

HOMESCHOOLING IN THE STATE OF MISSOURI: HOW ADVOCACY COALITIONS
INFLUENCE REGULATION OF THE HOME SCHOOL

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INFLUENCE REGULATION OF THE HOME SCHOOL

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the dozens of “invisible” children I have had the privilege to serve and assist in the public school setting, most notably to Z. and M. And to J., who persevered and independently paved a successful path in life. You are my courage and inspiration.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	vii
SECTION ONE: AN INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background of the Study.....	3
The Rise of Homeschooling.....	3
Amendments and Federal Case Law.....	6
Challenges to State Compulsory Attendance Laws.....	9
Homeschooling in the State of Missouri.....	11
Statement of the Problem.....	13
Problem of Policy.....	13
Problem of Practice.....	14
Study Purpose.....	15
Research Questions.....	17
Significance of the Study.....	18
SECTION TWO: SCHOLARLY REVIEW.....	20
Conflicts and Controversies within Homeschooling Literature.....	21
Conflicts Between Pro- and Anti-Regulatory Researchers.....	22
A Conflict of Rights.....	26
International Trends.....	26
Federal and State Rights of U.S. Citizens.....	28
State-by-State Policy Comparisons.....	29
Gaps in Homeschooling Literature.....	30

Theoretical Review.....	32
Revisions and Adaptions of the Advocacy Coalition Framework.....	33
SECTION THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	42
Framework History.....	42
Framework Components.....	42
ACF Assumptions.....	43
Conceptual Categories of the ACF.....	46
Theoretical Emphases.....	48
Advocacy Coalition Hypotheses.....	49
Policy-Oriented Learning Hypotheses.....	50
SECTION FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	52
Qualitative Methods.....	53
Positionality.....	53
Setting.....	55
Missouri’s Political Climate.....	55
Organizational Details.....	56
Participants.....	58
Data Collection.....	58
Data Analysis.....	60
Limitations, Assumptions, and Design Controls.....	62
SECTION FIVE: FINDINGS.....	65
Research Question 1: The Narratives of Homeschooling Advocacy Coalitions.....	65
Policy Knowledge.....	66

External Forces.....	67
External Forces and “Devil Shift”.....	69
Coalition Influence.....	70
Coalition Influence and Mobilization.....	71
Use of Narratives.....	72
Conclusions on Document Analysis Findings.....	74
Research Question 2: Policy Agreement and Discrepancies.....	74
Policy Position Discrepancies.....	76
Protecting the Rights of All.....	79
Ideologues and Pedagogues.....	79
Homeschool Narratives from Practitioners.....	81
Policy Knowledge and Homeschool Practice.....	82
The Priority of Organizational Involvement.....	82
Conclusions on Participant Interview Findings.....	83
Summary of Findings.....	84
SECTION SIX: DISCUSSION.....	85
The Research Questions.....	85
Potential for Policy Change.....	88
Implications for Practice.....	89
Implications for Policy.....	90
Implications for Scholarship.....	90
Discussion Conclusions.....	91
SECTION SEVEN: SCHOLARLY PRACTITIONER REFLECTION.....	92

REFERENCES.....95

APPENDIX A Informed Consent.....102

APPENDIX B Interview Questions.....103

APPENDIX C Document and Interview Analysis Themes.....105

VITA.....106

ABSTRACT

The state of Missouri has no justiciable regulations for homeschooling, which leaves some Missouri children without their guaranteed state protections. Utilizing the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), this qualitative study analyzed the narratives of two homeschooling advocacy coalitions, the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) and the Coalition for Responsible Home Education (CRHE), to identify any consistencies or inconsistencies between coalition narratives and those of actual homeschoolers. This study applies the ACF to contribute to literary scholarship using the ACF in qualitative research on homeschooling policy and the educational practice of Missouri public school teachers and leaders who may benefit from an improved understanding of the parental right to homeschool. Study outcomes reveal how the policy narratives of the HSLDA are likely to keep Missouri homeschooling unregulated and how their resources compare to the counter-narratives and operations of the CRHE as part of the process of keeping homeschooling unregulated. Also identified are the discrepancies between coalition and participant policy positions. Following the ACF, this study seeks to provoke policy-oriented learning that may induce policy change and ensure all Missouri children benefit from their state-authorized protections and rights.

