HOMESCHOOLING DURING COVID-19: A CASE STUDY

Rebecca Z. Johnson
rebjohns@nmu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.nmu.edu/theses

Part of the Other Education Commons

Recommended Citation
https://commons.nmu.edu/theses/671

This Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Works at NMU Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in All NMU Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of NMU Commons. For more information, please contact kmcdonou@nmu.edu,bsarjean@nmu.edu.
HOMESCHOOLING DURING COVID-19: A CASE STUDY

By

Rebecca Z. Johnson

THESIS

Submitted to
Northern Michigan University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of

EDUCATION SPECIALIST

Office of Graduate Education and Research

January 2021
SIGNATURE APPROVAL FORM

HOMESCHOOLING DURING COVID-19: A CASE STUDY

This thesis by Rebecca Z. Johnson is recommended for approval by the student’s Thesis Committee and Department Head in the Department of Education, Leadership, and Public Service and by the Dean of Graduate Education and Research.

committee Chair: Abby R. Cameron-Standerford, Ed.D. Date

First Reader: Bethney M. Bergh, Ph.D. Date

Second Reader: Sarah Kemppainen, Ed.D. Date

Department Head: Joseph Lubig, Ed.D. Date

Lisa Schade Eckert, Ph.D. Date
Dean of Graduate Education and Research
ABSTRACT

HOMESCHOOLING DURING COVID-19: A CASE STUDY

By

Rebecca Z. Johnson

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the lived experiences of homeschool families during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically how they managed their day to include teaching elementary school-aged children in the rural Midwestern United States. This qualitative case study allowed the researcher to analyze the phenomenon of homeschooling during a global pandemic, and the strategies necessary to balance home and schooling during unprecedented times. The data for this case study included a pre-interview questionnaire, an interview, and primary source documents from two homeschool families. The means by which the homeschool families organized their day to include the teaching of elementary school-age children was studied along with the successes and challenges of homeschooling.

The analysis of data yielded the following results: While each participant had varying levels of homeschool experience, each individual discussed the significance of support networks as part of the homeschool or unschool experience. Additionally, both participants discussed the challenges of balancing home, work, school, and childcare. Finally, the analysis showed that both participants enjoyed working with their children, and found it rewarding when their children thrived.

Keywords: COVID-19, distance learning, homeschooling, pandemic, reopening schools, school closures, unschooling
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my Dad, Zuhair N. Bashi (October 21, 1943 - April 5, 2020),

who exemplified a passion for learning, equality, and love for all.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

- Research Problem ................................................................. 1
- Research Purpose ...................................................................... 2
- Research Purpose ...................................................................... 4
- Research Question ..................................................................... 4
- Theoretical Framework .............................................................. 4
- Definition of Terms .................................................................... 5
- Limitations ................................................................................ 7

**CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

- Introduction ............................................................................... 9
- History of Homeschooling .......................................................... 9
- Homeschooling Demographics .................................................... 11
- Reasons Families Homeschool .................................................. 11
- COVID-19 Pandemic and School Closures ................................... 14
- Distance Learning During COVID-19 ....................................... 15
- Reopening Schools During COVID-19 ...................................... 16
- Chapter Summary ................................................................. 17

**CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

- Study Overview ........................................................................ 19
- Research Design ........................................................................ 19
- Binding the Case and Participant Selection ............................... 20
Table 1: Percentage of school-age children who were homeschooled, ages 5 through 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through grade 12, by reasons parents gave as important and most important for homeschooling…………………………………………………………………………13

Table 2: The total number of reported Coronavirus (COVID-19) cases and deaths worldwide and nationally, and the number of COVID-19 cases in children as reported in the United States as of January 8, 2021…………………………………………………………………………18

Table 3: Participant responses to the pre-interview questionnaire…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..25

Table 4: Sample of raw data from first cycle coding………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………32

Table 5: Code charting…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..33

Table 6: Homeschool and unschool schedule………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………40

Table 7: Homeschool and unschool curriculum, instructional resources, and materials………41
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Photographs of Ashley’s homeschool learning environment..........................35

Figure 2: Cross-case analysis......................................................................................43
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis follows the format prescribed by the American Psychological Association, seventh edition.

Research indicates a growing trend of parents choosing to homeschool their children. Students whose parents report them as being schooled at home, are enrolled in a public or private school for less than 25 hours a week, and not due to a temporary illness, are considered homeschooled (Wang et al., 2019). Historically, parents of homeschoolers challenged compulsory attendance laws in the courts. Today, homeschooling is legal in every state with no federal policies governing homeschooling (Dahlquist et al., 2006).

A 2016 study found the percentage of students being homeschooled was higher in rural areas (4.4 percent) than in cities (3.0 percent) or suburban areas (2.9 percent) with more students being homeschooled in Southern (3.9 percent) and Western states (3.7 percent) than in the Midwest (2.9 percent) (Wang et al., 2019). Furthermore, Wang, Rathburn, and Musu (2019) reported an increase in the percentage of students being homeschooled between the years 1999 (1.7 percent) and 2016 (3.3 percent). Today, it is estimated that over one and a half million children, ages 5 to 17 and in grades kindergarten through twelfth grade, are being homeschooled in the United States (Kleist-Tesch, 1998; Princiotta & Bielick, 2006; Wang et al., 2019).

With homeschooling growing in popularity across the United States, and the recent unique school closures worldwide, this qualitative case study examined the lived experiences of two homeschool families from rural Midwestern United States during the COVID-19 pandemic. The outbreak that began in Wuhan, China at the end of 2019 and spread to over 100 countries,
with more than 120,000 cases and over 4,000 deaths was declared a global pandemic on March 11, 2020; resulting in an estimated 107 countries to implement national school closures (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020; Mahase, 2020; Viner, 2020).

This case study allowed the researcher to analyze the phenomenon of homeschooling during a global pandemic and the strategies necessary to balance home and schooling during uncharted times. More specifically, the researcher examined how homeschool families organized their daily life to include the teaching of elementary school-aged children. The information from this study can serve as a guide to those parents considering homeschooling as a result of COVID-19, or parents having to support their children’s distance learning during school closures. Distance learning is defined as a form of teaching and learning where the teacher does not meet with students in-person nor in a traditional classroom, but rather the teacher uses the Internet, e-mail, video calls, and other digital platforms to conduct their class remotely (Stauffer, 2020).

**Research Problem**

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) began in Wuhan, China in December of 2019 and spread to over 20 countries by January 2020 (Wilder-Smith & Freedman, 2020). Wilder-Smith and Freedman (2020) report that COVID-19 is primarily transmitted by respiratory droplets with similar incubation times as SARS and they recommend relying on public health measures, such as isolation, quarantine, and social distancing in order to prevent further transmission. On March 11, 2020, The World Health Organization’s Director-General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus declared the novel coronavirus outbreak as a global pandemic. On March 18, 2020, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization estimated that 138 countries had implemented
national school closures related to COVID-19, affecting 862 million or 80% of children and young people worldwide (Armitage & Nellums, 2020; Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020; Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020; Viner et al., 2020).

In January 2020, the first confirmed case of COVID-19 was reported in the United States. As the virus spread throughout the country, state governors and health officials began enacting policies to help reduce the spread of the infection, including school closures (Auger et al., 2020). Carlson, Petts, and Pepin (2020) found nearly every state implemented stay-at-home orders due to COVID-19, and the virus affected every aspect of Americans’ lives. The closure of schools, childcare centers, and nonessential businesses placed immense stress and additional responsibilities on families as they had to balance work, family, and now distance learning (Anders et al., 2020; Carlson et al., 2020).

With the COVID-19 school closures, parents around the world were not given a choice in their children’s education. Rather, with little or no notice, they were faced with supporting their children’s education at home, as public and private schools transitioned to distance learning. A study conducted by McDowell (2000) found that working moms who felt forced into homeschooling appeared to have strained parent-child relationships. Since parents that are given little decision in their children’s education exhibit negative homeschooling experiences, and because 138 countries implemented national school closures related to COVID-19, it is imperative for researchers to examine homeschooling in relation to forced school closures (McDowell, 2000; Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020).
Research Purpose

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the lived experiences of homeschool families during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically how they managed their day to include the teaching of elementary school-aged children in the rural Midwestern United States. Students are considered homeschooled when their parents report them as being schooled at home instead of at a public or private school for at least part of their education (Redford, Battle, & Bielick, 2017). This qualitative case study allowed the researcher to analyze the phenomenon of homeschooling during a global pandemic and the strategies necessary to balance home and schooling during unusual times. The process by which the homeschool families organized their day to include the teaching of elementary school-age children was studied as a means to guide parents supporting their children’s distance learning during school closures.

