11 different homeschooling groups 1-4 times per group from January 2021 until August 2021. These private groups were mainly for Black/African American and Melanated homeschoolers/unschoolers, with a couple of groups that focused on homeschoolers in Wisconsin, Illinois, or a particular region in those states (these regional groups had members across racial identities and were not always exclusively Black).

Snowball Sampling & Personal Contacts

I also recruited Black homeschooling parents through snowball sampling (Noy, 2008). As I conducted interview with parents, I shared my recruitment flyers and encouraged them to share with any other Black/African American homeschoolers they knew who fit the study criteria. Additionally, my broader community also supported my recruitment efforts. They shared my recruitment flyers on their social media pages, as described above, as well as passed these flyers on to Black homeschoolers they knew. This led to connecting with more Black families who were currently homeschooling or had homeschooled in the past.

[29] I have also received multiple Instagram Direct Messages and emails from people who have seen the flyer but were not eligible to participate because of their location and/or because they did not meet the eligibility requirements (e.g. they had been supporting their children with virtual learning in the pandemic rather than homeschooling).

Other Recruitment Strategies & Discussion

While I tried to recruit via email to local, statewide, and national homeschooling organizations, I either received fewer responses, was informed that their organization did not recruit for research through their networks or was provided with information about other homeschooling groups that could potentially assist. The virtual nature of recruitment allowed me to share recruitment flyers across various platforms, which provided me more reach in my recruitment strategy. However, the pandemic also decreased my in-person contact, which did not allow me to build relationships in my preferred manner (i.e., sharing space with other Black homeschoolers and getting to know each other). Further, I did a lot of recruitment communication via text and email during a pandemic, which did not give me opportunities to follow up with homeschoolers in person. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, though, these various recruitment efforts enabled me to connect with more Black homeschoolers in both states.

Data Collection

I collected data from August 2020 to August 2021 in three Phases (see Table 2 below). Phase 1 data collection took place over the course of a year, from August 2020 through August 2021. Phases 2 and 3 occurred simultaneously from June 2021 through August 2021. I discuss each of these phases in turn below. Before collecting data, I began document analysis of Wisconsin's and Illinois's homeschooling laws to familiarize myself with the requirements in both states. This homeschooling law analysis was an iterative process that continued throughout data collection. For example, in some interviews homeschooling laws were discussed, thus I wrote analytical memos to make sense of how parents understood the laws.

Table 2

Data Collection Phases

	Data Collection Technique	Timeframe	Participants
Phase 1	Interviews with parents	08/2020- 08/2021	15 parents
Phase 2	Focus groups with parents	06/2021- 08/2021	11 parents
Phase 3	Focal family projects	06/2021- 08/2021	6 parents, 7 young people

Parent Interviews

During Phase 1, I conducted 15 one-on-one semi-structured interviews with ten Black homeschooling parents in Wisconsin and five Black homeschooling parents in Illinois. The 15 parents in Wisconsin represent 14 individual Black homeschooling families.[30] I prioritized parents who were the primary adult providing home-based education for interviews to understand the daily experiences, strategies, approaches, and understanding of homeschooling. The goals of these interviews were to understand why they decided to homeschool and how they engaged in homeschooling. Further, I sought to understand their school experiences (if applicable) and their homeschooling experiences – including their resources, challenges, and tensions. Lastly, I asked questions related to how they understood their identity as Black and/or African American and how, if at all, they engaged in Black Racial Socialization (i.e., conversations about race, racism, and what it means to be Black. See: Constantine & Blackmon, 2002; Peters, 2002; Thornton, 1997) with their children in their homeschooling (see Appendix 4 for Interview Protocol). Prior to conducting these interviews, my sister used this interview protocol on me, as I wanted to pilot the questions and see how I would respond to them as a Black homeschooling parent. I conducted all interviews virtually (via Zoom, Google Hangout,

[30] I interviewed a mother and father from one family unit to learn about their homeschooling experiences. In the first interview with one parent, they both described engaging in homeschooling in varied ways, unlike other interviews, so I decided to also interview the" secondary" homeschool parent to also learn from them.

Facetime, or WebEx), and they lasted between 65 minutes and 178 minutes. I compensated parents with $10 via electronic cash payment (e.g., Venmo) or an E-gift card.

Focus Groups

During Phase 2, I conducted five focus groups/group interviews.[31] Eleven of the 15 parents who participated in Phase 1 attended these groups. The purpose of the focus groups was two-fold: I aimed to learn more about Black parents' homeschooling experiences through group discussions that could generate additional perspectives, and I wanted to create a space for Black homeschoolers in the same state to connect with each other. I developed the focus group protocols based on the themes that emerged from the Phase 1 interviews. These focus groups provided another source of data for triangulation and an opportunity to member-check some of the findings thus far. I checked in about their motivations for homeschooling and discussed how, if at all, being Black shaped their experiences. The focus groups also enabled me to gain more understanding about these parents' homeschooling perspectives and experiences, particularly as they relate to broader discussions on homeschooling and education. I gathered their perspectives on critiques of homeschooling any tensions they felt while homeschooling (see Appendix 5 for Focus Group protocol). All focus groups were conducted virtually via Zoom and lasted between 57 minutes to 111 minutes.[32] I compensated parents who participated in the focus group discussions with $20 via electronic cash payment or an E-gift card.

[31] I invited all 15 parents who participated in Phase 1 to join a focus group, however, only 11 participated. Based on the families' schedules, I was unable to schedule group discussions that worked for many parents. Therefore, I held one focus group with three parents and four group interviews that consisted of two parents in each.

[32] At this point of data collection during Phase 2, the University of Wisconsin, Madison lifted restrictions on in-person human subjects research. Given the continued uncertainty of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated health risks, I decided to continue with virtual data collection rather than attempt to gather parents from different households. This virtual mode created a set of advantages (e.g. enabling parents to join who may not otherwise been able to arrange transportation) and disadvantages (e.g. technically difficulties) for conducting focus groups.

Focal Families

Phase 3 focused on focal families. I conducted a more detailed analysis of each parents' way of homeschooling through various data collection methods, including collecting parents' homeschool artifacts and engaging with young homeschoolers through interviews, photography, drawing, and journaling projects. To gather a set of focal families with a range of backgrounds, geographical contexts, and racial experiences, I invited all 14 primary homeschooling parents to participate in Phase 3. Six parents participated and gave permission for their children to participate if they chose to do so. Seven young people assented to participate, two of whom come from one individual family.[33] Two of the focal families homeschool in Illinois and four of the focal families homeschool in Wisconsin. I compensated all parents who participated in Phase 3 with $40 via electronic cash payment or E-gift card.

Focal Young People. Within these focal families, I learned from young people through individual interviews and a homeschool documentation project that included drawing, journaling, and photo-taking over one to two weeks. This combination of research methods allowed young people to be able to share their experiences utilizing a variety of ways (Kirk, 2007). After gaining parent permission, I engaged in an ongoing assent process with young people that took place at various points throughout the study. The initial assenting process took the longest time (sometimes close to 30 minutes) as I explained what a dissertation was, what I was studying and why, why I was interested in including them in the study, and what type of questions I would ask. I also encouraged them to ask me questions about the study or myself (e.g., do I have a kid, where do I live, etc.). This time before the assenting process was important for getting to know the young person better and for them to get to know me. I knew two of the young people from a

[33] If a focal family had more than one young person being homeschooled between the ages of 6-18, I invited siblings to participate in the study. I conducted interviews with siblings individually.

homeschooling space outside of the research for three to four years. This pre-existing relationship likely made them feel more comfortable with me. I conducted the assenting process in the same manner with them and emphasized that I would not be mad if they did not want to participate.

If young people agreed to participate in the study, I asked them to share with me what I was asking them to do in the study. This helped me determine whether they fully comprehended what their participation would entail. As I recruited homeschoolers between the ages of six and 18 years old, I developed interview protocols for young people ages 6-8, 9-12, and 12-18 (see Appendix 6) and a youth demographic questionnaire (See Appendix 7). I provided families with the option to conduct interviews in person or virtually. Three interviews were conducted virtually, and four interviews were conducted in person with Covid-19 precautions.[34] I conducted semi-structured interviews with young Black homeschoolers to center their perspectives and better understand their experiences learning outside of traditional school. The purposes of these interviews were to explore their homeschooling experiences: with whom, where, and what they learned; what they liked, disliked, and wanted to change, if anything. Further, I aimed to learn about their experiences and thoughts about both homeschooling and schools. The initial interviews gave me the opportunity to get to know the young people and to hear about their experiences in general. They lasted between 52 and 120 minutes.

Each homeschooled youth had the opportunity to draw, journal and take photos to document their homeschooling experiences. To encourage participation in Phase 3, I provided the young people with materials to use for their projects. This helped to ensure that they did not experience any barriers to participating. Each young person who participated received a

[34] I explained I would bring hand sanitizers, pens, and wear a mask. I also explained that the interview could take place inside or outside with six feet of distance between us or inside.

bookbag, folder, composition notebook, sketchbook, digital camera, SIM card, camera case, pens, pencils, and color pencils (See Appendix 8 for photos of materials). I went through the materials with them and answered questions about the study. I aimed for young people to have autonomy over the aspects of the project in which they engaged, therefore I did not have requirements for the documentation of their experiences. The young people incorporated at least one of the three techniques to share their experiences in addition to participating in two interviews. While I asked them to draw, take photos, and journal about their homeschooling experiences and anything that they felt was important, I also provided written prompts to help guide them if needed (see Appendix 9 for Focal Youth Project Prompts). I suggested one to two weeks for youth to work on their homeschooling projects and completed a one-week check-in with each young person to discuss their progress, answer any questions, and see if they still wanted to participate.

After each young person completed their homeschooling projects, I conducted a final debrief interview to discuss them (see Appendix 10 for Second Interview Protocol with Youth). During these interviews, youth shared what they drew, took photos of, and wrote. I utilized their creations to help facilitate further dialogue about their homeschooling experiences. Additionally, I asked for their feedback on how it was to complete the project and what about the process could be improved. These debrief interviews lasted between 27 and 71 minutes. Youth were able to keep these materials after their participation in the study as a thank you and received a $40 gift card for their participation.

Overview of Parents[35]

Ten of the parents in this study homeschool in Wisconsin and five homeschool in Illinois, representing a total of 15 parents. Latoya and Trevor are partners who both participated in this study, so this sample represents 14 different families. Thirteen of the mothers in this study were the primary homeschooling parent, including Latoya. Ben was the only father who was the primary homeschooling parent. This sample includes three single parents – the rest of the parents are married. One parent lives in a racially mixed area, while most parents live in either predominantly Black areas or predominantly white areas in Wisconsin and Illinois.

Six parents have graduate degrees or are pursuing graduate education, three have bachelor's degrees, three have high school degrees, and the rest have attended some college. Three parents are retired and/or stay-at-home parents who engage in household labor as they homeschool their children. Of the 13 homeschooling mothers, ten are also working in various capacities (full- and part-time employment, business ownership, in office or working from home). These professions ranged from working in city and state level positions, childcare, and education (both K-12 and university level), health, service work, non-profit, management, and entrepreneurship. The reported annual incomes ranged from $25,000 to close to $200,000. There is also religious diversity among the families, with eight practicing some Christian denomination.

[35] All names used in this study are pseudonyms.

Table 3

Parents' Regional, Marital, and Educational Background

Name	State	Neighborhood Racial Demographics	Marital Status	Highest Level of Education	Annual Income
Latoya[36]	Wisconsin	Predominantly Black	Married	Bachelors	$25,000
Tricia	Wisconsin	Predominantly white	Married	Doctorate	$150,000
Hazina	Wisconsin	White	Married	Associate	$60,000
Alice	Wisconsin	Mixed	Married	EdS, Doctorate*	Close to $200,000
Nicole	Wisconsin	Predominantly Black	Single	Some college (high school)	$80,000
Alexis	Wisconsin	Predominantly Black	Married	Associate	$75,000-85,000
Gemini	Wisconsin	White	Married	Some college (high school)	$115,000
Jamaica	Wisconsin	Predominantly Black	Married	Masters	Unsure
Tiffany	Wisconsin	White	Married	Bachelors & Associates	$145,000
Trevor	Wisconsin	Black/African American	Married	Bachelors	$28,000 – 38,000
Vanessa	Illinois	Predominantly white	Single	Bachelors, Masters*	$50,000
Cynthia	Illinois	Predominantly white	Married	Masters	$100,000
Chi	Illinois	Black	Single	Graduate School	$83,000
Tasha	Illinois	Predominantly Black	Married	High School	$105,000 – 110,000
Ben	Illinois	Predominantly Black	Married	Bachelors	$70,000

Note. *Indicates degrees that parents were pursuing at the time of the study.

[36] Latoya was the primary homeschooling parent while her partner Trevor was the secondary homeschool parent.

Table 4

Parents' Homeschooling Background

Name	# of Children Homeschooling[37]	Length of Homeschooling[38]	Child Previously Attended School
Latoya	Two	3 years	Yes, public school
Tricia	One	3 years	Yes, private & independent schools
Hazina	One	5 years	Yes, public schools
Alice	One	8 months	Yes, private school
Nicole	One	9 months	Yes, charter school
Alexis	One	2 years	Yes, charter school
Gemini	Four	6 months	Yes, public & private schools
Jamaica	One	1 year	No, N/A (child's age)
Tiffany	Two	9 years	Yes, public and private schools
Trevor	Two	3 years	Yes, public school
Vanessa	One	6 years	Yes, public schools
Cynthia	One	10 years	No, N/A (never enrolled)
Chi	One	6 years	Yes, public school
Tasha	Three	9 years	No, NA*
Ben	Two	15 months	Yes, public school

Note. Tasha's older children attended private and public school and her younger children (who are the focus of this research) have never attended and are homeschooled.

Ten of the parents have elementary-aged children, three have middle-school-aged children, and two have high-school-aged children. Everyone except Jamaica and Cynthia had their child(ren) previously enrolled in public, private, and/or charter schools before homeschooling (Cynthia and Jamaica have always homeschooled). At the time of the interviews (August 2020-August 2021), parents had been homeschooling anywhere between six months and ten years.

[37] Some of the parents have adult children that they either did not homeschool or are no longer homeschooling. Some of them have children that are babies or toddlers. These children are not reflected in the table. The children in the column represent the children that were the focus of their interview about homeschooling.

[38] This column indicates how long they had been homeschooling at the time of the first interview.

School Data

All but two parents had their children previously enrolled in school, and six parents had their children enrolled in more than one school before homeschooling. Children attended public, private, independent, charter, or magnet schools in Wisconsin and Illinois. Most of the parents in Illinois had their children previously enrolled in a large, majority Black and Brown school district. One parent had their children previously enrolled in two racially diverse school districts where, according to test scores, Black students fell below expectations. One parent, who never enrolled their child in school, would have had access to a predominantly white school district where most Black students were below proficient or did not meet testing expectations.

While several of the parents in Wisconsin had access to a large, majority Black and Brown school district, only one family had their child previously enrolled in this school district. Another parent considered this district as she evaluated her educational options in the area, and another enrolled her child in this district before going to another school outside of this district. Three of the parents in Wisconsin opted to choose a private or charter school instead of this school district for their children's education before transitioning to homeschool. The other three Wisconsin parents had access to predominantly or almost exclusively white school districts and had their children enrolled in two different schools (public, private and independent) prior to homeschooling. In all these school districts where parents sent their children in Wisconsin, Black students were reported as performing at a "basic" or "below basic" level based on district report cards or had fewer than 20 Black students and no available test score data.

The Young Homeschoolers

This study included seven Black/African American/Dark Brown/Mixed/Biracial[39] young people ages 7-15: Alexander, Maggie, Kelvin, Unknown,[40] Keke, Joshua, and Natasha (see Table 5 for Youth Demographics). As noted in the previous section, most of these young people attended some type of public or private school in Wisconsin and Illinois. Alexander and Natasha homeschool in Illinois and Kelvin, Keke, Joshua, Unknown, and Maggie homeschool in Wisconsin. Natasha, Alexander, Kelvin, Keke, and Maggie all live in predominantly white communities – they described seeing mostly white neighbors –while Joshua and Unknown lived, respectively, in more racially diverse[41] and predominantly Black communities – Unknown described seeing mostly Black people.

Table 5

Youth Demographics[42]

	Self-Identified Racial Identity	Age, Gender	Homeschool with other children/ siblings?	Length of Home-school	Attended School?
Alexander	Other (African American)	7, Male	No	5 years	Yes
Maggie	Dark Brown/Black	7, Girl	Yes	3 years	Yes
Kelvin	Mixed, white/brown, African American	8, Guy, man, boy	Yes	1 year	Yes
Unknown	African American	8, Boy	Yes	2, 3, 5 years	Yes
Keke	Biracial, white/Black, Black	10, Female	Yes	1 year	Yes
Joshua	Black	13, Male	No	1 year	Yes
Natasha	Black	15, Girl	No	10 years	No

[39] These were some of the descriptions that youth shared in their demographic questionnaire and interviews.
[40] During my feedback session with this young person, he requested his pseudonym be changed to "Unknown."
[41] This young person was unsure about their neighborhood racial demographics, so this information is based on what their parent described.
[42] The information in this table is provided by the young people in the study. For a couple of youth, they described their homeschooling taking place before the state would recognize them as school-aged and define them as homeschoolers. Parents also described homeschooling their children before the "legal" age of homeschooling (e.g. since their children were 1-2 years old), noting how they see their homeschooling in relation to parenting.

Keke and Kelvin are siblings and Unknown and Maggie learn together in a homeschool collective. All the young people have unique backgrounds and experiences that contribute to their understanding of their homeschooling experiences (discussed in detail in Chapter 7 on young Black homeschoolers' perspectives). In this chapter, I introduce each Black homeschooled youth based upon their own descriptions of self.[43] The following descriptions of the youth are important to include to try to humanize them in this research.

Alexander has been homeschooling since he was one or two years old. When he became of age, he started attending school so his mom could work. He continued to homeschool in the evenings and on weekends, even when he was in school, until the Covid-19 pandemic. Alexander, now a seven-year-old, is a helpful and creative person. He really likes rockets, to build and create things, especially trains. If he had a superpower, he would have the ability to fly and shoot repulsor beams like Iron Man and blow the "bad guys" to another country. Alexander lives in a big, racially diverse city in Illinois but near different people who are white and do not look like him. He identifies racially as "Other" and views historical African American figures as his ancestors. His favorite food is bacon cheeseburgers and favorite colors are red and black. When Alexander grows up, not only is he going to be an engineer, but an actor, too.

Maggie is a seven-year-old dark brown girl who is a leader. She can do whatever she puts her mind to. Maggie is Black and beautiful and loves her natural Black hair. She loves pizza and the color blue. She has always wanted to fly, so if she could pick any superpower, it would of course be flying. She would fly high in the sky, over the clouds and into space. Maggie lives in an almost all-white city in Wisconsin. With her superpower, she would fly away from the predominantly white neighborhood that she lives into countries in Africa, like Uganda. There she

[43] I constructed these descriptions based on what they shared in their demographic questionnaire, their interviews, and their homeschooling artifacts (illustrations, photos, and journal entries).

would learn languages, teach the other children English if they did not already know it, and create community and friendships with other Black children. She used to attend school but has been homeschooling for three years. Maggie isn't an official scientist but will be one in the future.

Kelvin is an eight-year-old brown-and-white mixed African American guy who lives in the country with his white neighbors in Wisconsin. It is very white where he lives, and before the Covid-19 pandemic, he attended predominantly white schools – one public and one private. He has been homeschooling for about a year with his siblings now. He likes a lot of things about himself, and he likes to do a bunch of different things like reading. Kelvin also loves tractors a lot. If he could create any superpower, he would create a machine that would make everything bigger – including land and his toy tractors. He is a hardworking farmer who likes to eat spaghetti with sauce. His favorite colors are yellow and green.

Unknown is a really smart and nice 36-year-old[44] who loves to make haunted houses. He also is very big and strong with a six-pack. If he were a superhero, he would have the power of speed. He would run so fast that he could run up and through buildings. Unknown is an African-American boy who lives around other Black people in his neighborhood. While he lives in a racially diverse city in Wisconsin, the city is very segregated. He used to attend a predominantly Black public school before he started homeschooling. Unknown has been homeschooling for some time now – as he describes, it has been two, or three, or five years. His favorite food is goat meat. When he grows up, he is going to be a scientist. His current occupation at home is taking out the garbage.

[44] This young person is really 8-years-old but wanted to be 36 in our co-constructed description of him.

Keke is a strong, intelligent, loving, observant, outgoing, independent ten-year-old Biracial, Black girl who loves to cook and bake. She likes to bake cupcakes and eat strawberry ice cream. She likes to do things outdoors, like building things and farming. She is handy with different tools and helps to build bridges and forts outside. She works with her dad landscaping and shoveling. Keke is also very active and enjoys playing basketball – her favorite sport – and doing karate, gymnastics, and swimming. She is very interested in agriculture, especially growing corn and beans. Keke really likes to read a lot of books by Black and biracial authors. She lives in a white neighborhood in a very white city in Wisconsin. She attended a private and public school – both predominantly white – before the pandemic and has been homeschooling for about a year with her family.

Joshua is a simple and athletic 13-year-old Black boy. He likes his hair because he can do different things to it. Joshua is involved in a lot of sports like track, basketball, football, and swimming. He also enjoys playing video games. His favorite colors are red and purple, and his favorite food is mac 'n' cheese or bacon. If he could have any superpower, he would pick time traveling. He likes the idea of time traveling because you could travel to the future and past, and if you travel to the past, you can fix things, so the future is better. Joshua lives in a racially diverse city in Wisconsin and used to attend a private, predominantly Black Christian school. He started homeschooling during the pandemic and has been homeschooling for about a year.

Natasha is an avid skater who enjoys spending as much time as she can on the ice. When she falls down, she doesn't give up and has learned to skate very well, performing tricks, and competing in ice-skating contests. She also works teaching others how to ice-skate. Natasha, a 15-year-old Black girl, lives in a white neighborhood in a predominantly white city in Illinois. She has been homeschooling for ten years. She started homeschooling when she was a younger

person and has never attended school before. Natasha's favorite color is blue and favorite food is pizza. She is a Marvel fan and would like to have magic like Wanda Maximoff. She likes to paint jackets, shoes, and t-shirts, as well as swim and hang out with friends.

Data Analysis

As I engaged in data analysis, it was important for me to interrogate my intentions for my research and how they are shaped by my identity. Because I am currently homeschooling, it was important for me to be aware of the varying experiences of Black families that choose to homeschool and to not impose my experiences or thoughts onto theirs. Thus, I posed detailed questions and explored the topic from their perspectives by asking follow-up and clarifying questions instead of assuming anything about their experiences.[45] Further, I conducted member checks (Maxwell, 2012) with parents and youth throughout the research process to ensure that I was understanding their experiences.

Interview and Focus Group Analysis

Following each interview and focus group, I wrote descriptive and analytical memos (Maxwell, 2012) related to my methodology (e.g., assenting process) and emergent themes (e.g., motivations to homeschool). I created these memos to begin thinking about the most salient aspects of the interviews and focus groups and how they related to my guiding research questions. I personally transcribed most interviews and focus groups while cleaning those that were auto-transcribed via Zoom. I outsourced a few of the interviews and focus groups to a professional transcription service (e.g., Sonix AI and Fiverr). Once transcripts were clean, I

[45] For example, if a parent shared that scheduling homeschooling was a challenge in their homeschooling, I made sure to ask what they meant by that instead of assuming that I knew what they meant because we had similar challenges with scheduling.

uploaded them to the qualitative coding software MAXQDA for analysis. I organized the transcript by data type (i.e., parent interviews, parent focus groups, and youth interviews).

In my initial reading and re-listening of data, I coded transcripts using BlackCrit and antiblackness as a lens to further analyze how being Black/African American and experiencing antiblackness shaped their homeschooling experiences. Further, I coded the data using codes that aligned with the topics discussed in the interview and focus group protocols (e.g., "homeschool motivations," "homeschool laws," "homeschool importance," "homeschool practice," "goals for homeschooling," and "Blackness + homeschool decision"). Moreover, I went through the process of open coding transcripts to identify patterns and themes outside of what I previously noted in my research design. This allowed me to learn more about families' homeschooling experiences broadly and explore salient themes that emerged from their perspectives. I used my analytical memos and these multiple rounds of coding to generate themes from the data (Saldaña, 2009).

I also conducted analyses within and across families. I first analyzed the data from the six focal parents in the study, which involved an analysis of their interview, focus group, and homeschool artifact data. I also analyzed the youth interviews and artifact data in parent-child dyad analysis to note patterns as well as points of contention from their perspectives. This allowed me to identify broad themes with the focal parent and focal youth in this study.[46] After analysis within these individual family units, I analyzed themes across the six focal families to further understand the convergences and divergences in their experiences. This allowed me to think more broadly about the themes from these findings, which I then connected to the non-focal parents' data. I was able to note similarities and differences between all the parents'

[46] I discuss these patterns more generally in the findings and discussion chapters. I did not write about parent-child data together to ensure confidentiality of the young people.

homeschooling experiences as I analyzed for patterns across demographic backgrounds and regions.

Toliver (2022), through her research practice, analysis, and writing, rejected the "confines of traditional [Western] narrative and thematic analytic methods," that "just didn't work" and instead considered and re-imagined other possibilities of data representation. I felt similar tensions as I moved from data collection to analysis. Trying to figure out how to represent the families in my research led me to narrative as a data analysis method.

Narrative Analysis. Narrative analysis as a method has increasingly been used in the field of education (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). It can be used to "explore the different ways in which both the production and analysis of qualitative data can be understood as processes whereby different groups of people engage in 'story telling' and in doing so produce narrative accounts of their lives" (Earthy & Cronin, 2008, p. 3). I utilized a narrative approach to share the findings from this dissertation study given that it can make the data more accessible to broader audiences (Bourbonnais & Michaud, 2018). Further, this approach enables me to center the perspectives and lived experiences of the families who participated in my study. I employ storytelling, vignettes, and composite narratives to interpret and share the findings from this dissertation research.

***Storytelling*.** Scholars note the impact that stories can have on people (Bourbonnais & Michaud, 2018; Johnston et al., 2021). Through the power of storytelling, qualitative researchers can translate research findings into accessible and practical information. Bourbonnais & Michaud (2018) assert that "storytelling [is] a strategy to promote the knowledge translation of qualitative results" (p. 3). As I interviewed Black parents about their homeschooling experiences, I asked what led them to homeschool, which elicited unique and contextualized stories that

incorporated varied aspects of their lives. After re-listening to these stories and as I engaged in a thematic data analysis to learn what motivated them to homeschool, I could not detach their specific motivations from other aspects of their stories, despite my attempts to do so in various revisions. Thus, narrative analysis allowed me to uncover Black parents' decision-making process to homeschool through their recounting of it.

I utilize storytelling in Chapter 5 when sharing parents' educational decision-making, which provides a chronological story of events that led them to homeschool. Within their stories, I highlight their motivations as well as the factors, or facilitators, that enabled them to homeschool. This storytelling approach allowed me to highlight the unique stories that individual parents told about their homeschooling journey. I believe that using storytelling for the focal parents in this study offers an engaging, credible, and accessible way to share my first main research finding.

Vignettes. A vignette is "an evocative description or an account of a short event or episode" (Reay et al., 2019, pg. 8). The approach of using vignettes to present research findings is a narrative-based method. This method typically involves organizing the writing around a broader theme with sub-sections that illuminate the different aspects of that theme. Reay et al. (2019) explain that "this approach foregrounds the interconnections among categories and gives space to show the findings in ways that capture more richness in an easily-readable and credible way" (p. 9). While these scholars do note that there's a "trade-off between depth and breadth" (p. 9) when using vignettes, they also describe research that has utilized other types of data to provide more depth to the vignettes.

I utilize vignettes in Chapter 6 when sharing parents' homeschooling practices. I pull from interview and focus group data from the focal parents to "re-construct the scene" (Reay et

al., 2019, p. 9). As I discuss the varied approaches to teaching and learning that parents employ in their homeschool practice, I incorporate vignettes from focal parents to further illustrate homeschooling in practice. While this vignette approach is typically used in ethnographic research and observational data, I use the homeschooling artifacts provided by the focal parents in the study to "show" the "evidence and examples" of their homeschooling approaches and practices. These artifacts provided me with more insight into their daily practices, particularly the materials they use, where they homeschool, and more.

Composite Narratives. Composite narratives comprise "a number of interviews" that are "combined and presented as a story from a single individual" (Willis, 2019). Further, Johnston et al. (2021) describe composite narratives as "stories that are woven together to represent interview data from multiple participants, presenting complex ideas in a way that can impact on audiences and maximize readers' resonance" (p. 2). Composite narratives, as described by Willis, is a technique used to "present an authentic yet anonymous story" in her research. Composite narratives support participant confidentiality through blending accounts from individual participants, thus making it challenging for participants to be identified based on their backgrounds and experiences. Though composite narratives are rarely used in qualitative research, they offer researchers a way to "present complex, situated accounts from individuals rather than break down data into categories" (Willis, 2019, p. 471).

As mentioned, composite narrative is a more "modern method," so there is less literature that documents how qualitative researchers use this method. While researchers' individual process for constructing composite narratives may vary, the onus is on the researcher to detail their methods for creating,[47] which can include using quotes and paraphrasing, as well as

[47] I detail how I constructed the composite narratives in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

representing all the data in a single composite narrative. Ultimately, the composite narrative represents "the final amalgamation of data" that "uses a singular point-of-view to tell a story that is based on multiple participants' accounts" (Johnson et al., 2021, p. 3). Further, presenting data in this way "provides a concise and credible method to present research findings" (Johnston et al., 2021, p. 1). These scholars view "rigor, impact and anonymity" as positive aspects of using composite narratives. As Johnston et al. (2021) assert, "narratives have the power to affect change in society by enhancing the transferability of research findings, presenting research findings with impact because they are engaging and memorable for readers" (p. 1). I utilized composite narratives in Chapter 7 when sharing young peoples' experiences and perspectives on homeschooling. Composite narratives allow me to represent their perspectives without compromising their confidentiality in the process, as well as to write in ways accessible to parents, young people, and others outside of academia.

Document and Artifact Analysis

Homeschool Laws. As detailed earlier in this chapter, analysis of state homeschool laws was an important part of this this research. I analyzed the laws as they are written on the Wisconsin Department of Public Education and Illinois School Board of Education websites. Further, I analyzed the laws as they are summarized and reported to homeschoolers from national homeschool support organizations. Lastly, I analyzed how parents made sense of the homeschooling laws when we discussed them in interviews.

Homeschool Artifacts. I utilized document analysis of homeschool artifacts to further understand Black families' homeschooling experiences. I used these artifacts to "elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge" (Bowen, 2009, pg. 27; See also: Corbin & Strauss, 2008). They offered supplemental data from Black focal homeschooling families,

providing more context and insight into their homeschooling. These homeschool artifacts, in addition to interviews and focus groups, enabled me to triangulate data (Bowen, 2009; Denzin, 2012). The use of artifacts from parents and young people encouraged them to share more stories about their homeschooling (Clandinin & Caine, 2008). Focal parents at times included written narratives about their homeschool artifacts (e.g., they wrote a short paragraph describing a picture, book, or worksheet as part of their homeschool artifact documentation). Further, young people captured their homeschooling experiences using journaling, photography, and drawing, and I used these artifacts to encourage dialogue during the second interview. I asked young people if they had a story to share about their photos, drawings, and writings. With permission, I gathered these artifacts, wrote descriptive and analytic memos about them, and examined themes and patterns within individual family units and across focal families.

The Politics of Refusal

> When I think about what I want [*chuckles*] people to know about Black homeschooling, I only care about Black people knowing about Black homeschooling. I -and again, for a lot of reasons that we mentioned, I'm okay if you don't know nothing about Black homeschooling.
>
> *-Latoya, Black Homeschooling Mother, Focus Group Discussion*

Research has a colonial legacy (McGranahan, 2016; Simpson, 2007; Veracini, 2011). Tuck & Wang (2014) highlight "refusal within research, as a way of thinking about humanizing research" and disrupting this legacy by refusing to "discover" and "make claims" about other people through research. Engaging in the politics of refusal allows for researchers to not objectify or engage in research that minimizes or harms those that are participating in the research. My goal for studying Black homeschooling is to learn more about Black families' experiences learning outside of conventional schooling. As I engage in this research, it is

important to engage the politics of refusal to write about and share research in humanizing ways. In some cases, this could mean refusing to write.

As I wrote this dissertation, I reflected on "what you need to know and what I refuse to write in" (Simpson, 2007, p. 72). As I revisited these stories, I considered what knowledge the academy deserves. There is power and importance in sharing stories. I certainly felt this during the interviews, focus group discussions, and various conversations that took place throughout this research. The critical reflection and dialogue about some of the more controversial topics of homeschooling was generative and insightful, yet the academy has proven "irresponsible" in handling these stories. As Latoya mentioned above, these stories about Black homeschooling are sacred. Further, several parents in my study shared their personal experiences as well as being a witness to various forms of anti-Black harm in schools. I thought about the purpose of sharing these stories. While it is important to understand these lived experiences and not deny this reality, I decided that naming these experiences without elaborating on the degradation process of these families is what the academy deserves. Given the large body of scholarship documenting the anti-Black racism Black families have and continue to experience in schools, I refuse to write in detail their experiences with antiblackness.

Reflexivity & Trustworthiness

In addition to the analytic memos I wrote about the data, I also wrote memos about my positionality based on broader themes related to parents' homeschooling experiences. For example, I wrote a memo to reflect on the various factors that shaped my decision-making to homeschool in comparison to that of the parents in my study. It was important to incorporate this practice to increase the trustworthiness of my research and analysis. I shared these memos with committee members and colleagues to ensure trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004). Further, I

conducted member checks with parents via focus group discussions where they affirmed, adjusted, or added to the themes that emerged about Black parents' decision to homeschool – motivators, facilitators, and the extent to which being Black and experiencing antiblackness shaped their decision. This process of sharing findings with families aligns with the values of reciprocity and collaboration in research. This form of data analysis was also an iterative process that involved sharing with families and gaining feedback and additional insight to continue co-constructing their stories for this dissertation. Further, in order to balance the goals of the research and stay aligned with the politics of refusal, I engaged in feedback sessions with parents and young people.

Feedback Sessions with Parents. Sharing preliminary findings with the families who participated in my study is an important part of my research process. As I strive to be transparent throughout research processes and engage in aspects of decolonial research methods, my goal is to produce non-exploitative research. Therefore, as I shifted from analytical memo-ing to writing the findings chapters, I reconnected with parents to invite them to participate in feedback sessions. I wanted to share with them what I had understood in my analysis and writing thus far and to offer their interview transcripts to them. I do not claim ownership over their stories, so I wanted to provide the opportunity for parents to review their transcripts, to elaborate on any topic, and to edit what they would like shared. While I offered this opportunity to all parents, only a few requested to review their transcripts.

In these sessions, I shared my first two findings that focused on parents' decision-making to homeschool and their pedagogical practices. The goals of these feedback sessions were to 1) share what I had learned from my dissertation research with parents; 2) provide parents with an opportunity to ask questions and give feedback; and 3) learn how parents think this research can

be used to benefit them and other Black families. I invited all 15 parents to participate in the feedback session. I was able to contact 14 of the 15 parents who participated in the study. Nine of the 14 parents completed the Google form that I sent for scheduling the feedback sessions, eight of them noting that they were interested and available to participate.[48]

I scheduled three separate feedback sessions with parents and held two feedback sessions with the four parents who were available to join. These four parents listened to my presentation of the findings, and after each finding they shared their thoughts about what resonated with them and what they thought I had overlooked. I also asked parents what they hoped to see come from this research and how these findings could be helpful to them and other families. These feedback sessions were generative. Parents gave positive feedback, affirming that they felt represented in the broader findings. They were also curious about some specifics, particularly as the findings related to parents' homeschooling practices, and expressed looking forward to reading that in the dissertation. They shared many thoughts for next steps and saw this research as helpful to other Black families who are interested or already are homeschooling.

Four parents were unable to attend the scheduled feedback sessions for various reasons and followed up with me after the sessions happened. I offered these parents the opportunity to view a separate recorded presentation of the feedback session slides and to record their responses in a Google form. Three of these four parents offered their written feedback on the video via the Google form. I compensated all parents who offered their verbal and written feedback with $20 via electronic cash payment for their time and expertise.

Feedback Session with Youth. The goal of the feedback sessions with young people were to 1) share the descriptions of them that I wrote to see if I represented them well based on

[48] The other parent was not available to attend the feedback sessions due to competing responsibilities at the time but noted in the comment section that they would like to read my final research.

their own words; 2) share my findings with them; and 3) and provide them with an opportunity to ask questions and offer feedback. I coordinated all communication with the young people through their parents as they often did not have their own numbers or emails. Therefore, I did not share the young people's interview transcripts to maintain their confidentiality throughout the research process. I invited all youth to participate in one-on-one feedback sessions. All youth participated in a feedback session.

In the individual feedback sessions, I shared the description of the young person to see if they liked how I described them and if they were comfortable with it being in my dissertation. During the feedback sessions, I gave them an opportunity to change the descriptions if they wanted. I also shared the three composite narratives that I created to share the research findings from the youth data (discussed in detail in Chapter 7). After sharing the composite narratives, I asked what they thought about them and asked if any of the composites seemed like them. This allowed me to see if my construction of the composite narratives from my analysis of youth data aligned with what they thought about themselves. I compensated all youth who participated in the feedback sessions with $20 via E-gift card for their time and expertise.

These processes – conducting feedback sessions with parents and young people, sharing parent interview transcripts – were not only opportunities to member-check my analysis and findings. They also represent the ongoing process of getting consent and assent from families about their participation in different aspects of the research and writing processes. Further, they helped me make the research findings accessible rather than solely for academic audiences.