Homeschooling in the State of Missouri: How Advocacy Coalitions Influence Regulation of the Home School

Section 1 – An Introduction

The central conflict examined in this study is between the state's responsibility to guarantee a child's positive right to receive a free and appropriate education and the federal government's responsibility to secure a parent's negative right, or liberty interests, in their child's education. Positive rights require the government to ensure that a citizen is provided for, while negative rights prevent the government from interfering when a citizen exercises their constitutionally guaranteed rights. This struggle between the rights of a child and a parent is evident in the homeschooling policy arena. While some may consider a child's right to an appropriate education paramount, others view a parent's liberty interests to oversee their child's education as a priority. Guaranteeing that a child receives a proper education in a home school setting could be considered minor because most homeschooling parents diligently teach appropriate content and document their child's academic progress (Dwyer & Peters, 2019; Goodpasture et al., 2013). However, when the state fails to protect the educational interests of children who experience educational neglect and abuse in the home school setting, a policy problem exists.

Beyond the boundaries of the United States, international law trends seek to protect the positive rights of children to be nurtured and to receive an appropriate education. According to Bartholet (2020), "at least two-thirds of all countries today embody [a child's] right" (p. 61) to education and protection against maltreatment. This global trend has strengthened child protection and led to highly regulated oversight, even banning homeschooling in other countries (Bartholet, 2020; Dwyer & Peters, 2019).

The U.S., however, often employs two constitutional amendments when considering the parental right to homeschool, and the hierarchy of these laws often outweighs the state-level responsibility to guarantee a child's education (Bartholet, 2020; Barnett; 2013; Dwyer & Peters; 2019; Green, 2013). First, the Due Process clause of the 14th Amendment guarantees a citizen's pursuit of life, liberty, and property and, thus, the parent's liberty interest in their child's education. Second, the Free Exercise clause of the 1st Amendment "protects the citizens right to practice their religion" (United States Courts, n.d.). So, if a family chooses to homeschool to use a religious curriculum and instill a faith tradition, the U.S. will protect this right. Yet, in the history of our Court system, there has never been a ruling that proclaims homeschooling to be a constitutional right of the parent (Bartholet, 2020; CRHE, 2023; Dwyer & Peters, 2019; Shulman, 2017). In Missouri, this legal conundrum is a problem of policy and educational practice. It is a policy problem because current Missouri state statutes leave Missouri children homeschooled without state protections and academic oversight. This conflict of rights is also a problem of practice because the controversy interferes with educators and their legal obligation to report neglect and ensure every child's education.

This study utilized the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014; Sabatier, 1988) to analyze the narratives of two national homeschooling organizations, the Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) and the Coalition for Responsible Home Education (CRHE). The HSLDA is a pro-homeschooling, anti-regulation coalition, while the CRHE is a pro-homeschooling, pro-regulatory coalition. These two coalitions reside within the homeschooling policy arena, and their respective policy positions were analyzed to understand how they influence home school regulation. Also included are the accounts of homeschooling teachers and homeschooled adults to identify their policy positions on the regulation of

homeschooling. By including the voices of homeschoolers, this study satisfied the research questions by revealing any alignment or discrepancies between homeschoolers and the narratives of these two coalitions. In all, I am adding the body of literature on homeschooling so that policy-oriented learning can increase the potential for policy change. I also seek to strengthen child protection and rights by contributing to the knowledge base of Missouri public school educators concerning homeschooling regulations and parental rights.