Research Questions

1. Central Question - What were the lived experiences of homeschool families during the COVID-19 pandemic?

2. Subquestion - How did homeschool families organize their day to include the teaching of elementary school-age children?

Theoretical Framework

Piaget’s Cognitive Constructivism theory, which claims that the development of intelligence is an adaptation between an organism and its environment, is the theoretical framework on which this research was based (Piaget & Cook, 1952). Piaget's theory of cognitive development proposes that humans cannot be given information that is immediately understood; rather, they must construct their own knowledge through four stages of learning: Sensorimotor
stage, preoperational stage, concrete operational stage, and the formal operational stage.

Furthermore, Kalina and Powell (2009) explain that while some aspects of student learning can be attributed to individual differences and the impact of external experiences, other forms of learning are attributed to the students’ interactions with those individuals outside of the home environment.

Additionally, cognitive constructivism is when individuals construct ideas through a personal process (Kalina & Powell, 2009). While parents serve as their child’s first teacher, the child’s personal experiences also contribute to their overall learning and development. This qualitative study was designed to describe the lived experiences of homeschool families as they organized their days to include the teaching of elementary school-aged children during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the COVID-19 pandemic impacted nearly every aspect of society, including mandatory quarantines and school closures, this collective case study examined two cases of homeschooling as an effort to illustrate different perspectives on homeschooling during extraordinary times (Creswell, 2013). As parents, understanding how children learn is a driving force for instruction regardless of the curriculum. If homeschool families, public schools, and private schools work in collaboration, we can promote the cognitive growth of all children during current and future school closures.

**Definition of Terms**

**Coronavirus (COVID-19):** A new illness caused by a virus that can spread from person to person, and has spread throughout the world. Symptoms range from mild to severe and have been fatal. The virus can spread by coming into close contact (about 6 feet) with an infected
person’s respiratory droplets through coughs, sneezes and talking (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020).


**COVID-19 School Closures:** On March 18, 2020, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization estimated that 107 countries implemented national school closures related to COVID-19. These school closures affected 862 million children, roughly half the global student population (Viner et al., 2020).

**Distance Learning:** A form of teaching and learning where the teacher does not meet with their students in person or in a traditional classroom, but rather the teacher uses the Internet, e-mail, video calls, and other digital platforms to conduct their class remotely (Stauffer, 2020).

**Elementary School-Age Children:** This age group typically includes children in grades kindergarten through 5th grade or ages five to ten years old (Corsi-Bunker, 2015).

**Homeschool:** Students whose parents report them as being schooled at home rather than at a public or private school for part of their education and whose enrollment in public or private school is less than 25 hours a week. Students that are schooled at home due to a temporary illness are not considered homeschooled (Redford, Battle, & Bielick, 2017).

**Non-essential Business:** The definition of non-essential business varies between cities and states, but is assumed to be a recreational business such as clothing and retail stores, bars and restaurants, sports facilities, and grooming services. Non-essential businesses do not provide groceries, medical care, financial support, medicine, or utilities (Fox Business, 2020).
Pandemic: The World Health Organization (WHO) defines a pandemic as a worldwide spread of a new disease (2010).

Unschooling: A branch of homeschooling, where unschoolers learn through everyday life experiences that match their abilities, interests, and learning styles (Gray & Riley, 2013).

Limitations

Simon and Goes (2013) define limitations as mattress and occurrences that arise in a study, and are out of the researcher’s control. Just as all studies have limitations, this collective case study also had its limitations. First, because this qualitative study followed the methodological design of a case study, the experiences of the two cases may or may not reflect the experiences of other homeschool families. As stated in Simon and Goes (2013), case studies may be suggestive of what may be found in similar organizations, but additional research is needed to verify whether findings from one case study would generalize in other contexts.

Furthermore, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the research investigator had limited access to participants. The third potential case was unable to participate in the study, because she and her family contracted COVID-19 during the data collection process. As a result, this collective case study was limited to two participants. Additionally, due to the ongoing pandemic, the researcher chose to collect all data online in an effort to preserve the health and safety of her participants. The research investigator used Google Forms to collect written responses to the interview questions. Because the interviews were conducted online, the researcher was unable to probe her participants for additional information, elaboration, or clarification of a response.

While the scope of this collective case study was limited to two cases, the researcher was able to describe the reality of two homeschool families during the COVID-19 pandemic and how
they managed their day to include the teaching of elementary school-age children. The researcher cannot conclusively say that the three identifiable themes in this study would be the case for all homeschool families, but they were in the case of this qualitative study. Subsequent studies may overcome the limitations of this study by conducting future interviews in-person, or by expanding the number of cases to provide additional insight into the lived experiences of homeschooling families during a global pandemic.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Before we can examine the lived experiences of homeschool families during the COVID-19 pandemic, we must first understand the history of homeschooling. This can be achieved by analyzing homeschooling demographics, and why families choose to homeschool. This next chapter will not only provide the reader with background information on homeschooling, but with current data regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on our nation’s children. With limited data from the literature on COVID-19, the guidance on schooling during a pandemic is scarce and continuously changing. The following literature review will not only provide the reader with a rich context of homeschooling, but will attempt to inform readers of current research and findings in relation to COVID-19 and its impact on children and schooling across the United States. By providing the reader with a rich context on homeschooling and the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher can then analyze the phenomenon of homeschooling during a global pandemic in the following case study.

History of Homeschooling

Prior to the emergence of public schools in the nineteenth century, parents’ educating their children in the home was common practice in all cultures and levels of society (Meehan & Stephenson, 1994). Many parents would educate their children while the more affluent families hired tutors. However as the United States began to mature, many people believed that children needed to be taught religious values as well as democratic principles (Kleist-Tesch, 1998). The desire to bring diverse cultures together led to the emergence of public schools and the enactment of compulsory education laws. The first state to pass such a law was the state of Massachusetts
in 1852 (Nemer, 2002). This law required that all children ages 8 to 14 attend school for a minimum of twelve weeks per year. However if a family faced financial hardship by sending their children to school, they were exempt from this law (Kleist-Tesch, 1998). As the number of children enrolled in public school increased, other states began enacting compulsory education laws. In 1918, Mississippi was the last state to enact such laws, making public education the norm in the United States (Kleist-Tesch, 1998; Nemer, 2002).

It was not until the 1960s and 1970s that public education came under outward scrutiny by religious and social advocates. It was at that time that the modern homeschooling movement began. John Holt and Raymond Moore were two of the founders of the modern homeschooling movement. According to Kleist-Tesch (1998), in 1972 Moore published an article criticizing public schools for removing children from their homes and forcing them into government institutions. Moore and his wife Dorothy continued to criticize public schools, suggesting that anti-religious values were being taught in public schools. During the 1980s, Raymond and Dorothy Moore were referred to as the grandparents of homeschooling, after writing a series of books on conservative Christian convictions and homeschooling (Kleist-Tesch, 1998).

By 1989, all 50 states legalized homeschooling, and education in the United States experienced a notable increase in the number of children being homeschooled (Hanna, 2012). In 1991, Patricia Lines, a renowned homeschooling researcher, estimated that 150,000 to 300,000 children were being homeschooled, and in 1998, she estimated that one million children, or 3-4% of all school-aged children in the United States, were being homeschooled (as cited in Nemer, 2002). Beginning in 1999, the National Household Education Surveys program (NHES), in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics
(NCES), had collected data to estimate the number of homeschoolers in the United States.

Redford, Battle, and Bielick (2017) had estimated that as of 2012, 1.8 million students were homeschooled. According to Ray (2015), the homeschooling trend may be the fastest-growing education option across the United States.

**Homeschooling Demographics**

As the number of homeschoolers continues to grow nationwide, the National Center for Education Statistics conducted an updated study examining the demographics of homeschool families. The 2012 study found that 41% of homeschool students lived in rural areas, 28% in suburban areas, 21% in cities, and 10% of homeschool students resided in towns (Redford et al., 2017). The same study found that 83% of homeschooled students were white compared to other ethnic groups, a larger percentage were middle or high school level students, and that there was no significant difference by sex. Finally, parents of homeschool children attained a wide-range of education with 23% of parents holding a high school degree, 18% with graduate degrees, and only 2% of parents held less than a high school education (Redford et al., 2017).

**Reasons Families Homeschool**

With the number of homeschool children rising, researchers began studying why parents were choosing homeschooling as a viable alternative to traditional schooling. In an earlier study, LaRue (1991) reported that 86% of parents who chose to homeschool their children did so for religious reasons. For example, Christian leaders, led by Raymond Moore, formed a movement known as the Exodus 2000 Project. The Exodus 2000 Project originated in response to Goals 2000. Goals 2000 was a plan to identify academic standards, measure student progress, and to provide the necessary means to meet such a standard (Nemer, 2002). Leaders of the Exodus 2000
Project were rebelling against the strict control of Goals 2000 by encouraging families to remove their children from public schools and place them into Christian schools or homeschools (Nemer, 2002).