As discussed, I sought to engage in humanizing research practices as I collected data with families about their homeschooling practices. Because relationships were a central aspect in this phase of research, I strived to foster connections with and among parents who participated in the

study. I strived to understand their homeschooling experiences in relation to their identities and the broader contexts in which they live and homeschool. In the following three findings chapters, I discuss Black parents' educational decision-making to homeschool, their homeschooling practices and challenges, and young homeschoolers' perspectives. Through re-presenting their experiences using stories, I aim to humanize them in this research.

Chapter 3: Black Parents' Educational Decision-Making to Homeschool

Educational freedom can be understood as parents' ability to determine what and how their children learn (Gryphon & Myer, 2003). As noted in this dissertation's introduction, the educational freedom of Black people in the U.S. has been marked by a long history of violence and restriction as well as resistance and freedom. Today, Black parents remain on a quest for "quality education" for their children as they make educational choices. The idea of school choice purports that more educational options for families can improve educational outcomes for all. Many scholars, however, have noted inequitable access and opportunities in "school choice," especially along racial and class lines (McCarthy Foubert, 2019; Posey-Maddox, 2017; Reynolds, 2010). Even with these inequities, studies have highlighted the school choice decision-making of Black parents between schools (Allen, 2017; Cooper, 2005; Pattillo, 2015; Posey-Maddox et al., 2021). Comparatively fewer studies have focused on Black parents whose educational decision-making leads them to opt out of schools and into homeschool. As discussed in detail in the introduction of this dissertation, these few studies have found that Black parents are motivated to homeschool for myriad reasons often underscoring motivations related to racism in schools (Fields-Smith, 2020; Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2015, Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; Mazama, 2016; Mazama & Lundy, 2013, 2015; Ray 2013; 2015). Even fewer studies examine factors beyond motivations that shape Black parents' decision to homeschool.

Further, the literature on Black homeschooling has overlooked the Midwest, particularly Wisconsin and regions outside of the Chicago metropolitan area. These states' educational reform efforts[49] – which aim to provide more families with educational choice – coupled with their past and present anti-Black conditions make the region a compelling one for the study of

[49] As noted in the introduction of this dissertation, education reform which led to charter and voucher options for families to choose from, shaped the educational landscapes in both Wisconsin and Illinois.

Black families' educational freedom. Its study can provide further insight into the ways that antiblackness shapes Black parents' decision to homeschool. Moreover, this region has relatively more relaxed homeschooling regulations and can therefore offer spaces of possibility for Black families who choose to homeschool in these conditions. It is important to examine Black parents' decision-making to homeschool in Wisconsin and Illinois to understand the factors that led them to opt out of schools and "choose" homeschooling.

The research findings in this chapter contribute to both the literature on Black homeschooling specifically and school choice more broadly by demonstrating the educational decision-making process that shapes Black parents' decision to homeschool in Wisconsin and Illinois. While the research on Black homeschooling has emphasized that multiple factors typically motivate Black parents to homeschool and how their motivations can change over time, less is known about what facilitates, or enables, Black parents' decision to homeschool. Studying Black parents' educational decision-making is important in order to illuminate the combination of factors that lead them to consider and ultimately engage in homeschooling as opposed to other schooling options. Further, studies have documented the rise of homeschooling among Black families (Rachid, 2005), and have noted a significant increase during the COVID-19 pandemic and continued homeschooling practice despite the return to in-person learning (Reid, 2022).

I argue that Black parents' motivations to homeschool illuminate both the constraints of traditional schooling and the freedom of homeschooling. While homeschooling for some Black parents is a response to the limited schooling options, it is also an opportunity for them to create a challenging and affirming learning experience for their children. Further, I argue that Black parents' decision-making to homeschool is multifaceted, including both motivations and the circumstances that make their decision possible. These circumstances – or *facilitators*, as I will

refer to them –consist of a unique set of factors that allow parents to act on their motivations and work toward providing their children with better educational experiences through homeschooling. Both motivators and facilitators are equally important to recognize in order to understand their complex educational decision-making, particularly given the relatively flexible homeschooling regulations in Wisconsin and Illinois.

This chapter first outlines the factors that shape Black parents' decision to homeschool, highlighting the specific motivators and facilitators learned from 15 Black and African American parents in this study. Next, it describes the homeschooling laws in Wisconsin and Illinois through the parents' discussion of the laws as they considered homeschooling. Then, it highlights the narratives of six focal parents to illuminate the unique motivators and facilitators that shaped their individual decision-making to homeschool. In addition to their narratives, I note the motivators and facilitators that shaped the non-focal parents' homeschooling decisions. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of these findings and the implications for these parents' homeschooling "choice."

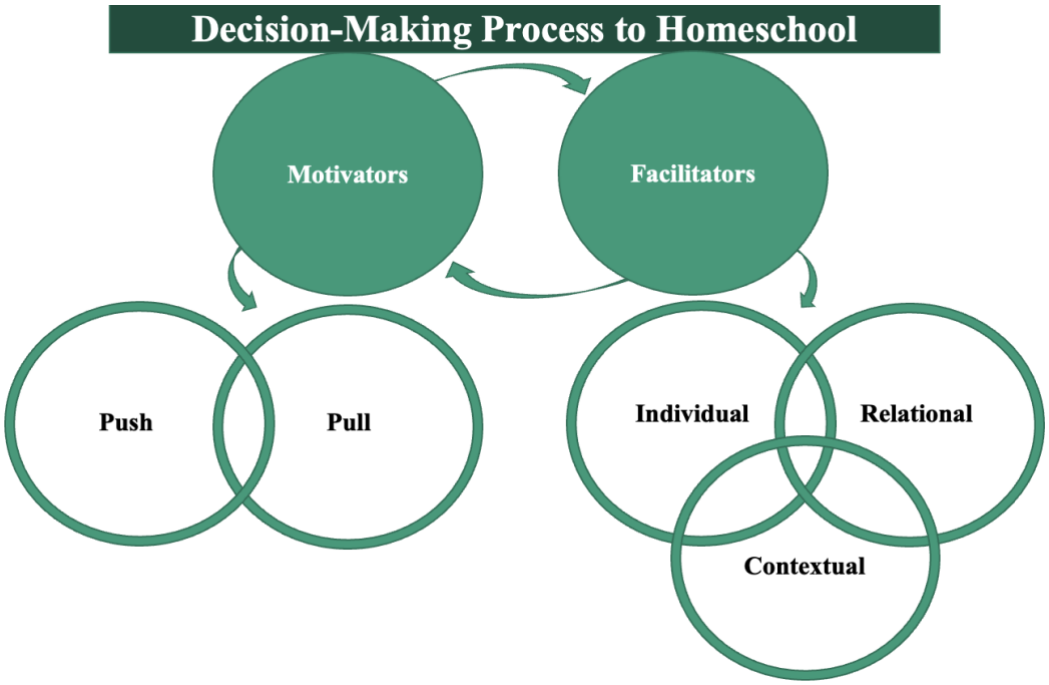
Motivators & Facilitators that Shape Black Parents' Decision to Homeschool

In what follows I describe the *motivators* – reasons why parents want(ed) to homeschool – and the *facilitators* – various enabling factors that led them to start homeschooling. Motivators and facilitators are two key components of Black parents' educational decision-making to homeschool. As parents in my study shared their stories about what led them to homeschool, it became clear that their motivators and facilitators were interconnected in unique ways. Because both motivators and facilitators are critical aspects of their educational decision-making, it is impossible to disentangle them when seeking to understand their decision to homeschool. For example, parents can first have facilitators present that would make it possible for them to

homeschool and then encounter a motivator that makes them want to homeschool. Or parents can have motivators to homeschool first and then encounter facilitators that make it possible for them to act on that motivation. Motivators and facilitators can also occur simultaneously. These parents' decision-making to homeschool entails this interplay between motivators and facilitators. Figure 3 highlights how motivators and facilitators are related to each other in Black parents' educational decision-making to homeschool.

Figure 3

Decision-Making Process to Homeschool



Note. Illustration of the decision-making process to homeschool, which shows the relationship between motivators and facilitators as well as their specific components.

Further, the motivators and facilitators that parents shared fell into both distinct and overlapping categories. Parents shared their motivations to homeschool, which included *push*, *pull*, and at times both push-and-pull factors. "Push" motivators are factors that drive parents toward homeschooling. "Pull" motivators are factors that attract parents to homeschooling.

Parents also shared various *individual*, *relational*, and *contextual* factors that acted as facilitators in their decision to homeschool. Individual facilitators consist of personal factors related to each parent or family unit, while relational facilitators include factors such as community and relationships. Contextual facilitators are the broader circumstances in which parents are operating (See Table 6 for a full list of motivators and facilitators).

Table 6

Motivators and Facilitators that Shaped Black Parents' Decision-Making to Homeschool

Motivators: Factors that made parents want to homeschool.	
Push	Pervasiveness of antiblackness in schools Dissatisfaction with schools Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on learning and health
Pull	Desire for family time Benefits of homeschooling
Facilitators: Factors that enabled parents to homeschool.	
Individual	Work dynamics Family dynamics Experience & knowledge of homeschooling
Relational	Homeschool communities of support Supportive relationships.
Contextual	Homeschooling laws Covid-19 pandemic Sociopolitical moment Lack of educational options

Parents often noted multiple motivating and facilitating factors that played a role in their decision to homeschool. Their storytelling revealed similar concerns and desires across families, while the circumstances and experiences that led them to homeschool varied. Further, while parents might have emphasized a particular motivator or facilitator that was central in their decision-making to homeschool, this same factor could be less important but notable for another parent. A specific motivating factor for one parent could be a facilitating factor for another.[50]

[50] For example, one parent discussed the Covid-19 pandemic and the virtual learning experience as a motivational factor that pushed them to want to homeschool. Another parent discussed the Covid-19 pandemic creating an opportunity to act on their initial motivations to homeschool that were unrelated to the pandemic.

While the decision to homeschool is complex and unique for each family, I identified central themes from the data.

Almost all the parents in this study – 14 out of 15– described push factors in schools that motivated them to homeschool (See Table 7). These push factors included the pervasiveness of antiblackness in schools, their dissatisfaction with schools, and, for a few parents, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on schools. Of these 14 parents, five also described pull factors that also motivated them to homeschool, which demonstrates how some parents were both pushed and pulled to homeschooling. These pull factors included their desire to spend more time as a family and reap the benefits associated with homeschooling. While most parents shared more than one motivator for them to homeschool, only two parents shared just one factor that motivated them to homeschool.

Table 7

Breakdown of Black/African American Parents' Motivators to Homeschool

Push	Pervasiveness of Antiblackness in Schools	Vanessa, Alice, Latoya, Tricia, Trevor, Hazina, Jamaica, Chi, Nicole, Tiffany, Alexis
	Dissatisfaction with Schools	Vanessa, Gemini, Alice, Hazina, Tasha
	Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Learning and Health	Alice, Ben, Nicole
Pull	Desire for Family Time	Vanessa, Gemini, Alexis
	Benefits of Homeschooling	Cynthia, Alexis, Trevor

The push and pull motivators listed above broadly capture Black parents' motivations to homeschool. While the desire for family time is a relatively straightforward motivator, the other push and pull motivators listed can be further subdivided. For example, parents' dissatisfaction with school related to the curriculum that is being used (or not used) in schools, their perceptions of the quality of teachers, or how instruction is implemented. Additionally, the pervasiveness of antiblackness in schools that parents shared related to a lack of representation in school

educators, staff, and curricula as well as harsh disciplinary practices for Black students. Further, parents who expressed wanting to homeschool because of the benefits highlighted the academic benefits or having the ability to foster their children's love for learning or create a safe space for their Black children to learn.

Additionally, all the parents in this study detailed various facilitators that aided in their decision to homeschool. These facilitators included parents' work and family dynamics, their positions in broader communities of support, experiences with and knowledge of homeschooling, homeschooling laws, the Covid-19 pandemic, the sociopolitical moment, and lack of educational options in their areas (see Table 8).

Table 8

Breakdown of Black/African American Parents' Facilitators to Homeschool

Individual	Work Factors (e.g. retired, stay-at-home, flexible/remote work)	Cynthia, Vanessa, Latoya, Trevor, Ben, Tasha, Chi, Nicole
	Family Dynamics (e.g. partner holistic support, including financially)	Latoya, Trevor, Tasha
	Experiences/Knowledge of Homeschooling	Cynthia, Alice, Alexis
Relational	Homeschool Communities of Support	Cynthia, Vanessa, Latoya, Chi, Tiffany, Nicole
	Supportive Relationships	Vanessa
Contextual	Homeschool Laws	Alice, Nicole, Chi
	Covid-19 Pandemic	Gemini, Jamaica, Vanessa
	Sociopolitical Moment	Alice, Nicole
	Lack of Educational Options	Gemini, Alice, Tricia, Hazina, Jamaica, Tasha

As parents shared what led them to homeschool, they detailed different facilitators that supported their decision. The homeschooling laws are important to highlight to further exemplify facilitators as a part of parents' educational decision-making as well as provide more context for homeschooling in Wisconsin and Illinois.

Homeschooling in Wisconsin & Illinois: An Introduction to Facilitators

Wisconsin and Illinois are two states classified respectively as "low regulation" and "no-notice, low regulation" based on their homeschooling laws (Home School Legal Defense Association, 2022). As described in the previous chapter, homeschoolers in Wisconsin are required to submit an annual form of intent to homeschool with the Department of Instruction, while in Illinois homeschoolers do not need to provide any notice. Additionally, both states require homeschoolers to teach particular subjects in their instruction; however, they do not provide strict guidelines on how to teach these subjects.[51] These requirements differ from some states that have more restrictive homeschooling laws that require homeschool students to take assessments and homeschool parents to have teacher qualifications, keep attendance records, and follow pre-approved instructional plans. None of these tasks are required in Wisconsin and Illinois.

While parents shared an awareness of the homeschooling laws in their respective states, only three parents in this study – two who homeschooled in Wisconsin and one in Illinois – discussed the homeschooling laws in relation to their decision-making to homeschool. Alice, an African American mother, pointed out the ease of homeschooling: "...Wisconsin is fairly easy to homeschool if you want. Just go out, do the form, document everything and just say okay, we're having school [*laughs*] and that was it." For Alice, the process to start (and practice) homeschooling in Wisconsin was effortless. Chi, a Black mother in Illinois, also described a seamless process to start homeschooling. She explained, "I looked up what it takes to homeschool and all you have to do is write like a sheet of paper and go in Illinois and take it to the school. The next day I took it to the school and said, I'm pulling [child] out, [child]'s gonna

[51] This aspect of each state's homeschooling laws and how they inform Black parents' homeschooling practice will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

be homeschooled. That was it. Like, it was that cut and dry." As Alice and Chi shared what led them to homeschool, they both noted how it was easy to start homeschooling in both states.

Nicole, an African American mother in Wisconsin, described being "at the place where I was ready to do it, but I was scared..." Nicole felt reassured learning about the process to start homeschooling, specifically that she had time to consider her child's school enrollment. In Wisconsin, the intent to homeschool form is requested by the state by or before October 15th. Nicole shared how that information "really helped me like, oh, so [child] can go back to school for a few weeks. I can see how I feel about it and then make the decision." Given the fall deadlines to give required notice, Nicole was able to take time to assess her educational options, which was particularly helpful in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic and virtual learning. While Alice and Chi both commented on the light paperwork needed to start homeschooling, Nicole highlighted the timeline for deciding to homeschool in Wisconsin. Further Nicole explained, "when I started to look into it [the homeschool laws], was only 875 hours a year that the state required. That breaks down to like three hours a day" – which for Nicole was not a lot of time. Through researching and familiarizing herself with the homeschooling laws and requirements, Nicole saw homeschooling as a possibility.

In addition to the low regulation and easy process to start homeschooling in Wisconsin and Illinois, the requirements on how and when to homeschool shaped Nicole's, Alice's, and Chi's decision-making to homeschool. While the homeschooling laws did not motivate any of them to homeschool, the laws acted as a facilitator that supported their decision to homeschool. I cannot say that they would or would not have started homeschooling if the process to withdraw from schools and begin homeschooling was more involved or burdensome; however, it is important to note that the ease in the process was a facilitator rather than an impediment. The

homeschooling laws in these two states provide just one example of a facilitator that shaped a few parents' decision to homeschool. Using focal parent narratives, the next section sheds light on their intricate storytelling as they described the various motivators and facilitators that led them to homeschool.

Focal Parent Narratives

To highlight the heterogeneity in Black parents' educational decision-making to homeschool and the interconnectedness between motivators and facilitators, I share the stories of six focal[52] parents. Two Black and African American mothers in Illinois – Cynthia and Vanessa – and four in Wisconsin – Gemini, Alice, Latoya, and Tricia – are the six focal parents whose stories I present in this chapter (see Table 9 and 10 for Focal Parent Demographic Background). As these parents' narratives illustrate, Black parents' motivations to homeschool are only one aspect of their educational decision-making. What enabled them to homeschool included factors and circumstances that allowed them to "choose" to homeschool.

Table 9

Focal Parents' Employment, Education, and Income

	Occupation	Level of Education	Annual Income
Cynthia	Retired	Masters	$100,000
Vanessa	Non-profit, Entrepreneur	Bachelors (pursing Masters)	$50,000
Gemini	Management	Two years of college	$115,000
Alice	Professor, Consultant	EdS (pursuing Doctorate)	Close to $200,000
Latoya	Stay-at-home mom	Bachelors	$25,000- $38,000[53]
Tricia	Professor	Doctorate	$150,000

[52] Focal parents represent the parents in my study who participated in all three phases: one-on-one interviews, focus groups, they shared their homeschool artifacts, and their child(ren) participated in the study.
[53] This income range is based on what partners Latoya and Trevor shared during their individual interviews.

Table 10

Focal Parents' School, Homeschool, and Neighborhood Background

	# of Children Home-schooled	Length of homeschooling	Previous School Type	Racial Demographics of Neighborhood, State
Cynthia	1	10 years	None	Predominantly white, IL
Vanessa	1	6 years[54]	Public	Predominantly white, IL
Gemini	4	6 months	Public & Private	All white, WI
Alice	1	8 months	Private	Racially diverse, WI
Latoya	2	3 years	Public	Predominantly Black, WI
Tricia	1	3 years	Private & Independent	Predominantly white, WI

Each story illuminates at least one push or pull motivator that made them consider homeschooling, as well as the individual, relational, and/or contextual facilitators that supported their decision to start homeschooling. Additionally, each story reveals how they understood their choice to homeschool. While I focus on these six focal families' narratives, the research findings are based upon an analysis of all 15 parent interviews and focus group data. I note and discuss any points of divergence between focal and non-focal families to highlight the nuances in educational decision-making for Black homeschooling families in Wisconsin and Illinois. The following stories from Cynthia, Vanessa, Gemini, Alice, Latoya, and Tricia are co-constructed from what they shared in their interviews and focus groups along with my interpretation of their experiences. I hope I re-present them well. Cynthia's and Vanessa's stories represent two mothers who consider homeschooling to be an individual choice that can provide the best education to their children. Gemini's and Alice's stories highlight two mothers who chose

[54] The demographic information and how parents define themselves and their experiences are important to honor. Vanessa shared homeschooling her seven-year-old for six years, which precedes what the state of Illinois would consider the legal age of homeschoolers.

homeschooling under the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic. Latoya's and Tricia's stories illuminate the "constrained choice" to homeschool in the face of antiblackness.

Cynthia's Story: Homeschooling as the Best Educational Choice

Cynthia, a married Black mother in a predominantly white city in Illinois "had never thought about" homeschooling. She had an older child who she enrolled in school, who did well and eventually graduated. She admitted that initially homeschooling was "weird" to her:

> It is only my negative thoughts growing up, because all I knew of homeschooling was just people that didn't believe in going to school or just religious people… I'd never heard of homeschooling in [state] to tell you the truth. Really, I didn't know of anyone that ever did it.

As Cynthia became more exposed to homeschooling, her interest in it as an educational option for her daughter piqued. She explained, "I always heard and read that homeschooling kids did well and the benefits of it, and so I wanted to try it." Cynthia shared, "...my husband has a friend that homeschooled, and they were doing well. And then I met other people who have homeschooled, and their kids were doing well." Seeing other homeschoolers – who seemed to be successful in their homeschooling endeavors – acted as a relational facilitator that supported Cynthia's decision to homeschool. The network of homeschooling parents she knew, coupled with the research she had done, made her think homeschooling "would be beneficial as something to try."

The ability to "get ahead quicker," "finish [school] sooner", and "learn more" served as additional benefits that lured Cynthia to want to homeschool. She reiterated this in her focus group discussion, sharing her hopes for her daughter to "graduate sooner," "learn more" and "learn different things." As she explained, "I'm teaching her to get ready for college and if she passes that college entrance exam, I'm happy. And then gets into college. That's my goal." She saw homeschooling as simply "teaching my kids... preparing my kids for life and college at

home, with the parent. All the resources, the books, the knowledge, is the same knowledge that's there in a school but it's done by the parent." Cynthia saw homeschooling as a way to provide her child with a high-quality education that would ensure her access to and success in college. The benefits associated with homeschooling were a pull motivator that led her to homeschool. The homeschooling parents she knew facilitated her decision to homeschool. The academic advantages homeschooling offered made her decide on it.

Moreover, Cynthia described how her employment status also facilitated her decision to homeschool. She shared, "I just felt that since I decided to be a stay-at-home mom, and I wasn't returning to work... I said, well, I'll give it [homeschooling] a try, especially since I am still going to be home." While being a stay-at-home parent is not a requirement to homeschool, Cynthia noted her ability to be at home with her child since she retired. While the benefits of homeschooling attracted her, Cynthia's retirement status afforded her more time to be at home with her child to homeschool.

While much of the literature on Black homeschoolers notes racism as a motivator, Cynthia did not discuss race or racism as she shared her motivations and experiences homeschooling. Being Black and antiblackness did not explicitly shape her decision to homeschool, as she noted how "it wasn't a factor" in her decision-making. She emphasized what played an important role in her decision to start homeschooling her child:

> ...Another main reason that I homeschool is the benefits, and I had her at an older age and I just felt that...the benefits, at my age and I had the time, I wanted to do that. And it had nothing to do with, again, being African American or anything. It was just this stage in my and my husband's life, it's something that I wanted to try and do... but my [being] Black doesn't have anything to do with that decision at all.

The community of support, resources, information, and time she could dedicate to homeschooling shaped her choosing it as an educational pathway for her family. Although her

daughter was only four-years-old at the time, Cynthia seemingly felt encouraged to homeschool once she encountered others doing it and witnessed it going well for them. Further, the research she did reaffirmed that this could be the best educational option for her daughter, and her retirement status provided her with the ability to start homeschooling. Cynthia had connections with other homeschoolers, gained increased knowledge of homeschooling, and experienced work factors that supported her decision to start homeschooling. These relational and individual facilitators were present for Cynthia, and as she learned more about homeschooling, she was motivated to homeschool. Cynthia never enrolled her now 15-year-old in school. After homeschooling for the past 10 years, Cynthia has "no regrets" about her decision to homeschool.

Cynthia believed that "homeschooling is a choice" and felt affirmed in her decision to homeschool, despite negative perceptions from others. As she recalled what her friends and family thought about her homeschooling, she recounted a plethora of judgmental comments. She added, "and they're all Black" which differed from the white people who were like "'oh that's a great idea… that's great that you're able to do that. She elaborated, "so I've always told people that the Blacks were not for it, the whites were really thrilled." As she considered these different perceptions of homeschooling, she shared:

> I think because Black education it was tough for them to get. Look at what happened. If you were an educated slave, you'd be beat. People didn't want Blacks to be educated. So they're thinking that, 'oh, they don't really know homeschooling.' So, they're thinking, the kid won't be educated… So, it stems from what Blacks had to go through with regards to education and how tough it is- why you had to have affirmative action for certain things…

Even though Cynthia had "very negative comments from Black family members with homeschooling," she didn't let that "deter" her. She asserted that she "didn't need approval from anyone" to choose to homeschool.

Vanessa's Story: Homeschooling as a Personal Choice

Vanessa, a single parent in a big city in Illinois, shared how working took time away from her being able to spend time with her son when he was first born. She wanted to recoup the time she spent away from him, explaining, "when it initially started for me for homeschooling, it was more so honestly to try and get back the maternity leave time [*laughs*] I thought I had missed out on, and it ending up coming into something else." As the two bonded, she also taught and exposed him to new things through various activities based on the homeschool content she saw on social media. As her son grew and learned, Vanessa began to realize how powerful homeschooling could be as an educational option. What motivates Vanessa to homeschool is "probably 15% of what I see happening in the school and 85% of what I want for my child." She quantifies her motivation to homeschool, indicating that a small percentage is about schools and their limitations while a much larger percentage is about her hopes for her son. Although she desired to homeschool her son, Vanessa shared trying to balance her time between working and parenting as a single mother.

Vanessa enrolled her son in school when he became of school age, and while he attended school she worked at a local non-profit organization. She described homeschooling "part-time" since he attended school, although they homeschooled in the evenings, weekends, and all year round. She explained how her goal for homeschooling full-time was "for him to turn 12-years-old, just because he is my only child and because if I do want to still work to support and provide for us, I want him to be at a certain age where he can stay at home alone." This way, Vanessa could provide virtual learning while she worked and then do more activities together in the evenings after her workday. Working full-time as a single parent seemingly barred Vanessa from initially withdrawing her son from school completely.

As she juggled parenting, working full-time, and homeschooling, Vanessa explained how, “there were times when I had to go to work... and I had to bring my son with me.” She thought about how “most of us can’t go to our jobs and bring our kids,” and that she has “been lucky enough to be able to do that in almost every [job] that I’ve worked on....” Although working placed some constraints on what Vanessa could do initially in her homeschooling, her work environment was family-friendly and provided her with the flexibility she needed as she balanced being the sole caregiver and homeschool educator to her child. Her flexible work experiences were an individual facilitator, which allowed her to homeschool. Further, her co-workers “became like a family that I needed, the support system that I needed when I didn’t have it” and became a relational facilitator that provided a community of support for her and her son.

While Vanessa was drawn to homeschooling because she wanted to spend more time with her son, she explained various additional push and pull motivational factors that went beyond her desire for family time. When sharing what motivated her to homeschool, she explained how,

> By my son being my only child and then he’s a male, we live in [city], so everything is crazy here. The violence is crazy. The policies are crazy. Schools crazy. Everything is crazy here. I want my son to know things that are not just academically what he’s supposed to know, but I want my son to have life skills. I want my son to have wisdom. I want my son to be able to grow into just a really good quality man...

For Vanessa, raising a boy where they lived in Illinois seemed to influence her desire to homeschool as she was concerned with the perceptions and experiences of boys. Vanessa viewed homeschooling as a space of possibility where she could provide her son with something that

schools could not. This meant instilling qualities such as "integrity" and "good manners" in her son and incorporating Black history.[55]

Vanessa also had concerns about various aspects of living in the city that included the schools. As a "part-time homeschooler" in Illinois, Vanessa and her son had experiences in schools that informed her homeschool practice, but these experiences also constituted a push motivator to completely withdraw from school. Further, Vanessa shared volunteering at school as often as she could, which provided a lot of insight into why she wanted to homeschool and how she approached it. She described various issues that she saw in schools, including outdated curricula and negative representations of Black students.

Vanessa shared how the "outdated" curriculum and pedagogical practices offered in school were another motivation that pushed her to homeschool. Vanessa reflected on how the school approached teaching and learning and commented on how,

> There's a lot of teachers that are not really interested in... kind of updating themselves on information about things or learning new techniques for teaching. I think they tend to teach kids typically the same way... but they tend to label some kids based upon like if they feel like they're acting out in class or you know things like that, when they're not really assessing the individual child's learning needs or learning styles.

Vanessa was dissatisfied with what she perceived as limited opportunities for learning in schools due to outdated pedagogical practices and seemingly a lack of effort and engagement from teachers, which resulted in students being constructed as problems in the classroom.

Vanessa explained "I was doing partial homeschooling with my son being in the public school system, so we were able to see some of the discrimination towards other kids and somewhat towards him as well." Once, Vanessa suggested that her child's teacher talk about

[55] While parents' homeschooling practices are beyond the scope of this chapter, it is important to note the interplay between parents' motivations to homeschool and how they approach their homeschool practice. This will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

"race relations" with the students; however, months passed before the teacher initiated a conversation with the class following the murder for George Floyd and subsequent mass protests across the country. Vanessa shared how a student started to demonize Black people for "rioting," "stealing" and "coming into our communities." She " interjected in the conversation" to combat this anti-Black rhetoric "because my son and like two or three other Black/African-American boys who were on that call." Vanessa critiqued the teachers for being "passive" and not going in depth in these conversations. These critiques seemed to be rooted in the absence of race-conscious and Black-affirming teaching practices in her son's school. She stated that "the things that they teach the kids about are not the things that I want my son to learn about..." She felt motivated to homeschool because of her ability to provide a more positive learning environment for her son. She does not explicitly connect this motivation to their identities as African American; however, as she considered what type of future and education she wanted her son to have, she acknowledged how schools did not offer positive representations of Blackness.

Vanessa did not share many personal experiences with her son experiencing racism, but she described how "it's definitely a lot of racism and discrimination definitely within the school systems. And I am now realizing that it's not just here in [city]... for me, I'm pretty much looking at taking my son out. I actually have always known that I was going to take him out of school fully." Vanessa was able to work toward her goal of withdrawing her son from school. She explained, "I think Corona [Covid-19] has helped me out" as she was able to go "full throttle" with her homeschooling business that supports her homeschooling practice. The pandemic was a contextual facilitator that supported Vanessa being able to homeschool her son full-time.

Despite previously having her son enrolled in two different schools, Vanessa was not satisfied with what they offered her son. Moreover, she desired to spend more time with her son and had her own ideas about what his education should entail. She saw homeschooling as allowing her to provide her son with the education she wants for him. Further, Vanessa viewed her decision to homeschool as an individual choice and explained:

> When you think about education for children, all of it is individualized anyway. There is no consensus of us on the South block is going to send all of our kids to XYZ school and us on the East block- it's not like that. Parents choose where they want to send their kids, when they want to send their kids to school, etcetera…

Vanessa believed that parents could choose public, private, charter or homeschooling for their children's education. For Vanessa, homeschooling was a "personal choice" that allowed her to spend time with her son and create a learning experience for him that departed from learning that takes place in schools.

Actively Choosing to Homeschool

Cynthia and Vanessa share unique stories that led them to start homeschooling in Illinois. They both highlighted the individual (work) and relational (support) facilitators that shaped their deciding to homeschool albeit in different ways. Cynthia was immersed in a homeschooling network based on her family's relationship with others, which offered her insight into homeschooling and support to do it. Vanessa, on the other hand, did not have this same network that directly provided her with guidance on homeschooling, although she did build one using social media. She did however have a network of support specifically from her co-workers, who supported her as a single, working, homeschooling parent.

Moreover, Vanessa was primarily motivated for family time. Similarly, Alexis, a Black business owner and homeschooling mother in Wisconsin also shared "part of it [wanting to homeschool] was just me wanting to spend more time with my kids. I didn't like that... the only

time we really had together was after school and that was just such a short amount of time between after school and bedtime." Evening routines, like "dinner, bath and bedtime" took up time that they had together. Both Vanessa and Alexis wanted to have more time with their children which motivated them to consider homeschooling. Further, like Cynthia, Alexis researched homeschooling and learned "the benefits of it." She explained, "I just felt like that was something I wanted for my family, like the ability to possibly graduate from high school early, start college early, the ability to focus more on things that she's interested in and also being able to teach her to mastery." These perceived benefits of homeschooling motivated her to homeschool as well. Cynthia and Alexis viewed homeschooling having fewer constraints as they considered their children's academic learning.

Cynthia and Vanessa shared distinct motivations to homeschool yet had overlapping goals. While Cynthia wanted to homeschool because of the academic benefits associated with it, Vanessa desired to homeschool to provide an educational experience that offered learning beyond what is taught in school. They both made the choice to homeschool based on what they thought would give their children the best education. The best education for Cynthia seemingly was one that offered rigorous academic learning, while Vanessa saw learning certain life skills and Black history as important. Additionally, Alexis was motivated to homeschool so she could teach her child about Black history – learning that she thought she could do better than schools. These findings highlight the freedom that parents perceive in their homeschool decision.

Further, these findings provide additional insight into what motivates Black parents to homeschool beyond racism in schools. Although Cynthia and Vanessa did not describe being Black as shaping their decision to homeschool, Vanessa described experiences and awareness of racism in schools influencing her decision-making. Moreover, she highlighted additional

motivations to homeschool, that seemingly were more important for her decision to homeschool. Cynthia and Vanessa's stories show the "pull" motivators to homeschool. Family time and the benefits of homeschooling are motivators at the forefront of their decision to homeschool. These findings are like other studies on Black homeschooling that highlight the "pull" factors to homeschool. As shown, motivations as well as individual and relational facilitators are important aspects in parents' decision to homeschool. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on health and learning also played an important facilitating and motivating role for Gemini and Alice.

Gemini's Story: Choosing to Homeschool amid the Covid-19 Pandemic

Gemini, an African American mother in a predominantly white city in Wisconsin, shared how she always wanted to homeschool her children, but "wasn't prepared." She added, "I didn't think my husband would want to do it. And so, I really didn't like prepare for it, get anything ready, look into it too much." As a mother of four, Gemini described feeling like she was "missing a big part of" who her children were when they went to school and that she had a "natural desire" to be around them. Although Gemini had always wanted to homeschool, this pull motivator did not immediately result in her homeschooling. Instead, additional push motivators as well as individual and contextual facilitators led her to make the decision to homeschool. Gemini described her children's experiences in schools as another factor that pushed her to homeschool:

> … [My two children] really kind of – and COVID [*chuckles*] - really kind of put it over the edge. One [child] is on the Autism spectrum and he was getting speech and some additional help at school, but it was to a point where he was diagnosed and they were recommending quite a bit of therapy and the school really didn't work with the therapist, the type of therapy they were recommending…And then my [other child] who is really smart was like bored in school. He had a hard time. He wasn't ready like socially, he got along with people but he wanted to play more than anything...

Gemini's child's learning needs were paramount to his growth and development, but there was conflict between the school and therapy. She explained, "I kind of knew for sure that that was

what we were gonna do, just based on their inability to accommodate some of his needs. I knew that we were pretty much gonna be homeschooling." Gemini attempted to advocate for her child's special needs accommodations to no avail. Additionally, her other child had a "hard time" at school because he was academically and socially bored. Gemini was dissatisfied with the school structure and felt the schools did not meet her two children's individual needs.

Gemini did not believe these experiences to be "racial at all" and instead elaborated on how the issue was "just the cohesion of working with his therapy and all that, but for me that represents the system and even their responses were very standard. It was like this is the way it is for everybody, and I didn't like that." She saw these issues in schools as "negative impacts that really just kind of pushed" her over. Gemini was pushed to homeschool because of the rigid school structure that did not support her children, which provided another motivation to homeschool beyond wanting to spend more time with her children. These pull and push motivators, coupled with the Covid-19 pandemic, facilitated her decision to start homeschooling. As Gemini examined the totality of the circumstances she explained, "when the pandemic hit my kids switch to virtual, I was noticing they didn't like it... and I'm like why am I putting my kids through this? I work from home. I've always wanted to do this [homeschool]. Why not try it?"

The Covid-19 pandemic was a contextual facilitator in Gemini's decision-making process to homeschool. She shared, "with Covid, I didn't want to do virtual 'cus I didn't like that at all, so it was just like, let's try this [homeschooling] [*chuckles*]. I've always wanted to, so I think it's a really good time to do it." Although she "always wanted to homeschool," she "just kept giving [herself] excuses..." The Covid-19 pandemic and school closures acted as a facilitator that supported Gemini's decision to finally start homeschooling. Although Gemini was motivated to homeschool by a desire to spend more time with her children and two of her children's adverse

experiences in school, the pandemic and switch to virtual learning acted as a facilitator for her to begin homeschooling. Additionally, Gemini's ability to work from home facilitated her decision. As Gemini shared her issues with her younger children in a rigid school system, she described feeling like their "choice was being taken away." The Covid-19 pandemic allowed for Gemini to choose homeschooling, something she longed to do since becoming a mother.

Alice's Story: Choosing to Homeschool Because of the Covid-19 Pandemic

Alice, an African American mother in a racially diverse yet segregated city in Wisconsin, shared how she had experienced homeschooling her now adult children during part of their high school years. At that time, she was motivated to homeschool her children for academic and behavioral reasons – believing that homeschooling could offer more support for her children – but her motivations to homeschool her youngest child now were quite different. Alice shared positive experiences with her 12-year-old's previous school. They had been at a Christian private school for years, and the school felt like home. She liked the school community and predominantly Black teachers and staff.

Alice discussed the school closures in March 2020 and the frustration that came with the transition to virtual learning. She added, "...for the fall they decided to do virtual school but at that time I thought, 'Nah, I'm not gonna go back to being frustrated and having him frustrated... and pay tuition to be at home.' None of it made sense, and I can homeschool." Alice did not feel that the educators and administrators considered the broader context of the pandemic and the impact that had on families, stating, "...you're in the middle of a pandemic and you tryin' tell these kids to sit in front of a computer screen for eight hours like really?" Although Alice initially tried to adjust, she quickly realized the challenges with virtual learning on top of the challenges living in the Covid-19 pandemic were becoming too much for her son.