Background

For this study, homeschooling was defined as the teaching and learning that takes place in a home where a school-aged child is a student, and the parent or guardian is the teacher. The history of homeschooling in the U. S. dates back to colonial America (Dwyer & Peters, 2019; Barnett, 2013). However, this study will begin with the anti-public school movements that sprang from influential critics of public schools during the 1970s, a pivotal legislative publication in 1983, and when Christian publishers capitalized on these conflicts to make curriculum easily accessible to homeschooling families. These influences bolstered the popularity of homeschooling and left state governments grappling with regulating and ensuring a child's right to education while not impinging on the federally protected rights of citizens. These challenges and their outcomes have relied heavily on the interpretation and application of two constitutional Amendments and a handful of case laws that date as far back as the 1920s. This study's background is from these political contexts and legal histories.

The Rise of Homeschooling

According to Dwyer and Peters (2019), homeschooling in the U.S. was more of a novelty during the middle of the twentieth century. While the 1940s and 50s saw challenges to the rights of parents to homeschool, the practice gained momentum in the 1970s when popular faith-based

organizations and education reformists of influence began to speak out against public schools “in the name of arresting the nation’s spiritual decline” (Dwyer & Peters, 2019, p. 72). The Christian Coalition led by Pat Robertson and the Moral Majority led by Jerry Falwell became prominent by engaging their organizations’ followers in political activism on various conservative Christian topics. James Dobson, the founder of the Family Research Council, also used his radio broadcast with its broad listening base to promote the idea that public schools had become a moral and political battleground standing against religious beliefs and conservative values (Dwyer & Peters, 2019). In 1987, Phyllis Schlafly of the Eagle Forum, communicated to her followers that the public school system was an attack on their religion, morals, and family values. Schlafly even published a book titled *Child Abuse in the Classroom* “that aim[ed] to document how public schools were failing to provide sufficient intellectual or moral training for America’s youth” (Dwyer & Peters, 2019, p. 74). These individuals and their influence over millions of followers are credited with creating a religious surge in homeschooling that occurred during the 1970s and 1980s (Dwyer & Peters, 2019).

Still, it was “a disillusioned schoolteacher named John Holt... [who] catalyzed the liberal branch of the modern homeschooling movement” (Dwyer & Peters, 2019, p. 44) with publications that characterized public schools as factories for turning out submissive citizens. Holt’s newsletter publications, starting in 1977, brought together homeschoolers across all geographical locations, demographics, and values (Bartholet, 2020; Dwyer & Peters, 2019; Yuracko, 2008). Holt’s position on public schools resonated with families who desired an educational alternative to public schools. Perhaps more importantly, his work united two groups: pedagogues and ideologues (Dwyer & Peters, 2019). So, while faith-based organizations, the ideologues, encouraged families to withdraw from public schools, Holt’s followers, the

pedagogues, were questioning public schools' instruction or pedagogy. Thus, all these influences bolstered the perception of mediocrity and immorality in public schools and led to a steady rise in interest in homeschooling.

Then, in 1983, former president Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education published a report entitled, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. The report intended "to be a clarion call for nationwide school reform, not the abandonment of schools" (Dwyer & Peters, 2019, p. 50). However, the impact was quite the opposite, and the publication catalyzed Christian schools and homeschoolers to establish their right to alternative forms of education (Dwyer & Peters, 2019). Though later studies revealed that the report was not as bleak as suggested and that the data pinpointed more to a need for identifying and attracting qualified teachers of math and natural sciences, the information harmed public schools. The appeal of homeschooling grew for many more families (Dwyer & Peters, 2019).