The 2012 parent and family survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NHES) found that approximately 64% of parents found it important to homeschool their children in order to provide religious instruction (Redford et al., 2017). This percentage represents a decrease from a similar study conducted in 1991, which found that 86% of parents choose homeschooling for religious reasons (as cited in Bielick et al., 2001). In a 2016 study, homeschool families were asked to identify the most important reason for choosing homeschooling for their children. The study found that parents choose homeschooling due to negative school environments, such as safety, drugs, and peer pressure (Wang, Rathburn & Musu, 2019). Other common reasons include lack of moral and religious instruction as well as unsatisfactory academic instruction (Redford et al., 2017). As the percentage of students being homeschooled for religious reasons decreases, and the total number of homeschooled students increases, it is clear that other factors are now contributing to parents choosing to homeschool their children. Reasons that parents choose to homeschool their children are listed in table 1.
Table 1
Percentage of school-age children who were homeschooled, ages 5 through 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through grade 12, by reasons parents gave as important and most important for homeschooling.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Important Percent</th>
<th>Most Important Percent ¹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A desire to provide religious instruction</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A desire to provide moral instruction</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A concern about the environment of other schools, such as safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A dissatisfaction with the academic instruction at other schools</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A desire to provide a nontraditional approach to child’s education</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>5 - Interpret data with caution; coefficient of variation is between 30 and 50 percent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child has other special needs</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Reporting standards not met. The coefficient of variation for this estimate is 50 percent or greater.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child has a physical or mental health problem</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reasons ²</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


¹ Respondents were instructed to mark all that apply for the “Important” item but could only choose one as “Most important.”
² Parents homeschool their children for many reasons that are often unique to their family situation. “Other reasons” parents gave for homeschooling include family time, finances, travel, and distance.
Although the 2012 NHES parent survey provided a comprehensive list of reasons why parents choose to homeschool their children, other reasons exist. For example, parents residing in rural areas tend to homeschool their children due to limited educational options in the area (Schafer & Khan, 2017). Pearson (1996) discussed the different needs of minority students, disabled students, and gifted students living in rural America, and how homeschooling provides “a cheaper educational alternative” for families (p. 5). Other reasons not discussed in the survey include the desire for parents to raise their own children and to gain a better understanding of their child’s academic progress (Ray, 2002). Finally, Apple (2006) predicted that parents might begin to choose homeschooling as a viable alternative in order to avoid the increased accountability placed on public schools.

**COVID-19 Pandemic and School Closures**

In January 2020, the first confirmed case of COVID-19 was reported in the United States. As the virus spread throughout the country, state governors and health officials began enacting policies to help reduce the spread of the infection, including school closures (Auger et al., 2020). On March 4, 2020, a metropolitan school district in Seattle was the first to recognize the presence of COVID-19 in the United States and closed its Northshore School District in Bothell (as cited in Reich et al., 2020). Then, on March 12, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic, followed by 107 countries implementing national school closures on March 18, 2020 (Viner et al., 2020). By the last week of March 2020, all 50 U.S. states had announced school closures (Reich et al., 2020).

As private and public schools across the nation began to close, the United States Department of Education made a statement that schools should provide some form of distance
learning (Reich et al., 2020). Distance learning is defined as a form of teaching and learning where the teacher does not meet with their students in-person or in a traditional classroom, but rather the teacher uses the Internet, e-mail, video calls, and other digital platforms to conduct their class remotely (Stauffer, 2020). By March 27, 2020, all fifty states had policies in place regarding school closures and the transition to distance learning (Reich et al., 2020).

While planning for distance learning, educators had to consider the implication of school closures on low-income households. Van Lancker and Parolin (2020), reported that in New York City, where large proportions of COVID-19 cases first appeared in the U.S., one in ten students were reported to be homeless or had unstable housing the previous school year. Viner et al., (2020) further reported the adverse effects of school closures such as economic hardship to working parents, health-care workers, and other essential workers needing to provide care for their children as well as meal shortages for those children qualifying for free school meals.

**Distance Learning During COVID-19**

Along with school closures, districts began providing parents with guidance plans for distance learning that included both online and non-digital alternatives. The recommendations from many states was for older students to engage in about three to four hours of learning per day with less for the younger students (Reich et al., 2020). A study by Anders, Macmillan, Sturgis, and Wyness (2020) found that 80% of parent graduates helped with schooling four days a week compared to 60% of parents who were non-graduates. Finally, the study found that graduates reported that distance learning was interfering with their jobs, particularly mothers at 80% and fathers at 67%. Another study reported that 89% of school-aged children participated in
some form of distance learning for an average of three hours per day and that 33% of couples reported sharing in the responsibilities of distance learning (Carlson, Peets, & Pepin, 2020).

Reopening Schools During COVID-19

As families of private and public schools were adapting to school closures, transitioning to distance learning, and preparing for a new school year, COVID-19 research was emerging. On May 19, 2020, an e-journal in German Medical Science (GMS) Hygiene and Infection Control, reported that children and adolescents were less likely to become ill with COVID-19 and exhibit a less severe illness than adults (Walger et al., 2020). On July 13, 2020, the World Health Organization (2020) shared how children represented less COVID-19 cases than adults, and exhibited milder reactions to the virus. Then on July 30, 2020, Thompson (2020) reported a study done in Chicago by JAMA Pediatrics. The study found that not only do children and teenagers with COVID-19 carry as much or more of the coronavirus in their noses as adults, but that younger children can have an average of 10 to 100 times the viral load than adults, suggesting children can pose a serious infection risk if schools or daycare centers reopen (Thompson, 2020).

Along with the approaching of a new school year, came a national debate as to whether U.S. schools should offer in-person instruction amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020) supported the reopening of schools as earlier studies suggested children are less likely to spread, contract, and exhibit severe symptoms of COVID-19. Other proponents of schools reopening include the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NAS). NAS provided several recommendations to school districts on how to safely reopen schools during a pandemic. Some recommendations include surgical
masks for staff, hand-washing stations upon entering the building, limiting large gatherings, staggering arrival times of students, prioritizing cleaning, ventilation, and air filtration, reorganizing classrooms to promote physical distancing, and limiting class size (Stephenson, 2020).

**Chapter Summary**

Homeschooling was the fastest growing educational trend in the United States prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. With public and private schools facing uncertainty for the 2020-2021 academic year, some parents may turn to homeschooling during the ongoing pandemic. With new and ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks in PreK-12 schools, and the unprecedented school closures of March 2020, this qualitative case study examined the lived experiences of two homeschool families from the rural Midwestern United States during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher analyzed the phenomenon of homeschooling and the strategies necessary to balance home, work, and schooling of elementary school-aged children during uncharted times. The intent of this study was to provide guidance to parents choosing homeschooling, or parents supporting their children’s distance learning as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The total number of reported COVID-19 cases and deaths worldwide and nationally as well as the number of U.S. children who tested positive as of January 10, 2021 can be found in table 2.
Table 2

The total number of reported Coronavirus (COVID-19) cases and deaths worldwide and nationally, and the number of COVID-19 cases in children as reported in the United States as of January 10, 2021.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Cases</th>
<th>Total Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>World</strong></td>
<td>89,960,893</td>
<td>1,931,083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>United States</strong></td>
<td>22,227,722</td>
<td>373,331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children in the</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,128,587</strong></td>
<td>0.00%-0.19% of all COVID-19 deaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>United States</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCES:**

https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Study Overview

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the lived experiences of homeschool families during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically how they managed their day to include teaching of elementary school-aged children in the rural Midwestern United States. This qualitative case study allowed the researcher to analyze the phenomenon of homeschooling during a global pandemic and the strategies necessary to balance home and schooling during new times. The means by which the homeschool families organized their day to include the teaching of elementary school-age children was studied along with the struggles and successes of homeschooling.

This chapter details the methodological framework for this research study. The first section in the chapter discusses the research design and rationale for choosing a qualitative case study. Next, the reader learns of the participant selection process. Then, the researcher discusses how she uses triangulation of data and explains the research methods used to increase validity. Following the section on triangulation, the researcher discusses any ethical biases before explaining how she undergoes the data collection process and data analysis procedures. Finally, the chapter concludes with the researcher’s data storage and protection plan along with the pre-interview and interview questions that were used in the email interviews.