Alice elaborated on the frustration that her son felt during virtual learning with the school. She explained, “I started to notice that his demeanor was just kind of changing – he was going into a small depression...he’s a pretty joyful, jovial type kid, easy-going, laid back. And I could see the frustration in him in just talking to him.” She saw that virtual learning “wasn’t a good fit,” but she did not immediately decide on homeschooling. She tried an online school instead, but she was dissatisfied because of the same issues that she saw with her child’s old school. She shared how “surprisingly and disappointingly a lot of the same issues existed... the curriculum was not great, there was a lot of cognitive overload with how the courses were designed. The teachers weren’t as responsive...” Alice was understanding that many families were “jumping into this online world for their children” in the pandemic, and schools and online programs were likely “overwhelmed with trying to navigate and have more students than they normally would have.”

Although Alice was empathetic to the experiences of educators in the pandemic, she also critiqued the virtual learning that her son experienced from curricular and instructional lenses. When doing so, she brought up her area of expertise as a graduate student and how she “knew they [educators] were doing [online learning] wrong.” Both the Christian school’s remote learning and the online school did not meet her son’s learning needs. “That’s when I decided to do it for real, strictly, let me create a curriculum based off of putting different things together, homeschool for him” she explained. She ultimately decided to cherry pick and provide his customized educational experience through homeschooling during the pandemic. Alice commented that since homeschooling, things have been “a lot better for” him, although he misses his friends. She also shared being unsure about whether they would homeschool long-

term, especially after things go back to "normal." As Alice reflected on her decision to homeschool, she expressed having "mixed emotions." She explained,

> I felt relieved that I could eliminate some stress in my life by eliminating the middleman [laughs] 'cus that was stressful. You know, you're trying to… make sure mentally [child's] okay and making sure I'm okay, and then I have to try to deal with another grown up about- that dealing with 20 other kids and their parents… I felt a little overwhelmed about being able to do it and do it well.

Although Alice had "mixed feelings" she shared "having grace" for herself and her son during these unprecedented times.

While the virtual learning experience in the pandemic and the subsequent impact it had on her son's learning and well-being motivated Alice to homeschool, other factors played a secondary role in her decision to homeschool. She highlighted the mass Black Lives Matter protests as shaping her thoughts about the typical pedagogical and curricular choices in schools. Because what she wanted for her child deviated from these school norms, she made the decision to homeschool. She explained,

> In wake of some of the things that we had going on this summer [2020], I really was more cognizant of wanting him to see himself represented in what we do as it relates to schooling and curriculum. And I don't think schools have done a really good job overall of culturally relevant teaching. So, that's always been important to me, but even more important over this last year of things we've had happened. And so, I feel like having the control to be able to do that and find stuff I think represents what I would want him to be able to, as he grows into a young man, that's gonna help him.

Alice shared how the mass protests that coincided with the pandemic heightened her desire to have her child represented in his learning. While she critiqued schools for not practicing culturally relevant pedagogy, this seemingly was not a prominent push motivator that led her to homeschool. Her prior awareness of this lack of culturally relevant teaching in school was not enough to motivate her to homeschool her son. However, the increased visibility, via social

media, of state-sanctioned violence against Black people influenced what and how she wanted her child to learn.

This sociopolitical moment was a contextual facilitator that led her to homeschool. She understood being African American as shaping her decision to homeschool in that, "it made it easier" to do it. She elaborated,

> ….Especially after we experienced a lot of the social and civil unrest this summer... I was already kind of already there anyways. But that made it easier because... I became even more aware by reading more... not only social justice issues, but social justice issues in the educational system… I'm like, 'oh my gosh. Schools weren't never really [*claps hands*]- they didn't have us in mind when they created the foundations of K through 12 schools, and so having that knowledge has really helped me be ok with my decision [to homeschool] even more so.

Alice's growing awareness of the educational system made her more critical of schools as spaces for learning, stating that there's "a lot to work" to "even bring them up to where they need to be for students of color." She added that "it's not only being Black" that shaped her decision to homeschool but "being Black and aware" played an important role. Being aware of "how systems were created and who they were created for" made a "huge difference" for Alice. Alice's consciousness of the unequal roots of the school system, particularly for Black students and other students of color, also motivated her to homeschool. Given these constraints in schools, she saw the possibilities to provide her son with a culturally relevant learning experience through homeschooling.

Alice described feeling a "sense of relief to be able to take- an empowerment kinda – being able to take control over something so important." Alice recognized that in homeschooling she feels "like I have more control as a parent, you know what I mean? To really be able to influence how [and] what he's learning." Having control over her child's education through homeschooling allowed her to support his well-being in the midst of a global public health crisis

and hyper-visible state violence against Black people. Additionally, Alice was able to have more control with his academic learning and "slow down" or "speed it up" if he needed it. She viewed homeschooling as "exercising your freedom to be involved in your child's education through your worldview lens instead of a worldview lens of what the state or the school has. You're able to interject your thoughts and views through the curriculum." Alice believes that "as a parent, having the freedom and flexibility to really influence what your child is learning" through homeschooling is important.

The Covid-19 Catalyst to Homeschool

Gemini's and Alice's decision-making to homeschool was shaped by the Covid-19 pandemic in distinct ways. Alice was motivated to homeschool *because* of the pandemic, while the pandemic acted as a contextual facilitator for Gemini to start homeschooling. Five of the 15 parents in my study started homeschooling during the pandemic: Alice, Gemini, Nicole, Ben, and Jamaica. Like Alice, the pandemic was as a motivator for Nicole and Ben to homeschool, while the pandemic facilitated Jamaica's homeschooling, similar to Gemini's experiences.

Nicole, a single African American mother in Wisconsin, was "thrusted" into homeschooling in the pandemic as she decided to prioritize her child's physical health over school learning. When thinking about her decision to homeschool, Nicole explained "I want to have my baby here with me versus her being like the top excelling student and so at the time, it was like if anything happens in regards to her academic career, I'm okay with that, as long as she's like healthy and alive." Similarly, Ben, a Black father in a big city in Illinois, shared health-related concerns in the pandemic as the sole motivational factor that pushed him to homeschool. Ben decided to "take the initiative" and homeschool his children to protect them from the coronavirus and to continue their learning. While Nicole and Ben expressed their

concerns about the virus itself, Alice shared more concerns about her son's mental health and the learning experience he was having during this time of virtual learning. While they were motivated to homeschool because of the health and learning implications of the pandemic, the pandemic also gave Gemini and Jamaica a window to homeschool. Jamaica, an African American mother in a predominantly Black neighborhood in Wisconsin, wanted to continue her child's learning and described homeschooling as formerly being on the "backburner." When the schools closed due to the pandemic, she, too, was "thrusted" into homeschooling.

In addition to the Covid-19 pandemic acting as a catalyst for these families to homeschool, apart from Ben, all of these parents had additional motivators[56]. These motivators were not unique and instead represented similar motivations to the families who began homeschooling prior to the pandemic. As noted, Gemini always wanted to homeschool to be with her children and disliked the "rigid" school system. Similarly, Tasha, a Black mother who has been homeschooling her three youngest children in a predominantly Black city in Illinois for several years, also shared her dissatisfaction with schools based on her own experiences as a young person in traditional school as well as her older children's experiences. Tasha felt that schools "stifle that natural curiosity because they have to maintain order." Moreover, she had trouble finding a school that would be academically challenging for her children, which raised the question, "do I send them [to school] and then they're bored… Or do I do it myself?" leading her to choose to homeschool.

While Tasha and Gemini were dissatisfied with the academic learning in school, Alice noted the limitations of learning in schools, particularly as it related to culturally relevant teaching. Like Alice, Nicole shared her displeasure with the school system and what was being

[56] Jamaica's motivations will be discussed in the Antiblackness and Homeschooling section of this chapter.

taught. She describes being motivated to homeschool to teach her child the "truth." While this lack of culturally relevant curricula in schools alone did not motivate Alice or Nicole to start homeschooling, the timing of the pandemic as well as the sociopolitical moment facilitated both of their decisions. Alice talked about the mass protests across the country for Black Lives in relation to the curriculum and instruction she wanted her child to receive in homeschooling, Nicole spoke about her decision to homeschool as an act of protest. She shared that homeschooling was her opportunity to "give back to the movement." She describes, "...the day that I sent in my paper [to homeschool], I felt that liberation. Like, when I sent that paper in, I just felt detached, I literally like felt the chain break, you know what I'm saying? If I could describe it literally felt like one clink... And so, it was a powerful internal thing, it empowered me in a way that I didn't know because...I never thought I would be homeschooling." Nicole powerfully described how it felt for her to start homeschooling during the Black Lives Matter movement *as a part of* the movement. Alice and Nicole described their decision to homeschool in relation to being Black and African American and feeling "empowered", unlike Cynthia, Vanessa, Gemini, Ben, and Tasha who shared it not being a factor in their decision-making. Latoya's and Tricia's stories highlight the centrality of being Black and "choosing" to homeschool.

Latoya's Story[57]: Homeschooling as the Only Logical Choice

Latoya is a Black woman who lives in a predominantly Black neighborhood in a racially diverse but segregated city in Wisconsin. She is a stay-at-home parent, or as her partner, Trevor, puts it, a "professional homeschooler." Latoya has been taking the lead homeschooling their two children – ages 5 and 7 – for the third year. In separate interviews, Latoya and Trevor both

[57] Partners Latoya and Trevor both participated in this study. Latoya is a focal parent in the study, however, Trevor's experiences are woven into Latoya's story given that they represent one family unit.

shared what led them to homeschool their children. Latoya briefly mentioned how she and Trevor discussed homeschooling before they had children, but that they did not make any concrete steps to do it. They ended up enrolling their oldest child into a public Montessori[58] school when he became school age. Many Montessori schools are privately run with high tuition costs; however, with this public option, Latoya noted that they did not have to face any potential financial barriers to attending. The specialized curricular model was accessible to their family, which seemed to influence their initial educational decision-making.

Trevor shared how the Montessori school they chose was a "better model than traditional, sit in the chair and if you move then we gotta do disciplinary action" school. Although he liked this model, he had concerns about the "amount of productivity" for their child, knowing that he was "bright" and could learn things like "a sponge." Latoya also knew she would supplement a lot of her child's education at home anyway while he attended school. This school did not do well according to state tests; however, Latoya was comfortable with the school's approach of "teaching the whole child" instead. Latoya and Trevor both shared positive experiences at their child's previous school. They felt comfortable and welcomed in the classroom as they conversed with the teachers and principal.

Latoya described how she connected with a group of families who were also interested in homeschooling. She met with this group of parents often and conversed about "what educating our child(ren) would look like." After a series of conversations, she was faced with having to decide if she would homeschool or keep her child enrolled at the Montessori school. She talked about being "on the fence about" whether or not she was going to homeschool and then shared,

[58]Defined by Montessori Northeast (2022), "Montessori is a method of education that is based on self-directed activity, hands-on learning, and collaborative play with guidance from a trained teacher who offers age-appropriate activities."

> When a decision really had to be made... it was just kind of a consensus amongst [us] that yeah, we're willing to take our child out of the school system and do home schooling together. That's what kinda made our choice much easier because we didn't know what we was doing, but it felt very comfortable to have other families who didn't quite know what they were doing to take the leap and commitment together. So that's what got us started.

This community of other homeschoolers was a relational facilitator that supported Latoya's decision to choose homeschooling as an educational option. Trevor elaborated further on what facilitated their ability to homeschool. He explained, "I guess being conscious, and in my wife [Latoya] being willing, we were able to like, actually face the fear, calculate the risk and the benefits, and then we had enough courage to do it. And we were inspired by others, too…" Trevor, who worked full-time, noted Latoya's willingness to homeschool their children. She shared that when they had their first child, they "decided that I would stay home... until they became of age where we'd be more comfortable with me returning to work." She added, but "now that we're homeschooling, I plan on staying home until it doesn't work for our family anymore." Latoya working as a stay-at-home and homeschooling parent while Trevor worked outside of the home enabled their family to choose homeschooling as an educational option. These family dynamics and work factors acted as an individual (family unit) facilitator that further supported their decision to homeschool.

While they had positive personal experiences, they both were aware of systemic issues that negatively impact the experiences of Black students in schools. As Latoya thought about what other factors motivated her to homeschool, she explained,

> It was also knowing the statistics of Black children and Black boys in particular, in public school across the country and especially in [city]. Looking at the school-to-prison pipeline, the high incarceration rate, the high dropout rate, the high punishment and suspension and expulsion rate for Black boys. Also, at this time my son, he was really young so, it was a matter of, do we take a step and completely take him out of the system, or do we wait until we have an encounter? Are we just gonna sit here and wait for the

> shoe to drop? So, with him in the system, it felt like it's just a matter of time and we just didn't want that time to happen...

Latoya describes the harmful disciplinary practices disproportionately applied to Black boys and how this fact played a role in her decision to homeschool. She feared that her child would experience this in schools. Indeed, violent anti-Black discipline practices in schools are heavily documented in the research and media (Dumas, 2016; Love, 2019; Morris, 2016; Wun, 2018) and in Wisconsin specifically (Fox, 2022). Latoya characterizes the "state of schools for a Black boy in America" as alarming given these statistics and therefore shaping her decision to homeschool. Trevor noted how they did not have "any horror stories" to share about their experiences in school, but also shared similar concerns about what their children would face.

Although Latoya did not share personal experiences of her son enduring this harsh discipline, the *anticipation* of her son experiencing it was enough for her to withdraw him from the school system and homeschool instead. She also spoke about the possibility – what felt like the inevitability– of her son also being "put into different boxes and labels." She explained that "while my son didn't experience racism at school in like a individual sense, it's like at a systematic level, right? Going to [school district] you were experiencing racism..." She contrasts her son's great experiences in school with the "devastating" statistics of other Black boys within the school district and asked, "what makes [child] so special?" She explained, "That was always like this overwhelming worry or fear like, damn, like when is his time gon' come? 'Cus, you know, like it's got to come. This is almost rites of passage of being Black in public schools." She feared the anti-Black perceptions of Black students, perceptions that deny their humanness and potential while labeling them inherent problems in classrooms. The expectation of anti-Black experiences in schools was a push motivator for them to homeschool. This was especially pronounced for Latoya given their local school district's statistics.

In addition to these negative perceptions of Black children, Latoya and Trevor also noted a lack of resources for them in schools. They shared how the lack of resources for Black children – in the form Black teachers and Black-centered curricula – was a factor that pushed them to homeschool. Trevor emphasized the lack of representation when he explained, "[child] would go to a school where 98%, 95% of the kids were Black, but all of the leadership was white people." For Trevor, this racial dynamic translated into a "lack of resources" for Black students. Trevor believed if Black students "had the right figure in front of" them, then they "would've soaked up everything." Instead, Trevor saw how the school staff perceived Black student as having "behavior issues," which resulted in disciplinary action. The countless studies documenting the experiences of Black students in schools highlight the disproportionate disciplinary practices and low academic expectations that white teachers perpetrate against Black students (Nowicki, 2018). Further, research also shows that Black students with Black teachers fare better in school, graduate, and attend college at higher rates (Bristol & Martin-Fernandez, 2019; Chatmon & Givens, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Milner IV, 2006).

As noted in the introduction of this dissertation, Black parents also have negative experiences in schools as they engage and advocate for their children (Cooper, 2003; 2005; Johnson, 2017). Latoya also named the negative stereotypes of Black parents as she thought about how being Black shaped their decision to homeschool. Latoya was aware of the antiblackness in schools that disregards Black children and spoke about her fear for her own children as a motivator that pushed them to homeschool. Additionally, she shared her apprehension as a Black parent having a child in the school system:

> As a Black parent and as the Black woman... feeling this kinda cloud hanging over that there's going to be an incident, or there's going to be a time where something happens to my child, or I have to go in and advocate for my child. And now... instead of a concerned parent, I'm the angry Black woman in your office or in your school, and telling you this

and telling you that.

Latoya again shared her trepidation as a Black mother in school and how she would be perceived by school leaders. Negative stereotypes about Black women, and Black mothers in particular, influence their experiences engaging in schools, leading to them feeling devalued, unheard, and disregarded (Cooper, 2005).

Latoya stated that another “outright reason” for her decision to homeschool was her desire to incorporate “Black history and Black learning into their everyday learning” and not “just in February" or "around MLK day.” She critiqued schools for this omission and noted how teaching Black history was another motivational factor that pushed her to homeschool. Trevor also desired to provide his children with an African-centered education that he did not get when he was a young Black student, and he saw this as a possibility through homeschooling. He recounted the negative impact that white supremacist teaching had on him when he attended suburban schools in Wisconsin. He explained,

> I wanted to find a way to avoid... subjecting them to that...you want to escape that so, how do you do it by sending them through that system? So, it came to a point where it was inevitable. We had to take the education of our children into our own hands if we wanted to avoid that.

Trevor brings up this inherent conflict between wanting to ground his children in a positive Black perspective and sending them to schools that teach the very opposite. He concluded, “...it was no way... It came to a point where you can’t go there [to school]. It’s no way around it.” Although both Latoya and Trevor shared their son having a positive school experience in school, they expected one day for that to change. Their narratives highlight the interconnectedness of push and pull factors for many parents and the salience of antiblackness, as they were pushed to homeschool by what was missing and/or problematic in schools as well as pulled to homeschool by the freedom it offered them to provide the learning experiences they desired for their children.

Latoya expressed her views on homeschooling, stating that,

> …it is so freeing and so liberating to have like self-autonomy and have faculty and… it's really like self-determination, right? It's like, I can do what I want to do and that's something that us as Black people in American society we don't get that often. We don't get those opportunities, so I think to not only have that opportunity as a parent, as a Black woman and to provide that opportunity to my children… I think that's a beautiful thing.

Latoya shared how after having homeschooled for a couple of years she's now "much more comfortable homeschooling." She explained, "I just see it as a no brainer, like, 'yeah Black families need to be homeschooling 'cus the school system is no place for us.' That's a very biased and, [*laughs*] you know, loaded kinda viewpoint, but that's just- that's how I feel being Black plays into my decision to homeschool now. I really feel like there is no other choice. No other logical choice."

Tricia's Story: Homeschooling as the Only Option

Tricia is a Black homeschooling mother who works full-time. She is a university professor and is actively involved in national and international organizations that align with her work. She is married with a seven-year-old whom she has been homeschooling for three years in a predominantly white suburb in Wisconsin. Tricia described parenting and homeschooling as both a rewarding and challenging experience. While she has immense feelings of pride seeing how critically and socially aware her child is as they learned together, she also noted the time investment and pushback from her child during homeschooling as downsides. Tricia shared that she "probably wouldn't be homeschooling" if she lived somewhere else with more educational options that were affirming for Black children. If she did not live in Wisconsin, she "most likely" would have her child enrolled in school, specifying if it was "maybe 40% Black or something, and it was a good school and it was teaching Black history and she had Black teachers, yeah

[*laughs*] she would probably be in a regular school. Public or private... if that was the composition of the school."

Before moving to Wisconsin, Tricia did some research and shared learning about it being the "worst place for Black people to live." She mentions reading about the "high suspension rates, high incarceration rates, high infant mortality rates, all of those things..." and how it shaped her idea of "what type of place [Wisconsin]… is." She described Wisconsin as being "just very different in terms of how Blackness is naturalized as something bad, as something negative... It's so different than other parts in the U.S where you have – not even more of a counter-narrative, but like a different reality." She referenced other places in the South, highlighting how those places had more positive images of and experiences for Black people. Tricia enrolled her daughter in schools that she hoped would provide her with the best educational experiences. She tried two different schools in Wisconsin – one independent and one private – and in both schools, she faced challenges which prompted her to consider homeschooling.

Tricia's child's negative experiences in schools were a motivational factor that pushed her to homeschool. When I asked what led her to homeschool, she explained, "We ended up homeschooling because of some experiences at previous schools that were basically racist and sexist..." Tricia described exclusion and socialization in the classroom that reinforced sexist stereotypes, as well as anti-Black racism in the schools, which made Tricia change the school her child attended. Unfortunately, however, she experienced similar antiblackness at the next school. While there are mandatory age requirements for pre-school and kindergarten grade levels throughout the Wisconsin school systems, the private school they attended had more leeway with their students. Tricia advocated for her daughter to advance to the next grade instead of being

held back due to her age. The principal initially agreed, but suddenly changed her mind and said that they "wouldn't be able to" move her on to the next grade. Tricia attributes the low expectations and disregard for her daughter's academic abilities in school to anti-Black ideas about Black children. She explained how "since this was a white principal" it was "racist to assume that a Black child could not also be gifted." Although Tricia provided examples of her child's high academic achievement, she felt that the principal "didn't want to acknowledge any of those things as being special because my kid is a Black kid. If it was another kid, I'm sure the story would have been totally different." Like many other Black homeschoolers, Tricia felt compelled to homeschool because of anti-Black racism in U.S. schools.

Tricia started to think about homeschooling when her child was enrolled in the second school because of where they lived. She explained that the "city was also very white so there would really be no difference from public and private since it would also be white." Living in predominantly white spaces meant potentially attending predominantly white schools. Given their previous experiences in two predominantly white schools, Tricia felt that she was out of options for educating her Black child in Wisconsin schools. She explained,

> For me it was like, we live in Wisconsin. So that's what it is. And for me, that's what it is in all aspects. It doesn't matter if it's public school, private school, after having those experiences and then also just reading [*laughs*] and knowing what Wisconsin is... it was like, I didn't have any other options. That's really the only option I had and so along with the [racist and sexist] experiences [in schools], it was purely that this is where we are located in this country, so this is the option we have.

While Tricia was motivated to homeschool because of the anti-Black racism and sexism her child experienced in schools, the lack of educational options that would affirm Black children was a contextual facilitator that shaped Tricia's educational decision-making. Where they lived and being Black were central parts of Tricia's decision to homeschool because of the pervasive antiblackness in schools and communities in Wisconsin. She elaborated, "I think if I

was in another place, I probably wouldn't [homeschool]." She talked about other places that have wealthy Black suburbs, where "visually you can see Black people doing well," as places where she would feel like she would not have to homeschool. She concluded that "Blackness has 100% shaped the reason that I'm doing it." Their previous experiences coupled with the statistics for Black people in Wisconsin made Tricia feel that homeschool was "really the only option" she had for education. The lack of educational options was a contextual facilitator and important element of her educational decision-making to homeschool.

Tricia's story highlights the grossly unfortunate but commonly experienced antiblackness in schools. For Tricia, experiencing antiblackness in schools prompted her to consider homeschooling as an educational option. Their experiences in schools were a motivational factor that pushed her to homeschool, although she did not want to do it. Tricia viewed homeschooling as a "burden." In addition to her full-time job, she homeschooled full-time. As she reflected on how homeschooling has impacted her family, she shared how her partner "still has the same amount of freedom. He could still go to work- like to an office – and then when he's helping [child with learning] that's after work. I can't do that. I don't have that luxury." She elaborated,

> So, I think the impact is different but that's also based on how societies are structured in terms of more labor for women, especially Black women…. I think from the parent side it's definitely been more of a burden for me because sometimes I just think, wow, when she was at [school]… I could actually sit in my office and do work. It's a luxury for people who can actually go into an office or coffee shops… It's hard for me to imagine that right now.

Tricia notes the added labor she endures homeschooling as a Black mother with a career. Tricia's story reveals how Black parents' search for a "good quality education, that values Black people" might mean "choosing" to homeschool – even if they do not want to.

Antiblackness and Homeschooling

Latoya's and Tricia's story highlight the pervasiveness of antiblackness in schools shaping their decision to homeschool. Tricia shared her child's experiences in schools which motivated her to homeschool. Similarly, Chi and Tiffany, Black mothers in Illinois and Wisconsin, described their personal encounters with antiblackness in schools pushing them to homeschool. As Chi realized that her Black child "was not gonna get affirmed" in schools she switched to homeschooling. As Tiffany desired to "rebuild" her child's confidence she decided to homeschool. Although most of the parents in this study did not share these personal experiences like Tricia, Chi, and Tiffany did, many described antiblackness shaping their decision-making to homeschool in other ways.

Latoya, Trevor, Jamaica, Hazina, and Alexis all shared their awareness of antiblackness in schools and their worry that their children would experience it, despite not having their own experiences to share. They still recognized the negative experiences that Black students endured in schools, the lack of resources for Black children in traditional schools, and the negative stereotypes of Black parents that could hinder their school engagement. While the Covid-19 pandemic prompted Jamaica to officially begin homeschooling, she had a desire to do so before the school closures and was motivated by the negative experiences that she witnessed working with Black students' public schools. Hazina desired to homeschool so she could "shape our kids into the amazing beings that we want them and know they can be" instead of "trying to depend on them [schools] to do it when we know that they're not." She noted miseducation of Black students in schools and viewed homeschooling as a corrective. These findings demonstrate how (anti)Blackness matters in the educational decision-making of Black parents. This raises

questions about homeschooling as a "choice" or rather an "only option" for protecting and affirming Black children.

Discussion

Motivations to Homeschool

Utilizing BlackCrit as a lens to understand Black parents' decision to homeschool allows for a specified understanding of how Blackness and antiblackness shape their educational decision-making. Nine of the ten parents who homeschooled in Wisconsin shared their experiences with and awareness of antiblackness and how it shaped their decision to homeschool. For some parents this was central to their decision-making, while for others it was mentioned but seemingly not as important as other factors. These findings illustrate the pervasiveness of antiblackness and how it informs Black parents' decision to homeschool, albeit in varying ways. Further, antiblackness was not salient for all the parents in this study, as noted in stories from Cynthia, Vanessa, Tasha, Ben, and Gemini. Although Vanessa highlighted racism in schools – particularly against Black people – as she discussed their experiences in schools and homeschooling, she also shared that being Black "didn't matter" in her decision to homeschool. It is possible that Vanessa was sharing her belief that being Black *shouldn't* matter when it comes to homeschooling. Taken together, the diverse experiences of Black parents highlight how they are not a monolith.

Parents were also motivated by their general dissatisfaction with schools. Vanessa, Gemini, Alice, Tasha and Hazina all shared their displeasure with schooling practices that ignore children's individual academic and socioemotional needs. Further the Covid-19 pandemic motivated a few parents to homeschool due to health-related concerns and issues with virtual learning. These findings demonstrate how Black parents' motivation to homeschool includes a

variety of "push" factors. Additionally, only a few parents shared "pull" factors that motivated them to homeschool. These parents were attracted to the benefits of homeschooling as an educational practice as well as their ability to prioritize family time. Overall, these findings illustrate the varied motivators for homeschooling in this study.

Facilitators to Homeschool

While all the parents shared individual, relational, and contextual facilitators that shaped their decision-making to homeschool, these factors manifested in different ways. For example, work factors included being a retired parent, a stay-at-home parent, working from home, having a flexible work schedule, and decreased work. These diverse work situations were all individual facilitators that enabled them to homeschool. Thirteen of the 15 parents interviewed were Black and African American mothers, and 13 of them shouldered the labor at home in their parenting and homeschooling responsibilities. Additionally, ten of these mothers were employed in various capacities (full-time and part-time employment in various fields, working from home, or running their own business). Most of the literature on Black homeschoolers highlights the experiences of homeschooling mothers, and within this literature some scholars address the labor of mothers (Lois, 2021). Of the two fathers in this study, only Ben was primarily responsible for homeschooling as he worked.

Most of the parents in this study – 12 out of 15 – were married. Previous research shows that in heterosexual two-parent families, it is typical for one parent to work, while the other parent homeschools. Often, the mother is primarily responsible for homeschooling. While not a major finding or representative of Black homeschoolers generally, my research highlights how Black fathers also are responsible for homeschooling. Further, my research uplifts Black mothers who take on the labor of homeschooling, oftentimes while still working. Latoya and Tasha are

examples of two mothers who had partners that worked and provided financially while they homeschooled the children. This family structure and work dynamic allowed them to be at home with their children, which was an important facilitator – albeit not a requirement – for parents who wanted to homeschool.

Family structures can take many forms, and research has shown that single-parents, particularly single-mothers, too, homeschool (Fields-Smith, 2020). The scant research on single homeschooling parents sheds light onto the experiences of families who do not make up the normative two-parent family structure. Chi, Nicole, and Vanessa are three single mothers in this study who also homeschool. Chi, Nicole, and Vanessa did not have similar family dynamics that facilitated being able to homeschool; however, they all shared different work factors that enabled them to start homeschooling. Nicole, for example, shared being 100% remote during the Covid-19 pandemic, which allowed her to be at home with her child. Chi shared how she previously worked a job that did not cover childcare expenses. As a single parent navigating work demands, she talked about how she "got a new job that allowed me to work from home and paid me better..." when sharing how she ended up homeschooling. This flexibility in their work facilitated their homeschooling. While Fields-Smith (2020) found that the single Black mothers in her study were willing to forgo working full-time – and, consequently, a higher income – in order to homeschool their children, my research highlights single Black mothers having flexibility in their work experiences that allowed them to either work from home or bring their children to the workplace.

Communities of support were integral in a few parents' decision-making to homeschool. Six parents in this study – three in Illinois and three in Wisconsin – shared how being in community with others supported their decision to homeschool. As described in detail, Cynthia,

Vanessa, and Latoya had various types of networks that supported their decision to homeschool. Additionally, Chi and Tiffany had friends who homeschooled that offered them support as they considered it. Nicole shared having another homeschooler help her "navigate the process" to start homeschooling, which facilitated her decision. Further, she shared learning about a homeschooling group in her area and commented on how she "didn't know that there was [Black] people in the city doing it." She added, "honestly to hear about a actual cohort in the city that's working was also like is what made me take the leap [to homeschool]." Nicole seemed to be inspired by other homeschoolers that were nearby. These findings emphasize the importance of community and counters ideas that homeschooling is an isolated or individual act.

Lack of Educational Options

The lack of educational options was explicitly discussed by five parents as they shared what led them to homeschool which varied based on what parents desired for their children's education. Gemini, Tasha, and Alice had concerns with the learning offered in schools that did not center their children as learners. Gemini had trouble with her children's school given that they were unable to accommodate the range of learning needs. Tasha, a mother of six, had previous experiences with public and private schools and noted how she witnessed the school system not preparing students well for life after school – be it college or a job – and always changing the curriculum without preparing teachers to effectively teach. With her younger children, she tried to find a school that could serve them as "advanced" learners but could not find a good fit. Research highlights the barriers Black students face accessing gifted programs (Hargrove & Seay, 2011), and this seemed to shape Tasha's decision to homeschool. Moreover, the educational options seemed more limited during the pandemic as Alice tried to find a good fit for her child. Alice shared her experiences with the lack of quality educational options in the

pandemic and the era of virtual learning. Remote schooling and online learning were not options that fit her child's learning needs, nor did they include culturally relevant curriculum for students in the "real world."

Tricia, Hazina, and Jamaica spoke about the lack of African-centered and Black-affirming educational options specifically in Wisconsin, which was a contextual facilitator that shaped their decision to homeschool. Tricia and Jamaica both discussed this, often referencing the South and other predominantly Black regions with a plethora of educational options. Hazina also mentioned the lack of educational options – specifically Afrocentric educational options– as she discussed her decision to homeschool. They focused explicitly on the role of antiblackness in shaping the educational options available to their children, whereas Alice, Gemini, and Tasha spoke about the quality of curricula and instruction more broadly. The lack of educational options shaped their decision-making to homeschool. This was seemingly a "constrained choice" (Cooper, 2009) for some of these families.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I amplified the unique stories of six focal parents and highlighted commonalities and distinctions in Black parents' decision-making processes to homeschool by synthesizing the experiences of the nine other parents in this study. Research has highlighted Black parents' engagement in the search for a "good school" across various regions and school types, acknowledging the racial calculus and tradeoffs involved in this search (Posey-Maddox, et al., 2021). Additionally, homeschooling research notes the challenges that Black parents face as they make the decision to homeschool, noting barriers to doing so (Ray et al., 2021). As Black parents make decisions to homeschool, it is important to look beyond just their motivations and examine their decision-making process, which includes the facilitators that enable them to do so.

Each parent in this study shared the motivators and facilitators that put them on the path to homeschool. While there were similarities with the push motivators that made parents want to homeschool, their decision-making process to homeschool was complex given the varied facilitators that enabled them to homeschool. These motivators and facilitators were interconnected and overlapped in different ways. Further, parents shared their desires for their children as well as themselves as they assessed their educational options and made educational decisions. Black and African American parents are not a monolith, and this is clearly illuminated by each parent's narrative. These findings illustrate the heterogeneity of Black homeschooling families by showing that not all Black parents consider antiblackness in their decision to homeschool and instead were motivated to homeschool for other factors. However, antiblackness was a salient theme for most parents in this study, highlighting the ways that anti-Black racism shapes many Black parents' educational decision-making. These findings also contribute to the literature on Black homeschooling by furthering our knowledge about the varied motivations and goals that Black parents have for homeschooling, particularly in this understudied Midwestern region.

All of the parents in this study desired to provide the best education possible for their children and chose to homeschool for varied reasons. They experienced the constraints in schools and learned of the freedom of homeschooling. The parents in this study saw many possibilities for their children's education through homeschooling. As parents reflected on their decision to homeschool and how they felt, many shared feeling confident and content with their decision after the fact. This is not to say that their decision to homeschool was "easy" or their homeschool practice is without any challenges. It was evident that most of the parents in this study felt affirmed in their decision to homeschool, as they described some of the unaccounted benefits of

homeschooling – the possibilities of learning outside of traditional schooling became apparent to them through their practice. These unexpected benefits reinforced parents' decision to homeschool and also supported their continued homeschooling practice. While previous research has focused on the barriers that impact parents' ability to homeschool, less attention is given to what sustains Black parents' homeschooling – an area of inquiry that I will further explore outside of the dissertation.

While we have insight into Black parents' school decision-making in the traditional school system, homeschooling is often overlooked as an educational option in the literature. This chapter sheds light on the fact that homeschooling is an option, and it explains the various components that shape Black parents' decision-making to homeschool. Rather than emphasize barriers, this chapter discusses facilitators as a key part of the process. Further, there are various facilitators that enabled parents to choose homeschooling, even if they didn't necessarily want to homeschool. Understanding these facilitators contributes to the literature on Black parents' homeschooling by illuminating how individual, relational, and contextual factors are a key piece of their decision-making. Describing motivations alone paints an incomplete picture about their decisions to homeschool. By illustrating the motivators and facilitators of Black parents in Wisconsin and Illinois, scholars can gain a better understanding of what makes it possible for Black parents to "choose" homeschooling as an educational option over other "choices."

Identifying Black parents' motivations and facilitators for homeschooling also allows for a greater understanding of why Black parents divest from schools to homeschool. As Chi reflected on her decision to homeschool based on the experiences her child had in school, she shared,

> It became clear to me that, this wasn't just about this individual child's experience. This is about really contemplating and reimagining what is possible for Black children. And

> what does it mean to step outside of, rather than saying, I don't have power within the system, to say, what power do I have?

Some Black parents saw "power" in their decision to homeschool. As Hazina, explained, "we've lost our power somewhere along the way and I feel like this [homeschooling] is a way for us to reclaim our power, and who we are, and to actually shape our kids into the amazing beings that they are…" Exploring Black parents' homeschooling practices is a start toward re-imagining a Black liberatory fantasy. The next chapter will focus on Black parents' homeschooling practices in order to contribute to the fledgling body of literature in this area.

Chapter 4: Black Homeschooling Parents' Pedagogical Practices, Approaches, and Challenges

The definition of a "good education" has been debated across various groups and institutions throughout history. Many educational scholars point to teacher quality and experience, family-school relationships, positive school culture, access to financial resources and materials, and particular curricular and pedagogical approaches as key indicators of a "good schooling" (Husu & Tirri, 2007; Johnson et al., 2010). Additionally, educational scholars and practitioners uplift various types of child-centered learning as "best practices" for teaching, including culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy, play-based learning, project-based learning, and student-centered learning (Danniels & Pyle, 2018; Kokotsaki et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014; Thamraksa, 2003). While the call for more culturally relevant pedagogy in K-12 schooling has been noted in the literature and media (King, 2017; Mensah, 2011; Woodson, 1933), this approach to teaching and learning is largely absent or superficial in most traditional school settings (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Further, standardized testing as a metric for "academic achievement" has shifted classroom learning away from these child-centered practices (Biesta, 2009). Although some education scholars and practitioners aim to have classroom and community-based educational spaces that are high quality, student-centered, and politically conscious and caring, institutional constraints often cause them to shift their practices to cater to high-stakes academic performances (Au, 2016; Baldridge, 2020; McKinney de Royston et al., 2021). The perspectives of schoolteachers, principals, youth workers, students, and parents are highlighted in this literature, while less attention is given to Black homeschooling families' approaches to teaching and learning outside of these educational institutions and their attendant constraints.

Centering Black homeschooling parents' voices in conversations about "good education" can reveal what they value and how they practice these values through homeschooling. Black homeschoolers, particularly in Wisconsin and Illinois are placed in a unique position to create the "good education" they desire given the less restrictive homeschooling laws in their states. The previous chapter discussed the various school-based "push" factors that motivated most to homeschool. The existing literature on Black homeschooling also highlights this general dissatisfaction with public schools and a desire to provide Black children with a high-quality education in a positive environment (Fields-Smith, 2015; Mazama, 2016; Mazma & Lundy, 2012, 2013, 2015; Ray, 2015; Puga, 2019). Black parents' dissatisfaction is often categorized in terms of the quality of education available in school and their experiences with racism in schools (Field-Smith & Kisura, 2015; Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; Mazama & Lundy, 2012; 2015; Ray, 2015). Further, these scholars note that many of the parents are homeschooling in modes distinct from schools, particularly as it relates to teaching African- and Black-centered curricula and culturally relevant learning (Fields-Smith & Williams; 2009; Mazama; 2016; Mazama & Lundy, 2013, 2015).