Then, according to Dwyer and Peters (2019), "it did not take long for savvy entrepreneurs to recognize the potential for profit in the homeschooling market" (p. 76). Nonsecular academies, private schools, and curriculum publishers began to capitalize on the increased interest in homeschooling and the unintended mantra of the 1983 report. Enrollment in faith-based and private schools increased, as well as demand for homeschooling curricula from both faith-based and secular publishers (Dwyer & Peters, 2019). What was once less accessible to parents, academic curriculum, became easily accessible. Homeschooling materials became readily available for faith-based ideologues and academic pedagogues who aspired to Holt's unschooling principles (Dwyer & Peters, 2019; Yuracko, 2008). In this context, many grassroots homeschooling organizations began to formally organize and test the legal waters of compulsory attendance laws.

Amendments and Federal Case Law

The central conflict of this study is the assumed federal right of a citizen to homeschool and the state's legal authority to supervise a child's education and protection. Two constitutional Amendments are the primary context of this study when considering the "right" of a parent to homeschool. This section reviews the nuances of the First Amendment Free Exercise Clause and the Fourteenth Amendment's Due Process Clause by examining their history in five Supreme Court rulings. These case laws continue to influence the homeschooling policy arena despite their age and often misguided interpretations within the court systems (Dwyer & Peters, 2019; Reich, 2008). It is also essential to explain that many pro-homeschooling advocates believe homeschooling is a sacred right protected by the constitution (Cheng & Donnelly, 2019; Glanzer, 2008; HSLDA, 2021). Yet, pro-regulation advocates believe that homeschooling is a sacred trust (CRHE, 2023; Shulman, 2014) that should include a governing partnership between the state and the homeschooling parent. While this concept is significant to the research, this section assumes that federally protected parental rights and state-authorized education oversight are in place.

First, the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment "protects citizens' right to practice their religion as they please, so long as the practice does not run afoul of a 'public morals' or a 'compelling' governmental interest" (United States Courts, n.d.). According to Shulman (2014), "legal claims based on the right to parent often come packaged with other constitutional protections, [but] most frequently and forcefully [as] the Free Exercise Clause" (p. 10). Of second consideration are the liberty interests contained within the Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment. Barnett (2013) shares that "parents probably have a fundamental liberty interest in the education of their children, but states can impose reasonable regulations nonetheless" (p. 349).

Before the influences of Christian leaders and John Holt in the 1970s, the Education Commission's report in 1983, and the availability of home school curriculum, at least three landmark Supreme Court cases had already set a precedent for parental rights. First, in *Meyer v. Nebraska* (1923), a teacher contested that state law that "stripped parents of their... [liberty interest] ...to direct their child's education" (Barnett, 2013, p. 350). The Court ruled that the state's authority in limiting the teaching of a foreign language did interfere with the liberty interests of the parents. In this case, educators and parents had a right to direct the instruction of a private school, and the state's interest did not outweigh the liberty interests of private school stakeholders. Similarly, in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925), the Court again sided with the citizen and "struck down Oregon's Compulsory Education Act, which required attendance in public schools" (Shulman, 2014, p. 9). This Court ruling determined that states "must permit private school [attendance] as an alternative to public schools" (Dwyer & Peters, 2019, p. 51). Thus, the Court again found the state's education interest to be less than a parent's liberty interest. Yet, perhaps the most significant and well-known Court ruling regarding parental authority and education is *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972). Here, a group of Old Order Amish claimed that the state's compulsory attendance law to attend school until at least the age of 16 violated both their religious freedom and liberty interests in raising their children. In *Yoder*, the Court found that the state's interest did indeed create an undue burden on both rights of the parents because the Court found that "the Due Process Clause protected the right to parent...and the Free Exercise Clause guaranteed religious freedom" (Shulman, 2014, p. 113). This ruling set a formidable precedent for those seeking a religious exemption from state laws and their educational authority.