Research Design

The methodological framework for this study is qualitative in nature, and follows a collective case study in design. In a collective case study, the researcher selects more than one
case to examine and shows different perspectives on the issue while replicating the procedures for each case (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2013). Case studies are rigorous and qualitative in nature and allow researchers to explore a phenomenon within its context while utilizing a variety of data sources and lenses (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Such studies afford researchers with an opportunity to explore real-life systems utilizing in-depth data collection and report on the themes of the case while allowing participants to share their stories (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2013). The intent of this multiple case study was to examine two cases that are in progress and can be compared, so the researcher and her readers gain a better understanding of homeschooling during a global pandemic. This collective case study presents an in-depth understanding of homeschool families by relying on many forms of qualitative data such as a pre-interview questionnaire, an interview, and primary source documents (Creswell, 2013).

In this study, the researcher wished to illustrate the issue of educating elementary school-aged children during the COVID-19 pandemic, by selecting two homeschool families to share their perspectives on balancing home and school during unparalleled times. The collective case study approach was appropriate for this study, because the researcher has clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and wished to provide a rich understanding of the participants’ actions (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2013). Prior to the researcher engaging in the selection process or data collection, she obtained permission to conduct this study from Northern Michigan University’s (NMU) Internal Review Board (IRB) (Appendix G).

**Binding the Case and Participant Selection**

Creswell (2013) states that a defining feature of a case study is that a case can be bounded within certain parameters in an attempt to study a real-life case in progress.
Furthermore, Baxter and Jack (2008) state how binding a case ensures a study will remain reasonable in scope and suggests binding a case by time and place. For the purposes of this qualitative research, the investigator limited the case study to two participants residing in the rural Midwest, who are currently homeschooling at least one elementary school-aged child during fall 2020 and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Once a case has been bound, the researcher must identify the participants of the study (Creswell, 2013). In this collective case study, two homeschoolers were identified through purposeful sampling with the intent to better understand homeschooling during a global pandemic (Creswell, 2012). More specifically, the researcher utilized a homogeneous sample, or subgroup, of individuals who possess similar characteristics (Creswell, 2012). In this study, participants were derived from two separate homeschool families that are homeschooling elementary school-age children during the ongoing pandemic.

**Research Validity**

Creswell (2013) shares several strategies used by qualitative researchers to assist with research validity. Triangulation, defined as making use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories, is used to help validate conclusions by authenticating evidence from three different sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2013). Triangulation will help draw on the strengths of different types of data. The data sources for this study include a pre-interview questionnaire, an interview, and primary sources from two homeschool families.

A second validation strategy presented by Creswell (2013) is clarifying researcher bias. The researcher comments on past experiences, biases, and prejudices that will likely affect her interpretations of the study. A third form of research validity includes in-member checking. In
this study, the researcher asked her participants to review a working draft of the data analysis portion of the study as a means to help judge the accuracy and the credibility of the study. Finally, the researcher utilized rich and detailed descriptions of the participants in the study so readers can make decisions regarding research transferability (Creswell, 2013).

**Researcher Bias**

In order for the reader to understand the researcher’s position and biases, the researcher will briefly clarify any past experiences that may shape her interpretations of this case study (Creswell, 2013). The research investigator is entering her fifteenth year of teaching at a public school in the rural Midwest. She began her professional career as a general education teacher, created and taught a program for at-risk kindergartners, taught as a reading and math interventionist, designed and taught a special education program for students with social and emotional challenges, and is currently a special education teacher and teacher consultant. The investigator earned a Bachelor of Science degree in interdisciplinary studies in social sciences human resources and society from Michigan State University, completed a post-baccalaureate program in elementary education and English, attained a Master of Arts degree in educational administration: Administration and supervision, and completed a special education postgraduate program in learning disabilities all from Northern Michigan University. She holds a professional teaching certificate, full approval for a learning disabilities teacher consultant, an elementary and secondary school administrator certificate, and full approval for a director of special education all from the Michigan Department of Education. Upon completion and approval of this study, the research investigator will hold an Education Specialist degree and a certificate in central administration.
Data Collection

Creswell (2013) states that a good qualitative case study presents an in-depth understanding of the case through the collection of many forms of qualitative data. Since the researcher determined a case study would be the appropriate methodological framework for this investigation, she utilized a variety of data sources including a pre-interview questionnaire, an interview, and the collection of primary source documents. Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, the research investigator preserved the safety of her participants by collecting all data online. Creswell (2013) states that collecting data online allows participants the flexibility to consider and respond to information, as well as provides a non-threatening and more comfortable environment.

First, the research investigator sent a preliminary email soliciting potential participants to three separate homeschool families residing in the rural Midwest (Appendix B). Two of the three individuals responded to the email, stating they would be interested in participating in the study. The researcher then forwarded a COVID-19 release form, generated and required by Northern Michigan University’s Internal Review Board, along with the informed consent document outlining the purpose of the study, participant requirements, and time commitments to the two participants who demonstrated an interest in continuing as participants of the study (Appendix C). The two participants were asked to review the release and informed consent form, provide an electronic signature on both documents, and return them to the research investigator. Upon receipt, the researcher provided her electronic signature on the informed consent form and returned a completed copy of the signed document to each of the two participants for their records.
After receipt of the signed COVID-19 release and signed consent forms, the researcher emailed five pre-interview questions, using Google Forms, to determine if the interested participants met the boundaries established for this case study (Appendix D). Next, the researcher reviewed the pre-interview responses to determine if the interested participants met the boundaries established for this case study. See table 3 for the participant responses to the pre-interview questionnaire.
Table 3

Participant responses to the pre-interview questionnaire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-interview Questions</th>
<th>Participant No. 1</th>
<th>Participant No. 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are you currently homeschooling this fall?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td><em>no response</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many children are you currently homeschooling this fall?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are any of the homeschooled children between the ages of 5-10 (or grades K-5)?</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many of the homeschooled children are between the ages of 5-10?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many years of experience do you have as a homeschool provider?</td>
<td>first year</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Once the researcher determined that both interested participants were from a homeschool family, and homeschooling an elementary school-aged child (ren) during fall 2020, she emailed both participants the interview using Google Forms and a pre-established interview protocol (Appendix E). The email interview contained ten open-ended questions specifically devised to obtain responses to both the central research question and the sub-question query: What were the lived experiences of homeschool families during the COVID-19 pandemic? How did experienced homeschool families organize their day to include the teaching of elementary school-age children?

To help the researcher develop relevant inquiry, she reached out to an experienced homeschool family to pilot the interview questions (Creswell, 2013). The individual was chosen based on convenience and access and was sent an email soliciting assistance for this study (Appendix A). The homeschooler, referred to as Mrs. H., homeschooled all eight of her children through high school (personal communication, August 20, 2020). Mrs. H. stated that the interview questions were pertinent to the study and well thought out. However, the questions were also “rather personal” (personal communication, August 16, 2020). As a result, the researcher asked participants to engage in member-checking of the draft data analysis of the study to ensure accuracy of information and credibility of the case (Creswell, 2012).

Finally, the researcher requested that participants of the study provide primary source documents using Google Form uploads as the third data collection piece in this investigation. Creswell (2012) indicates that the collection of documents in a qualitative study can serve as a rich source of information for the researcher. For the purpose of this case study, participants were asked to provide electronic samples of their homeschooling schedules, curriculum, instructional
resources, and materials, and photographs of their learning environments to help guide new homeschool families and parents supporting their children through distance learning.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

Once the researcher received the pre-interview responses, interview responses, and primary source documents, she began the data analysis process. The first step to the data analysis process was to organize the data (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2012). For the purpose of this study, the researcher began by creating individual, electronic files separating these three material types: pre-interview responses, interview responses, and primary source documents.

After receipt of the three data sources, the researcher conducted a preliminary exploratory analysis via handwritten analysis. The research investigator explored and memoed the data to gain a general sense of the three data sources (Creswell, 2012). After conducting the preliminary analysis, the researcher began the coding process, which included in-vivo coding. She initially identified 44 codes during the coding process. Then, further organized her findings with code charting, and yielded 11 primary codes (Saldana, 2015).

Next, the researcher engaged in a cross-case analysis in an attempt to categorize or theme major ideas that emerged from comparing the two cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008). She found four similarities across the two cases with six distinct differences. Reducing the number of codes allowed the researcher to write a qualitative narrative, telling the reader a story and providing a chronological report with detailed information about the emerging themes (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2012).

Finally, the research investigator categorized the three types of primary source documents provided by the participants. First, she memoed the homeschool or unschool schedules, followed
by the homeschool curriculum, instructional materials, and resources used by both families, and concluded by uploading the images provided by Participant No. 1.

**Data Storage and Protection**

The data collected in this case study has been stored in digital format on the researcher’s personal home computer. The desktop computer is password-protected. Consent forms were signed using electronic signatures and saved on the researcher’s desktop in a PDF format. All email correspondence, pre-interview responses, interview responses, and primary source documents were converted to PDF files and will be saved onto the researcher’s personal desktop for seven years.