The growing literature on Black homeschooling provides some insight into the diverse homeschooling practices of Black parents (Baker, 2013; Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2015; Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; Mazama, 2016; Mazama & Lundy, 2012, 2013, 2015; Taylor, 2018); however, their daily practices remain largely understudied (Mazama, 2016). This chapter contributes to the Black homeschooling literature and the broader discourse of a "good education" by closely examining how Black homeschooling families approach teaching and learning at home and in community in Wisconsin and Illinois. Specifically, it adds to the small but growing body of literature on Black homeschooling by providing greater detail regarding

what homeschooling "looks like" and exploring the various factors that inform these practices. This chapter analyzes both homeschool artifacts from focal parents that represent their homeschooling practices and the policy contexts that help shape those practices. For instance, Wisconsin and Illinois mandate required subjects to be taught in homeschooling, but each state has low-regulation laws relative to other states, which provides an opportunity for creative learning practices to take shape in this region. The findings provide deeper insights into Black families' homeschooling practices by describing how education laws, parents' goals, and daily challenges shape these practices. Considering these factors together offers a more detailed understanding of why Black parents choose some pedagogical practices over others.

All of the parents in this study desired to provide their children with the best education possible and practiced homeschooling in varied ways, both at home and in community. I argue that Black parents' homeschooling practices fall on a fluid spectrum that ranges from parent- and child-led learning on one axis and interest- and curriculum-based learning on the other. Moreover, many parents utilized an array of pedagogical practices, some of which resembled while others departed from what is traditionally practiced in schools. While parents' goals for homeschooling were explicit, their practices were shaped by numerous factors outside of their educational visions. All of the parents experienced challenges and tensions while practicing homeschooling. I argue that these constraints are similar to those that practitioners in other educational institutions face, despite homeschoolers' learning outside of conventional schooling spaces. Even with the "freedom" that homeschooling affords these Black families in Wisconsin and Illinois, many of the parents noted feeling external pressures stemming from neoliberal ideologies in education that value grades, testing, and competition as metrics of "good

education." I argue that Black parents' homeschooling practices embody elements of freedom and reproduction within a broader neoliberal educational context.

Building on the previous chapter's findings on parents' decision-making to homeschool, this chapter illuminates parents' pedagogical visions, practices, and challenges. First, I revisit the homeschooling laws in Wisconsin and Illinois to provide context for some parents' homeschooling practices and how these laws inform their homeschooling. Next, I provide a frame for understanding Black parents' homeschooling practices. Then, I illuminate homeschooling practices with the use of focal family vignettes – highlighting parents' visions, practices, and challenges. I draw from interviews and focus groups with the six focal parents – Cynthia, Vanessa, Gemini, Alice, Latoya and Tricia – alongside their homeschool artifacts, to demonstrate their visions for homeschooling, their daily lives, and their teaching and learning in practice. Next, I discuss the themes from these vignettes at length utilizing the homeschooling practices of the nine non-focal parents to note nuances in how Black families homeschool.

Homeschooling Laws & Parents' Homeschool Practice

Ten of the parents homeschooled in Wisconsin and five homeschooled in Illinois (See Table 11 for parents in each state). As discussed in the previous chapter, Wisconsin and Illinois are two states that are classified as "low regulation" and "no-notice, low regulation," respectively, according to their homeschooling laws (Home School Legal Defense Association, 2022). Notable for parents' homeschooling practices is the fact that parents in these two states are not required to test their child or have their curricula and instructional plans pre-approved by the state. This provides homeschoolers in this region more freedom to engage in teaching and learning practices that differ and extend beyond what is traditionally taught in schools. Parents' homeschooling practices were shaped based on the state-mandated subjects, guidelines on what

constitutes homeschooling, and their daily instructional practices to fulfill the homeschooling requirements.

Table 11

Homeschooling Parents by State

Wisconsin Homeschooling Parents (n=10)	Illinois Homeschooling Parents (n=5)
Gemini, Alice, Latoya, Trevor, Tricia, Hazina, Nicole, Alexis, Jamaica, Tiffany.	Cynthia, Vanessa, Chi, Tasha, Ben.

State-Mandated Subjects

Both Wisconsin and Illinois have state-mandated subjects that homeschoolers are required to teach (outlined in Table 12), which can inform the curricular choices of homeschooling parents in these regions. While these broad subjects are required with no particular content at each grade level, there is no mechanism in place (e.g. testing) to enforce these requirements. While several parents referred to the subjects they are required to teach in their homeschooling, only a few of the parents spoke about these requirements dictating what they teach and learn.

Table 12

State-Mandated Subjects to Teach in Homeschooling

	Wisconsin	Illinois
State Mandated Subjects	Reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and health	Language arts, math, biological and physical sciences, social sciences, fine arts, and physical development and health

Gemini shared that she looked into the homeschooling laws as she prepared to start homeschooling her children. She explained, “I did a lot of research on Wisconsin state laws for homeschooling. I also printed out Common Core standards for reading, language arts, basically common core subjects for math and just some standards for science. And I researched those to

help me develop a curriculum...” Alexis also noted the state requirements for homeschoolers in Wisconsin when sharing why she teaches what she teaches in their homeschooling. She explained:

> I guess I feel like [specific topics] they’re needed, but they are required with DPI [Department of Public Instruction] that we focus on those topics of learning in our program. Although, they’re not like super strict or detailed about what we have to do in each topic, but they do say that we have to focus on those things. So, I guess I just use that as a kind of like a blueprint of what I plan to teach.

Several parents shared using the state guidelines as a “blueprint” in their homeschooling but noted the ways that they are able to choose how and what they learn in those areas. Some parents described their homeschool involving play-based, discussion-based, media-based, hands-on, and applied learning. They also choose to learn about additional topics beyond what the state mandates (see Table 13).

Table 13

Homeschooling Topics Described by Parents

State Mandated Subjects	Subjects Parents Taught in Homeschooling
Language Arts	Reading, comprehension, phonics and sounds, English grammar, writing, spelling.
Mathematics	Math, algebra, geometry, numbers
Science	Science, gardening, STEM activities, science experiments, biology, coding, animations, technology
Health	Health, affirmations, physical activity (sports, exercise, karate, taekwondo, yoga, ballet, skating, dance)
Social Studies	Racial wealth gap, economics, history, Black history, civics, social studies, social injustices.
Fine Arts	Art, colors, music (violin), photography
Non-required subjects that parents included in their homeschooling	Languages (Spanish, Portuguese, Sign Language, Hebrew, Mandarin), Speech therapy, Black experience, Bible study, Bible scripture, Devotion, philosophy, life skills, cooking, research.

Vanessa described researching the homeschooling laws and explained how:

> …with Illinois, I feel like it's a free-for-all type of situation. There's no really real actual restrictions compared to some other states like maybe Wisconsin or Texas, New York. Honestly, it's really basic. They just want you to cover the main four core curriculum. So that's the math, the ELA [English Language Arts], history, and science.

Cynthia also explained the homeschooling laws being "lax" in Illinois and how "they want to just make sure you're teaching but there's nothing that you have to fill out or anything..." Cynthia described teaching her child what children in school learned and what was outlined according to the state's homeschool laws. She elaborated, "[I] am starting now to keep track of transcripts because [child's] in ninth grade and has to prepare for college and we have to know the courses..." Cynthia's comments highlight how her child's grade shaped how she read and understood the homeschooling laws related to their homeschool practice (Table 14 outlines the age group of the children parents homeschooled.) Cynthia and Tiffany, who both homeschool their high-school-aged children, shared their homeschooling practices and discussed college informing their homeschooling practice in different ways. Further, Tricia and Alexis, who homeschooled elementary-aged children, and Chi who homeschooled a middle-school aged child, also considered college as they homeschooled, albeit in varied ways. This highlights how parents across age groups thought about college in either their homeschool goals or practices.

Table 14

Age Group of Homeschooled Children in Study

Age Group of Children	**Parents**
Elementary-school-aged	Latoya, Trevor, Tricia, Hazina, Gemini, Jamaica, Alexis, Nicole, Tiffany, Tasha, Vanessa
Middle-school-aged	Alice, Chi, Ben
High-school-aged	Cynthia, Tiffany

Tasha also commented that the way Illinois's homeschooling requirements are written allows for a potentially overwhelming freedom. When I asked how she felt when she decided to homeschool, she explained:

> Overwhelming and yet freeing. Overwhelming because in the state of Illinois homeschoolers are considered a private school. So, I don't have any curriculum I have to follow. I have to teach certain tenements in English. That's pretty much it though. So however I choose to teach that. Math, science, reading, it's all on me. So, that can be overwhelming because there isn't any, "OK, this is what you need to pick or do."

Tasha continued to note how in some states, particularly in the South, there is more "oversight" regarding what can be taught with state approval. She described that in Illinois "it's freeing in that it doesn't have that." This "freedom" allowed for homeschooling parents in these two states to have more control and decision-making when it comes to their homeschooling in practice. While Tasha sees homeschooling in Illinois as a freeing experience, Gemini commented: "I have way more freedom [homeschooling] but I know that your freedom has restrictions." Gemini did not feel completely "free" to homeschool in the way she wanted to and instead, at times, felt constrained by DPI's guidelines and homeschooling laws.

What Constitutes Homeschooling?

What constitutes an education is important to interrogate, especially given the debates on schooling versus education and the impact of each on Black people in the United States (McKinney de Royston, 2011; Patel, 2016; Shujaa,1994). As noted in the previous section, parents offered their children an expansive educational experience that incorporated a range of topics. While there is more "choice" within the required subjects given that parents can choose what curriculum, if any, they use, state laws outlined restrictions on how homeschooling parents could engage in community with other homeschoolers to learn. Illinois does not have a restriction; however, detailed in Wisconsin's homeschooling law is that "an instructional

program provided to more than one family unit does not constitute a home-based private educational program" (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2021). As Latoya described their homeschooling routine, she noted how her family learns about various topics with a group of other families every morning. In the afternoon, she homeschools one-on-one with her children, explaining:

> ...Because here in Wisconsin, the learning that we do in our group, it doesn't count towards our [required] 875 hours of homeschooling. So, it's just something that's kinda extracurricular, to keep my children around other children and expose them to just kinda different subjects and different people as teachers.

Latoya's partner, Trevor, also commented on the homeschooling laws as he described how learning with other families has been an "invaluable" part of their homeschooling experience. He stated, "They wouldn't even consider that homeschooling as far as the state definition. But that's what we need to be able to do. We need to be able to work in groups, you know what I mean?" Trevor notes the constraints in the homeschooling laws that would limit their engagement with others, a type of learning that is integral to their lives. Despite the fact that these "hours" would not count toward homeschooling, several parents in Wisconsin still participated in learning collectives and homeschooling co-ops to enhance and supplement their children's homeschooling experiences within the family unit. These parents felt free to homeschool in a way that aligned with their values and goals for education.

Alexis, however, described how this aspect of the homeschooling law limited her homeschooling practice. When describing what she needed in her homeschooling, she shared:

> I feel I could benefit from a co-op of some sort. I think that we could benefit from being a part of a co-op. I know in Wisconsin, I think they don't allow that. But I think that that would be really useful especially for Black families – like if I'm not able to teach one day, to just have my kids involved in a co-op where they are still learning and I can still work and then I can some days be there with them learning as well or teaching them and other kids as well...

While Alexis desired to homeschool in community with other Black families, she noted how it was not "allowed" in Wisconsin. These homeschooling laws constrained Alexis, and potentially others, by placing limits on what "counts" as homeschooling. She highlighted not only seeing value in homeschooling in community, but also brought up a tension: managing homeschooling and ensuring her children's learning as a working parent.

The homeschooling laws were recognized by the parents in this study; however, they still had "choices" in how to engage in homeschooling in their families and with others. Despite group learning experiences not counting towards the hours of homeschooling required by the state, several parents in the study participated in some form of homeschooling with other families, either in existing learning co-ops throughout their region or in homeschooling groups they created for themselves.

As discussed in the previous chapter, several parents had relationships with others and homeschooling communities of support that facilitated their decision to homeschool. Several of these parents shared how they knew other homeschoolers and relied on them for resources and support in their homeschooling practice as well (e.g. asking them for information about curricula, classes, and advice). A few parents also created and/or participated in homeschooling co-ops in their area in order to provide their children with an opportunity to learn with others.

Parents who participated in a homeschool co-op shared a variety of "teachers" for their children, including themselves, their partners, older siblings, grandparents, other homeschooling parents in co-ops, tutors, and coaches. While the other parents did not note any participation in a co-op, they shared how their partners, for example, would sometimes be involved in supporting their children's learning. Additionally, Alice noted how she hired one of her son's previous schoolteachers to support his learning as well.

Table 15

Homeschooling Collective Participation

	Participated in Homeschool Co-op, at present or in past[59]	**Never Participated in Homeschool Co-op**
Wisconsin	Latoya, Trevor, Tricia, Hazina, Tiffany.	Alice, Gemini, Alexis, Nicole, Jamaica.
Illinois	Cynthia, Vanessa, Chi, Tasha.	Ben.

Additionally, parents shared the many places that they go as part of their homeschooling. This included, but was not limited to, various spaces in their home, outside, libraries, parks, zoos, museums, sports clubs, community colleges and universities, nature centers, youth organizations, other homeschooling families' homes, conferences, parents' workplaces, children's extracurricular activities (e.g., karate, violin, ballet, skating, and taekwondo), different cities, states, and countries. Many discussed these places as sites of learning for their children. For example, many parents referenced the library as a resource to get materials and books to use in their home, as well as a space to meet with other homeschooling families or to attend events. Further, most parents emphasized in their homeschooling practice that learning happens everywhere – not just in their home. Parents often took the opportunity to turn everyday trips into a "whole lesson." Trips to the grocery store could include writing a list, setting a budget, interacting with the cashier, and paying for food, then going home to cook. These "life skills" were incorporated in several families homeschooling.

[59] Cynthia, Chi and Hazina spoke about their participation in homeschool co-ops in the past, but not currently. Either their children aged out of the homeschool co-op, they had philosophical and pedagogical differences in the homeschool co-op, or the homeschool co-op was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The others spoke about actively participating in a co-op.

Instructional Practices

A few parents who homeschooled in Wisconsin mentioned the number of hours that were required to teach in their homeschooling each year. The required hours for homeschooling also shaped how parents approached their daily instructional practices (as mentioned with the hours spent homeschooling in co-ops "not counting"). Further, Nicole mentioned the 875 hours of instruction needed in order to homeschool each year in Wisconsin and how, "that breaks down to like three hours a day. In my mind, I'm like, so what they doing with the with other five hours at school?" She seemingly saw the feasibility of homeschooling based upon the few hours she would need daily in order to reach the state's homeschool hours requirement. This seemed to shape not only her decision to homeschool, but also offered her a reference point as she figured out their homeschooling in practice. This requirement made homeschooling seem more possible since it was not the length of a traditional school day. That parents referenced their state's homeschooling laws when discussing their homeschooling practices illustrates how this particular context shapes their approach to homeschooling.

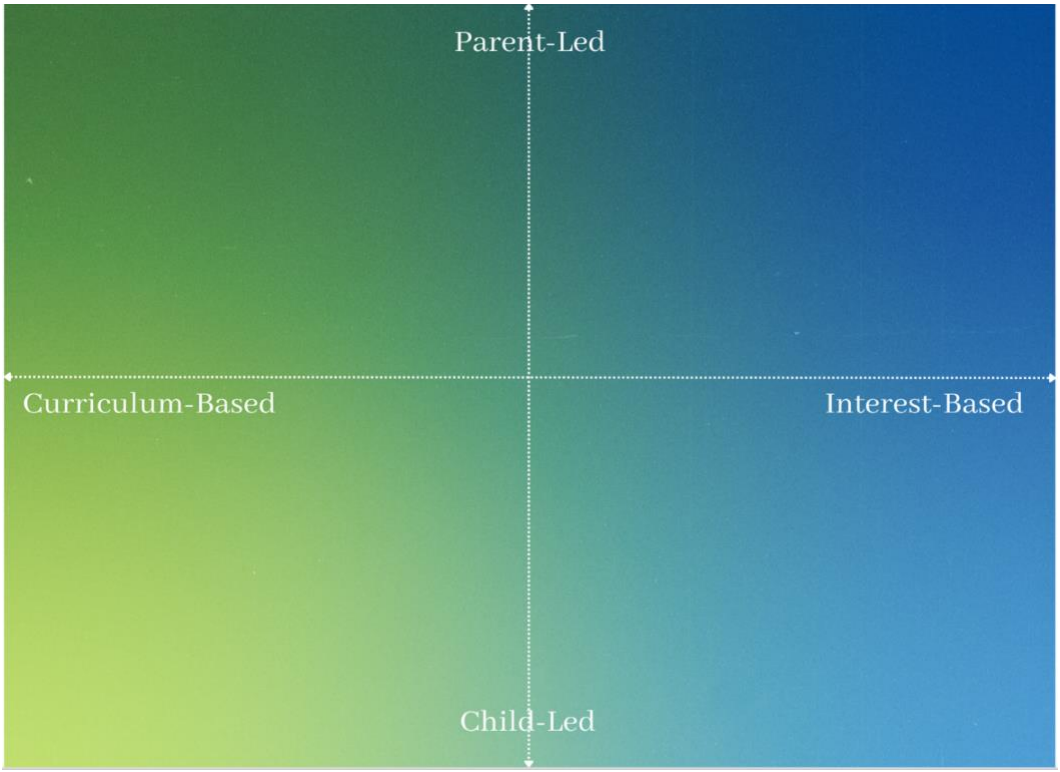
Pedagogical Approaches

Black parents' homeschooling practices are expansive – they include a vast range of philosophies, approaches, resources, and materials. I categorize Black parents' homeschooling practices broadly in four interrelated categories that exist on a spectrum. These categories include "parent-led," "child-led," "curriculum-based" and "interest-based" learning. Figure 4 depicts a relational quadrant that illustrates how homeschooling practices and approaches fall along a spectrum. Further, this figure emphasizes how families can be placed anywhere within this relational quadrant depending on how they approach and engage in homeschooling. This visual shows that parents' homeschooling practices were not stagnant: they could shift over time

and vary based on subject, child age, parents' goals, and/or parents' competing responsibilities. Families could be represented by one or multiple points on the visual depending on their practices. I did not use any statistical analysis to plot parents on this relational quadrant and instead utilize this visual to help understand the wide-ranging and continuously evolving homeschooling practices of Black parents. This categorization broadly captures their varied approaches to homeschooling and allows for a discussion of the particularities of each families' homeschooling practices (e.g. "child-led" for one family could mean something different for another).

Figure 4

Homeschool Practice Relational Quadrant



Note. Illustration of the relational quadrant that provides an overview of parents' homeschooling practices.

The vertical line represents the range of homeschooling practices that fall on the parent-led and child-led learning spectrum. For example, if a parent falls closer to the parent-led end of the spectrum, this indicates that the parent(s) were largely in charge of what, when, and how topics were taught in their homeschooling practice. On the other end of the spectrum is child-led learning, meaning that the child(ren) were mainly directing their learning with parent support. Based on what parents shared in interviews and focus groups, their homeschooling practices could fall anywhere on this line to indicate some combination of the two modes. The horizontal line represents the range of homeschooling practices that constitute curriculum-based and/or interest-based learning. Some parents shared closely following curricula or materials for teaching and learning while others shared learning about topics of interest. Curriculum-based learning typically followed a more sequence-based learning – dictated by a textbook or curriculum and set up by standards and guidelines for learning – while interest-based learning occurred more organically and was responsive to the family's changing interests. Parents' homeschooling practices could fall on either end of the spectrum or somewhere in between to highlight a combination of these approaches to learning. As mentioned, these approaches on both lines could vary based on different factors such as the subject area (e.g. curriculum-based learning with math, and interest-based learning with reading).

The four end points on this visual highlight the extreme ends of these learning approaches such as, for example, a homeschooling practice that utilized only parent-led learning or only interest-based learning. This was rarely the case in these parents' descriptions of their homeschooling experiences. In theory, parents' homeschooling practices could be mapped anywhere on this relational quadrant. For instance, a parent could be at the intersection of both lines, and this would mean that they described a balanced approach in their homeschooling that

included both parent-led and child-led learning as well as curriculum-based and interest-based learning. Or parents could utilize parent-led and curriculum-based learning – such as parents using textbooks and other standardized materials – and fall in the upper-left quadrant. In the lower-right quadrant would be parents who employ child-led learning. In the upper-right quadrant would be parents who utilize a curriculum based on their child's learning needs or preferences. For example, one parent commented that they incorporated more online-based learning given that their child preferred this type of learning over worksheets. In the upper-right quadrant would be parents who teach and learn based on their interest. For example, parents who utilized a Black- and African-centered approach to learning or taught life skills often did so based on their interests and goals for their children's learning.

As noted, Black parents shared a wide range of pedagogical practices that they utilized in their homeschooling. I noticed this range across and within the homeschooling families, indicating that individual families incorporated various learning practices. Further, homeschooling parents' curricular choices and instructional approaches worked in tandem with their goals. For example, a few parents envisioned their children going to college and thus focused more of their homeschooling on academics and extracurriculars. This goal shaped their instructional approach – focusing on teaching their children specific subjects needed for college admission – as well as their curricular choices – gathering curricula that would provide these academic learning experiences (these practices would fall in the upper-left quadrant of Figure 4). Other parents aimed for their children to be self-directed lovers of learning, and thus they followed their children's interests. This meant allowing children choice in their education while

parents acted as a guide, curating opportunities to enhance the learning experiences their children selected.[60]

Homeschooling in Practice

As discussed in the first findings chapter, Black parents shared various motivational factors that pushed and pulled them toward homeschooling. Some of these motivations were rooted in their dissatisfaction with schools and the constraints on learning. They also saw freedom in homeschooling because of their ability to approach teaching and learning differently. Parents saw various limitations on learning in schools, and these limitations as motivators subsequently shaped Black parents' homeschooling practices for the express purpose of offering their children a different and freeing learning experience. This was related to their goals to support their children's learning utilizing a variety of approaches. In addition to their goals, their individual and family circumstances also shaped their homeschool practice, as often times parents balanced multiple responsibilities in addition to homeschooling (Table 16 highlights focal homeschool parents' employment and marital status).

Table 16

Focal Homeschool Parents' Employment and Marital Status

Parent	Marital Status	Occupation	Employment Status
Latoya	Married	Stay-at-Home Parent	Homemaker
Tricia	Married	University Employee	Full-time
Alice	Married	College Employee & Graduate Student	Full-time
Gemini	Married	Office Employee	Part-time
Cynthia	Married	Stay-at-Home Parent	Retired
Vanessa	Single	Entrepreneur, Non-Profit, Graduate Student	Full-time

[60] It is important to note here that these two visions (college-bound education and self-directed learning) were not mutually exclusive and that this presented itself as a tension for parents who did not want to only center academic and curriculum-based learning in their homeschooling. While they desire and practice other ways of learning, they were challenged when thinking about if they were doing "enough" for their children to get into college.

In order to illuminate the varied approaches to homeschool, I use vignettes from the six focal parents: Cynthia, Vanessa, Gemini, Alice, Latoya, and Tricia. I constructed the focal parent vignettes from interviews, focus groups, and parents' homeschooling artifacts. I use these vignettes to present more insight into the daily instructional practices across a range of Black homeschooling families. I present these vignettes first to introduce the diverse homeschooling practices of the parents in this study.

Cynthia

Everyday Cynthia starts homeschooling her 15-year-old daughter at 7:45 am. She begins with a lecture because she "believe(s) in traditional [teaching] like I was taught." She engages in homeschooling practices that are similar to the "traditional" school teaching and learning approach but notes how "each day is different." Cynthia explained,

> Mondays is the day we have less academics, because she's got her violin coach... so we do a little bit of math and a little bit of reading and then she has violin... Mondays I want her to be ready for her violin coach, so she's supposed to practice and be prepared for violin... and then on Monday she skates... Tuesdays are the full day, where she has her math, biology, writing, civics, research or whatever that week that we have. Wednesdays is a little bit less than the Tuesday. Thursdays we have art, more civics, and in addition – she does her violin every day, too, and she skates on Wednesdays and ...Thursday. And on Thursdays I go over anything she has had trouble with earlier in the week. Friday is same thing... And then we get to have a little bit of something different on Fridays with her art. She'll do the reading portions of her art, background of like African art or Egyptian art and then she gets to do the project on Fridays.

Cynthia structured the week so that toward the end of the week there is a more "light day with academics," which "allows her to play catch up with any works that she's had trouble with in the prior week." They do most of their homeschooling in other areas of the house but will, "on a rare occasion" use the chalkboard in the basement "when a change of scenery is needed." She uses the basement mainly to store her teaching books, which she utilizes for their homeschooling curriculum.

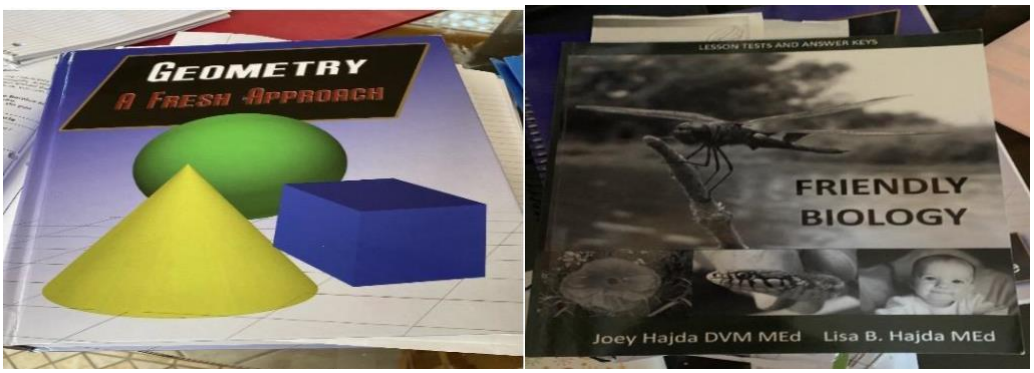


Image #1 Description: Cynthia's homeschooling artifacts. On the left is a photo of a math book used in their homeschooling, entitled "Geometry: A Fresh Approach." On the right is a photo of a science book used in their homeschooling, entitled "Friendly Biology."

Cynthia listed a range of subjects she taught in their homeschooling. While there were various topics they covered on any given day, Cynthia elaborated on how their "days are nearly identical with regards to how assignments are given. [Daughter] has a folder that has her assignments for the week. There is also a notebook that may have additional daily assignments. I typically give extra work if she has not understood, or she has not used her time wisely." Further she shared, "I explain in lecture and she's responsible for reading and taking her notes and work in the worksheets, so I'm typically done [teaching] by 10:30 and then she has to finish her assignments." She utilizes a "daily assignment sheet" that "has all of her subjects and whatever subject she has that day, she has the page number that she has to read, the problem she has to answer for each one so it's listed there, so she knows exactly what she has to do, so she has one for every day of the week." Cynthia led their homeschooling practice with the use of these daily assignment sheets. She noted how "everything has to be turned in at a certain time... because... it helps to get it done plus avoid being lazy and not turning it in... Just like in school I had... deadlines... and she has to learn how to turn things in on time as well." This structured their homeschooling practice around Cynthia's pre-planned schedule and assignments that she created. Further, Cynthia used an iPad "to record grades, research, and create cheat sheets" for

homeschooling. She organizes the assignments her daughter completes in a binder and checks to see if it is done.

Cynthia's goal for homeschooling is to support her daughter in passing the college entrance exams, and this also shaped the curriculum and instruction used in their homeschooling. Teaching the same subjects as schools and keeping track of this learning is important for Cynthia because her daughter "has to prepare for college." Cynthia's pedagogical practices can be categorized as mainly a parent-led and curriculum-based approach to learning.

Creating this rigorous academic learning schedule was not without challenges though. Cynthia shared her "panic" during the summer as she tried to find the "right textbooks to teach with." Finding a text that provided good examples was her biggest challenge each year and was extremely important for her homeschool practice. She explained,

> [Math & Science books] do a great job of explaining and it helps her. It helps me because I know a lot of things, but some things that I'm learning too in this process and it makes learning fun for her and teaching it for me, explaining it... You can have a book that doesn't explain it very well... It makes it a bad experience. I think a lot of it has to do with the material being presented and how it's presented.

The "right" textbooks for Cynthia are an important aspect of her homeschooling practice. Cynthia, whose homeschooling goal is to academically prepare her child for college, emphasized finding curricula and textbooks that would help her child learn various subjects. She found the multiple options and sole decision-making power over her curriculum challenging at times.

Cynthia noted another challenge "...being the mom and the teacher and it's like kind of like being taken advantage of sometimes... she doesn't take advantage of her [music teacher] nor her [sports coach], she'll do whatever they tell her. But being that I'm the mom and the teacher sometimes it's an issue." Cynthia felt that her roles as her mother and teacher created a unique set of challenges and resistance that she did not see from her child when interacting with other

teachers. Cynthia expanded on this challenge, noting how homeschooling had been an issue because of her child's "attitude" when she would push back on what she was being told to do. While Cynthia prioritized academic learning in her homeschooling, other parents emphasized their homeschooling to cultivate skills and qualities in their children.

Vanessa

In an ideal world, Vanessa would be world schooling[61] her seven-year-old son. When she can, Vanessa takes the opportunity to travel by car to the neighboring state of Illinois, taking their learning on the road with them. Road schooling, in other words, has felt like an introduction to world schooling. Vanessa wants her child "to get the full experience" of whatever state they are exploring. She dedicates more of her budget to support this type of learning, while being resourceful, utilizing free services and materials available at the library or online for other areas of learning. She explained, "when you're a single mom, it's just you. You have that one income, right...I have to split my income between our household necessities, things that we need for survival... and then trying to save for him. You know, so, it's hard, it's really hard..." While Vanessa likes the idea of traveling with her child, she acknowledges it being difficult as a working, single parent. She explained, "if you're a working parent and you're trying to homeschool, it's already hard in that element because you're trying to balance..." multiple responsibilities.

Vanessa highlighted her own unique set of challenges as a single parent homeschooling and working, sharing how it felt like an "extra step" because "...I don't have the person in the household where I can be like, 'Can you get the kids for ten minutes? I need to go take a bath,' you know?" She shared how being a single mother was an important and challenging part of her

[61] World schooling is the educational approach to learning that is grounded in experiencing and interacting with the world around you.

homeschooling as she tried to juggle various responsibilities and wearing “different hats” including the “disciplinarian,” “teacher” and “chef.” Part of this challenge was “trying to maintain the same attitude” with all the competing demands on her. She noted how, "as a single mom, I definitely think the personal time is needed, but I wouldn't be able to give advice on how you get that personal time, because I haven’t discovered that for myself.”

Juggling these responsibilities is not easy. However, Vanessa’s community holistically sees and supports her homeschooling endeavors by welcoming her child in the non-profit organization. At work, Vanessa can show her child another side of her, and her co-workers provide additional examples of career possibilities. She recognizes the various spaces they find themselves in as learning opportunities, which for part of their homeschooling included public school. Vanessa explained that on a typical day her son would be at school while she worked, and “then once we come home, I go over whatever it is that I think he’s supposed to know.” Having her son enrolled in school and volunteering at the school gave Vanessa a reference point because she “knew what the kids should be learning” which in turn shaped her homeschooling practice. She explained,

> that gave me a kind of much more of an idea of what I wanted my son to do. I basically do everything I think you would say the typical public-school educator would do or principal even would do. I create his curriculum. We discuss different topics. I ask him what he’s interested in. I’ve taken a number of different approaches with my son in trying to figure out how he learns or what he likes to learn about, and also the different teaching methods that work with him.

Vanessa describes her homeschooling as a continuous practice that considers both school learning and her son’s interests. Further, she notes how she utilizes a variety of approaches to learning, such as creating units for them to study in-depth. Vanessa tries to “figure out” how to engage him in learning in a way that centers him. She mentioned the evolution of their homeschooling since he was younger, starting with “more of a Montessori approach,” then

letting “him vocalize what he wants” to learn, and then learning more about African American history as something she wants him to learn. Vanessa’s homeschooling practices exhibit a combination of parent- and child-led as well as curriculum- and interest-based learning.

Image #2 Description: Two photographs of two Units that Vanessa developed and taught in her homeschooling. On the left is the Juneteenth Unit and on the right is the Frida Kahlo Unit.

In her homeschooling, Vanessa highlighted prominent Black historical figures for her son. She explained,

> I always try to remind my son, people like Thurgood Marshall and Malcolm X and Shirley Chisholm and Ida B. Wells and Mary McLeod Bethune, like all these different leaders, all these different ancestors that we have that come before us. And I always try to remind him of the amazing qualities that they each have... the integrity that they had, and then just try to put those little things together for him or help him to create those things for himself. So having mannerisms, good manners, right, etiquette is key. The way you carry yourself, your integrity...

Her approach to teaching Black history supported her cultivating these qualities in her child. This is the type of education that she wants for her son, and she sees homeschooling as the best way to provide this learning experience.

Vanessa has been able to learn alongside her child, exposing him to various topics and taking his lead to explore what they’re interested in learning. Vanessa’s homeschooling practices encompass a wide range of approaches and content, including both planned lessons and spontaneous activities. Vanessa “love[s] that homeschooling gives you so much freedom to do all those things,” and she is excited to see where their homeschooling journey takes them next.

Gemini

Around 8:30 am, Gemini typically starts homeschooling her four children – ages five, five, eight, and ten. They might begin with a "learning game" that focuses on letters or math or do "some kind of activity to get the day started." Having four children with different ages and learning needs shapes how their day starts. For example, her older children could start with "some type of spelling activity" independently while her younger children would do an activity with her. Through homeschooling, Gemini is able to support her children's learning needs and approach learning in a variety of ways. While Gemini leads her children's learning, she provides them with varied learning opportunities based on what they each are learning independently. For other topics, she usually does more group learning with her children. For example, with science they may all do an experiment together to learn, and she would give her older children some "math" or "vocabulary stuff so it's more advanced."

Image #3 Description: A photo of the circuit learning Gemini did with her children in homeschooling.

While she aims to have them learn in a group, when possible, she also meets their individual needs and tailors the learning for each of her children. She shared, "if I can keep them all together then I will 'cus it's just easier for me. I feel like there's a lot of dead time if I'm focused

on one." Sometimes Gemini "combine[s] lessons" for her older children depending on the subject and where they are in their learning. She explained how she reviews "Common Core standards" for her older children's grades and could "blend a lesson" for them both and build on those lessons based on the knowledge they demonstrate.

In addition to balancing the learning needs of all her children, Gemini also spoke about her desire to have a balanced approach in their homeschooling, one that did "not have a lot of structure, but structure enough to where they know" it is "learning mode." She does not "have a set end time" for their homeschooling, explaining "it could be longer, it could be shorter" depending on her children's energy. She elaborated:

> … if they're into something I'll just keep going like, if they're engaging, I can tell there's certain things that to them aren't really school and so they're just totally into it and that's when I try to find things that don't feel robotic, and that just feel like a natural kind of thing for them or it's not where they're feeling the rigidness. Like, I think kids in school can tell there's a pressure or like even just the boredness... just not as enthused, I guess. And so… one of my goals is to avoid where they feel like [exasperated sigh] 'what is this?' you know? Where they're not attentive and not into it.

Gemini's homeschooling practices utilizes a combination of learning approaches that she creates based on her children's needs and interests. As she noted her displeasure with the rigidity of schools, Gemini aims to have less structure in her own homeschooling practice.

Image #5 Description: Gemini shared a photo of two of her children outside gardening.

Further, Gemini emphasized how they "do stuff all throughout the year even like on the weekends" and how she "can basically turn anything into [*laughs*] some type of learning." Gemini doesn't always rely on a curriculum and instead sees learning opportunities throughout their day. She considered their homeschooling practice "kind of non-stop" because of the natural ways they can learn together. She continued to note her approach to homeschooling being a balance of structure and natural learning. She explained in their homeschooling there is,

> Some of the structure of regular school but we are definitely more hands on, outside type of people. So, it's trying to balance some of that stuff and not go too far one way or the other. And my kids learn very well naturally so, for me it's balancing having a lesson plan as opposed to being able to come up with a lesson plan on the spot because it's just so easy to do based on kind of the things that we're doing and just regular activities.

Gemini admitted that her homeschooling approach "probably isn't 100% like what deschooling[62] may look like or unschooling may look like," she highlighted the "process for me of coming out of this school systems and being familiar with them, knowing that this is what I want to do, this is what I don't want to do… So, when I say deschooling and unschooling, that's where I'm just talking about basically gearing their learning structures around what they need individually and collectively." Gemini saw unschooling as a contrast from "rigid" school practices. As she described her homeschooling practices, she notes this awareness and active refusal of those practices in her approach to homeschooling her children.

Gemini, however, also shared her own internal conflict and "being overly critical" of herself when she compared how she homeschools with what takes place in schools. She

[62] Deschooling is defined as "broader denunciation of the institutional life, a critique begun by Ivan Illich (1970). Illich encourages others to build meaningful lives for themselves outside of institutions — including education, medicine, and transportation — while also looking beyond the commodification of learning in capitalism. While homeschooling transplants the structure of schooling into the home, deschooling refers to an ideology and social critique and unschooling is an ideological reaction and a radical lifestyle shift." (He et al., 2015, pg. 392).

explained how she "always feels like they have to be doing something that looks structured." She elaborated on how she knows that:

> [my children] can learn naturally. I've seen 'em do it. But just constantly feeling like I have to be that same type of teacher that they had when they were in school... I'm constantly reminding myself of... doing a comparison of when they were at school making sure I'm setting the bar high for myself. Making sure they have what they need.