Still, though the previous examples addressed how a state's educational authority can be limited, two other Court rulings demonstrated support for the state's control over education and child rights. In *Prince v. Massachusetts* (1944), Sarah Prince was convicted of several child labor crimes within the state court. She claimed that the state interfered with her free exercise of religion and parental liberty interests (Dwyer & Peters, 2019; Green, 2015). Prince permitted her niece, whom she was guardian, to accompany her to sell religious pamphlets, violating child labor laws. Prince argued that the state's law interfered with the child's and her rights to free exercise of religion while also violating Prince's Fourteenth Amendment due process liberty interests in raising the child. The Court, however, found that because of the state's *parens patriae* authority, "neither rights of religion nor rights of parenthood are beyond limitation" (Shulman, 2014, p. 83). In *Prince*, the Court found that the state's obligation to the child outweighed the parent's religious freedom and liberty interests in the child. Yet another ruling in favor of state educational authority came about in 1987. The *Mozert v. Hawkins* case in Tennessee went to the Supreme Court as another challenge to religious freedom only. The parent, Bob Mozert, "objected to Hawkins County [Schools]...regulations requiring his children to read from the Holt Company basal reading series" (Reich, 2002b, p. 445). Like *Yoder*, the parent sought exemption from state requirements based on religious freedoms. However, in the *Mozert* case, the court found that the reading series did not burden the parent's religious freedoms claiming that exposure to the series did not constitute a compulsion to believe concepts differing from the family's religion (Reich, 2002b).

These relevant Supreme Court rulings serve as a legal background on homeschooling and demonstrate how rulings on religious freedoms and the liberty interests of raising a child can have varying outcomes. Equally, children's rights were only considered in *Prince v.*

Massachusetts (1944). This history resonates with our nation's enduring governmental structure in that the negative rights of parents weigh more heavily than the state's obligation to protect children's rights. However, in all the cases, the Court had two responsibilities: to determine if the practice at issue created a burden on the Due Process Clause or the Free Exercise Clause, and if so, did a state's interest outweigh the burden created on the parent or guardian (Reich, 2002b)? In *Meyer*, *Pierce*, and *Yoder*, the Court found that the state's authority did create an undue burden on parental rights, and state laws had to evolve to accommodate these federal protections. But, in *Prince* and *Mozert*, the Court found that the state's power over education did not burden the citizens' liberty interests or religious freedoms. The Court also supported the state's historical authority over education.

Challenges to State Compulsory Attendance Laws

Through the criticisms of the public schools in the 1970s and the resulting interest in homeschooling, individual states had to consider child education rights and federal parental rights against established case laws on compulsory attendance that occurred during the 1950s to the 1970s. Compulsory attendance law is a power given to states to hold parents accountable for sending their children to school. This law varies from state to state, but each interpretation provides a guideline for when children must begin to receive schooling, generally age six, and when they can independently withdraw from school, generally age 17. What follows are early state case laws on compulsory attendance that framed and continue to inform the homeschooling policy arena.

First, in *People v. Levisen* (1950), the Illinois state supreme court ruled that the interpretation of state statutes placed homeschooling in the same realm as private school attendance and was justifiable. Yet, in *Scoma v. Chicago Board of Education* (1974), a federal

district court “rejected a homeschooler’s challenge to the state’s compulsory...attendance law” (Dwyer & Peters, 2019, p. 61). The court found that the state law did not violate the parents’ Fourteenth Amendment liberty interest to educate their child. In the late 1960s, Barbara and Frank Massa of Morris County, New Jersey, were fined for not complying with the state’s compulsory school attendance law after they began homeschooling their child. Through an appeal, the court sided with the Massa, who produced copious amounts of documentation to prove they had “complied with the attendance statute by furnishing...instruction equivalent to that provided by the public school” (Dwyer & Peters, 2019, p. 60). And during the 1970s, Massachusetts gave local superintendents oversight of home schools. In 1978, one superintendent required that “homeschoolers have a social experience equivalent to that with children in public schools” (Dwyer & Peters, 2019, p. 61). The state court sided with the homeschooling parents declaring that “education officials were not permitted to impose requirements so burdensome as to make homeschooling practically impossible” (Dwyer & Peters, 2019, p. 61).