**Pre-Interview and Interview Questions**

The pre-interview questionnaire was designed to assist in the identification of specific cases bounded within certain parameters (Creswell, 2013). In this case study, the research investigator was seeking homeschool families homeschooling elementary school-aged children in fall 2020, during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The pre-interview questionnaire was sent to potential participants via email prior to the interview. Please see Appendix D: Pre-Interview Questions.

The interview questions were designed to obtain responses to both the central research question, and the sub-question research query. *What were the lived experiences of homeschool families during the COVID-19 pandemic? How did homeschool families organize their day to include the teaching of elementary school-age children?* The interview questions were emailed to the participants for completion.
Interview Questions:

1. Please define homeschooling as it pertains to you.

2. How did you get started with homeschooling?

3. Please describe a typical homeschool day.

4. What curriculum or resources do you use to homeschool?

5. What materials do you have readily available when homeschooling?

6. How do you create a learning-friendly environment in your home?

7. What do you like best about homeschooling?

8. What is the most challenging aspect of homeschooling?

9. What advice do you have for parents who are new to homeschooling, or parents who are supporting their children during distance learning?

10. Is there anything else you would like to elaborate on or share with me in regards to homeschooling?
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the lived experiences of homeschool families during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically how they managed their day to include the teaching of elementary school-aged children in the rural Midwestern United States. The following chapter represents the findings of this study. First, the researcher provided the reader with the participation-identification process. Next, the researcher included a description of the 11 categories found during in-vivo coding. Five categories were identified from Participant No. 1. Participant No. 2 yielded six categories during the coding process.

Following the coding description, the researcher included a narrative for each of the two participants attempting to answer the central question and sub-question of this study: What were the lived experiences of homeschool families during the COVID-19 pandemic? How did homeschool families organize their day to include the teaching of elementary school-age children? The research investigator then identified three themes using a cross-case analysis of the two cases studied in the collective case study. Finally, she summarized her findings to provide guidance to her stakeholders that include parents choosing homeschooling because of COVID-19, or parents finding themselves supporting their children’s distance learning during school closures.

Participant Identification

Crow and Wiles (2008) speak of the significance of protecting the anonymity and confidentiality of participants in a study. Furthermore, they suggest researchers ensure data is not
traced back to their participants by using pseudonyms (Crow & Wiles, 2008). For the purposes of this case study, the researcher chose to use pseudonyms to assure information presented in this study cannot be traced back to the participants.

The research investigator conducted a Google search for top female names from 1990, the estimated average age of the two participants in this study. She yielded the Office of Social Security Online, which further broke popular names down by state (Social Security Administration, n.d.). Since this study took place in the rural Midwest, the researcher refined her search by choosing the top two female names from Michigan in 1990. The first name listed in the database was Ashley, followed by the name Jessica. The researcher then assigned participant No. 1 the pseudonym Ashley and participant No. 2 the name Jessica in an effort to protect their identity throughout the remainder of this study.

**Participant Findings**

After receipt of the three data sources including, a pre-interview response, interview response, and primary source documents, the researcher conducted a preliminary exploratory analysis via handwritten analysis. The research investigator explored and memoed the data to gain a general sense of the three source types (Creswell, 2012). After conducting the preliminary analysis, the researcher began the coding process, which included in-vivo coding. She initially identified 44 codes during the coding process. Then, as she further organized her findings with code charting, the researcher yielded 11 primary codes (Saldana, 2015). Table 4 represents a sampling of the coding process, and table 5 is the coding chart used during data analysis.
Table 4

Sample of raw data from first cycle coding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw Data</th>
<th>In-Vivo Coding</th>
<th>Preliminary Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Please define homeschooling as it pertains to you.</em></td>
<td>“due to COVID-19”</td>
<td>COVID-19 safety measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeschooling this year is due to COVID-19, and to keep my son, XXXX, safe, and give him a quality education.</td>
<td>“keep my son safe”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>How did you get started with homeschooling?</em></td>
<td>“homeschool would give him a more consistent routine”</td>
<td>Consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My husband and I chose to homeschool our son because of COVID-19, and the regulations in place at our public school. We felt that homeschool would give him a more consistent routine and that would benefit him with his education. When we decided to homeschool, I began researching homeschool in general, and different curriculums that would easily allow him to keep on the path of learning he was on. I joined local and global social media homeschool groups that were a great source of information.</td>
<td>“joined local and global social media homeschool groups”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Please define homeschooling as it pertains to you.</em></td>
<td>“unschoolers”</td>
<td>Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are unschoolers, meaning we do not use a set curriculum or grade level to guide us. We are interest-led, meaning we follow the flow of the children's interests.</td>
<td>“we do not use a set curriculum or grade level” ‘interest-led”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>How did you get started with homeschooling?</em></td>
<td>“lived abroad”</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We lived abroad during the time our oldest child would have been K-2 age. I homeschooled to keep her 'on pace' but the more I learned about the evolution and science of learning and as I saw her thrive at her own pace, we realized this would continue even when we moved home.</td>
<td>“I saw her thrive at her own pace”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 5

Code Charting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Interview Summary</th>
<th>Primary Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashley</td>
<td>COVID-19, keep my son safe, regulations in place at our public school, homeschool would give him a more consistent routine, joined local and global social media homeschool groups, art, music, and physical education in our everyday afternoons, cooking, and doing a lot of hands on projects, peaceful, yet cheerful, learning environment, decorated with classroom posters, organized in a manner that helps us easily stay on track, work one on one with him, undoubtedly been balance, homeschooling, having two children, and keeping up on daily household responsibilities, challenging, readjust my expectations, enjoy the experience, willing to adjust, do what works best for you and your child, reach out to other parents that are homeschooling</td>
<td>Routine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Support groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Finding balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adjusting expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Family centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>Unschoolers, do not use a set grade level, interest-led, follow the flow of the children's interests, lived abroad, saw her thrive at her own pace, Life Learning Co-op, answering questions, not putting time constraints on activities they are enjoying, flexibility, kids get as much sleep/rest as they need, long hours outside, travel, unstructured play time, foster family relationships, when we are all at our best, not just when we are tired, preserve their innocence/youth, primary breadwinner, tired, A lot, wake up very early, spreading myself thin, trust your child and yourself, you do not need a set schedule, or curriculum to learn, school is a new invention, concept of grades and levels don't show how much kids are learning</td>
<td>Interest based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Individualized pace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Learning Co-ops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Family centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Time management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participant No. 1

Ashley is new to homeschooling this year. She and her family chose to homeschool their first grade son because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Ashley wanted to keep her son safe, “give him a more consistent routine,” and provide him with a quality education. Ashley and her husband believed that homeschooling during the pandemic “would give their son a more consistent routine that would benefit him with his education.”

Once Ashley and her family decided to become a homeschool family, Ashley began to research different homeschool curriculums. She decided on using a curriculum called The Good and The Beautiful. Ashley also joined both local and global social media homeschool groups, which she found to be “a great source of information.”

Next, Ashley set-up her homeschool environment to include “all materials that a typical school classroom would have available.” The learning environment is located in their home basement, separate from their family room. Their classroom includes multiple desks, different areas to work in, a variety of writing utensils, and books at varying reading levels. Additionally, Ashley’s learning environment includes a Chromebook, printer, craft supplies, whiteboards, and a chalkboard. When creating her home learning environment, Ashley strived to create “a peaceful, yet cheerful, learning environment” decorated with classroom posters, a calendar, and an organization system that helps them “stay on track.” Please see figure 1 for photographs of Ashley’s homeschool learning environment.
Figure 1

Photographs of Ashley’s homeschool learning environment.
A typical homeschool day for Ashley and her family begins around 8:00 a.m. They start their school day with the Pledge of Allegiance. Next, they move on to activities from their morning basket. Some resources from their morning basket include a Bible story, poetry, science books, history books, and chapter books. Working on the morning basket can take Ashley and her son anywhere from 45 to 90 minutes to complete. After working through the morning basket, Ashley presents the core subjects. They begin with Language Arts, which includes handwriting practice as well as twenty minutes of silent reading or shared reading. After their Language Arts lessons, Ashley and her son take a ‘brain break’ that includes snack, water, and physical movement. Some examples of physical movement include doing a GoNoodle video, engaging in a free choice activity, or going outside for a 20-minute walk. After their morning break, Ashley presents her math lesson, which takes them to lunchtime and the end of their school day. Finally, Ashley will incorporate the arts, music, and physical education in the afternoons, along with cooking and other hands-on projects that can be incorporated in “everyday life.”