While Gemini has read about unschooling and viewed it as an educational approach that encourages children to learn more naturally, she still felt constrained when thinking about how schools approach learning in a more "structured" way. Gemini's pedagogical practices can be described as a combination of these parent- and child-led and curriculum- and interest-based learning. It seems that Gemini aspires to practice child- and interest-led learning; however, her hesitations about homeschooling push her to incorporate parent-led and curriculum-based learning as well. Despite her desire to be less structured, the comparisons with their previous school and her own schooling experiences sometimes shapes her ideas about learning and subsequently her homeschool practice. As she sets "the bar high" for herself as a homeschool educator, she attends to what her children need. Other parents also considered their children's needs, specifically as they learned in modern society as Black children.

Alice

Alice often wakes up early and heads to the living room to study and work from home. As a graduate student and professor, Alice's day consists of a variety of tasks – reading, online lecturing, office hours, and meetings. She shares her schedule with her partner and son so that they are all on the same page. Her schedule varies each day, and she often has time throughout the day to check in with her son as he learns. If he needs help and Alice is unavailable, he will usually figure it out on his own as he is a "good researcher," or he will ask Alice's partner for

help. She sits down with her 12-year-old son each night to go over what he is expected to do the next day in their homeschooling.

While Alice's son would typically be involved in various sports activities, those extracurriculars have taken a back seat due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Now, they spend more time outside in the yard and do other things to bond throughout the day. While Alice is up early studying and working, her son usually sleeps in until close to noon, gets ready for the day, and learns various topics until later in the evening. She outlines his learning schedule so it is easier for him to follow. She explained:

> I have roughly planned out his next few months of homeschool. On Sunday I fine-tune his schedule for the week, taking into consideration what he needs to re-do, and what he missed in the previous week. Our goal is for him to achieve at least an 80% on all work that he submits. Additionally, on Sunday evenings we sit down and talk about expectations for the week so that he is able to get a jump start to the week. [Son] works independently for the most part, and he will ask for help if he is not understanding something.

Alice utilized a homeschool planner online to keep track of their learning schedule. Alice's pedagogical practices can be understood as curriculum-based and parent-led mainly.

Image #5 Description: Alice shared a photo of her son's homeschool planner, which lists the various activities her son is expected to complete throughout the day.

The online platforms help Alice provide lessons, stay organized, and keep track of her son's learning. She noted how she can "see everything he works on and his scores" on this learning platform, which guides their conversations and how she can "give him additional help." She will supplement some of his online learning with textbooks or worksheets in order to "give him a little more variety."

Image #7 Description: Alice shared a photo of the learning dashboard on Study.com.

Alice described how they "primarily use Study.com" for some of their homeschooling learning. She explained "after trying many different curriculums [son] said he liked Study.com better because of the short videos and the easy layout." She also liked the "parental dashboard" that was "easy to navigate."

Alice engaged in "trial and error" as she started homeschooling. As she looked through various online programs and curriculums, she had concerns about the design of these programs as well as the lack of representation. She explained, "having a Black child, a Black boy, I wanna make sure- I'm looking at [chuckles] the curriculum through a totally different lens. Like, I

wanna make sure that he's getting what he needs to get and he sees himself represented in the curriculum and I didn't see a lot of that either."

Alice described it being challenging for her to "do it all." She explained, " Being mom, disciplinary, and trying to balance that with – still I want a healthy relationship with him..." As she shared having to repeat herself and asking her son, "can't you just do it?" that it was "frustrating, because I feel like I'm always kind of like the bad cop in the situation." Alice described the frustration that she felt having to fulfill multiple roles "day-to-day and day in and day out…" as she homeschooled. This tension while homeschooling at times made it feel like maintaining a healthy relationship with her child frustratingly difficult. However, Alice prioritized spending time with her son and appreciated the time they had together as they homeschooled.

Because of their relationship and homeschooling together, Alice can tell "that's what he enjoys" so she tries to support his learning in those areas. She also knows areas in which he is not particularly eager to learn, so she tries to use creative ways to incorporate topics like reading and writing into their homeschool day. In addition to English, Science, and Social Studies, Alice also follows her son's "passion," focusing on coding and other STEM activities where he can use his hands. She noted that "he has told me he wants to do more experiments, so I have added that to his lessons moving forward. On Fridays we will work on an experiment or project." She elaborated that by homeschooling, "I'm hoping that with [son], I'm able to really direct him in a way that he's able to do exactly what he's called to do and what he was created to do." This highlights how Alice also incorporates aspects of child-led and interest-based learning into their homeschooling.

With homeschooling, Alice is able to support her son's learning utilizing various teaching approaches that center him. Alice believed that "having a curriculum that is useful, like, he can connect the dots outside of- it's just not him doing work for the sake of work. I want him to be able to connect the dots with what he's learning to the real world." Alice aimed for his learning to be relatable to him. She elaborated,

> I want [child] to be confident. I want him to be a confident student in his subject matter...so no matter if he decides to go back to school or not, or go to college or not, or go into the workforce or not, I want him to be confident as a learner and understanding how he learns and understanding – taking that information on how he learns and being able to get information, process it, and implement it. That, to me, would be a success.

As her son approaches the end of his middle school years, Alice is starting to shift the way that she engages him in their homeschooling. She lets him know that answers "may not be in front of you like in previous years," emphasizing increased expectations as he matures. Alice "challenges" her son more in their learning, which is "forcing him to slow down and think through it" rather than her just saying, "you have to do this, that and the other." She aims to be his guide in his learning. Alice wanted learning that centered the current "real world" and could be relatable to her child. Further, when she spoke about culturally relevant learning, Alice often placed an emphasis on her child as a Black boy. Other parents highlighted the importance of Black-centered learning in their homeschool practice.

Latoya

Trevor, Latoya's partner, shared waking up early in the morning, going for a walk, picking up trash in front of the house, or going out into the garden, often with his children – ages five and seven – who were up too early. He would ask questions and they would tell each other stories "to get them thinking." In their single-income family, Trevor goes to work in the morning and Latoya spends the day engaging their children in homeschool activities throughout the day.

Latoya gives them some warm-up activity – usually spelling or math – to begin. They also have free time before they meet up with two other families in her homeschooling group.

In her homeschooling group, Latoya and two other homeschool moms take turns teaching different subjects. They teach various subjects each day and also take a weekly field trip. They rotate meeting in each other's homes, so sometimes the homeschool group meets at Latoya's house. Without this homeschooling group, Latoya said she would feel isolated since she homeschools and is a stay-at-home parent. Latoya spends the morning learning with her children and the two other families in their homeschooling group until lunch. After learning in their homeschooling collective, Latoya and her children each lunch together and then pivot to their individual homeschooling. They spend 2-3 hours in the afternoon covering different subjects. They engage some of the subjects just 2-3 times a week rather than focus on each subject every day. They might even cover a subject only weekly.

Latoya enjoyed homeschooling and noted few challenges. One challenge she had homeschooling was at times, having "to fight against an attitude or a crummy day, or just whatever different moods that one or both of my children might be in at the time." She noted how she approached homeschooling with her children and how that could make it "easier." She explained using various spaces in their home, "sitting and being close to them," and "allowing them to be comfortable and move around" as features of their homeschooling. She added that sometimes, her children "have their choice maybe even within a concept that I want to teach them. I think it all makes it better, it makes it easier for them to learn and more comfortable for them to learn, and they feel like they have a say in their learning which ultimately makes it easier for me." While Latoya seems to mainly use parent-led learning practices, she also includes elements of child-led and interest-based learning into their homeschooling practice.

Trevor described coming home from work and hanging out, playing games, and going for bike rides with his children. He expressed wanting to "take a load off" of Latoya – a stay-at-home, homeschooling parent – so he does activities with the children to give her a reprieve. Latoya shared that over dinner they do more "informal" learning, which could include math questions, trivia, or a pop quiz. After dinner they "chill." Their bedtime routine includes going over math facts or counting in another language, followed by a bedtime story which has been a staple in their home since her eldest was born.

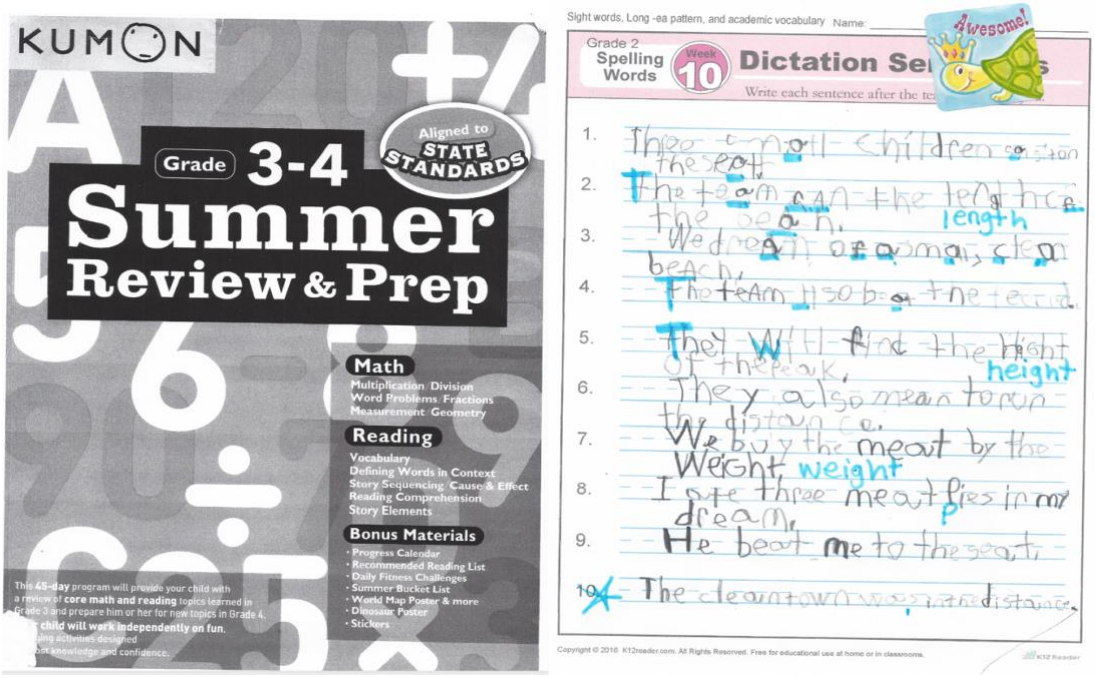


Image #8 Description: Latoya provided homeschooling artifacts that were representative of their summer homeschooling routine. This included a Kumon reading and math focused summer workbook, as well as a spelling worksheet.

For their family, learning continues throughout the year in different ways. Latoya shared how their learning during the summer involves neither their homeschooling collective nor her direct instruction; rather, they engage in different learning activities. While she does "not lead lessons, Latoya described providing "opportunities for them to review and keep abreast of the things they've learned and preview upcoming concepts." These summer learning opportunities

"tends to be less structured" than during the academic year, with "organic opportunities throughout the day to explore learning." This highlights how homeschooling practices can shift over the year for families. During the school year, Latoya utilizes more curriculum- and parent-led homeschooling, while during the summer their learning is more child-led and interest-based.

While Latoya shared various academic topics they learned in homeschool, she shared that she isn't focused on college right now – possibly because her children are younger. She explained how she "just want[s] them to kind of have the freedom to be who they are." Additionally, Trevor noted how in their homeschooling, their children learn "all of the basic traditional school stuff they teach, but they always put – it's African-centered. It's Black-centered." He explained:

> They just kind of put a little bit of Black folk and African American in it so that these kids can apply it to they self. It's not something outside of 'em…it's into them. So, every math lesson it's gon' be about some sort of Egyptian math or ... it could be just as simple as that whatever we counting, that it's five kids in a group, they gon' be Black kids in a group. All of that stuff makes a difference. That makes it Black-centered. All of the history is based on African American history, the geography and learning about Africa and all of that matters. The scientists is all Black scientists. I know they'll learn about all the other scientists as well but learning about yourself first is critical.

Latoya and Trevor both emphasized this African-centered approach in their lives and learning by "reintroducing those [Black-centered] concepts into our lineage." They both desired to incorporate an African-centered approach to their children's education and saw homeschooling as giving them the freedom to do so. They noted this approach being a central feature in their own homeschooling practice as well as with their homeschooling group.

As Latoya reflected on the impact homeschooling has had on their family, she shared, how their family has "a lot more control." She explained, "…and I don't mean control in the, like, domineering sense, but I just mean in having the like capacity or will of our children…" She noted how this isn't possible in a school because, "benchmarks are set by external people…

you gotta do homework and if they're not doing homework, they're facing all of these consequences that are set by someone else, who might not even- probably most likely doesn't know your child." With homeschooling, Latoya can create and set the standards for her children's learning. Trevor also emphasized the importance of setting your own standards in homeschooling as well. He explained the tension he experiences homeschooling, as well as his advice. For him "developing the patience" was challenging, as well as:

> Battling with yo urge with tryin' to keep up with traditional education, like standards and pace. If you are able to be patient and know that you kinda set the agenda, you don't have to try to keep up with anybody else, I think you can be extremely successful. But if you try to keep up with traditional schooling, I think you'll be disappointed. You might give up, because you would think, "oh, man, I'm not doing it. I'm not hittin it." But they not doing it at the traditional school either. They not hittin' any of these benchmarks that they set, so you doing better on the benchmarks that you set....

Refusing the standardized approach to learning in traditional schools was an important part of their family having more opportunities in their homeschool. Latoya noted how homeschooling "gives them [children] control over their own lives and autonomy in a lot of ways that being in the public school wouldn't allow them to do."

She shared a "pin of the Black Power fist with the word 'Free' on it" to represent her homeschooling. She explained,

> This embodies like our driving philosophy and idea behind homeschooling, is to give our children the chance to be free to be themselves, free to be *Black* in learning and that's just something that without homeschooling, like putting them in a traditional system, is something that they're denied often, so, I think that this really represents a lot of our homeschooling philosophy.

Her children being "fully who they are" was an important part of homeschooling. This freedom was related to Black-centered learning for Latoya. For other parents, Black-centered learning and college preparation were equally important in their homeschool practice and not mutually exclusive goals for homeschooling.

Tricia

During the traditional school year, Tricia types up the homeschooling schedule, detailing what activities and topics they will be engaging. She likes to use the schedule so her seven-year-old will know what she needs to do. The schedule is flexible though, so "if she doesn't get to it that day, she can do it another day." Like other families, Tricia homeschools her daughter all year-round; however, the schedule and structure of their homeschooling varies from the academic or traditional school year and the summer. While Tricia typically leads their learning, she also allows her daughter to follow her interests. During the summer, it is less "planned" and instead her daughter engages in activities she enjoys like reading and science.

During the "school year" they focus on a range of topics such as science, reading, writing, Black history, and math, as well as extracurricular activities that include languages, music, and dance. They also engage in a range of learning experiences, such as participating in a homeschooling collective that meets daily during the week, going on field trips (locally and in other cities), taking classes from an external learning program, and completing one-on-one instruction with books and workbooks. Tricia teaches topics to her daughter for various reasons – math because it is "just something you can use" and geography because it is important to "know where you are and how you're connected to a larger world."

Tricia's pedagogical practices shift over the year. During the summer, she allows for a more child-led and interest-based learning to take place, while during the school year she utilizes a more parent-led and curriculum-based approach to homeschooling.

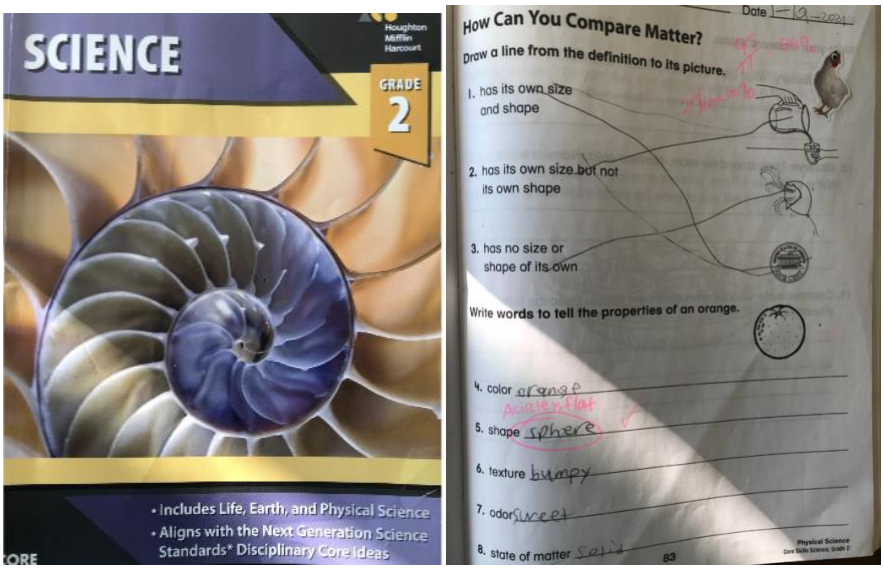


Image #9 Description: Tricia shared a photo of a science workbook they used in their homeschooling.

As a working homeschooler, Tricia shared "time" as a challenge in homeschooling. She shared the amount of time and labor that she puts into homeschooling her child on top of the household responsibilities placed on women and her full-time work. As she creates a rigorous academic learning environment for her daughter that includes a range of learning opportunities, Tricia emphasizes how it is hard for her to make time for her own work, despite preferring to focus on her career. Her responsibility homeschooling and the high academic expectations she has for homeschooling creates a major time investment for Tricia. Tricia described her goal is to provide her daughter with a high-quality learning experience and identified Black-centered learning as an aspect of this learning . She explained,

> I hope to accomplish her having a good quality education that values Black people. I hope it would be in terms of what she can get out of education would be the same as if she went to a good school... When I did enroll her in a private school it was with the expectation that it would get her where I want her to be [academically], even though I was still skeptical...the goal of K-12 is to prepare you for college, so I'm trying to prepare her for college. So that would be for any school, whether she was doing homeschool or not.

This wide range of learning experiences are important for Tricia whose goal is to send her daughter to college.

Further, Tricia noted their extracurriculars being a part of their learning although these activities did not "count" for homeschooling under state requirements. She described her daughter learning about "safety skills, African dance, and about Nigerian culture" for example. Although not required teaching, Black-centered learning was an important aspect of her homeschooling. Tricia shared how she took her child around town on a Black-centered field trip. She explained:

> We did this whole thing where we looked at basically some Black history in [city], so there was [historical Black landmark] here and then they even have this thing downtown... that has the names and like a little statue of Black Blues musicians, so we turned that into a whole lesson. But I try to make it where she can kind of see like the great things that Black people, like all the stuff we've done in everything.

She believed that this Black-centered learning impacted her daughter positively: "I think knowing about her history helps... I think it helps with her confidence because she knows she's not gonna feel bad... she's not gonna feel like she belongs to a group of people who hasn't done anything. She knows that Black people have done a lot." Tricia shared that incorporating this learning into her homeschooling was not always easy, given the lack of resources in their predominantly white suburb. She explained that for her, and other Black parents – homeschooling or not – "just have to do the extra work, you know, to make sure that Black children are learning what they are supposed to learn."

Engaging her daughter in critical thinking is an important part of homeschooling for Tricia. One way that she does this is by offering her daughter various books from which to choose, and the two then read and discuss the book:

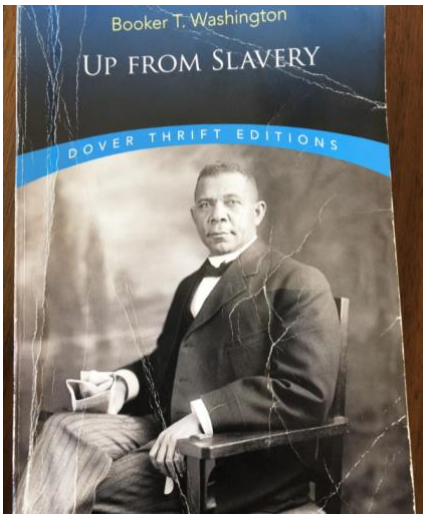


Image #10 Description: Tricia shared a photo of the book *Up From Slavery* by Booker T. Washington, which was a book her daughter chose to read together.

In their "thoughtful discussions" they would discuss a range of issues such as "manual labor, gender or women's roles, and how he critiques Black people..." These learning experiences made Tricia feel "proud," especially when her daughter makes a "profound" statement. Tricia also noted homeschooling being challenging at times because of their critical and conscious engagement. She explained, "it's like on the one hand... I want to encourage like independent thinking and standing up for yourself, but then to be the parent to have to experience that all the time, it's not easy." Although homeschooling is not easy and Tricia felt burdened to do it, she shared aspects of their homeschool practice that were most important to her. She explained how it wasn't "doing workbook stuff" that she enjoyed, but instead, "discovering a bunch of Black history in [city]." Tricia added, "not to minimize the work that I do with her, but to me the group part of homeschooling is really important and that's actually the part that I enjoy the most, because it's like being in community with other Black children and Black moms learning together." This collective learning with other Black families "define[d] the [homeschool] experience" for Tricia.

Homeschooling Practices & Challenges

As evident in the homeschooling routines of the six focal parents, Black homeschooling parents' practices include a range of educational philosophies that incorporate a combination of parent- and child-led learning and curriculum- and interest-based learning. While these vignettes do not represent every facet of their homeschool practice, they do offer insight into how Black families practice homeschooling. Further, they help illustrate other factors that shape their homeschooling, such as Alice's work and school schedule coupled with her son's pre-teen age enabling him to learn independently, and how Latoya's ability to stay at home with her children shaped the learning that she was able to do from when they woke up until when they went to sleep, as well as their participation in a homeschooling collective. Further, these vignettes illustrate a typical yet flexible structure to their homeschooling days, which vary based on their children's extracurricular activities, the subjects they are covering each week, their children's perceived engagement in the learning, the season, and parents' schedules, and their children's needs.

This was evident in all of the families' homeschooling practice. For example, both Nicole and Alexis (two non-focal parents), described how their children determined when their day started. Alexis noted how her daughter "gets up whenever her body tells her it's time to get up." Instead of waking their children up at a fixed time, Nicole and Alexis shape their homeschooling schedule based on their children's sleeping habits. They both deemed it important for their children to rest fully before starting the day. This in turn shapes how the rest of their day looks. Alexis shared how she didn't want her child to "dread" homeschooling and noted being "very flexible" with their schedules. Moreover, Hazina shared how their homeschooling routine evolved over time, but initially was like "school." Hazina described having set times dedicated to

each subject, like school, as "draining" for their family, so she switched to block scheduling instead. She felt "like with the block schedule it works for everyone because he's able to still get in the same amount of knowledge and information in but it's a little more relaxed and fun and it doesn't take as long so he doesn't feel so grumpy and tired by the end of the lesson day." Their new schedule did not start until around 11 each day and incorporated a range of subjects, including "workouts, exercise, yoga" and music. With this new schedule Hazina described their days as "a lot more relaxed than they were and I found that it helps a whole lot because he doesn't feel as strained and so he's taking in the information a lot quicker and a lot easier."

Homeschooling offered families more freedom in that parents could create learning schedules that aligned with their children's needs. Despite this flexibility that parents had and their motivations and goals to teach their children in a particular way, all parents shared some of the challenges they have encountered homeschooling. These challenges shaped their homeschooling practices in various ways. These homeschooling tensions took place in the Covid-19 pandemic, within their families as parents juggled other responsibilities and in the context of broader education and society and perceptions of learning and Black people.

Homeschooling Challenges in the Covid-19 Pandemic

A couple of parents noted the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic had on their homeschooling practice and their educational goals for their children. As I and other scholars have already noted, Black homeschoolers learn in many different places outside of the home. Thus the pandemic influenced Black families' homeschooling practices in distinct ways. Alexis and Hazina both noted how being in the house more had been difficult for them and their children. Hazina explained how they weren't "able to do what we normally would do…the little activities we would do outside the house are no longer accessible, so we're really stuck inside

now…" Alexis also commented that "it's also hard just being in the house all the time 'cus my kids like to be out. So, this past year has been really difficult, and it's been hard getting them to stay focused and wanna be in the house learning, because I think they wanna get out more and be around other kids and they just wanna do more."

Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic created a lot of uncertainty and precarity for Jamaica who was prompted to homeschool because of the pandemic. When talking about her goals for homeschooling, she shared, "…My [*chuckles*], my goal is never to be a long-term homeschool mom.... I only wanted to do it until first grade but a year later we're basically in the same spot with Covid. There's still just a lot of unknowns. And so, for me that's one thing I'm kind of worried about." Although Jamaica felt thrusted into homeschooling, she noted how she has been enjoying the experience and that she does not "want [child] to lose everything that I feel like he's learned. I don't want him to be lose that excitement for learning because he's gonna be sardined into a classroom." While she recognizes that there are "exceptional teachers" she has doubts about how her child would do if they went to traditional school.

Further, Ben, a working father who is also the primary homeschooling parent, shared his challenge with having to divide his time between working and homeschooling during the pandemic. He explained, "at times I'll get more clients and because I also need money to support us financially with my family and I also need to teach my kids, so I'll be like caught between a hard rock... like I have to make a very hard decision... " The economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic had been difficult on Ben, whose income decreased as a result of fewer clients seeking his services. While the pandemic prompted him to begin homeschooling and provided him with more time given his shift in hours, Ben at times had to choose between working and homeschooling. When an opportunity to take a client arose, he would have to make the hard

decision to reschedule lessons with his children in order to make money to support them. Ben was able to arrange homeschooling around his sporadic work schedule, and although he shared his children being adaptive and understanding, it was still hard for him to do.

Balancing it All

Further, a few parents described having to balance and navigate their roles as mothers and homeschool educators. Nicole, for example, shared that maintaining her relationship with her child and having patience during their homeschooling was sometimes a challenge for her. She explained, "when we flip that teacher-student role from mom-daughter, still having patience in that moment of – having to understand her process, too. That she's still maybe processin' this." Moreover, Jamaica shared her challenges with dividing her time and attention between two children with different educational needs and "making sure making sure there's something for each of them. She explained, "Like today the oldest one had Outschool[63] and the youngest one was just like 'well, I'm not getting any attention,' so I'm trying to find Outschool classes as well for him…so really just balancing the two grade levels… that's probably the hardest thing." Further, Ben strived to support his children's academic learning which was an important goal for homeschooling and noted challenges finding textbooks and other teaching materials aligned with his homeschooling vision. He shared that it was challenging for him to learn the content and deliver it to his children. In addition to homeschooling and working, Ben spent a lot of time developing his teaching methods based on advice and his own lessons learned through the process of homeschooling. He utilized his children's former classroom teachers, family relatives, and YouTube for teaching recommendations and support.

[63] Outschool is "an education platform that offers online classes for kids ages 3-18. Unlike traditional classes, Outschool classes let kids explore their interests with live Zoom classes taught by experienced, independent educators." (outschool.com)

Many described challenges related to parents' need to balance multiple responsibilities with homeschooling, illuminated in Alice's and Tricia's homeschooling in practice. Much of the research on Black homeschoolers, and homeschooling in general, highlights the role of mothers as home educators. This literature highlights the experiences of heterosexual, two-parent households with less attention to single parents who homeschool and other family dynamics in homeschooling. This study and recent others attest to the fact that single Black mothers also homeschool (Fields-Smith, 2020). As noted in the previous literature on Black homeschooling and apparent in this study, Black mothers are the primary if not sole homeschooling parent. Their role as homeschool educators creates an additional layer of labor on top of their roles as parents and, in many cases, as workers. In this study, many of the mothers homeschooled, despite their full-time employment status, pushing back against the perception that homeschoolers are stay-at-home parents who only homeschool. Although a few of the homeschooling parents in this study were stay-at-home parents, several of the mothers worked inside and/or outside of their homes as well. Further, a few parents in this study were single, highlighting how the household and parenting labor fell completely onto them.

Even in households that had two parents, most mothers shared being the only person homeschooling the children with little help from their partners. Some shared this as an unfair burden on them, others described it as a matter of fact. Alexis commented on trying to balance several things as she homeschooled. As a business owner, she found scheduling learning in their homeschooling as a challenge. She explained:

> Scheduling the time... I just have a lot on my plate right now. While I'm trying to run two businesses and then one of my children is still very, very young and needy, so this year [*laughs*] has been very challenging with homeschool trying to balance it all... I feel that, if my husband was a little more hands on, that can kind of alleviate some of the stress. If he could teach lessons here and there, but he's extremely busy as well so, it's just hard.

While Alexis explained her challenges homeschooling with other demands, she is the one who has to make compromises to balance the work, childcare, and homeschooling. Mothers often bear the invisible labor of household chores and child-rearing, which further competed for time and energy for several parents in this study. For Alexis, this meant shifting homeschooling lessons around meetings, errands, and other demands. Like many homeschoolers, Alexis adopted a learning schedule that works for their family's routine and needs. The various forms of labor that Alexis had to juggle made her question whether she could homeschool at all. She sometimes wondered if she should put her "child in school where someone can focus on her education more..." This challenge was felt by other parents in the study, too.

Comparison to Schools

While many parents saw the value departing from traditional schooling in how they approached and engaged in learning in homeschooling, at times, parents questioned if they were "doing enough." Several parents shared self-doubt and self-criticism as challenges as they homeschooled. At times, these challenges were rooted in the comparisons they drew between their homeschooling practices and traditional schooling. In Tasha's words, the challenge is "not comparing myself to what traditional schools is doing... concerned like, okay... do they have the social interactions?" While Tasha was confident in their social interactions in the neighborhood and as they participated in homeschooling co-ops and extracurriculars, she still noted how "people will ask" about their homeschooling. In addition to socialization, a few parents also discussed the stereotypes and misconceptions about learning while homeschooling. People have asked a few parents, "how are they going to learn?" which both implies that homeschooling cannot offer the same learning that schools can and conflates schooling with learning. As Gemini and Trevor noted this challenge with school comparisons and "battling with yo' urge with tryin'

to keep up with traditional education." Trevor highlighted that "success" in homeschooling is based on what goals families set for themselves. He pushed back against the idea of "keeping up" with schools and encouraged homeschooling parents to set their own pace and standards. By doing this, homeschooling parents can let go of some of the external pressures associated with traditional schools' metrics of "learning," which often are not "real learning."

Homeschooling created an opportunity for them to learn in ways that differed from how "learning" took place in schools. Tiffany noted how she "didn't want to put [child] back into the school system," and how that was "scarier" for her and made her "nervous," even though she had great familiarity with traditional educational institutions. Tiffany emphasized her schooling experiences and how it shaped how she thought about education. Additionally, her schooling experiences afforded her with insight into how things work in the educational system. While she acknowledged her educational experiences assisting her in navigating these institutions, she also recognized the constraints that this sometimes placed on her homeschooling practice. A few parents also noted societal perceptions of homeschooling creating the metric of success as how well their children will fare in the "real world." Like Gemini, Tiffany wanted to learn more naturally and be "free-spirited" when it came to educating her children at home, but she also felt confined by the boxes that the traditional educational system puts on the definition of learning.

Chi also shared her challenges homeschooling that stemmed from the external pressures of performing and being "prepared" for the larger society. She explained how her "own insecurities and uncertainty about what I'm doing is the biggest challenge...feeling like if this doesn't pan out, I basically ruined this child's life for the sake of trying this thing..." She commented on their progression through a curriculum and how their pace created self-doubt in how she approached homeschooling. She elaborated:

> ...In those moments of self-doubt... I have to check the ways in which that can creep into like my language... And then it comes out when I'm like, "oh, you haven't been doing this or that." ... the ways that I feel stressed about whether or not they're prepared for the realities of the education system or whatever. Like are they prepared for college? Are they going to get into a good college? That's the hardest thing for me.

Chi's awareness of her insecurities and how they show up in her homeschooling practices illustrates the pressure to perform schooling in ways that are familiar and valued in broader society. While some parents expressed these concerns generally for their children, few parents connected these concerns to being Black and homeschooling. Similarly, Tiffany shared her concerns about how their homeschooling practices and learning would translate to other institutions. These concerns shaped how she approached homeschooling her child. She explained:

> …I feel like I have to really come up with a grade. So, in homeschooling, you can have like a transcript that's like a descriptive transcript, where you're just explaining what this child covered over this semester in this class. And that can be justifiable for a credit, half a credit. And it could not be graded, like, you could not have a grade. And I feel like a lot of families do do that. I feel like when it comes down to my child being Black and applying to college, I need a grade to show like, if I just wrote out a paragraph of like she did this wonderful study, and dadadadadada, like, "access denied" [*chuckles*]... so I feel like we have to – sometimes I want to be more loose. Not loose as in easier, but like more free-spirited with certain things, but I have to be a little bit more structured and rigid. And that's been a battle... I'm like, she's my first one... I don't want to negatively impact her getting accepted into schools.

While a couple of parents highlighted the conflation between schooling and learning and how this conflation imposed on their homeschooling practice, Tiffany highlighted how being Black also plays a role in this dynamic. Her child's identity as Black – in an anti-Black society – creates another layer of tension and consideration for their homeschooling. She shared how she wants to be more "free" with certain aspects of the learning but that she has to be more "structured and rigid."

While studies on Black homeschooling emphasize how their homeschooling practices do not differ in rigidity or structure compared to others', fewer studies highlight the nuanced reasons that can inform Black homeschooling parents' "choice" to be rigid and structured (McDowell et al., 2000). The "bondage" that some Black parents experience, described by McDowell et al (2000) highlights how homeschooling practices can be informed by external oppressive structures and neoliberal educational contexts that emphasize grades and competitiveness for college. Of course, this "bondage" is racialized. While homeschooling parents engage in learning practices that uplift a more expansive definition of learning and decenter schooling, some still feel pressure to conform to schooling practices. They aim to give their Black children a "good education" with the hopes that this will positively shape their life outcomes, namely getting into a "good" college. Further, Tiffany highlighted how being a Black homeschooling family creates a different set of standards and pressure than that of white homeschoolers:

> I think the other thing too is being.... not of many Black families that are homeschooling, we do feel this... overwhelming pressure that, [*sigh*] how do I word this. When we just look at apples to oranges from white to Black, I know that my kids have to do more... than the white kid that's homeschooling in our group... I feel like we have to- we can't do what Johnny can do and get away with it. I guess that's the best way to put it. So, it's like, I need you to up your game for your workload or whatever you're doing because there's higher expectations of us or it's just harder. It's harder and it's harder in the world for Blacks still to this day... and it does influence our homeschooling, at least for us, maybe not for other families, but it definitely does influence like how we homeschool to some degree.

Tiffany explained how being Black shapes their homeschooling practice given that societal standards for Black people are different than for others in society. Although homeschooling offers Black parents the ability to incorporate a wide range teaching and learning approaches into their practice, Tiffany shared feeling like she has to conform to particular teaching practices

because of anti-Black racism that simultaneously demands more of Black people and devalues Black people no matter what they accomplish.

Similarly, Chi saw homeschooling as a way to "free" her child and also described the tensions that she faced with homeschooling due to societal constraints:

> I'm like, "[child] I don't have a great plan, but we can't afford to fail, right? Like, we can't afford to fail. So, if you want to do homeschooling, you have to buy in, because I'm still working full-time, I still have to pay all the bills, you have to be intrinsically motivated, you have to get up, move, you have to do your math." And we still have those conversations, where I'm like… "are you going to waste your advantage, or are you going to keep pushing? Because you feel like the biggest fish in the pond, but there are bigger ponds out here..." ...I don't manage [child]'s schedule or anything like that. I'm like you have to figure it out. You have to understand that... this is just as much your responsibility as it is mine, right. Like, [stammers].... I think there can be a lot of pressure where it's like, if you don't do well, then everyone's gonna think that I didn't do what I was supposed to do, you know? And everyone is gonna say that I didn't homeschool you. But I'm like, this is less about me being able to say that you were successful and more about me knowing that like you did this, like you handled this. I gave you the things that you needed... knowing that no matter what happens in life, you know where to find tools and how to assist yourself to succeed. That's what I really need to teach you, because that is the actual thing that's going to carry you through...

As Chi shared her experiences homeschooling, she highlighted the competitiveness of getting into an Ivy League school and the reality of Black people "working twice as hard for half as much." Chi's homeschooling approach involves having her child be responsible and self-directed in their learning. While Chi seemed to be attracted to this way of homeschooling, as a working single parent she also needed her middle-school-aged child to take more ownership in their learning. In the excerpt printed above, Chi expressed concerns regarding society's scrutiny on Black people's parenting and seemingly felt apprehensive if her child did not appear to "do well" in their homeschooling.

Discussion

These six vignettes from Cynthia, Vanessa, Gemini, Alice, Latoya, and Tricia—as well as the data from non-focal families- underscore the various goals that parents had for

homeschooling their children and how they aimed to reach these goals via their homeschooling practices. They display the heterogeneity of Black families' homeschooling practices through detailing what their homeschooling routines entail as well as how they approach teaching and learning with their children.

Homeschooling as a broad umbrella term encompasses a wide range of practices and approaches to instruction. Some view "school-at-home" as a typical homeschooling approach that many homeschoolers utilize. This "traditional" or "school-at-home" approach incorporates parent-led learning as well as curriculum-based learning as central pedagogical practices. Very few of the parents in this study only took the "school-at-home" approach in their homeschooling, instead using both practices that resembled traditional schooling and others that schools lack. "Unschooling" differs from the "school-at-home" approach to learning by uplifting everyday life experiences as learning opportunities. Further, these learning experiences are "ones that the children choose and therefore their abilities, interests and learning styles are centered" (Gray & Riley, 2009). The "unschooling" approach to homeschooling incorporates child-led and interest-based learning, falling at the opposite end of the spectrum as the "school-at-home" approach. While some parents utilized one of these approaches more than the other, it is important to emphasize the variability in their homeschooling practices and the factors that shape those practices. Many of the parents in the study described a more eclectic approach to homeschooling, which combined homeschooling approaches. Labeling parents' homeschooling practices as either a "school-at-home" (or parent-led/curriculum-based) or an "unschooling" (child-led/interest-based) approach simplifies their complex practice of homeschooling. The visual I created aims to uplift the varied and unique ways that parents homeschool not just across families, but within families as well.