When asked what she likes most about homeschooling, Ashley responded, “I love that I get to work one on one with him, and experience the moment when things ‘click.’ It is a truly amazing experience for me!” When asked what the most challenging aspect of homeschooling is, Ashley stated, “The most challenging aspect of homeschool for me has undoubtedly been balance. Between homeschooling, having two children, and keeping up on daily household responsibilities, there are days that are challenging. I’m learning to readjust my expectations along the way.” Finally, when Ashley was asked if she had advice for any parents considering homeschooling, or for parents supporting their children’s distance learning, she shared, “Enjoy the experience, and be willing to adjust as necessary! Do what works best for you and your child.
Reach out to other parents that are homeschooling- they are a wealth of information and support!”

*Participant No. 2*

Jessica is an experienced homeschool provider, beginning her fifth year as head of a homeschooling family. She is currently homeschooling two elementary school-aged children in the fall of 2020, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Jessica and her family identify themselves as unschoolers. She further defines unschooling as “not using a set curriculum or grade level to guide us. We are interest-led, meaning we follow the flow of the children's interests.”

Jessica chose to be a homeschool provider because she and her family were living abroad while their eldest child was of kindergarten through second grade age. Jessica became a homeschool family to keep her daughter on pace while living abroad. However, Jessica found that “the more I learned about the evolution and science of learning, and as I saw her thrive at her own pace, we realized this would continue even when we moved home.”

As unschoolers, Jessica does not use a set curriculum in a way that public schools use them. Rather, she uses a variety of resources, such as Beast Academy, Mango Language, Minecraft, Prodigy, The Kids Should See This videos, the public library, Google, and other such resources. Jessica also has craft supplies, books, and outdoor gear readily available as part of their homeschool materials. Jessica has established a learning-friendly environment by creating an appreciation for asking questions and seeking answers together. Jessica fosters her children’s learning by allowing them to engage in activities without placing a time constraint on the things they enjoy.
In Jessica’s home, they do not follow a set homeschooling schedule. Rather, their “days vary a lot.” Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Jessica and her family belonged to the Life Learning Co-op, a Co-op for unschooling, which met two full days per week. They would go to the public library for a book club, and then spend the rest of the week at home or outside in the woods. Currently, due to the ongoing pandemic, Jessica and her daughters begin their days working on projects over breakfast. Then at 10:00 a.m., they have a Minecraft call with their Co-op friends, followed by lunchtime. After lunch, they go outside “somewhere or other.” Finally, Jessica’s daughters are involved in three online book clubs and take online piano lessons once a week.

When asked what she likes most about homeschooling, Jessica said it was the flexibility of unschooling that works best for her and her family. More specifically, her children are able to get the sleep or rest they need, spend long hours outside, travel on their own schedule, have unstructured play with friends, and help preserve their innocence. Homeschooling helps their children learn at their own pace without the pressure of attaining certain levels “before they are ready.” Finally, Jessica shared, “We can foster our family relationships every single day when we are all at our best, not just in the evenings when we are tired.”

When Jessica was asked to share the most challenging aspect of homeschooling, she began by sharing how she is the primary breadwinner for the family, and that she is tired a lot. She wakes up early to get her work done, and is worried that she is spreading herself too thin “and that they can sense that.” When Jessica was asked what advice she had for parents considering homeschooling, or parents supporting their children’s distance learning, she replied with, “Trust your child and trust yourself!” She further went on to elaborate how parents do not
need a set schedule or curriculum to help their children learn, how humans have learned at their own pace and way forever, and that the concept of grades failing to show what kids are learning or passionate about.

For a visual representation of the participants' lived experiences as homeschool families, please see table 6 outlining the homeschool and unschool schedules of Ashley and Jessica and table 7 for the curriculum, instructional resources, and materials used in both cases.
Table 6

Homeschool and unschool schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ashley</th>
<th>Jessica</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The school day begins at 8:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Projects during breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pledge of Allegiance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning basket</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bible story</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poetry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Science or History</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Chapter book</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language arts</td>
<td>10:00 a.m. Minecraft call with Co-op friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handwriting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silent or shared reading (20 minutes)</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain Break with snack &amp; water (20 minutes)</td>
<td>Outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• GoNoodle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Outside walk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Involved in three online book clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch (concludes the school day)</td>
<td>Online piano lessons (once a week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoons</td>
<td>The days vary and are interest-led</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Art</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Music</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• PE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cooking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hands on projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7

Homeschool and unschool curriculum, instructional resources, and materials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ashley</th>
<th>Jessica</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Good and The Beautiful</td>
<td>Beast Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mango Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructional Resources</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pledge of Allegiance</td>
<td>Minecraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible</td>
<td>Prodigy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry books</td>
<td>The Kids Should See This</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science books</td>
<td>Public library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History books</td>
<td>Life learning Co-op</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter books</td>
<td>(3) Online book clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GoNoodle</td>
<td>Online piano lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Google</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Materials</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple desks</td>
<td>Craft supplies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different areas to work</td>
<td>Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing utensils</td>
<td>Outdoor gear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books of different reading levels</td>
<td>Outside (the woods)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chromebook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft supplies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteboards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalkboard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calendar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom posters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overlying Themes

Three themes emerged in the cross-case analysis of this collective case study: Support networks, finding balance, and family-centered. In a collective case study, the researcher selects more than one case to examine and shows different perspectives on the issue while replicating the procedures for each case (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2013). The themes were identified as an attempt to answer the study’s central question and sub-question: What were the lived experiences of homeschool families during the COVID-19 pandemic? How did homeschool families organize their day to include the teaching of elementary school-age children? Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the case similarities, differences, and overlying themes.
Figure 2

Cross-case analysis.

Cross-Case Theme Analysis

Ashley
- Routine
- Adjusting expectations

Jessica
- Support
- Networks
- Finding balance
- Family centered
- Interest based
- Individualized pace
- Flexibility
Support Networks

While each participant had varying levels of homeschool experience, each individual discussed the significance of support networks as part of the homeschool or unschool experience. For example in Ashley’s case, she chose to join both local and global homeschool social media groups as a means to help her gather information on homeschooling. The homeschool networks helped guide Ashley as she was exploring how to become a homeschool provider. Not only did the support networks offer possible curriculum, instructional, and resource ideas, more importantly, the homeschool groups provided Ashley with support as she navigated a new chapter in her family’s life.

Jessica, who is currently unschooling two elementary school-aged children, has been a homeschool provider for five years. While Jessica is part of an experienced homeschool family, she still spoke of the importance of belonging to a support network. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Jessica and her two daughters belonged to an unschool co-op known as the Life Learning Co-op. This support network met at the local public library two full-days per week, where the children would participate in book clubs. Post COVID-19, Jessica and her children continue to rely on the unschool support network, but as a way to engage in online book clubs and virtually socialize over Minecraft.

Finding Balance

Ashley and her family chose to homeschool their first grade son because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. They wanted to keep their son safe, and provide a quality education along with a consistent routine. While Ashley follows a homeschool schedule, routine, and curriculum, she also shared how finding balance is the most challenging aspect of being a homeschool

44
family. Some days, Ashley finds it difficult to balance homeschooling, raising two children, and managing household responsibilities. For her, she is learning to adjust her expectations in an effort to balance the responsibilities of parenting, homeschooling, and caring for a home.

In the case of Jessica, an unschooling family, she too reported how the most challenging aspect of homeschooling is finding the balance between work and home. As the primary breadwinner for her family, Jessica is trying to accomplish too much in a single day, and finds that she is often tired. While her unschooling methods allow for flexibility, are interest-led, and do not follow a set schedule or curriculum, Jessica too finds it difficult to balance work, home, and schooling. Prior to COVID-19, she was able to rely on childcare two days a week to help balance her responsibilities. However, with the ongoing pandemic, Jessica is no longer utilizing childcare. Instead, she wakes up very early so she can work before her daughters are awake. Jessica acknowledges she is spreading herself too thin, and worries her daughters can tell how tired she is.

*Family Centered*

Ashley and her family chose to homeschool their first grade son because of the COVID-19 pandemic and uncertainty with their local schools. While this was a new experience for her and her son, she quickly found how much she enjoyed working one on one with him. She further shared how rewarding it was for her when her son demonstrated an understanding of the concepts being taught. Ashley reminds parents new to homeschooling, or distance learning, to enjoy the experience and to adjust expectations as necessary. She further states how parents should do what works best for their family, and reach out to other homeschooling parents for information and support.
Like Ashley, Jessica’s unschooling is family centered. By allowing her daughters to follow their interests and work at their own pace, she has found them to thrive as learners. By removing the pressures of grade levels, and working at a pace that is individualized for each child, Jessica’s children are able to learn without placing time constraints on their preferred activities. The flexibility of unschooling allows her children to be well rested, spend time outdoors, travel, engage in unstructured play, foster family relationships, and preserve their innocence.