All of the focal parents described leading their child's learning, particularly through subject areas, activities, and curricula. With the exception of Cynthia, the other focal parents described how they allow their children to lead their learning through picking topics for study or providing relevant learning opportunities for them based on their interests. For example, Vanessa tailored their learning based on what her son wanted to learn. Gemini also practiced this tailoring while also factoring in her children's unique learning needs. Tasha, a non-focal parent, responded to what a typical day looks like for her family as she homeschooled with "there isn't [*brief pause*] a such thing [*laughs*] for me." She explained, "there isn't, because I am more of a unschooler-homeschooler, so I don't have a set calendar like… every day is a new adventure…" Tasha emphasized the children taking the lead in how and what they want to learn. Her role in this learning is to provide additional instruction by relating different content to their interests. Tasha encapsulated the practice when she stated, "to me, unschooling is really having an overall vision of how education impacts everything in your life and therefore how to include it in everything in your life."

Parents who described a more parent-led and curriculum-based approach in their homeschooling had goals of high academic performance and college admission for their children. Both Cynthia and Tricia shared their college goals for their children, and they emphasized their parent-led and curriculum-based homeschooling practices as strategies to ensure their children meet this goal. Ben, for example, shared how he utilized a school syllabus to lead homeschooling instruction because he was concerned with supporting their continued academic learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. When discussing the topics he taught and why, Ben explained, "I've been like following the school curriculum and I have the lesson plans from the teacher, so I've been doing different topics according to the syllabus." Relying on

resources from teachers shaped his approach to homeschooling. Similarly, because of their desire for their children to be college-bound, Cynthia and Tricia focused on rigorous academic learning that was aligned with school instruction. What set Tricia apart from Ben and Cynthia is that Tricia prioritized Black history in their learning, which constitutes a departure from learning in schools. This curricular choice stems from her desire for her daughter to have an education that "values Black people."

For some parents (8 out of 15), teaching Black-centered material was a central motivator while for others it was just one of several reasons why they wanted to homeschool. Indeed, 11 of 15 described practicing this type of teaching. Curricular relevance, typically related to teaching Black history and culture, was one of various reasons why some parents in this study wanted to homeschool. This aligns with what has already been discussed in the literature on Black homeschooling. In my study, a little over half of the parents shared concerns about schools' "whitewashed" or wholly absent Black history and were against the Eurocentric miseducation that supported white supremacist narratives and beliefs. This teaching in school was an explicit motivation for a few parents to homeschool. Others were motivated to homeschool because they viewed homeschooling as an opportunity to create a learning experience that affirmed their Black children through having them represented in the material, teaching expansively about Black people, and fostering positive Black identity through this teaching.

Parents utilized this approach based on their own interests and goals for their children's learning experiences. Latoya, Trevor, Hazina, Alice, Nicole, Alexis, and Vanessa all discussed the absence of Black-centered learning in schools and their ability to provide this learning in their homeschooling. Tricia, Jamaica, and Tiffany on the other hand shared more of their displeasure with schools, particularly as it related to the violence that is done against Black

children in the form of low expectations and supports for them to flourish in school. Gemini did not share these same concerns, but she spoke about having an African- and Black-centered focus in their homeschooling practice so her children would see themselves represented. Parents shared the benefits of having a Black-centered approach to homeschooling: their children would see themselves in their learning, understand Blackness to be expansive, and be able to connect this all to their themselves, their family, and community.

Conclusion

The findings from this chapter contribute to the literature on Black homeschooling families and their pedagogical practices. I discussed parents' pedagogical practices in the context of their goals for homeschooling, the homeschooling laws in their state, and the challenges they face homeschooling. Further, I noted the various factors in their lives that also shape their homeschooling practices. This context contributes to the literature by providing a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of the various factors that shape parents' homeschooling practices. For instance, this chapter detailed the labor of Black mothers in particular – including single Black mothers – and their experiences as parents, homeschool educators, and sometimes workers. All parents experienced challenges related to their homeschool practice. These tensions existed within their families (e.g. competing demands and responsibilities, taking on all of the homeschool labor, and maintaining relationships with their children) which in turn shaped how they engaged in homeschooling. While homeschooling parents were able to approach and engage in homeschooling that worked for their individual families, at times, parents were challenged with perceptions of learning. It is important to discuss the visions, practices, and challenges of Black homeschooling families in order to understand what they desire for their children's education, how they aim to provide their children with this education, and what hinders the

fulfillment of their goals. Recognizing the challenges and tensions that Black families face can help shift policies and practices to support their learning endeavors. Further, uplifting what parents center as important in their practice and how they sustain their homeschooling in spite of challenges can contribute to our understanding of what Black families view as a "good education."

Moreover, discussing homeschooling practices in relation to parent-led, child-led, curriculum-based, and interest-based learning allows us to understand education in more expansive ways. For example, the parents in my study also recognized that they, too, learned as they homeschooled. They learned how to homeschool, what worked for their family's routine, and what materials, curricula, styles were appropriate for their children. They also learned more about their children and more about themselves. This newfound knowledge shaped some parents' evolution in their homeschool practices. Moreover, parents gained knowledge as they created lessons. A few parents also acknowledged how their children teach them, particularly about technology, coding, and animation. Parents learning through homeschooling uplifts the idea that both young people and adults are learners, that everyone is a teacher. Some families are learning in community, prioritizing relationships over academics which in turn strengthens their academic learning.

While some parents' practices demonstrate parent-led and curriculum-based homeschooling practices that resembled traditional schooling, other parents created multiple diverse learning experiences – from utilizing African-centered pedagogy to "unschooling" – which demonstrates the ways that homeschooling can offer a more liberatory education by disrupting normative schooling practices. These practices were informed by parents' goals for their children's education, as well as societal pressures to perform and conform to notions of

academic achievement and success. While some parents' practices deviated from these practices, offering their children a more "free" learning experience, a few parents shared feeling constrained to what educational institutions value, even though they were "detached" from these institutions as they homeschooled. This constraint was further exacerbated by raising and educating Black children in a racialized, neoliberal system. These moments of learning outside of conventional school logics and in community-based educational spaces are critical to uplift because they provide insight into how to create liberatory learning practices. These small-scale acts of resistance can inspire educational revolution.

Chapter 5: Young Black Homeschoolers' Perspectives on Learning

Scholars have discussed the principles of liberatory education for decades, particularly as it relates to transforming our current society (Abioye, 2019; Freire, 1970; Hill, 1986; hooks, 1994). Many are adamant that this type of education cannot take place within the confines of traditional schooling because of its inherent oppression and antiblackness (Martin et al., 2019; Woodson, 1933). As noted in the conceptual framework of this dissertation, Black families throughout history have studied, organized, and searched for liberation through education. Scholars agree that liberatory education or pedagogy encompasses raising the political and critical consciousnesses of young people and fostering an awareness that they can transform themselves and their communities (Friere, 1970). This mode of education can incorporate relationship- and emotion-centered pedagogy as well as culturally affirming and sustaining pedagogy (Castillo-Montyoa et al., 2019). Further, "liberation education" and "liberation schools" often emphasize teaching Black history and culture as well as supporting Black youth's academic success in mathematics and literacy (Abioye, 2019; Hills, 1986; Martin et al., 2019). While liberatory education has been conceptualized and practiced throughout time and space by Black communities, few studies center how Black youth understand their education and imagine liberatory futures for themselves despite antiblackness (Coles, 2020, 2021; Griffin & Turner, 2021).

Most of the educational scholarship on children and youth focuses on their educational outcomes while their perspectives on learning are often overlooked. Even though there have been calls for more youth participation in decision-making within schools by youth, teachers and researchers, youth are generally pushed to the margins and excluded from discussions related to their education. Creating space for young people to be included in the educational experiences

purportedly designed to serve them is critical; therefore, this topic is of growing interest in both research and practice (Dolan et al., 2015). There is growing scholarship that documents the experiences of Black young people in school, including how school and community-based educators strive to include these students in their decision-making (Warren & Marciano, 2018; Wasserberg, 2018). In homeschooling research, however, there remains a dearth of studies that incorporate young peoples' perspectives.

Scholarship that examines the experiences of homeschool youth has remained tied to the logic of schools. Some studies have focused on their academic performance, socialization, social behavior, and social skills, utilizing quantitative methods that survey youth or their parents (Medlin, 2006, 2013; Ray, 2010). Such scholarship seems to operate under the assumption that homeschool youth must validate homeschooling as a credible educational option and that homeschool youth are missing out on socialization opportunities that school students receive. Further, this scant research is limited to white homeschoolers (Medlin, 2006). The research that does include Black homeschooled children, focuses on their critiques of schools and their role in their family's decision to homeschool (Puga, 2019).

The research on Black homeschooling has paid much less attention to the experiences of Black homeschool youth and their perspectives on education. The homeschooling research that includes Black homeschooled children focuses on their "academic achievement" in relation to their public-school counterparts (Ray, 2015). This research on Black homeschoolers centers notions of "achievement" that are connected to an inequitable, disparate, and racist traditional schooling system. We need to expand Black homeschooling research beyond attention to test scores as a primary measure of academic achievement. We need to include and center Black homeschool youth's everyday experiences and reflections on learning outside of traditional

schooling. Uplifting Black homeschool youths' perspectives on their homeschooling experiences offers families insight into how they can better support their children's learning at home and in community. These perspectives can also inform practices in other educational spaces such as community-based educational organizations and schools. Further, the perspectives of Black homeschool youth are vital to imagining possibilities outside the constraints of K-12 schooling.

In this chapter, I focus on Black youths' descriptions of and experiences with homeschooling (see Table 17 for youth demographics). These findings are based upon an analysis of interviews with seven Black homeschooled youth[64] and their illustrations, journal entries, and photos they used to document their homeschool experiences. I argue that homeschooling is a site of liberatory imagination and possibility for youth despite the constraints placed on them in their homeschooling. I find that homeschooling for these Black youth is a positive educational experience that affirms them as learners and offers them more freedom in their learning, especially in comparison to traditional schooling. Some youth, however, pushed the bounds of their homeschooling as they shared desires for even fewer constraints and more freedom. For a few of these youth, Black-centered learning was an important aspect of their education. By centering their experiences, we can see homeschooling for Black youth as a potential site of liberatory learning and understand how Black homeschool youth can guide others toward more liberated learning.

First, I provide background information regarding the who, where, and what of these youth's homeschooling experiences. This first part of the chapter will utilize youths' interviews and homeschooling artifacts (pictures, illustrations, and writings) to illustrate their homeschooling in practice.

[64] See Methods Chapter for full description of the youth in this study.

Table 17

Youth Demographics

	Age	Racial Identity	Gender	Length of Homeschool	Attended School?
Alexander	7	Other (African American)	Boy	5 years	Yes
Maggie	7	Dark Brown & Black	Girl	3 years	Yes
Kelvin	8	Mixed, white/brown & African American	Boy	1 year	Yes
Unknown	8	African American	Boy	2, 3, 5 years[65]	Yes
Keke	10	Biracial, white/Black & Black	Girl	1 year	Yes
Joshua	13	Black	Boy	1 year	Yes
Natasha	15	Black	Girl	10 years	No

Then, I unpack their experiences with and perceptions of homeschooling utilizing composite narratives (Willis, 2019). As detailed in the methods chapter, composite narratives are single narratives, comprised based on mixed accounts from research participants, that are crafted to represent interview data. These composite narratives illustrate their complex experiences homeschooling and also help ensure their confidentiality. Thus, I do not use their pseudonyms in the presentation of these research findings. Instead, I use three composite narratives to highlight their experiences with and perceptions of schools, their likes and dislikes about homeschooling, and how they understand their homeschooling experiences. After each composite narrative, I provide an analysis related to the key features of that homeschooler type. I end with a discussion of how understanding their experiences can expand the possibilities for creating liberatory educational spaces for Black youth.

[65]I honor the words shared by young people. This is how this young person described how long they've been homeschooling. Their parents' demographic information and interview confirms that they have been homeschooling for three years.

Youths' Homeschooling Experiences

The homeschool youth in this study described their experiences learning at home in relation to with whom, where, and what they homeschool.

With Whom and Where Youth Homeschool

All the young people described homeschooling as primarily occurring with their mothers, with an occasional "sub" that was a father or an uncle. One youth commented on how their mom "teaches me, and my dad kind of just does nothing." A few mentioned their siblings as they shared about their homeschooling. Only a couple of young people shared about homeschooling with other children and mothers in a homeschooling group. Further, a couple of young people referenced learning in their homeschooling from an adult outside of their family (e.g., a coach or tutor). As noted in the literature on Black homeschoolers and mentioned previously in this dissertation, mothers are often responsible for homeschooling their children. Moreover, the scant literature on Black families' homeschooling practices notes Black homeschooling children learning in other spaces with other adults, such as in homeschooling collectives and other educational programs (Mazama, 2016). In Image #1, a Black homeschool youth in this study drew a picture of them homeschooling,[66] which included other children and another mother:

Image #1 Description: A homeschool youth drew themselves learning with other children in a homeschooling group. Someone else's mother is teaching the group about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

[66] In the warm-up activities during the first interviews with youth, I asked them to draw a picture of themselves homeschooling. This warm-up elicited a variety of responses and helped me learn what they thought about as their homeschooling.

Additionally, all youth referenced their homeschooling taking place at home. Some youth shared sitting at a desk or working at a table during their homeschooling, as illustrated in the drawings created by two homeschooled youth (Images #2 and #3 below). One homeschooled youth described their drawing (Image #2), sharing, “this is me and this is a chair, and this is my workbook, and this is a table. And I'm sitting on the chair doing work.”

Image #2 Description: A homeschooled youth drew themselves learning at a desk working on math from their folder.

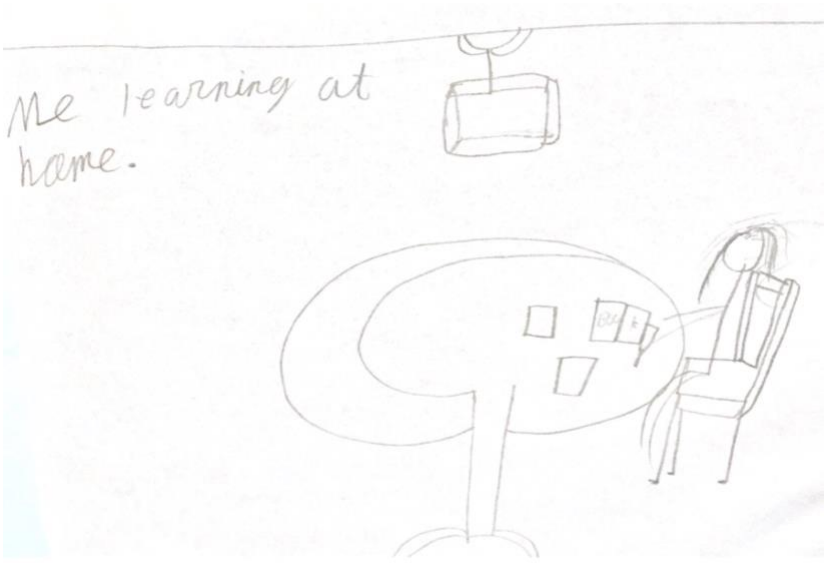


Image #3 Description: Another homeschooled youth drew a picture of themselves learning at home, in response to a drawing prompt they were given for their homeschool project.

Most youth, however, shared that they homeschool all over their homes. One commented how they homeschool "everywhere, except for the basement." A couple of youth described having a dedicated space in their home for learning. In Image #4 below, a third youth drew a picture of themselves in their "learning room." They described their drawing:

> This is the table that I sit at. And that's my seat right here... Right here what we call the craft table... under my and my mom's chairs we have these little crates, and it has all our stuff in it... My math book, my notebooks. My reading books, my spelling, a bunch of folders, a lot of folders, my daily planner and that's about it.

Image #4 Description: A homeschooled youth drew themselves in their "learning room."

While home was a central and important aspect of their homeschooling, they also described going outside, to their extracurricular activities, farms, museums, zoo, nature sites, other cities, states, countries, and more. One youth described going "to the caves" and seeing "horses for some field trips." Youth documented their homeschooling experiences outside of the

home in photos and drawings. Some took pictures of animals at the zoo (images not included). Another youth drew a picture of themselves taking a picture of a gorilla on a field trip:

Image #6 Description: A homeschooled youth drew a picture of themselves taking a picture of a gorilla at the zoo (as described in the handwritten caption, which reads, “Me taking a picture of a gorrolo”).

The young homeschoolers in this study took photos, drew pictures, and wrote about with whom and where they homeschool. As evident in their homeschooling artifacts and interviews, these young people learned in a variety of spaces, typically with their mother, and occasionally with others. Many youth also took photos of their various activities and diverse settings in which they learned, including farms, gardens, playgrounds, and their neighborhood. I discuss these activities in greater detail in the following section.

Homeschool Activities

As discussed in the previous chapter, the homeschooling parents in this study described a wide and diverse range of learning activities they curate for their children. The homeschooled youth also shared various activities that comprise their homeschooling. One youth shared, “We read. We do- we write. We do spelling. We do math lessons... and a whole bunch of other stuff

and more stuff and more stuff...” For this youth, the learning activities were too many to list by name. All youth shared the topics that they learned in their homeschooling, which could include a broader subject area, a specific topic within a subject, a person, or a concept. Table 18 below illustrates all of the topics that youth mentioned engaging in homeschooling.

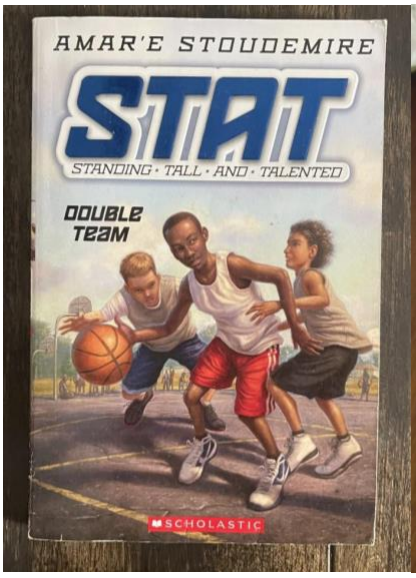
Table 18

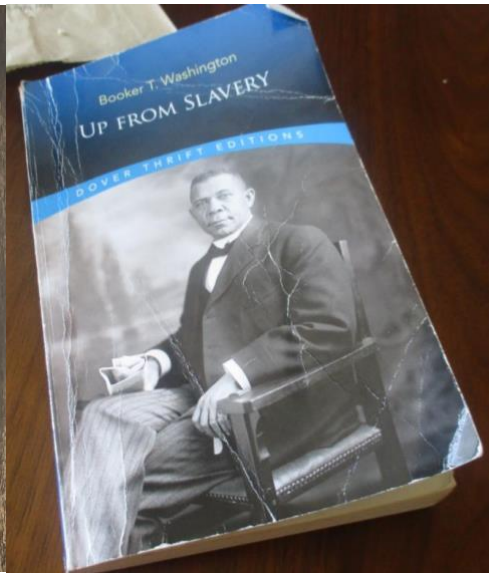
Homeschooling Subjects Learned Described by Youth[67]

Subject	**Topic Area**
Math	Addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, geometry.
Science	Trains, slime, tractors, deductive/inductive reasoning, plants.
Language Arts	Reading, writing, spelling, vocabulary.
History	World History, geography, Africa, African roots.
Art	Painting
Black-centered Learning	Granville T. Woods, Booker T. Washington, Marcus Garvey, UNIA, Black Star Line, W.E.B. Du Bois, Shirley Chisholm, Garrett Morgan, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Mae Jemison, Rosa Parks, George Washington Carver, Malcolm X, Ida B. Wells, Jackie Robinson, Muhammad Ali, Barack Obama, Colonization, Segregation.

The young people also shared how they engaged in a variety of activities in their homeschooling. This included reading independently, reading with their mothers, doing workbooks and worksheets, and a range of hands-on activities. As the young people documented their homeschooling experiences, many took photos of different activities and materials they used in their homeschooling. Two young people took a photo of a book they were reading. In Image #8 below, a young person shared a photo of a book they were reading and liked because it was about basketball. Another young person shared a photo of a book that they read and discussed with their mother in Image #9.

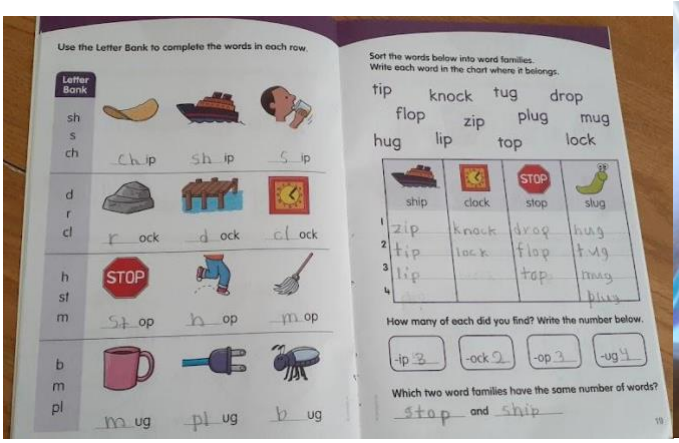
[67] It is important to note that not all youth studied these topics. While all youth may have mentioned these subject areas in their homeschooling, some youth went into detail to describe what they learned. I created this table to highlight the subject areas in which I categorized youth’s learning.

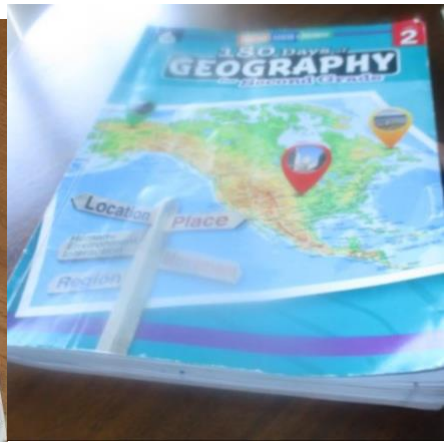




Images #8 & #9 Description: In Image #8 on the left is a picture the book *STAT: Standing Tall and Talented. Double Team* by Amar'e Stoudemire. In Image #9 on the right is a picture of the book *Up From Slavery* by Booker T. Washington. Each picture was taken by a different young person.

Additionally, youth took pictures of various workbooks and worksheets that they completed in their homeschooling. These materials focused on language arts, math, and geography. Youth shared the work that they completed in these subject areas. In Images #10 and #11, two homeschooled youth shared the workbooks they were currently working on:





Images #10 & #11 Description: In Image #10 on the right is a photo of a page this youth completed in an opened workbook that appears to focus on spelling/English language arts. In Image #11 on the left is a photo of the cover of a geography workbook. Each picture was taken by a different young person.

In addition to completing worksheets and workbooks, a couple of young people described doing "research" as a part of their homeschooling. They engaged in this research to learn more

about a person or an event. Only one youth described using a computer in their homeschooling and took photos to capture this computer-based learning. In addition to learning on websites to complete reading and math activities, they also used the computer to look up information of interest. Image #12 below is a photo this youth took of their computer screen as they were researching topics of interest:

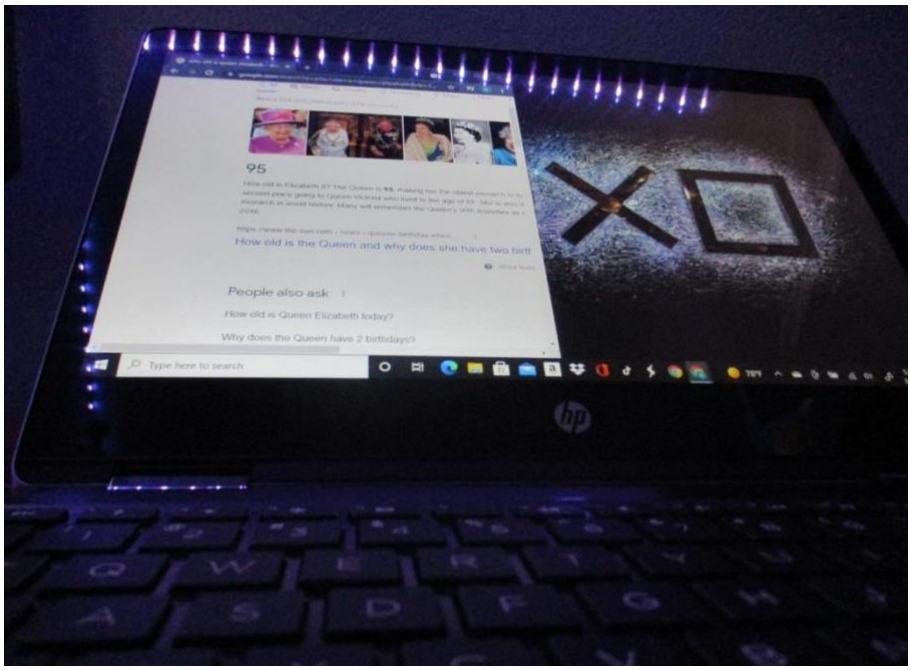


Image #12 Description: A young person took a photo of a computer screen. The screen shows a Google search response to a topic they were curious about, "how old is Queen Elizabeth?"

This example highlights one way in which young people can utilize technology – specifically a computer and the internet – to explore topics of interest. This offers a platform to learn a wide range of topics in their homeschooling.

A couple of young people described using a mixture of book, workbook, worksheet, and computer-based learning. One young person described how they were learning about how to identify story plots using a Plot Chart, pictured in Image #13 below, as they watched the TV show *Everybody Hates Chris*. They then wrote the plot from the episode on another sheet.

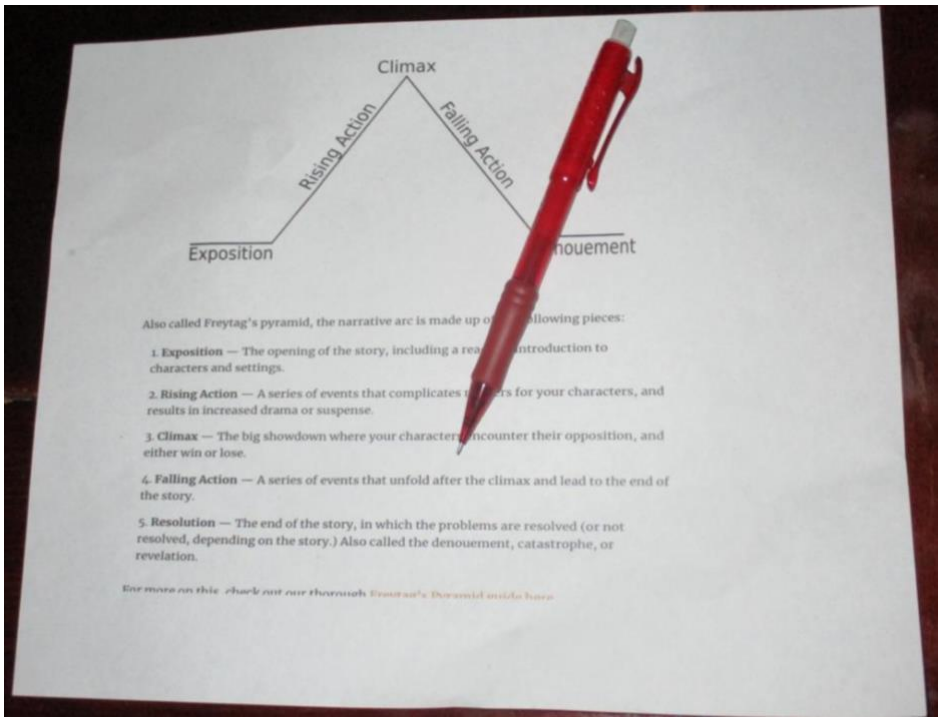


Image #13 Description: A homeschooler took a picture of their Plot Chart with a pencil on top.

Further, all youth described engaging in, or wanting to engage in, science projects. This included more STEM-based activities such as baking, gardening, conducting science experiments, and building things using various materials. This was a popular subject and learning approach that young people described in their interviews about homeschooling, and a few youth captured this learning in their photos. In Images #14, #15, and #16, homeschooled youth shared some hands-on activities in which they engaged.

Image #14 Description: This is a photo of a homeschooler's hands as they create a giant camera using a cardboard box and other materials.

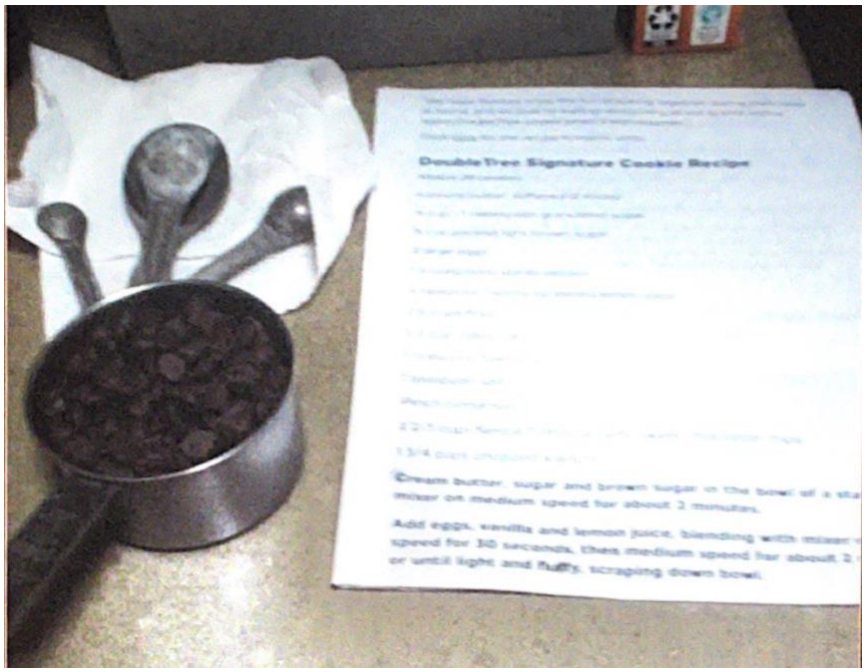


Image #15 Description: This is a photo of a homeschooler's recipe for chocolate chip cookies, measuring tools, and ingredients.

Image #15 Description: This is a photo of a homeschooler's garden. They wanted to document the different plants and foods they are growing as part of their homeschooling.

Youth also described other hands-on activities that included arts and crafts. Image #16 captures an art activity that a homeschooler did for Juneteenth that involved rock painting:

Image #16 Description: A homeschooler shared the center photo of two painted rocks. The rock on the left is painted red, white, and blue for the Juneteenth Flag. The rock on the right is painted red, black, and green for the African American Flag. [The image on the left of the youth's photo is the Juneteenth flag and the one on the right is the African American flag. I pulled these images from Google as a reference].

Youth drew pictures to document their learning in homeschooling. Some of these illustrations included their learning about Black history, captured in images #17, #18, and #19.

Image #17 Description: A homeschooled youth drew a picture about George Washington Carver and his crops, which they learned about in their homeschooling. George Washington Carver is saying "this is a good crop."

Images #18 and #19 Description: A homeschooler shared two drawings they created. On the left is a drawing of a flag that utilizes the colors red, black, and green (the colors of the Pan-African/Black Liberation flag). Above their drawing they wrote, "This represents my favorite colors from Juneteenth." Below it they wrote "Juneteenth" and added a heart. On the right is a drawing of Harriet Tubman that represents a story they learned about her.

Additionally, these young homeschoolers described learning outside of their homes in varied ways. These included going on field trips (to various places around their city, or out of the state and country), extracurriculars (skating, violin, swimming, basketball, football, language learning), playing outside, farming, and building things.

Youth described the learning activities they did at home, mainly with their mothers, and on various field trips. Their descriptions of this range of homeschooling activities illustrate how they learned subjects that are traditionally taught in schools *and* additional topics related to agriculture and Black history. A couple of young people noted that their photos, drawings, and writings about homeschooling could show others that "homeschooling is fun and that they should try it" and "how to do it themselves." These descriptions contribute to the limited research on Black homeschooling practices by providing more insight into how Black families homeschool, particularly from the young people's perspectives. In addition to these descriptions

of their homeschooling, it is also important to examine how young people understand their experiences homeschooling.

Youths' Perspectives on Homeschooling

In addition to their diverse learning activities, these youth also shared having relatively positive experiences in their homeschooling, especially in comparison to traditional schools. They often spoke about their experiences in schools – or their perceptions of schools – as they talked about what they learned in and liked about homeschooling. They spoke about their homeschooling in favorable or neutral ways, while they spoke unfavorably of schools. As documented in previous research on Black students in schools, youth share experiencing unfair treatment, harsher discipline, and low expectations by teachers (Diamond and Lewis, 2015; Ferguson, 2000; Morris, 2015; Sojoyner, 2017; Voight, Hanson, O'Malley, and Adekanye, 2015). These school experiences were similar to those of a few young people in this study. More salient were young peoples' critiques about learning in schools.

All of the youth shared positive experiences about homeschooling, especially in comparison to schools. To varying extents, all youth spoke about the freedom that they had in their homeschooling, which contrasted with what they experienced or expected in schools. This included the freedom to have choice in their learning, to play and have fun, to create their schedules and to do more activities in their learning. Three youth expressed that they would not change anything about their homeschooling because they like everything their homeschooling offers. The other four, however, expressed aspects of their homeschooling that they either dislike and wish they could change or suggestions about how to make homeschooling even better. It is critical to learn from Black homeschooled youth about how they feel about their learning experiences and how they want them to be.

Moreover, Black-centered learning was highlighted for majority of youth in varying ways. For a few young people (three out of seven) learning about Black history, people, and culture was central. They brought it up unprompted in their interviews, while others spoke about Black-centered learning only when directly asked. For a couple, it seemingly wasn't a part of their learning as they shared little to no information about it. Additionally, race, racism and Black identity was not explicitly central for youth however, all shared some thoughts related to it when asked. Most youth heard of or described racism in their own words, while fewer youth were familiar with how to describe race and their thoughts about their own racial identity.

Constructing Composite Narratives

As a researcher, I am committed to doing my best to protect the confidentiality of the young people who participated in this study. As mentioned in the methods chapter of this dissertation, I decided to use composite narratives to re-present young peoples' perspectives on homeschooling, given that this method enables me to ensure confidentiality while capturing their experiences. As previously discussed, composite narratives are useful in that they provide a meaningful representation of data and preserve anonymity (Willis, 2019). As scholars who use composite narratives note, it is important to demonstrate a "clear link" between the data and composite narratives, and "the only modification is to present data from several interviewees as if it were from a single individual." By detailing the process I took to create these composite narratives, I hope to gain the trust of readers.

The composite narratives focus on young Black homeschoolers' experiences broadly, which includes their thoughts on their homeschooling and their experiences in school.[68] In the

[68] While the interviews with young people explored the topics of race, racism, and being Black/African American, those parts of the interview were not included in the analysis and formation of the composite narratives. When details about their identity or topics of race/racism emerge in the composite narratives, it is because they were directly linked to their homeschooling experiences as described by the young people.

composite narratives, I decided to use direct quotes from the young people in this study because I want to make sure that their exact words are represented in the composite narratives. I also paraphrased some parts of the interviews in order to help construct the narrative form and to obscure personally identifiable information about a young person.

I used the following guidelines to construct the composite narratives featured in this chapter:

1. Developed from seven youth interviews.[69]
2. Used direct quotes from these interviews.
3. Based the composite narratives on salient themes from the interviews.
4. Included details from a combination of interviews in each composite narrative, using quotes from at least two youth interviews that represent key themes.

I conducted open coding of each youth interview and highlighted broad themes. From that initial coding, I examined the themes across each interview to see if there were any patterns. These broad categories included "positive thoughts about homeschooling," "Black-centered learning," and "negative school experience," for example. From this broad categorization, I could further examine youths' individual experiences and see how they related to each other. As I moved from developing codes and themes for each interview, I wrote analytic memos to connect themes across at least two youth interviews. If two youths mentioned similar experiences – such as their experiences in schools or their dislikes about homeschooling – I included those themes from their interviews into a single composite narrative. While there were many

[69] The photos, illustrations and writings produced by young people were utilized in their description of homeschooling discussed earlier in this chapter. These images are not included in the composite narratives in order to maintain confidentiality.

similarities across the youth interviews, there were also differences in experience and opinion when it came to learning. At times, these perspectives were in tension with each other.

During this process, it became clear to me that it would not be possible to fit one interview neatly into one composite, and another interview into another composite. While there were overlapping themes from the interviews, these patterns did not overlap perfectly with different subgroups of youth. For example, three youth could have shared similar perspectives about their homeschooling but differed in their experiences and perceptions of schools, thus the composite narrative could not encompass all of the experiences from one youth. Further, some themes were unique to just one interview which prompted me to consider what to do with these findings.[70] Six of the seven youth did not fit exclusively into just one of the composites, which highlights the complexity of their experiences. The Politicized Homeschooler narrative, for example, is comprised of three young people (Youth 4, 5, and 6) who all mentioned aspects of Black-focused learning, but only two of these young people offered critiques about homeschooling. The composite narratives do not represent a perfect grouping of the seven young people into three neat stories, as Table 19 demonstrates how youth overlapped in these composite narratives.

Table 19

Composite Narratives & Youth Representation

Composite Narrative	**# of Youth Represented**
The Agreeable Homeschooler	Youth 1, Youth 2, Youth 3
The Politicized Homeschooler	Youth 4, Youth 5, Youth 6
The Visionary Homeschooler	Youth 7, Youth 6, Youth 5, Youth 4, Youth 3

[70] When youth shared a perspective on homeschooling that differed from the rest, this could potentially spotlight their experiences in a way that could make them identifiable to parents. As noted, maintaining their confidentiality was a priority which led me to the composite narratives where I could mix similar accounts together.