Summary of Findings

This collective case study aimed to describe the lived experiences of homeschooling families during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how they managed their daily life to include teaching of elementary school-aged children in the rural Midwestern United States. The analysis of the data collected for this qualitative study yielded the following results: While each participant had varying levels of homeschool experience, each individual discussed the significance of support networks as part of the homeschool or unschool experience. They recommend joining or participating in support networks as a means to gain further homeschooling knowledge, parental support, or opportunities for socialization for the children. Furthermore, both participants discussed the challenges of balancing home, work, school, and childcare and suggested that parents adjust their expectations to allow for flexibility and help with balance. Finally, the analysis showed that both participants enjoyed working with their children, and found it rewarding when their children thrived. The participants remind parents to enjoy the experience and do what works for their families.
Overview of the Study

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the lived experiences of homeschool families during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically how they managed their day to include the teaching of elementary school-aged children in the rural Midwestern United States. This qualitative case study was significant, because it allowed the researcher to analyze the phenomenon of homeschooling during a global pandemic and the unprecedented school closures that occurred worldwide. The intent of this study was to offer guidance to parents considering homeschooling because of the COVID-19 pandemic, or to parents supporting their children’s distance learning as schools continue to offer distance learning.

Before examining the lived experiences of homeschool families during the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher conducted a literature review to understand the history of homeschooling. The researcher investigated the demographics of why families make the choice to homeschool. The review of literature provided the reader with background information on homeschooling, along with current data regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on our nation’s children. By providing the reader with a rich context on homeschooling and the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher was able to analyze the phenomenon of homeschooling during a global pandemic.

The methodological framework for this study was qualitative in nature, and followed a collective case study in design. In a collective case study, the researcher selects more than one case to examine and shows different perspectives on the issue while replicating the procedures
for each case (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2013). The intent of this multiple case study was to examine two cases that are in progress and can be compared, so the researcher and her readers can gain a better understanding of homeschooling during a global pandemic. This collective case study presents an in-depth understanding of homeschool families by relying on many forms of qualitative data such as the pre-interview questionnaire, interview, and collection of primary source documents (Creswell, 2013). A collective case study approach was appropriate for this study, because the researcher had clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and wished to provide a rich understanding of the participants’ actions (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2013).

For the purposes of this qualitative research, the investigator limited the case study to two participants residing in the rural Midwest, who are currently homeschooling at least one elementary school-aged child in autumn of 2020 during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In this study, two homeschoolers were identified through purposeful sampling. More specifically, the researcher utilized a homogeneous sample, or subgroup, of individuals who possessed similar characteristics (Creswell, 2012). In this study, participants were derived from two separate homeschool families that are homeschooling elementary school-age children during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. To ensure research validity, the researcher utilized triangulation, defined as making use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories, to help validate conclusions and authenticating evidence from three different sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2013). The data sources for this study included a pre-interview questionnaire, an interview, and primary sources from two homeschool families. Additional validation strategies used in this study include the clarification of researcher bias,
in-member checking, and the use of rich and detailed descriptions of the participants in the study for research transferability (Creswell, 2013).

To preserve the safety of her participants during a pandemic, the research investigator collected all data virtually. After receipt of the three data sources, a pre-interview response, interview response, and primary source documents, the researcher conducted a preliminary exploratory analysis via handwritten analysis, memoed the data, and conducted in-vivo coding. The researcher initially identified 44 codes, and as she further organized her findings, yielded 11 primary codes (Saldana, 2015). Finally, three themes emerged in the cross-case analysis of this collective case study: Support networks, finding balance, and family centered. The themes were identified as an attempt to answer the study’s central question and sub-question: What were the lived experiences of homeschool families during the COVID-19 pandemic? How did homeschool families organize their day to include the teaching of elementary school-age children?

**Implications of the Findings**

While the scope of this collective case study was small, the researcher was able to describe the reality of two homeschool families during the COVID-19 pandemic and how they managed their day to include the teaching of elementary school-age children. The intent of this study was to offer guidance to parents considering homeschooling, or parents supporting their children’s distance learning as COVID-19 cases continue to exponentially rise. The researcher cannot conclusively say that the three identifiable themes would be the case for all homeschool families, but that they were true in the case of this qualitative study. Rather, the researcher aimed to tell the lived experiences of two homeschool families as they share their knowledge,
successes, and challenges of balancing life and school during COVID-19 school closures and distance learning.

The analysis of the data collected for this qualitative study yielded the following results: While each participant had varying levels of homeschool experience, each individual discussed the significance of support networks as part of the homeschool or unschool experience. They recommend joining or participating in support networks as a means to gain further homeschooling knowledge, parental support, and opportunities for socialization for the children. Furthermore, both participants discussed the challenges of balancing home, work, school, and childcare and suggested that parents adjust their expectations to allow for flexibility and help with balance. Finally, the analysis showed that both participants enjoyed working with their children, and found it rewarding when their children thrived. The participants remind parents to enjoy the experience and do what works for their families. Knowing the challenges of balancing life and school during a pandemic, it becomes critical for policymakers to examine the themes that emerged from this study and consider how to support parents of school-aged children during unprecedented times.

Recommendations for Future Research

As the number of homeschool families increase throughout the United States, and because schools across the nation continue to face uncertainty as a result of the ongoing pandemic, the need for further research is prevalent. In this qualitative case study, the researcher was able to explore the lived experiences of two homeschool families during a global pandemic and answer the central question and sub-question: What were the lived experiences of
homeschool families during the COVID-19 pandemic? How did homeschool families organize their day to include the teaching of elementary school-age children?

A cross-case analysis of a homeschooling and unschooling family revealed several differences in routines, expectations, curriculums, instructional resources, and materials used by the two participants. Because individual families differ in their homeschooling experiences, a valuable study would be one that examines homeschooling from the perspective of a homeschooled child. More specifically, the study could follow elementary school-aged children who were homeschooled during the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, in an effort to gain further insight on homeschooling during unprecedented times, the researcher recommends examining additional cases as a means to provide more robust and applicable findings across contexts. Specifically, the researcher suggests binding future studies to families whose children had previously attended public or private schools, but chose homeschooling as a result of COVID-19.

Conclusion

The outbreak that began in Wuhan, China at the end of 2019 resulted in an estimated 107 countries implementing school closures (Viner, 2020). The closure of schools, childcare centers, and non-essential businesses in spring of 2020 placed immense stress and additional responsibilities on families as they had to balance work, family, and now distance learning (Anders et al., 2020; Carlson et al., 2020). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, homeschooling was the fastest growing educational trend in the United States. With public and private schools facing uncertainty during the ongoing pandemic, parents were forced to make difficult decisions regarding the education of their children.
The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the lived experiences of homeschool families during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically how they managed their day to include the teaching of elementary school-aged children. The information from this study was intended to serve as a guide to parents choosing between and navigating either homeschooling or distance learning. As the 2020-2021 academic year continues to bring unique challenges for families, policymakers should consider how to support stakeholders as they choose the best learning option for their children. The emerging theme of balancing life and school as a challenge in both cases of this qualitative study is significant. Knowing homeschool families rely on support networks, adjust expectations to allow for flexibility, and find ways to make schooling work for their families is notable. Therefore, if public and private schools consider the lived experiences of these two homeschool families, perhaps students can continue to receive a rich learning opportunity while preserving the family unit during distance learning.
REFERENCES


Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, July 23). The importance of reopening America’s schools this fall.


Fox Business. (2020, May 8). What is a nonessential business?


https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#trends_dailytrendscases

https://www.foxbusiness.com/lifestyle/what-is-a-non-essential-business


https://www.ssa.gov/cgi-bin/namesbystate.cgi

https://www.aeseducation.com/blog/online-learning-vs-distance-learning


Walger, P., Heininger, U., Knuf, M., Exner, M., Popp, W., Fischbach, T., & Simon, A. (2020). Children and adolescents in the CoVid-19 pandemic: Schools and daycare centers are to be opened again without restrictions. The protection of teachers, educators, carers and parents and the general hygiene rules do not conflict with
this. *GMS hygiene and infection control, 15.*


https://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/frequently_asked_questions/pandemic/en/
APPENDIX A: Email Soliciting Pilot Tester

Dear Mrs. H.,

Thank you for your interest in assisting with my research study. Currently, I am an Education Specialist candidate from Northern Michigan University in the Department of Education, Leadership, and Public Service. I am conducting a collective case study to describe the lived experiences of homeschool families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As an experienced homeschooler of eight children, you are being asked to assist in my research. Your participation in this research will allow me to refine the interview questions for my case study. Please review my draft interview questions (5 minutes) and provide feedback and suggestions on how to improve, add, or change any of the interview questions (10-15 minutes).

Thank you for piloting my interview questions. Your identity will remain confidential throughout the process; your name will only be stored and kept secure on my private computer. If you are interested in reading the completed study, you may access my research at Northern Michigan University's Commons (https://commons.nmu.edu/) at the end of this semester.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (906) 360-7003 or rebjohns@nmu.edu.