I constructed these composite narratives through categorizing these young peoples' perspectives on homeschooling. The composite narratives represent the themes from youth interviews as described and the themes represent a single composite narrative. Like other scholars, I decided to describe their experiences based on their own words, so after each composite narrative I insert my analysis as a researcher. This also allows for the composite narratives to be more readable and impactful. The composite narratives of these homeschoolers should be read as an amalgamation of Black homeschooled youth experiences at one point in time.

In what follows I introduce the homeschool squad: *The Agreeable*, *The Politicized*, *and The Visionary*. Agreeable homeschool youth shared generally positive experiences homeschooling and did not express a desire to make changes to their homeschooling. Instead, they were content with their learning, even if some aspects of their homeschooling were not their favorite. The Politicized and Visionary homeschool youth, like the Agreeable homeschool youth, enjoyed homeschooling. Unlike the Visionary and the Agreeable Homeschoolers, the Politicized Homeschooler saw Black-centered learning as a central, enjoyable part of their homeschooling. The Politicized homeschooler, however, challenged certain aspects of their homeschooling practice and expressed their desires to change the aspects they did not like or think were fair. The Visionary Homeschooler, like the Politicized and Agreeable Homeschoolers, enjoyed their homeschooling particularly because of the wide range of learning in which they engaged. Further, the Visionary Homeschooler believed that they could be involved in a wide range of activities and learning experiences in their homeschooling.

The Agreeable Homeschooler

The Agreeable Homeschooler sat at their table waiting for Mom to bring them a spelling worksheet to start the day of learning. On the table sat a folder with math worksheets and a book that they were going to start reading. For them, homeschooling was "good" – they did not "really like reading, but it's good." The Agreeable Homeschooler could recite their typical daily learning schedule: "I wake up and then first I do math on Monday and Wednesday and on Tuesdays and Thursdays, I first do science. And every day I have to do art... then I had to do a daily language-arts..." They have extracurricular activities scheduled in the afternoon throughout the week as well. They described homeschooling as "sometimes fun and sometimes boring." There are some aspects of homeschooling that are "pretty boring" and sometimes "takes a long time to do," but overall homeschooling is "fun", and they like it the way it is. They would not change anything about their homeschooling, although they think a visual that outlines the daily learning would be helpful, so they would know what to expect each day. The most fun part of homeschooling was taking field trips, which were infrequent.

The Agreeable Homeschooler previously attended school where they had generally positive experiences, outside of a few encounters with a bully. They saw bullies as "the part of school" that is "messed up," and they stated that "that's not good because then the kids get messed up." They thought kids at school were "mean" and liked being alone. They described other children getting in fights and in trouble, and how they, in contrast, "never went to the principal." They also shared how they "didn't have to do much work" at school and that it was "kind of boring." They shared how they did not want to go there. When they attended school, at least they had friends, family, and a couple of teachers that made school cool. When they started homeschooling, they felt "normal" but considered staying in school to be around friends. On the

bright side, they liked not having homework anymore. They ultimately found homeschooling to be "just better." Even though some topics they learn are harder and not their favorite, they see homeschooling as the "best" because they get to learn new things.

Analysis of the Agreeable Homeschooler. The Agreeable Homeschooler represents the homeschooling and schooling experiences of three youth. The Agreeable Homeschoolers described their homeschooling experiences in a matter-of-fact and impartial manner. They generally shared positive feelings about their homeschooling. Seemingly, their homeschooling experiences were good, and they would not change a thing about them. Even when they shared some things they do not really like, they did not express wanting not to do it; they seemed indifferent to the idea of changing their homeschooling. When I asked if they would change anything about their homeschooling, they responded "No." When I asked them to describe a perfect homeschooling day (if they could create it), these youth shared that it would include the activities that they typically do in their homeschooling. This could be because they genuinely did not want to make changes to their homeschooling or because they did not want to elaborate on any changes with me. Overall, they seemed to agree with what their parents offered in their homeschooling.

This approach to homeschooling described by the Agreeable Homeschooler aligns with pedagogical practices that utilize a more parent-led and curriculum-based approach to learning. This is not to say that this was the only way they engaged in homeschooling; however, it was not evident in the interviews that the Agreeable Homeschooler contributed many thoughts about how or what they learned. Further, the Agreeable homeschooler did not have negative experiences in schools per se, but they did not enjoy the school environment. The only positive aspects of

schooling were their relationships with friends and teachers, but otherwise they seemed indifferent about school.

The Politicized Homeschooler

The Politicized Homeschooler sat on their laptop learning about the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the learning room. They were "learning about his marches and how he stood up for himself up... even when he was scared." The Politicized Homeschooler shared that the "best part [of homeschooling] is that you get to learn about Black people. Well, this homeschool is learning about Black people, other Black leaders and all that..." In homeschooling, the Politicized Homeschooler often works independently, doing research on various topics. Their parents encouraged them to write what they are "against" when they come across materials that conflict with what they are learning in homeschooling. They contrasted this homeschool learning with what they learned at the previous schools they attended. They did not think they "learned about the actual history" in school. Instead, they learned in their homeschooling that "America was made off of a lie," and they noted how "schoolteachers say that Abraham Lincoln was a good guy." They asserted that "the teachers are lying because they say that he did it for the enslaved people, but he did it to keep the country together." They further explained how there remains "stuff hidden about Black people and we're not teaching in schools, and that's why most Black people are homeschooled because – well not most, but if they get a chance they homeschool their kids, well, they want" to since "they aren't teaching their kids the real truth in school." In addition to this critique of school curricula that whitewash or erase Black history, the Politicized Homeschooler sees homeschooling as a space that teaches them Black history and makes them critical about society today.

The Politicized Homeschooler loves that in homeschooling, "you can also say things that you couldn't say in a real school because they'll just say [*mockingly*] 'raise your hand.'" In addition to the "lies" taught in schools, they described learning at school as "boring." They shared how in school "you had this daily routine where you were doing the exact thing every single time, like, you go on Tuesday, we have spelling, math, calendar time, recess, lunch, gym, you have a schedule for every day, it would just be the same." Further, they did not like that in school "when you learn something, and you keep going on and on." They viewed this as "over-teaching." They got in trouble at school sometimes and hated that about school. They admitted, "like I did something wrong, you know, all my friends always did something wrong, and she [teacher] didn't really do something wrong to them. But then I got in trouble and then they don't get in trouble." They would get in "big trouble" even though they "didn't do anything wrong." One time, another student told the teacher that The Politicized Homeschooler did something to them, "when I didn't and then I told the teacher that. She [teacher] kept asking me [about it] and then she said, 'this is my last time I'm going to ask you or I'm gonna call your mom.'" They "just had to say yes" to the accusation, ending up in trouble and angry.

The Politicized Homeschooler did not like aspects of homeschooling that were similar to the issues they saw in schools. While the Politicized Homeschooler did not describe "getting in trouble" at home, they did share that their homeschooling has a similar lack of variety in the learning schedule as school. They described learning some topics in homeschooling and explained how they do not "like the way it's set up. For example, if I start a new [concept], it would just give me an example and make me go on and on and on. I do five pages but that's still kind of a lot for me, and then it makes me bored." The Politicized Homeschooler wanted shorter blocks of learning, like, "50 minutes you learn homeschooling, and then the next day comes and

you do like 50 minutes of homeschooling." Instead of staying up late homeschooling, they want to "just do two subjects then be done" for the day (with a "free day" on Friday).

Analysis of the Politicized Homeschooler. The Politicized Homeschooler represents three homeschool youth. The Politicized Homeschooler views their homeschooling as a space of freedom and constraints. In their homeschooling they are learning in ways that raises their critical consciousness about Black people. The Politicized Homeschooler sees learning about people and events in Black history as an important aspect of homeschooling. They described this Black-centered learning in their interviews when I asked about their homeschooling,[71] illustrating that this learning was central to their experiences. They spoke about their "ancestors" being "Kings and Queens" and highlighted a variety of topics and people (described in Table 18: Homeschooling Subjects Youth Learned). They also discussed present-day racism, particularly against Black people, in their stories about their learning.[72]

Much like their description of Dr. King, the Politicized Homeschooler challenges how things are in society, schools, and their own homeschooling. Although the Politicized Homeschooler had experiences in schools and shared a few critiques about schools, they were not always rooted in their own experiences or memories. Like the Agreeable Homeschooler, they sometimes shared their indifference about school. However, they differed from the Agreeable Homeschooler in that they critiqued schools heavily. These messages about schools were seemingly passed down to them through Black history lessons in their homeschooling. As they commented on schools as sites of miseducation, they did not explicitly tie this directly to their experiences in schools. Instead, they made sense of schools from their parents' perspectives as

[71] This varied from other homeschooling youth who did not describe this Black-centered learning or did to a lesser extent when asked directly.
[72] The data suggests that these youth learned a lot about what it meant to be Black in their homeschooling and their parents spoke about race and racism in their homeschooling or parenting practice.

youth described learning all of these things from their mom, homeschooling, and/or their own research.

The Politicized Homeschooler also resisted aspects of their homeschooling that they saw as "boring." This was more than them just not liking an activity or book; it was about a "way of learning." For example, some rigorous, academic-focused aspects of their homeschooling took up a lot of their time, which took time away from rest, play, and other activities they enjoyed. The Politicized Homeschooler pushed back against this monotonous learning that they critiqued in schools. The types of learning that these youth wanted to pursue were in tension with the goals that parents had for homeschooling their children. While these youth pushed back on certain aspects of their homeschooling, this seemingly did not result in them being able to change these things. Even though this conflict between what their parents taught and what they wanted to learn created tension at times, the Politicized Homeschooler did not share being punished or controlled like they were in their schooling experiences.

The Politicized Homeschooler embodies the freedom and constraints that can take place in homeschooling. While free to learn about Black history – something that is limited in traditional schooling – they are not as free to learn in the ways they want. This highlights the constraints that are placed on them in their homeschooling practice. It is important to note that many parents described wanting their children to be "free" in their learning. These findings from youth raise questions about how parents' visions do not always translate in practice and affirm young people.

The Visionary Homeschooler

It was a sunny day as the Visionary Homeschooler played outside with other children in their homeschool learning collective. Homeschooling is "fun" because "you can do more things,

like go outside," they shared. Going outside and playing was one way they learned with others. The Visionary Homeschooler saw homeschooling as "just the best thing" because "you can learn a lot." In addition to common subjects like reading, writing, spelling, and math, they noted that "homeschooling is about learning new things" as well. They desired to "know more things" in their homeschooling, and they pursued that desire. The Visionary Homeschooler used to attend school, but they like their homeschooling – and homeschooling with other young people – "better."

When at school, they felt like it would take "a long time to get out school... but when you're out of school, it doesn't take a long time to go back." They liked recess at school because they could "do whatever" during that time and talk to their friends. The Visionary Homeschooler described the constraints they experienced in schools and the freedom that homeschooling offered. For one, they could sleep in longer. They explained how they used to "have to get up early, and fix my hair, brush my teeth, and do regular stuff that I do every day but like [*brief pause*] in a rush." Not having to rush to school anymore, they "get a lot of extra time" to just play before starting homeschooling. Moreover, the Visionary Homeschooler eases into their homeschooling day, usually with a game or connecting with the other children in their homeschooling, rather than jumping right into academic learning. They described how "we create what we want," which was one of their favorite parts of homeschooling. They felt that letting "the kids learn what they want to learn" was important and wished that they could do more of that in their homeschooling. They saw homeschooling as a form of play and wanted to "play games that show" them "how to do things." During our interview, they asked me, "...are you like one of those persons who do homeschooling, but you understand that you can still play while and you can still learn?" They witnessed other children in their homeschooling collective

learn as they played, even though there was not “much learning” – that is, adult instruction – taking place.

Additionally, the Visionary Homeschooler shared how they had more choice throughout their homeschooling day. They explained, “when we get tired of the other things we do, we get to have more breaks... but you wouldn’t be able to do that in another school, because they would say [*mockingly*], ‘Okay, you have to do this, it’s not a break.’” They disliked schools because they forced children to learn whatever the teacher wanted them to learn. Imitating the teacher, they said, “ok, get your pencil and your notebook so you can learn about whatever the subject is.” They also noted how in schools:

> they [teachers] didn't really help the kids learn. They [kids] struggled... When a kid didn't finish their spelling, they [teachers] would go just straight into math and they just go straight out of math. They would say, “Hey, well, you're gonna have to spend your recess on it.” Well, you say that we need at least 40 minutes of recess. We ain’t gonna get our 40 minutes in of recess. We are going to sit at a table all day.

Homeschooling on the other hand was “fun” where children “learn everything” including, “math, vocabulary... I do research. Science! I love science. Hands-on learning. I learned engineering, agriculture... The wildlife, for sure. Gym class, anytime, anywhere basically for me [*chuckles*].” Science in particular was exciting since they got to “try new experiments.” They added that they “just didn’t want to do the old thing that we know would happen. I wanted to experiment, like a scientist.” For the Visionary Homeschooler, homeschooling is “amazing” because “everything you do in homeschool always has to be fun and you get to learn about stuff at home” and through travel to new places. Other outings and activities that they did not think others would view as learning still “counted” as a part of their homeschool experience because they were learning something new.

Analysis of the Visionary Homeschooler. The Visionary Homeschooler sees homeschooling as a space that offers an abundance of possibilities, including those already realized in their homeschooling and those they are still imagining. To a certain extent, all of the youth embodied some essence of the Visionary Homeschooler in that they felt homeschooling created a space for them to do more than they would be able to if they were in school. However, the predominating young people who represent the Visionary Homeschooler described a lot of different learning they did in their homeschooling, emphasizing the play and hands-on activities that they enjoyed most. While very happy with their experiences learning at home, the Visionary Homeschooler still desired more. The Visionary Homeschooler represents the imaginative youth who have and love child-centered learning experiences. They emphasize the play-, outdoor-, and interest-based learning that they experienced in homeschooling. Moreover, they pushed the bounds of what "counts" as learning – uplifting play and daily activities as modes of learning. While the Politicized Homeschooler and the Visionary Homeschooler were alike in that they pushed the bounds of their learning experiences, it seemed that the Politicized Homeschooler's parents encouraged them to think critically about Black history and the present but were unreceptive when they were critical about their learning experiences. In contrast, it seemed that the Visionary Homeschooler's parents encouraged them to do so and were open to branching out to learn in these varied ways.

The positive aspects of schooling for the Visionary Homeschooler are non-academic; instead they enjoyed the relationships and free time. Further, the Visionary Homeschooler sees schools as contradictory spaces that do not have children's best interests in mind. The pace of many schools is not child-centered: by taking time away from play and socializing to spend on academics, schools demonstrate a lack of consideration for children's holistic well-being. These

youth experienced and witnessed this factory pace in school, and in contrast, see how homeschooling offers them more choice in their learning. For them, this choice makes homeschooling a better learning experience. The Visionary Homeschooler's experience emerged with parents who utilized more child-led, interest-based, and "unschooling" practices in their homeschooling.

Discussion

The Homeschooler Composite Narratives

The Agreeable, Politicized, and Visionary Homeschoolers all enjoy their homeschooling more than school, and they shared various ways that they understand their homeschooling experiences. The Agreeable Homeschooler represents the homeschooled youth who are content with their homeschooling experiences and have fewer thoughts about aspects, if any, that they would reimagine. In contrast, the Visionary and Politicized Homeschoolers are similar in that they both push the bounds of what constitutes learning. For the Visionary Homeschooler, homeschooling provides much of what they envision for their learning: they spoke about the endless possibilities that homeschooling affords them. The Visionary Homeschooler is the embodiment of "freedom" in homeschooling. For the Politicized Homeschooler, homeschooling provides them a space to center themselves as Black people and develop critical consciousness about race and racism. However, their learning experiences did not always affirm them as self-directed learners. The Politicized Homeschooler embodies the "constraints" in homeschooling. This contradiction prompts a reconsideration of which aspects of homeschooling are liberatory and which are restrictive, and how parents and educators can support Black youth in creating experiences they desire.

Conclusion

This chapter highlights young Black homeschoolers and their range of experiences learning at home and in community. Youth shared various experiences related to their homeschool learning; specifically, with whom they learned, where they learned, and what they learned. Overall, youth shared positive experiences with their homeschooling practice – particularly in comparison with their schooling experiences. Many youth seemed content with their homeschooling experiences, highlighting the freedom they feel homeschooling affords. Others noted this freedom while also discussing the tensions they feel in their homeschooling practice. These tensions provide parents and educators with insight into how to support learning experiences for Black youth. These youth perspectives further illuminate the possibilities and constraints of homeschooling. It is important to uplift these stories when considering what liberatory learning means for Black homeschooled youth.

Utilizing composite narratives over summarizing youth experiences or discussing their experiences individually makes it challenging to highlight the nuances of their individual homeschooling experiences. This is a tradeoff that I decided to make for this dissertation to uphold my promise to maintain confidentiality to the best of my ability, which is one of several benefits of using composite narratives. The composite narratives in this chapter allow for a rich and complex presentation of youths' perspectives and rejects a simple categorization of their experiences. Further, these composite narratives allow readers to increase their understanding of how some Black youth experience homeschooling due to the descriptive and impactful nature of storytelling. Thus, this accessible approach to re-presenting their experiences homeschooling can inform broader educational practices for Black students.

To provide a more detailed understanding of their homeschooling experiences, I will now discuss patterns that emerged from the data and when constructing the composites. As noted in the Politicized Homeschooler composite narrative, Black-centered learning is an important part of their homeschooling experiences. It is evident from the interviews that they learned a lot about African and African American history and are critical about present-day social conditions, particularly for Black people. Previous studies on Black homeschoolers highlight this type of learning, noting that parents are motivated to homeschool to teach Black history and culture and describing how they incorporate this learning into their practice. Further, these studies note how Black homeschooling parents desire to affirm their Black children through emphasizing this learning. These findings resonate with some of the parents in this study who employ a Black-centered approach to homeschooling. However, it is important to raise questions about what type of learning Black youth find "affirming" for themselves. The youth in this study seemed to feel the most affirmed when they described learning and engaging in their favorite activities, as well as when they are able to create their own day learning.

Similar to the parent interviews, some youth described Black-centered learning as central to their experiences while others did not. There were no significant patterns across age, gender, or previous school type for youth who noted the centrality of Black-centered learning. It is important to note, though, that while a homeschooling parent might have expressed utilizing a Black-centered or culturally relevant approach, this was not necessarily expressed as central or important to the homeschooled youth – which was apparent with one of the parent-youth dyads. This is not to highlight any disconnect between homeschooling parents and children, but instead to provide insight into how youth make sense of these experiences and what resonates with them.

Further, this gives parents and educators an opportunity to think about how they can best engage Black youth in their learning.

While most of the homeschooled youth lived in predominantly white areas, none of the youth discussed that their particular region shaped their homeschooling experiences. For example, one youth noted how homeschooling where they live is not different than other places. Another youth shared, "it's nothing special" homeschooling in their area. Youth did not share this in their interviews unprompted, and in their homeschooling projects they either did not choose to respond to these specific prompts, or they stated it did not matter. This contrasts from a few parents who shared that where they live shaped their decision to start homeschooling and/or their homeschooling experiences.[73]

Some youth did share negative experiences in schools; however, this was not always related to antiblackness. Instead, it was connected to rigid schooling practices that force them to learn things they are not interested. Two youth, for example, described school as boring, while four youth critiqued schools for how they approach teaching (over-teaching, the teacher dictating their learning, or doing the same thing at school every day). One youth did not have experiences attending school, but experiences with school students shaped their ideas about how others can be "mean." Four youth also discussed their awareness or experiences with bullies (students and teachers). Two youth critiqued schools because of their lack of Black-centered learning.

The young people aged seven through 15 shared a range of experiences in their homeschooling. It appeared that the older youth had fewer suggestions about things they wanted to change in their homeschooling, while the younger youth shared more suggestions about what they hoped to

[73] For example, some parents noted how living in their area meant that they had limited options for their Black children to attend school—they were not satisfied with the quality/resources in the school or had/anticipated negative experiences given that they lived in predominantly white areas.

change. This raises questions about the relationship between age and educational agency. Perhaps there were differences in how these parents' approaches to homeschooling shaped how youth understood the possibilities and limits of their learning experiences. While some youth had been homeschooling for a year while others for up to ten years, these differences did not seem to contribute to the details that youth shared.

There are various factors that could have shaped what youth shared with me. Because I am an adult and researcher (and for some youth, someone they did not know well), it is possible that they might not have been comfortable sharing more personal thoughts about themselves. Perhaps they were not sure if I could be trusted when I stated that I would not share what they said with their parents. It is also possible that, like with interviews with adults, they had not considered the topic of discussion much and therefore had less to share. It is possible that with increased time with youth – and in theory a stronger relationship – they may have opened up more. Thus, engaging in research over extended periods of time can establish stronger relationships and shape youths' comfort sharing about their experiences. These are areas for future inquiry**.**

The findings from this chapter contribute immensely to the literature on Black homeschooling. As Black youth have rarely been included in homeschooling research, it is important to continue to explore this topic. Black homeschool youth in this study illuminate the freedom and the constraints in homeschooling. As young people, they can lead us to Black liberatory fantasy, as they re-imagine their learning experiences through homeschooling. While homeschooling has its challenges, as described by the parents in the study, much can be learned from young Black homeschoolers about creating something new and beautiful in education.

Chapter 6: Lessons Learned from Black Homeschooling Families

As Black families increasingly choose homeschooling as an educational option – which has only heightened further in the Covid-19 pandemic – it is critical that we do not overlook Black families in discussions on education. This study provides an in-depth analysis of Black families' homeschooling experiences in Wisconsin and Illinois from the perspectives of both parents and young people. Their stories reveal motivations for and practices of homeschooling beyond the logic of neoliberal education reforms and school choice. As the findings suggest, Black homeschooling families offer a layered perspective that raises questions about education in the U.S. – particularly what Black families desire to disrupt and create for their children's education and the challenges they experience on this quest.

This study highlights the ways that homeschooling can reimagine education and recognizes the tensions homeschooling makes visible in the broader context of neoliberal education. This research finds that homeschooling is a site of possibilities and constraints for Black families navigating these intertwined systems of antiblackness and neoliberalism. Black parents are motivated to homeschool because of the limitations of other educational options as well as the perceived possibilities that homeschooling offers in Wisconsin and Illinois. The perceived and actual lack of school options is evident in some parents' decision-making to homeschool. While neoliberal logics in education posit individualism and personal responsibility in school "choice," race – and anti-Black racism in particular – is a critical component of this discussion. As the research findings demonstrate, Blackness and antiblackness were central to many parents "choosing" to homeschool. These findings build on the scholarship on Black parents' educational choices by extending how homeschooling can be understood beyond critiques of neoliberalism in education and within a lens that engages with antiblackness.

The freedom that homeschooling affords, particularly in these two states with relatively low-regulation homeschooling laws, allows parents to incorporate a wide array of educational experiences for their children, particularly pedagogical practices that depart from those of traditional schools. Further, Black parents seek to offer their children learning experiences that are rooted in freedom, such as creating space for them to follow their interests and incorporating Black studies. However, despite their goals, a few parents sometimes chose or felt forced to practice homeschooling in ways that resemble schooling, such as adhering to certain curricula and schedules. While some parents' goals for homeschooling aligned with neoliberal ideals of high academic performance, competition, advantage, and attending college, fewer parents discussed how the stakes were higher for Black children in our current society. Most parents longed for their children's educational experiences to offer them greater freedom beyond the constraints of normative educational practices. At times, parents achieved this freedom for their young homeschoolers. This research contributes to the extant literature on school choice, Black homeschooling, and BlackCrit.

This research connects to and extends how we think about Black education in the U.S. Firstly, this study disrupts the unsubstantiated yet persistent anti-Black logics on Black families in education. This research highlights how Black families value education, illuminating their pedagogical approaches and their varied engagement to support their children's learning through home education. Black parents' motivations and practices homeschooling exhibit the immense care and attention they have for their children's educational experiences. Black homeschooled youths' engagement in their learning showcases their interest in education. The research challenges claims made by researchers and educators that Black parents and youth do not care or are not interested in education. This study challenges ideas about schooling versus education and

pushes both schools and community-based educational spaces to examine what constitutes meaningful education for Black youth and parents.

Black homeschooling can be understood as another alternative that Black people have created in their search for quality and affirming education. As some parents in this study noted, Black families homeschooling is a way of "reclaiming our power" given the educational racism Black parents and youth experience. One parent explained this "resurgence in homeschooling" within a historical Black tradition of self-education:

> …Many of our ancestors were educated because they weren't allowed in schools. So, to be fair, we're [Black homeschoolers are] just going back to what we did the first time [*chuckles*]. And perhaps this will allow more opportunities for those creative forces to come forward, because we have some of the most powerful creative forces came from our ancestors and if you look back, many of them weren't traditionally educated. They were homeschooled or they were in those little schoolhouses where Big Mama was teaching three, four, kids or auntie or somebody was doing that because they weren't allowed in formal school setting because they were Black. So, I think that this is definitely opening an opportunity for our community to look at new ways and different ways that they can educate their children.

The act of Black families homeschooling is perhaps not a "new and beautiful effort at human education" and instead a return and continuation of creating new possibilities for Black people in an anti-Black society. This study on Black homeschooling illuminates these possibilities for Black education from Black parents and youths' perspectives.

Black Parents' Decision-Making to Homeschool

As discussed in Chapter Three, Black parents' homeschool decision-making includes an interplay of motivators and facilitators. These findings on Black parents' motivations to homeschool overlap with the broader scholarship on Black parents and educational choice that often emphasizes the constrained choices they face while searching for quality schools for their children (Cooper, 2005; Posey-Maddox et al., 2021). Many of the parents in this study experienced school-based factors that "pushed" them to homeschool, such as antiblackness,

Eurocentric curricula, and receptacle-model instruction. Further, given their perceived lack of affirming, supportive, and challenging educational options for Black children, a few parents felt that homeschooling was their best option. However, there were a few homeschooling parents for whom antiblackness and other "push factors" did not shape their driving motivations. Instead, they saw homeschooling as the best educational option generally.[74] Although not a "major finding" in this research, it is important to note those parents who fall outside of major themes and patterns to highlight the heterogeneity of Black homeschoolers.

The homeschooling literature emphasizes educational choice, but it is important to consider the "positioned choices" that some Black parents in this study made (Cooper, 2005). As the findings from this study illustrate, not all of the parents considered homeschooling a "choice" option, and a few expressed having to homeschool as the last resort (Fields-Smith, 2015) due to the lack of educational options they had. While only a couple of parents could be considered "active choosers" as they began homeschooling (and others through their practice saw the benefits and decided to choose homeschooling again and again), other parents saw a lack of affirming educational options elsewhere for their children and feel like homeschooling is their "only option."[75] These findings complicate the critique of homeschooling as a privatized and individual effort that reinforces neoliberal ideology because parents are "choosing" to homeschool out of necessity, to evade anti-Black harm, and to reject learning models that solely focus on academic achievement. In what follows, I discuss my findings for particular

[74] While some parents shared having both "push" and "pull" motivations, only one parent in the study was only "pulled" to homeschool. Cynthia saw other homeschooling families doing well and, when she researched it, saw potential academic benefits for her child. She chose to homeschool, noting in her interview and focus group that being Black did not play a role in her decision at all. She did not think about schools and antiblackness, nor did she express an explicit goal to include Black history or culture into their practice. Instead she just sees homeschooling as the best option overall.

[75] A homeschooling parent in my study described it using this phrase.

motivations and facilitators and how they align with, diverge from, and extend the extant literature on Black homeschooling.

Motivations to Homeschool

Parents' motivations to homeschool are varied and multiple; they highlighted both negative experiences with traditional schooling (both public and private) and the positive possibilities that they see in homeschooling. These findings align with previous research on Black homeschooling that offers the terminology of "push" and "pull" to characterize motivations to homeschool. In another alignment with the existing literature, my study finds that the pervasiveness of antiblackness in schools motivated many Black parents to homeschool. Antiblackness shaped parents' decision to homeschool through both lived experiences with racism and/or their anticipation of these experiences. Black parents in my study highlighted the negative perceptions of Black parents, harsh discipline of Black students, low academic expectations of Black students, fabrication or omission of Black-centered teaching, and negative stereotypes about Black people in general as the dimensions of antiblackness they experienced, witnessed, or anticipated. They viewed this antiblackness impacting their children's ability to learn and develop a strong sense of self. Homeschooling in response to these conditions classifies these parents as "Racial Protectionists" (Mazama, 2012). This classification, however, oversimplifies the complex decision-making that Black parents engage in as they transition to homeschool.

Additionally, several parents also shared their dissatisfaction with schools' general approach to teaching. For a few parents, this dissatisfaction stemmed from not having access to rigorous and challenging curricula, the use of outdated curricula and teaching practices, and the rigid structure of learning. They viewed these school features as cause for concern. They

questioned the quality of schooling and, at times, whether schools could prepare their children for post-graduation life. Parents held these critiques of schools prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, and a few other parents noted their displeasure with virtual and remote learning as a motivator to homeschool. While many news articles have noted the rise of homeschooling during the pandemic, this study offers one of the first in-depth investigations that discusses parents' motivations to homeschool in the pandemic.[76] My findings suggest that while the pandemic's impact on learning and health – both physical and mental – shaped Black parents' decision to homeschool, many already had concerns about schools. The Covid-19 pandemic and the shift to virtual schooling only facilitated their decision to begin homeschooling. In other words, the pandemic homeschoolers are not homeschooling just because of the pandemic, but also due to non-pandemic reasons that other parents in the study shared (e.g., antiblackness in and dissatisfaction with schools).

While the Black homeschooling literature emphasizes "push" motivators – particularly those related to race and racism – this study found important "pull" motivators that shaped Black parents' decision to homeschool. Although religion has been documented as a salient motivator for Black homeschooling parents (Fields-Smith, 2015; 2020; Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; Mazama & Lundy, 2014), this study did not reveal religion to be central to parents' decisions to homeschool. It is possible, given the parents' religious backgrounds, that religion played a role in their decision to homeschool; however, the interviews and focus groups did not indicate it as a primary motivator. Instead, at times, parents shared more about religion when discussing their homeschooling practices, but even these mentions were minimal. For instance, a few parents listed bible study and devotion as parts of their homeschooling day. Concordant with the existing

[76] The news articles used the term "homeschooling" to refer to virtual schooling, remote schooling, and virtual charter schools rather than to private home-based education.

literature, some parents found homeschooling attractive because of the opportunity for more bonding time with their children (Fields-Smith, 2020; Mazama, 2015; Ray, 2015). However, parents often shared that this family time was an unanticipated benefit rather than a primary motivator for homeschooling.

This study found that commonly noted "pull" motivators were unanticipated benefits that did not shape parents' initial decision to homeschool, but likely shaped their decision to continue homeschooling. Moreover, only a few parents highlighted the benefits associated with homeschooling as a "pull" motivator. While only a few parents noted this "pull" explicitly, many of the parents emphasized in interviews that their children experience academic growth, confidence, and comfort in their homeschooling. For these parents, the academic benefits of homeschooling did not motivate their initial decision, but rather these benefits became apparent as their homeschooling unfolded. Lastly, a few parents in this study noted that they were pulled to homeschool given that they could create something new and different for their children's education. These parents see homeschooling as offering them possibility to cultivate a positive learning environment, unrelated to academic "achievement." They see homeschooling as an affirming educational option for their Black children. These findings taken together highlight the heterogeneity of Black families' motivations to homeschool.

Facilitators to Homeschool

While previous studies highlight similar motivations for Black homeschooling families, this study extends the critical conversation by rearticulating what shapes their decision-making to homeschool through the lens of facilitators. Facilitators are the various factors that enable parents to act on their desire to homeschool. These findings contribute to the literature by identifying factors beyond motivators to understand what leads Black parents to homeschool. My study

identifies individual, relational, and contextual facilitators that promote homeschooling as an educational "choice" for Black families.

This study teases out the individual facilitators that enable Black parents' decision to homeschool based on the experiences that parents described. While I could further analyze parents' demographic backgrounds and theorize how these factors may also shape their homeschool decision-making, I instead listened to parents' stories and noted the story points that they thought were important. For example, a couple of parents noted that their family structure and work dynamics (which are individual facilitators) shaped their decision to homeschool. They shared how the ability to have one parent stay at home and one parent work outside of the home enabled them to act on their desire to homeschool. While most of the parents in this study are married, only a couple highlighted their marital status and attendant work arrangements as they shared what led them to homeschool. Equally important were the stories from single parents who had different family structures and shared other facilitators that supported their decision to homeschool. For example, relational facilitators were important to their decision to homeschool – either having relationships with other homeschoolers or having close relationships that served as a network of support. These individual and relational facilitators are important to consider in Black parents' decision-making to homeschool because it illuminates the factors that make homeschooling a reality. This analysis of facilitators contributes to the literature that often highlights the barriers or challenges to Black parents' homeschooling. These obstacles are certainly necessary to discuss, however it is also vital to discuss the factors that support Black parents' decision in the face of these roadblocks.

Lastly, contextual facilitators are critical to Black parents' decisions to homeschool as they help us understand how external factors shape their educational choices. In light of the

Covid-19 pandemic, for example, a couple of parents expressed that these circumstances provided them an opportunity to finally act on their existing motivations to homeschool. Additionally, I could not ignore the influence of Black Lives Matter when conducting this study, and a couple of parents noted that this sociopolitical moment shaped how they understand their educational choices and what they want for their Black children. At times, their desires for their children's lives made them feel that they had limited options to provide intellectually challenging and culturally affirming education. Lastly, the low-regulation homeschooling laws in Wisconsin and Illinois provide ease to homeschoolers. Although, only a few noted this context as they discussed how they began homeschooling, it is important to note the fact that laws are not impediments for Black families who want to homeschool. These findings establish that Black parents' decision to homeschool involves a consideration of their motivations as well as facilitating circumstances and events.

Black Parents' Homeschooling Practices

In Chapter Four, I explored Black parents' pedagogical visions and practices. As discussed, parents incorporated a range of homeschooling practices that were parent- and child-led and curriculum- and interest-based. It was evident in parents' descriptions of their homeschooling days, the resources they used, and the places they went, that they approached and practiced homeschooling in a variety of ways. Similar to what the scant literature on Black parents' homeschooling practices documents, the Black parents in this study homeschooled in multiple spaces, in and outside of the home, and often incorporated learning modes and content that extend beyond that of traditional schools (Fields-Smith, 2020; Mazama, 2016). Black parents' homeschooling practices reflect the freedom they have learning based on how they approach and engage in homeschooling, yet parents also shared feeling constrained in their

homeschooling practice because of dominant norms of U.S. schooling. These norms, at times, led them to reproduce dominant schooling practices in their homeschooling (e.g., having and following a rigid schedule and teaching based on the state's grade-level guidelines).

Moreover, parents' homeschooling visions informed how they approached and practiced teaching and learning with their children. For example, if they envisioned that their homeschooling would incorporate a lot of Black history and culture, they then implemented an Afrocentric pedagogy and curriculum. If they wanted their children to lead their learning, they adopted unschooling methods. If they wanted their children to go to college, they focused on academics and extracurriculars. It is important to elucidate parents' visions for their children's education in order to unpack their homeschooling approaches and pedagogical choices.

Despite parents' explicit visions for their children's education, they all faced challenges in their homeschooling practices. Some of these challenges entailed the tensions parents felt between teaching how they wanted and teaching what state guidelines indicated. Although both Wisconsin and Illinois require that specific subjects be taught in homeschooling, they do not enforce these guidelines because they do not have testing requirements. Even without this "accountability measure" in place, parents still feel responsible for teaching these topics to their children. This responsibility stems not necessarily from their vision for their children's education but rather from what they believe their children need in order to be "successful" in an anti-Black neoliberal society. These findings build upon the work by McDowell et al (2000) that notes the "bondage" that Black parents feel as they homeschool. This raises questions about the purpose and meaning of education from diverse perspectives.

Black Homeschooled Youth

Chapter Five explored homeschooling through the perspectives of young people, whom the homeschooling literature often overlooks. Previous literature focuses on young Black homeschoolers' academic performances compared to their counterparts in traditional schools and their critical thoughts about traditional schooling. This study contributes to the literature by centering how Black youth understand their homeschooling experiences. In other words, it does not emphasize the school as a point of comparison. Young Black homeschoolers' descriptions of their experiences illuminate not only what homeschooling is like for them, but also reveal how they make sense of learning at home versus in (their perceptions of) traditional schools. Each youth understands their homeschooling to be a more positive learning experience than they (would) have had in traditional school, emphasizing the aspects of freedom and choice that homeschool offers them. While a few young people were generally satisfied with their homeschooling experiences, a few young people pushed the bounds of their learning – they highlighted a desire to learn more or to learn in a different way. Young people who hoped to change aspects of their homeschooling did not want to change what they were learning; in fact, they described enjoying the content and, if anything, wanted more of it. Instead, they shared wanting to change how they approached this learning. They pushed back on instructional methods such as spending large blocks of time homeschooling and completing worksheets that they find too challenging.

These young people's homeschooling experiences illuminate the possibilities for educating Black children despite the constraints imposed on them. Their visions of homeschooling incorporate practices that reject a focus on academics and instead centers rest and play. These findings call into question studies that focus purely on academics, measure young

Black people's value on this "achievement" scale, and center adults' ideas about "a good education." As we raise questions about educational needs and best practices, it is important to center young Black people in particular to understand how to create learning experiences that are affirming for them.

Contributions to BlackCrit in Education

This research has empirical and theoretical contributions to the growing scholarship on Black homeschoolers. While other studies on Black homeschooling utilize sociological and Afrocentric theories –emphasizing the roles of race and racism in traditional schooling in shaping Black parents' homeschooling motivations and experiences – this study employs BlackCrit as a theoretical frame to understand Black families homeschooling in Wisconsin and Illinois. Using antiblackness as a lens, the research findings from this dissertation highlight the specificity of being Black in schools, in deciding to homeschool, and in practicing homeschooling.

As some parents discussed their experiences in schools that pushed them to homeschool, BlackCrit allowed me to analyze the more detailed ways that (anti)Blackness continues to matter. Parents shared the implicit and explicit ways that their identities as Black and African American shaped their homeschool decision and practice. This finding demonstrates the prevalence of (anti)Blackness shaping Black parents' decision-making – albeit in different ways. Some parents described it as central to their decision, while others noted that it was less salient. While none of us are immune to antiblackness, a couple parents in this study did not discuss the centrality of being Black or antiblackness to their educational decision-making. They expressed that their goals for homeschooling are high academic performance and college preparedness. This raises questions about Black parents' responses to antiblackness. Other parents also described their

homeschooling goals for their children in relation to neoliberal standards that encourage "achievement" and competition in U.S. schooling. These stated goals raise questions about the purpose of education and the implicit external pressures on Black homeschooling families to prepare their children for the world as it exists rather than for its transformation. While homeschooling allows Black parents more freedom and autonomy over their children's education than traditional schooling, some still feel bound to teach in ways that society accepts. As a few parents noted, homeschooling Black children was an "unhappy paradox" (McDowell et al., 2000). Even with homeschooling goals such as self-directed learning and Black history and culture curricula, they at times questioned their homeschooling practices as they thought about their Black children's economic futures (e.g., college and work).

Further, I conducted this research during the height of the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, when anti-Black sentiments and violence were hyper-visible and the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated longstanding health and economic inequities for Black people. BlackCrit allowed for a specific examination of how their Blackness shaped their educational decision-making and homeschooling practices in this sociopolitical moment. Crises open a portal to create new ways of existing. Parents highlighted their homeschooling visions and practices that they hoped would affirm their children despite antiblackness in society.

While BlackCrit is helpful in understanding what some Black parents are resisting via homeschooling, it also "create[s] space for Black liberatory fantasy" (Dumas & ross, 2016). Black liberatory fantasy in education is undertheorized and the findings from this study encourage liberatory fantasy in different ways. Black homeschooling, often framed as an act of self-determination and protest by previous studies and parents in this study alike, withdraws from a traditional schooling system that is rooted in antiblackness and capitalism. As a parent in this

study noted when she filed her form to start homeschooling, she "felt the chain break" as she "detached" from the school system. Understanding homeschooling as an emancipatory practice contributes to the Black liberatory fantasy by rejecting current systems that are experienced and well-documented as harmful. Further, as some parents described their experiences and perceptions of schools, they shared their desire to escape these anti-Black experiences in particular, which is a manifestation of fugitive and liberatory practice.

Black young people are at the center of Black liberatory fantasy. Writing about theory as a liberatory practice, hooks (1994) proposes that "children make the best theorists" (pg. 59). She elaborates on her own experiences: "Whenever I tried in childhood to compel folks around me to do things differently, to look at the world differently, using theory as intervention, as a way to challenge the status quo, I was punished" (p. 60). Engaging in Black liberatory fantasy means engaging in anti-oppression in various ways, including disrupting adultist practices that position young people as unknowledgeable or unworthy of contributing their perspectives. Young Black homeschoolers offer much needed insight into Black liberatory fantasy because they have less school conditioning. As young Black homeschoolers experience learning in a "non-traditional" way, their experiences have the potential to guide others toward Black liberatory fantasy in education. Thus, framing Black homeschooling families within this tenet encourages us to imagine new possibilities for Black people in education and beyond.

Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice

This in-depth analysis of Black homeschooling families' motivations, visions, practices, and challenges has implications for efforts to rethink educational possibilities in this sociopolitical moment. This dissertation furthers educational research, policy, and practice

through the perspectives of Black homeschooling families. It offers lessons for the individual, family, school, and policy levels.

Future Research

It is important for future research on Black homeschooling to extend the findings from this dissertation study. While this study offers a multitude of contributions to research findings, methods, and theory on Black homeschooling, it does not exhaust the questions of why and how Black families homeschool. Future research can utilize these findings to further investigate Black parents' decision-making to homeschool, how they approach and engage in homeschooling, and how young Black homeschoolers understand their learning experiences. These areas of further exploration can provide additional empirical data and contribute to the growing body of literature on Black homeschoolers. Further, future research can continue to explore racial neoliberalism and its relationship to Black homeschoolers.

Black homeschooling parents' pedagogy is a much-needed area of research. Future research can examine their homeschool approaches and practices – augmenting the scant empirical data on Black homeschooling – and connect them to various bodies of literature on pedagogy. Moreover, continuing to research understudied areas in the Midwest can offer more insight into regional and racial contexts that shape Black parents' homeschooling motivations and practices. As I noted earlier in this chapter, the reasons why some parents in this study wanted to homeschool resonated with other parents even if they did not initially share these same motivations. Instead, many parents spoke about the unaccounted benefits or positive outcomes they saw as they homeschooled. As parents discussed these pleasant surprises, it seemed to me that they acted as "new motivations" to continue homeschooling. My future research and others can continue to explore what sustains Black families' homeschooling practice, particularly in

spite of challenges. This line of research is an important undertaking to document the ongoing decision-making that Black parents engage in as they home educate their children.

This study included Black young people in various aspects of the research process and offers insight into research methods that engage with children. The research also contributes to humanizing and decolonial research methods with young people as well as adults. Future writings will contribute to methodological reflections on this study's research practices, particularly as they relate to engaging young people in research. It is crucial for researchers to include and center young Black homeschoolers in future research on Black homeschooling. Researchers must engage in humanizing research practices as they do so and be intentional about not producing damage-centered research (Tuck, 2009). While it is critical for research on Black homeschool youth and parents to continue to expand, it is also important that research on Black homeschooling also benefits Black homeschooling families and communities. This can be incorporated into research practices that are collaborative as well as research exploration on the topics that Black homeschool parents and youth view as meaningful to them. Moreover, researchers must share a commitment to disseminating information learned from studying Black homeschoolers families to encourage transformative education practices.

Policy Recommendations

Reform may happen to make things incrementally better, however, no policy "solution" will eradicate the antiblackness inherent to schools. Centuries of strategies demonstrate the ever-partial success of policy change. In the revolutionary meantime, I offer the following suggestions for policymakers and school reformists from the perspective of families in this study. The perspective of Black homeschooling families contributes to discussions on education reform (Puga, 2019). As Fields-Smith (2015) notes, "if school reformists want to know how to improve

public schools, part of the answer must come from those families who have experienced them but chose to homeschool" (p. 278). As parents in focus group discussions thought about what traditional schools could do to make them want to send their children (back) to school, many were skeptical about what schools could offer them. When considering whether there were any redeeming qualities in the school system, one parent shared:

> ...Let me tell you, they just need to scrap it, scrap it, scrap it because it was built on white supremacy. End of discussion, right, and you can't fix that... You putting a band aid on something that needs total reconstruction. And that's, that's facts... school systems in general were not designed for inclusivity, diversity, equity – I mean none of that. It was none of that. It was, let's teach little rich white kids, that's how public school system started. So, you need to scrap it and start over [*laughs*]. And that's a lot of money, resources, and time, and people just aren't – their mindset isn't there because in order to do that, you have to acknowledge first … there was an issue with it. We're not at a place in America that we're ready to acknowledge that. Once you acknowledge it, then you can fix it, but we still on the baby step, we can't even acknowledge it.

For one, many believed schools were inherently oppressive spaces not created for Black people and "built to tear you down." Others highlighted how schools had limited offerings for families. Moreover, many emphasized the possibilities and benefits they had in their homeschool practice and therefore could not fathom why they would stop homeschooling to (re)enroll their children in a school system. One parent stated, "there is so much that has to change from the administration down just to the day-to-day basics of what the teachers are teaching the kids" as she contemplated what schools could do for her family. Based on these generative discussions with parents, here are some of their recommendations for schools:

1. Create a learning environment where students do not have "work thrown at them."
2. Give teachers autonomy, rather than "forcing" them to teach certain things.
3. Teach accurate history, which would automatically include Black history.
4. Invest in teachers that look like our children (i.e., Black teachers).

These recommendations are not new.

The findings from this study encourage schools to undergo a radical paradigm shift, in which educators and policymakers wholly re-envision learning. As we consider education for Black families, as Bettina Love notes, we must be committed to educational "freedom" not "reform" (2019). What traditional education systems can do is consider Black homeschooling as spaces that aim to disrupt antiblackness and affirm Black youth. They can look to Black homeschooling parents' motivations, practices, and visions and Black young people's perspectives on learning for help understanding the limitations and constraints of their schooling systems. They can push themselves to actively combat antiblackness and collaborate with Black families. As a Black mother and scholar, I am skeptical of large-scale transformation taking place in schools as schools function to serve an anti-Black, capitalist society (Dumas, 2016). However, on a smaller level (e.g. particular classrooms or organizations with educators who are unapologetically and fiercely committed to the practice of educational freedom) these learnings from Black homeschool families can inform educators' practices.

Practice

We can create various opportunities to learn from Black young people, including in educational research and practice. This study can inform the work of educators across settings to co-create affirming educational experiences with Black young people and their families. Those who do not see Black families contributing anything of value to educational practice in schools and organizations must first engage in disciplined unlearning to disrupt anti-Black logics before they can collaborate with Black families in education. For those who are unwilling to learn and unlearn, this line of research and practice is not for you.

All of the parents in this study have goals to create the best educational experience for their children, which included many aspects of learning that were not welcomed or incorporated

into school practices. Moreover, some parents' view partnering with their children as the best way to ensure they experience relevant and affirming learning experiences. The families in this study described how they incorporate a range of educational experiences into their homeschool. These parents can continue to expand their practices through examining their educational visions and what their children desire. Parents' motivations and practices homeschooling highlight the importance of relationships and care with their children as they learned together and the importance of shifting power in the parent-child and teacher-learner relationships.

It is critical for adult educators, including parents, teachers, and youth workers, to listen to what young people think about their educational experiences. In educational practice, just allow young people to lead their learning, and offer them guidance and support rather than rules and punishment when they challenge the status quo of education. If school leaders and educators are committed to supporting Black youth and parents in school environments, they must listen to the concerns and goals that Black families have. Further, they must unapologetically resist school practices and policies that create harm. This study challenges and encourages those who are up for the task to co-create educational spaces to re-imagine learning for Black youth and their families.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. U.S. Census Bureau's Pulse Survey: Relevant Charts & Table

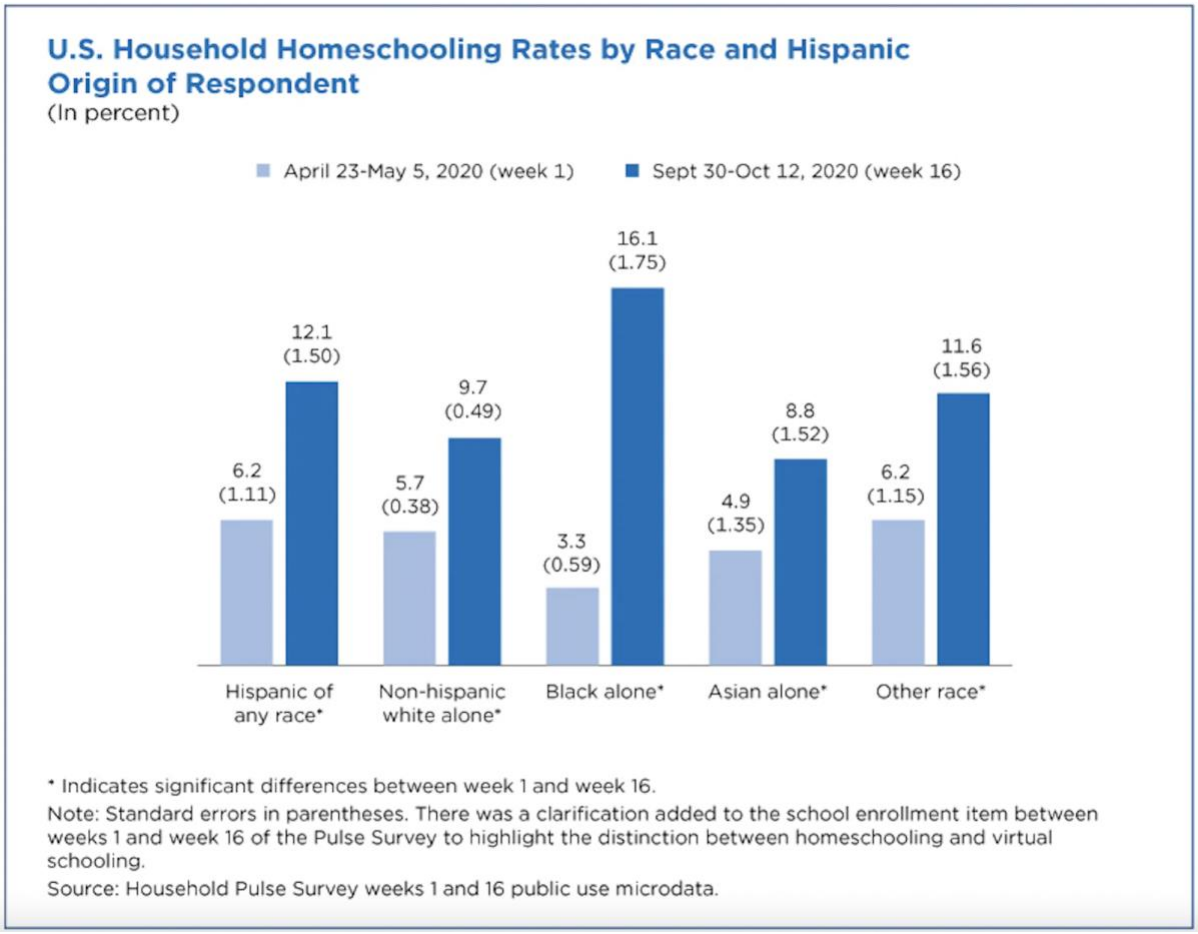

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Table 1.

Homeschooling Rates of Households by State

State	April 23-May 5, 2020 (week 1)		Sept. 30-Oct. 12, 2020 (week 16)		
	Percent	Standard error	Percent	Standard error	Difference
Alabama	5.0	1.62	12.1	2.93	*7.1
Alaska	9.6	1.92	27.5	3.63	*17.9
Arizona	5.4	2.01	13.0	2.97	*7.6
Arkansas	6.8	1.85	10.3	2.80	3.5
California	8.6	1.77	8.7	1.40	0.1
Colorado	3.4	1.02	8.7	1.65	*5.3
Connecticut	2.5	0.98	7.5	2.31	*5.0
Delaware	8.9	3.23	9.1	3.03	0.2
District of Columbia	7.0	5.24	10.3	3.87	3.3
Florida	5.0	1.41	18.1	2.84	*13.1
Georgia	7.1	1.88	16.0	4.12	*8.9
Hawaii	4.5	2.36	8.1	2.99	3.6
Idaho	8.0	1.87	10.3	2.17	2.3
Illinois	2.1	0.79	5.4	1.45	*3.3
Indiana	5.4	1.66	10.0	2.27	4.7
Iowa	6.6	3.78	6.0	1.58	-0.6
Kansas	2.4	0.91	10.1	1.97	*7.7
Kentucky	7.7	2.65	6.5	1.41	-1.2
Louisiana	6.2	1.90	14.5	3.41	*8.3
Maine	4.1	1.43	11.6	3.66	*7.6
Maryland	4.4	1.60	6.1	1.41	1.7
Massachusetts	1.5	0.56	12.1	2.61	*10.6
Michigan	5.3	1.64	11.3	2.30	*6.0
Minnesota	4.6	1.29	9.7	1.88	*5.1
Mississippi	3.4	1.09	15.0	3.82	*11.6
Missouri	5.9	1.67	10.9	2.68	5.0
Montana	8.2	2.85	18.3	3.62	*10.1
Nebraska	3.0	0.98	6.5	1.79	*3.5
Nevada	2.5	0.85	13.1	2.17	*10.6
New Hampshire	3.4	1.15	6.3	2.66	2.9
New Jersey	4.7	2.03	10.7	3.20	6.1
New Mexico	6.4	1.99	14.3	3.60	*8.0
New York	1.2	0.60	10.1	2.08	*9.0
North Carolina	5.0	1.30	9.4	3.59	4.4
North Dakota	2.8	1.33	8.2	2.72	*5.4
Ohio	6.1	1.93	9.4	2.84	3.3
Oklahoma	7.7	1.81	20.1	3.61	*12.4
Oregon	8.3	2.53	13.0	1.96	4.7
Pennsylvania	7.3	1.68	10.8	2.16	3.5
Rhode Island	4.4	2.40	7.3	2.52	3.0
South Carolina	6.4	2.08	13.2	3.74	6.8
South Dakota	6.5	2.44	12.5	2.92	6.0
Tennessee	5.4	1.61	13.2	2.45	*7.8
Texas	4.5	0.95	12.3	2.27	*7.8
Utah	5.7	2.07	11.2	1.54	*5.5
Vermont	4.1	1.80	16.9	4.83	*12.8
Virginia	7.9	2.70	9.4	2.19	1.5
Washington	6.6	1.90	8.1	1.82	1.5
West Virginia	5.4	1.54	16.6	4.05	*11.2
Wisconsin	3.5	1.53	8.1	1.98	*4.7
Wyoming	6.5	2.12	12.9	3.69	6.4

* Significant difference between weeks 1 and 16.

Note: There was a clarification added to the school enrollment item between weeks 1 and 16 of the Household Pulse Survey to highlight the distinction between homeschooling and virtual schooling.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey weeks 1 and 16 public use microdata.

Eggleston, C., & Fields, J. (2021) Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey Shows Significant Increase in Homeschooling Rates in Fall 2020. United States Census Bureau. Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/03/homeschooling-on-the-rise-during-covid-19-pandemic.html

Appendix 2. Homeschool Requirements Across the United States

The following images from the Coalition for Responsible Home Education break down homeschool requirements by state. These categories are not mutually exclusive, for example, a state may require homeschool annual notice but not have homeschool parent qualification requirements, while another state may require notice and parents to have certain certifications:

Image 1: Homeschool Notice

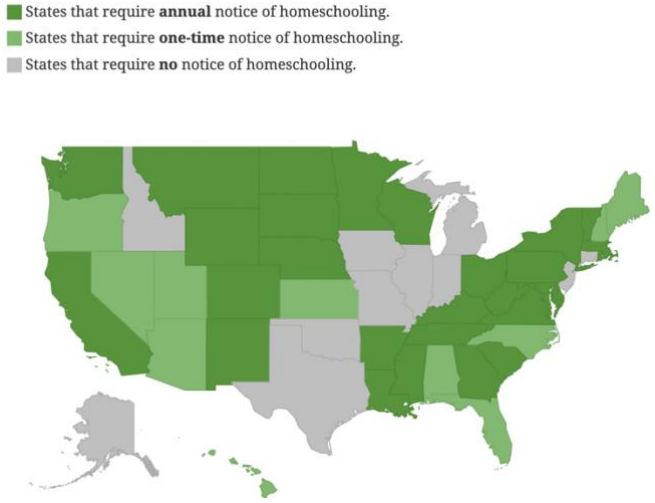

Image 1 Description: Homeschool Notice requirements by state in the United Sates. Wisconsin is a state "that require[s] annual notice of homeschooling" and Illinois is a state "that require[s] no notice of homeschooling."

Image 2: Homeschool Options

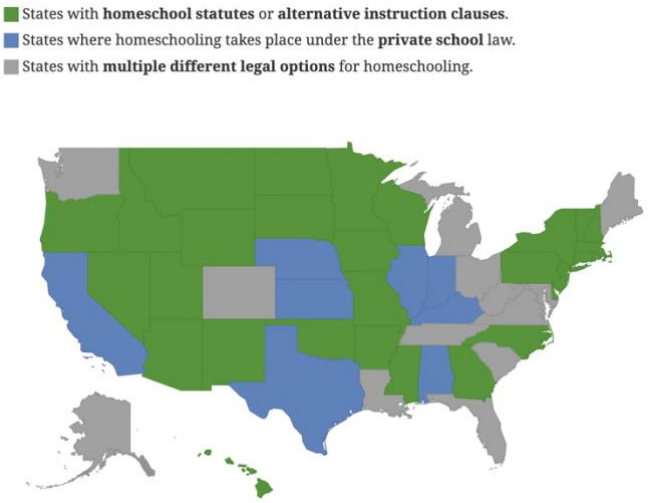

Image 2 Description: Homeschool Options by state in the United States. Wisconsin is a state "with homeschool statutes or alternative instruction clauses" and Illinois is a state "where homeschooling takes place under the private school law."

Image 3: Subjects & Instruction

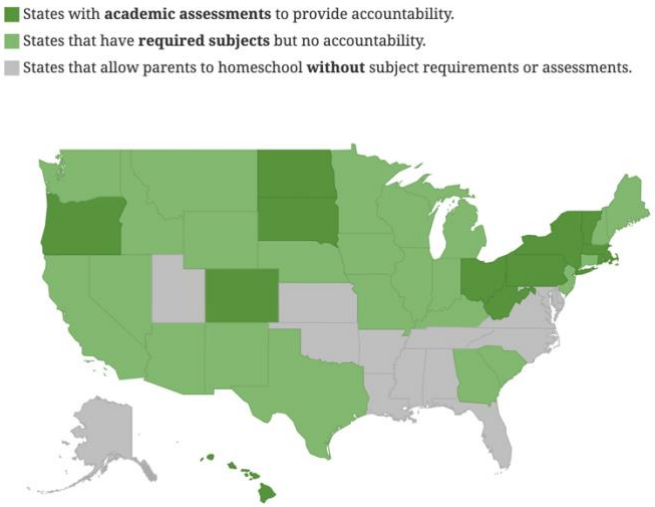

Image 3 Description: Subjects & Instruction requirements by state in the United States. Wisconsin and Illinois are both "states that have required subjects but no accountability."

Image 4: Assessment & Intervention

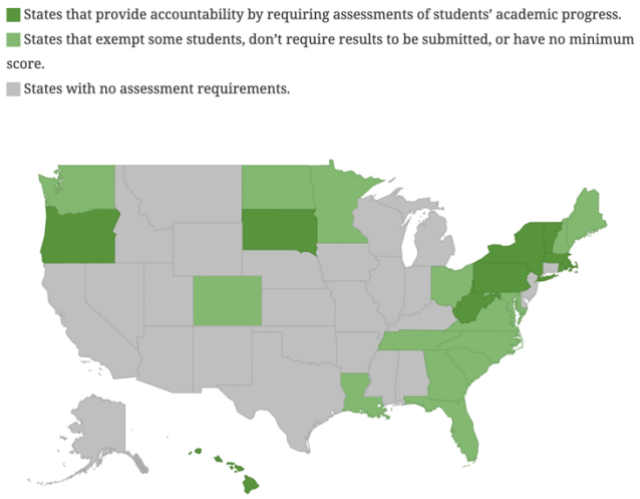

Image 4 Description: Assessments & Intervention requirements by state in the United States. Wisconsin and Illinois are both "states with no assessment requirements."

Source of Images 1-4:
Inside Homeschool Policy. (2021, March 24). Coalition for Responsible Home Education. https://responsiblehomeschooling.org/research/current-policy/

Appendix 3. Parent Demographic Questionnaire

Parents/Caregivers Demographic Sheet
Research Study: Black Homeschooling: Aspirations, Challenges and Opportunities

Your racial identity:

Your gender identity:

Your age:

City, State:

Racial demographics of your neighborhood (e.g. predominantly Black, predominantly white, racially mixed):

Your religious/spiritual affiliation (if applicable):

How many children do you have?

Please list their gender identity and age (e.g. boy, 12):

Number of years homeschooling:

Name and location of schools your children have previously attended (if applicable):

Age, grade, gender identity and current school of any children who are not homeschooled (if applicable):

How many people are living in your household?

Your occupation:

Marital Status:

Highest level of education completed:

Annual household income:

Partner/Spouse info (if applicable)
Age:
Racial Identity:
Gender Identity:
Occupation:
Highest Level of Education Completed:

Appendix 4. Semi-Structured Parent Interview Protocol

Individual Black Homeschooling Parents/Caregivers Semi-Structured Interview Protocol
Parents/caregivers will complete demographic sheet prior to conducting the interview.

BACKGROUND

1. Tell me about yourself?
2. You have ___ child(ren). What has it been like raising them so far?

DECISION TO LEAVE/REASON FOR HOMESCHOOLING

3. It says that you've been homeschooling for ____ years. Can you tell me about how you ended up homeschooling?
    1. What things had an impact on you deciding to homeschool?
4. When your child(ren) was enrolled in school, what was that like for you?
    1. How did you engage with/in the school?
    2. Can you share a story about your experiences with your child's old school (if applicable) that led you to homeschool?
5. How did you feel when you decided to take your child out of the school?
6. What was the conversation like with your child(ren)?
7. What relationship, if any, do you still have with your child(ren)'s old school/ the local schools?

PEDAGOGY

8. What does a typical day for your family look like?
9. Who is involved in your homeschooling?
10. What do you all do?
11. What places, if any, do you go to?
12. Who helps you in your homeschooling? In what ways do they help?

CURRICULUM & CONTENT

13. What topics do you teach and why?
14. How do you think this impacts the learning of your children?

RACE

15. What does being Black mean to you?
16. What, if anything, do you tell your child about being Black?
17. How does being Black shape your decision to homeschool, if at all?
18. How does being Black shape your homeschooling experiences, if at all?
19. Do you teach your children anything about race? Why/why not?
    1. If yes- What do you say?
    2. If no- Do you think they learn about race in other ways?
20. Do you teach your children anything about racism? Why/why not?
    1. If yes- What do you say?
    2. If no- Do you think they learn about racism in other ways?

PERCEPTIONS OF HOMESCHOOLING

21. If someone asked you, "What is homeschooling?" How would you define that?
22. What are some stereotypes/misconceptions you've heard about homeschooling?
    1. Where/from whom did you hear these stereotypes?

PROCESS

23. What resources help facilitate you being able to homeschool?
24. What do you find challenging as you homeschool?
25. If you had to guess, how much money do you think you spend on homeschooling?
    1. And what do you spend this money on?
    2. What else might you need to homeschool?
26. If you could create an ideal homeschooling experience, what would it look like? What would be included? What would you want to do?

UNDERSTANDING OF HOMESCHOOLING

27. What do you think the impact of homeschooling has been on you?
    1. Your children?
    2. Your family?
28. [*Recap some things they do and ask*] So, what do you do to take care of yourself as you homeschool?
    1. How do you handle/cope with the stress of homeschooling?
29. What is the most important part of homeschooling for you and why?
30. What do you hope to accomplish homeschooling your children?
31. What is something that you've learned since homeschooling?
32. How, if at all, has your homeschooling evolved over time?

TENSIONS

33. How do you feel about your decision to homeschool now?
34. What do your family and friends say about your decision to homeschool?
35. How do you see your decision to homeschool fitting in with the education of Black students more broadly?
36. If you had to decide to homeschool again, would you do it all over again?
37. Is there anything unsettling about your decision to homeschool?

CLOSING

38. What would you tell other Black families that might be considering homeschooling?
39. Is there anything else you would like to add that I haven't already asked, that would be helpful in understanding your experiences homeschooling?
40. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix 5. Semi-Structured Parent Focus Group Protocol

Semi-Structured Focus Group Protocol for Black Homeschooling Parents/Caregivers
[Welcome everyone, go over info sheet, obtain consent, then start with a warmup activity]

Warm up activity: *I emailed the prompt to our warmup activity, which was to "find something in your home that represents your homeschooling." Does everyone have something to show and share? (If not, give participants 2 minutes to find something for the warmup activity).*

As we're in this space having a group discussion about homeschooling, please feel free to utilize the chat if you want to add things or respond to others who are speaking. If you have a question you want to pose, you can include it in the chat as well. I'll be monitoring it. We won't go in any particular order with the questions- I hope this is more of a free-flowing conversation, so jump in as you feel comfortable. As we know, Black people are a diverse group of people and we have that diversity in our experiences as well, so as you're sharing speak your truth, experiences and ideas and respect others.

BACKGROUND
For the warmup activity, we will just go popcorn style. In your introductions please share:

1) Your name, number of child(ren) you're homeschooling, ages of child(ren), and what you found to share and why? [Perhaps, share a story?]

PEDAGOGY/CURRICULUM
2) Share your favorite subject to teach and why? [Can you share a story of you teaching/learning in that subject]
3) What is your child's favorite thing to learn about?

CONNECTIONS/RELATIONSHIPS
4) What are some ways that you connect your child(ren) with other children?
5) What are some ways you connect with other Black homeschoolers?
6) How would you like to connect with other Black homeschoolers?

CRITIQUES/TENSIONS
7) In this study, parents shared various homeschooling goals that they have for their children's education. When thinking about your personal educational goals, how, if at all, do they align with goals outlined by your school, district, or state?
a. What do you do when your educational goals conflict with those outlined by the state?
b. How, if at all, do you incorporate or navigate what is suggested/mandated learning by the department of education in your own homeschooling?
c. How do you grapple with your own immediate goals for your child's education, knowing that potential colleges or jobs may value different things?
d. What tensions, if any, do you feel/have as you homeschool your children and think about the learning that is happening in schools?

8) Most homeschooling parents in my study had their children previously enrolled in school, then took them out to homeschool for a variety of reason. What would it take for your kids to go/go back to school?

a. Can schools (public or private) do anything to redeem themselves?
b. What can schools do to get you to enroll your child(ren), if anything?
c. Do you believe that schools can change?
d. What changes would you want to see?

9) In an article from 2020, a writer states, "Homeschooling not only violates children's right to a "meaningful education" and their right to be protected from potential child abuse, but may keep them from contributing positively to a democratic society." What do you all think about this statement?

a. Is there anything you agree with? Why?
b. Is there anything you disagree with? Why?
c. This article was written about homeschoolers generally, how, if at all, do you think your experiences are captured in this statement?
d. What regulations, if any, do you think should be used for homeschooling families?

10) Another critique about homeschooling is that it takes away funding and resources from local schools that serve more students and families, and that homeschooling is a form of privatization. What are your thoughts about this?

a. Have you ever thought about the impact that your family homeschooling could have on schools? [ask for examples]
b. What do you think about funding and resources for homeschooling families?
a. Should there be some?
b. Would you want some?
c. What do you see as the potential pros and cons of having funding for homeschoolers?

11) Some people believe that Black families homeschooling is an understandable, but individualized decision that cannot create large-scale transformations in education that are necessary for a majority of Black families. How would you respond to this?

a. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
b. Is this something you considered when you decided to homeschool?
c. How do you think large-scale transformations in education for Black families can be created?

12) In my study, a lot of themes are coming up. I wanted to share the reasons why parents in my study wanted to homeschool. [Share screen and read bullet points].

a. What do you all think about this?
b. Are there any that stand out to you as being influential in your decision to homeschool?
c. Anything that I am missing about why you wanted to homeschool?

13) In my study, a lot of themes are coming up. One thing that is important to note is differences in how parents understand Blackness and how it relates to their homeschooling experiences. For some, being Black or African American is very central to their experiences, while for others, not so much.

a. What do you all think about this?
b. Could you all talk more about this theme?
c. What stands out to you?
d. Does this theme reflect your individual experiences?

CLOSING

14) What do you want other people to know about Black homeschoolers?
15) What piece of advice would you offer to other Black homeschoolers on the call?

At the end of the focus group, I will share the Google Form sheet in the chat and have participants fill out the form before the Zoom meeting ends. In the form they will note the best way for compensation as well as respond to questions about connecting with other Black homeschoolers in the study.

Appendix 6. Semi-Structured First Interview Protocol with Youth

Youth Semi-Structured Interview Protocol (ages 6-8)
[*Set aside time to play/friendly conversation*] "Let's draw together."

WARM UP

1. Can you draw a picture of you during homeschool?
    a. What's happening in the picture you drew?
        i. Where are you in the picture?
        ii. What are you doing?
        iii. Who is with you?
        iv. What are they doing?

BACKGROUND/RAPPORT-BUILDING WITH YOUTH

2. Tell me about yourself?
    a. What's your favorite color?
    b. What's your favorite food?
    c. If you could pick a superpower, what would it be?
    d. What do you like about yourself? Why?

LEARNING AT HOME

3. [If applicable] How was it at your old school?
    a. What did you learn?
    b. What did you like about it?
    c. What did you dislike about it?
    d. Do you still have friends from your old school?
4. What do you learn at home now?
    a. What do you do?
    b. Who do you homeschool with?
    c. Where are some places you go?
5. If someone asked you, "What is homeschooling?" what would you tell them?

FEELINGS ABOUT HOMESCHOOL

6. How does it feel to be homeschooled?
    a. What are some things, if any, that you like about it?
    b. What are some things, if any, that you don't like about it?
    c. Is there anything you would change about homeschooling?
    If yes- What would you change and why?
7. What is the best part of homeschool?
    a. What are some of your favorite things to do? Why?
    b. What are some of the best things to learn? Why?
8. What is your least favorite part of homeschool? Why?
    What isn't the best part of homeschool? Why?
9. What do you want to do in homeschool?
    a. If you could create your day, what would it look like?

RACE

10. Do you learn about being Black?
    a. If yes- What have you learned about it? Where/from whom?
    b. If no- Do you have questions about it?
11. Do you learn about race or racism?
    a. If yes- What do you learn about it? Where/from whom?
    b. If no- What would you want to learn about it, if anything?

CLOSING

12. Is there anything else you want to tell me about yourself and being homeschooled?
13. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you very much for talking and playing with me! We are all done, but when I am away, I want to know if you will think about using this sketchpad/camera/journal to take draw/ pictures/write about your homeschooling? With your permission, I'd like to talk about what you drew/ took pictures of/wrote about.

Appendix 7. Youth Demographic Sheet

Youth Demographic Sheet

Research Study: Black Homeschooling: Aspirations, Challenges and Opportunities

Your age:

City, State:

Your racial identity:

Your gender identity:

Racial demographics of your neighborhood (e.g. mostly Black, mostly white, racially mixed, etc):

Your religion/spirituality (if applicable):

How long have you been homeschooling?

Have you attended school before?

What school did you attend? (if applicable)

Grade (if applicable):

Your occupation (if applicable):

Appendix 8. Materials for Focal Youth Homeschooling Project

Image Description: Pictured is a bookbag, folder, composition notebook, sketchbook, digital camera, SIM card, camera case, pens, pencils, and color pencils. These materials were provided to youth who participated in the study.

Image Description: Picture are fidgets that I provided youth during in-person interviews. This was provide them with something to play with as we talked, hopefully to support their comfort.

Appendix 9. Focal Youth Homeschooling Project Prompts

Journal about, draw, and take photos of your experiences homeschooling!

Use these prompts to guide your thoughts as you write, draw and take photos.

Please also include anything that you feel is important to write about, draw or take pictures of related to homeschooling and being Black/African American. Please do not take any photos of anyone that has not agreed to be in this project.

Writing prompts:
What is it like for me to be Black/African American/_____?

What is it like for me to be a homeschooler?

How is it being homeschooled in [region]?

What kind of learning experience do I want?

Drawing prompts:
Draw anything that represents your experiences homeschooling.

Draw anything that represents being a Black/African American/_____ youth.

Photo-taking prompts:
Take photos of anything that represents your experiences homeschooling.

Take photos of anything that represents being a Black/African American/_____ youth.

Appendix 10. Semi-Structured Final Interview Protocol with Youth

Black Youth Focal Family Semi-Structured Interview/Debrief (Journal) (Ages 6-18)
This interview will take place at the end of phase 3 research. Youth will be asked to give assent to participate in the final debrief interview. No additional demographic information will be obtained.

"You spent the last couple of months journaling about homeschooling."

1. How did it go?
    a. What was easy about journaling?
    b. What was difficult about journaling?
2. What, if anything, would you like to share from your journal?
    a. Can you share something you thought or wrote about as a Black youth in [region]?
    b. Can you think of a story to share?
    c. Can you share something you thought or wrote about as a Black homeschooler?
    d. Can you think of a story to share?
    e. Can you share something you thought or wrote about in regard to the learning experiences you want?
    f. Can you think of a story to share?
    g. Was there anything else from the journal or this project that you want to share with me?
    h. Do you have any questions for me?

Black Youth Focal Family Semi-Structured Interview/Debrief (Photo Taking) (Ages 6-18)
"You spent the last couple of months taking pictures about your experiences homeschooling"

1. How did it go?
    a. What was easy about the process?
    b. What was difficult about the process?
2. Can you show me the pictures you took?
3. What's your favorite picture? Why?
4. Pick 5 more pictures that really stand out to you.
    1. Describe picture #1.
        a. What is happening in your picture?
        b. Why did you take a picture of this?
        c. What does this picture tell us about your experiences being Black/ as a homeschooler?
    2. Describe picture #2.
        a. What is happening in your picture?
        b. Why did you take a picture of this?
        c. What does this picture tell us about your experiences being Black/ as a homeschooler?

[*So on until all 5 photos are discussed*]

5. How can these picture provide adults with more information about educating Black youth?
6. Is there anything else about these photos that you liked to share?
7. Do you have any questions for me?

Black Youth Focal Family Semi-Structured Interview/Debrief (Drawing) (Ages 6-18)

"You spent the last couple of months drawing about homeschooling."

2. How did it go?
    a. What was easy about drawing?
    b. What was difficult about drawing?
3. What, if anything, would you like to share from your drawings?
    i. Can you think of a story to share?
    j. Was there anything else from your drawings or this project that you want to share with me?
4. Do you have any questions for me?