Thank you again,

Rebecca Z. Johnson, M.Ed.
IRB Proposal HS20-1142
APPENDIX B: Email Soliciting Participants

Hello,

My name is Rebecca Z. Johnson. I am an Education Specialist candidate from Northern Michigan University’s Department of Education, Leadership, and Public Service. I am conducting a collective case study to describe the lived experiences of homeschool families during the fall of 2020 and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

You are invited to participate in my research, because you are an individual who fits the parameters of the study. Participation in this research includes responding to an electronic questionnaire (5 minutes), completing an email interview (45 minutes), and providing the researcher with electronic copies of the following primary source documents: Homeschool schedule, list of curriculum / instructional materials or resources, and a photo (s) of your teaching environment (10 minutes). Lastly, reading the draft data analysis to help the researcher with accuracy and credibility of the case (15 minutes). Please note, because of COVID-19, all components of this study will be conducted via email.

If you would like to participate in this study, please respond to this email by October 21, 2020. A consent form along with a questionnaire will be emailed to you with a completion date of October 22, 2020. Upon completion, please return the questionnaire and signed consent form via email, and retain a copy of consent for your records. Finally, the interview questions and document request will be forwarded to you via email with a completion date of October 26, 2020.

If you have any questions, I can be reached at (906) 360-7003 or rebjohns@nmu.edu.

Thank you,

Rebecca Z. Johnson, M.Ed.
IRB Proposal HS20-1142
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Northern Michigan University
School of Education, Leadership, and Public Service
PROJECT TITLE: Homeschooling During COVID-19: A Case Study
IRB Approval Number: HS20-1142

Purpose of this study:
The purpose of this collective case study is to describe the lived experiences of homeschool families during fall 2020 and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. By examining how homeschool families organize their day, parents of children ages 5-10 who are considering homeschooling due to COVID-19 or parents having to support their children’s distance learning due to unplanned school closures may find guidance from experienced homeschool families.

What will be asked of you in this study:
● Read, sign, and return an informed consent form (electronically)
● Complete and return a brief pre-interview questionnaire (electronically)
● Complete and return an email interview (electronically)
● Email the researcher the following primary source documents: Homeschool schedule, list of curriculum, instructional, or resource materials, and a photo (s) of your teaching environment (electronically)
● Read the draft data analysis portion of the study and provide feedback to the researcher to ensure accuracy (electronically)

Time commitment of participants:
● Approximately 5 minutes to read, sign, and return an informed consent form along with the completed pre-interview questionnaire
● Approximately 45 minutes to complete and return the email interview
● Approximately 10 minutes to gather, scan, and email primary source documents to the research investigator
● Approximately 15 minutes to read and respond to a draft copy of the data analysis portion of the study
Risks and benefits of participating in this study:
The risks associated with this study are minimal. Participants may find the nature of the questions personal, and they may become uncomfortable while answering questions on the questionnaire or interview or by submitting pictures of their homeschool environments. In addition, because the interviews will be conducted via email, participants may be concerned with privacy protection (addressed below). The findings of this study may benefit parents of elementary school-aged children by providing them with guidance during school closures. I cannot and do not guarantee or promise any benefits from this study.

Confidentiality:
Your identity will be kept confidential. Your information will be de-identified by an assigned code name. Your actual name will not be used in any report or publication. All electronic correspondence will be stored on my personal-home computer, which is accessible using a secure password.

Compensation:
Participation in this study is voluntary; therefore, you will receive no payment or reimbursement for your participation.

Voluntary participation:
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence or penalty. You have the right to omit any questions or decline any procedures.

Contact information:
If you have any further questions regarding your rights as a participant in a research project, you may contact Dr. Lisa Schade Eckert of the Human Subjects Research Review Committee of Northern Michigan University (906-227-2300) leckert@nmu.edu. Any questions you have regarding the nature of this research project will be answered by the principal researcher who can be contacted as follows: Dr. Abby R. Cameron-Standerford 906-227-2768 acameron@nmu.edu.

Agreement:
My (electronic) signature below indicates that all my questions have been answered. I agree to participate in the project as described above.

Participant’s Name (print):

Participant’s (electronic) Signature/Date:
Research Investigator:
I have answered any questions the subject had in regards to the procedure(s) described above and the risks involved; I believe he/she understands the contents of the consent document and is competent to give legally effective and informed consent.

Responsible Investigator’s (electronic) Signature/Date:
APPENDIX D: Pre-Interview Questions

IRB Proposal HS20-1142

1. Are you currently homeschooling this fall?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. How many children are you currently homeschooling this fall?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 or more (please specify)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3. Are any of the homeschooled children between the ages of 5-10 (or grades K-5)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. How many of the homeschooled children are between the ages of 5-10?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All children</th>
<th>1 child</th>
<th>2 children</th>
<th>3 children</th>
<th>4 or more children (please specify)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

5. How many years of experience do you have as a homeschool provider?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0 (this is my first year)</th>
<th>1 year</th>
<th>2 years</th>
<th>3 years</th>
<th>4 or more years (please specify)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
APPENDIX E: Interview Protocol

Project: Homeschooling During COVID-19: A Case Study

Time Researcher Received Completed Interview:
Date Researcher Received Completed Interview:
Interviewer:
Interviewee / IRB Proposal: Rebecca Z. Johnson, M.Ed. / HS20-1142

Review, sign, and keep a copy of the informed consent document (Appendix C)

1. Please define homeschooling as it pertains to you.
2. How did you get started with homeschooling?
3. Please describe a typical homeschool day.
4. What curriculum or resources do you use to homeschool?
5. What materials do you have readily available when homeschooling?
6. How do you create a learning-friendly environment in your home?
7. What do you like best about homeschooling?
8. What is the most challenging aspect of homeschooling?
9. What advice do you have for parents who are new to homeschooling, or parents supporting their children during distance learning?
10. Is there anything else you would like to elaborate on or share with me in regards to homeschooling?

Probes that can be used in a follow-up email if necessary (Creswell, 2012):
“Tell me more.”
“Could you explain your responses more?”
“I need more detail.”
“What does ‘not much’ mean?”

(Send a thank you email to the individuals for their cooperation and participation in the study. Assure them their identities will remain confidential and that they may retrieve the results of the study at Northern Michigan University's Commons at https://commons.nmu.edu/).
APPENDIX F: Thank You Email

Dear,

Thank you for taking the time to participate in my research study. Your contributions allowed me to conclude my Education Specialist degree from Northern Michigan University’s Department of Education, Leadership, and Public Service. More importantly, your expertise as a homeschool family allowed me to provide current and relevant insight on homeschooling during a global pandemic. Hopefully your knowledge can serve as a guide to new homeschool families or parents who find themselves supporting their children’s distance learning during school closures.

If you are interested in reading the completed study, you may access my research at Northern Michigan University's Commons (https://commons.nmu.edu/) at the end of this semester.

If you have any questions, I can be reached at (906) 360-7003 or rebjohns@nmu.edu.

Thank you again,

Rebecca Z. Johnson, Ed.S.
IRB Proposal HS20-1142
APPENDIX G: IRB Approval

Memorandum

TO: Abby Cameron-Standerford
School of Education, Leadership, and Public Service

CC: Rebecca Johnson
School of Education, Leadership, and Public Service

DATE: October 20, 2020

FROM: Lisa Schade Eckert
Dean of Graduate Education and Research

SUBJECT: IRB Proposal HS20-1142
IRB Approval Date: 10/20/2020
Proposed Project Dates: 10/23/2020 – 1/31/2021
“Homeschooling During COVID-19: A Case Study”

Your proposal “Homeschooling During COVID-19: A Case Study” has been approved by the NMU Institutional Review Board. Include your proposal number (HS20-1142) on all research materials and on any correspondence regarding this project.

A. If a subject suffers an injury during research, or if there is an incident of non-compliance with IRB policies and procedures, you must take immediate action to assist the subject and notify the IRB chair (dereande@nmu.edu) and NMU’s IRB administrator (leckert@nmu.edu) within 48 hours. Additionally, you must complete an Unanticipated Problem or Adverse Event Form for Research Involving Human Subjects.

B. Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant.

C. If you find that modifications of investigators, methods, or procedures are necessary, you must submit a Project Modification Form for Research Involving Human Subjects before collecting data. Any changes or revisions to your approved research plan must be
approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

Until further guidance, per CDC guidelines, the PI is responsible for obtaining signatures on the COVID-19 Researcher Agreement and Release and COVID-19 Research Participant Agreement and Release forms.

All forms can be found at the NMU Grants and Research website: http://www.nmu.edu/grantsandresearch/node/102