Today, these legal inconsistencies also resemble the condition of homeschooling laws and regulations from state to state in our nation. In New York, a parent wishing to homeschool must submit a notice of intent to the school district superintendent, submit an Individualized Home Instruction Plan (IHIP), comply with subject requirements, file quarterly reports, and the child must participate in an annual assessment (HSLDA, 2022). Similarly, in Ohio, West Virginia, and the Carolinas, a parent wishing to homeschool must meet a high school equivalency or GED teaching requirement. And in Ohio, if the child fails to show growth on the annual assessment, the parent must submit a remediation plan to the superintendent. Compare these homeschool regulations and educational protections with the states of Kansas and Arkansas, where the only enforceable regulation is that a parent must provide notice of their intention to homeschool. Or

consider Tennessee, where notice is required, and the parent must meet teaching requirements, but there are no mandated subjects to teach. These examples demonstrate the difference between high, moderate, and low regulatory states and show that the individual state can legally oversee the homeschooled child's education if it pursues these protections. Still, none of these states exemplify the legal condition of homeschooling in Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Texas, Oklahoma, and five other states, which, to date, retain no justiciable laws on homeschooling.

Homeschooling in the State of Missouri

In Missouri, a parent or guardian can homeschool a child with little to no regulatory expectations from the state. While state statutes exist for homeschooling and compulsory school attendance, even Missouri's education agency, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), has no authority over home schools and exists only to "maintain a strong public education system" (DESE, n.d.). This state educational agency and the state laws provide confounding guidelines and leave measures for teaching educational content and expected learning outcomes nonexistent for some Missouri children. Missouri, along with ten other states, is where the interests of parents and the academic and autonomous rights of children create a stalemate in policy. Specifically, Missouri remains a key pro-homeschooling, anti-regulation battleground as one of the 11 remaining states in our nation that require no notice to homeschool and have no enforceable regulatory practices within its state statutes (HSLDA, 2022).

Missouri records two state statutes that relate to homeschooling. The first is RSMo 167.031, the state's compulsory attendance law. In Missouri, a homeschool should enroll children of compulsory attendance age and "have the primary purpose of providing private or religious-based instruction [to] pupils between the ages of 7 and 16 years, and [the school] must not charge or receive tuition, fees, or other remuneration" (HSLDA, 2021). This same statute

recommends that homeschooling families keep a plan book, diary, or other written record indicating the details of the child's academic work, outcomes of evaluations, and academic progress. The second statute is RSMo 167.042, which provides directions to the home school parent on how to file a home school declaration. This statute exists so that the home school may "minimize unnecessary investigations due to reports of truancy" (RSMo 167.042). So, though these legal provisions sound appropriate, their limitations provide several loopholes that place some Missouri children at risk for educational neglect, physical abuse, and even sexual exploitation (Garth, 2016). A parent has no obligation to enroll their school-age child in public school once they reach the age of compulsory attendance. Thus, a child can reside in a home and potentially receive no education because the parent asserts they are homeschooling. These statutes thus exemplify how current homeschooling laws usurp a child's right to an education.

In closing, the history and background of homeschooling have been and continue to be a fiercely contested and assumed federal right of parents based on the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment (religious freedom) and the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (liberty interests). However, if it were true that homeschooling is a federally protected right of the parenting citizen, then states would not have such inconsistent and wide-ranging regulatory, even enforceable, practices for home schools. Equally, homeschooling in Missouri, and other low-regulatory states, leave the general citizen misinformed and unaware of the physical, emotional, and educational abuses of children that take place because of the lack of regulation (Bartholet, 2020; CRHE, 2023; Dwyer & Peters, 2019; Barnett, 2013). Current Missouri state statutes interfere with its authority over education and child protection, leaving some Missouri homeschooled children at risk of educational, emotional, physical, or sexual neglect. These realities speak to the purpose of this study, which is to communicate the discrepancies between

the narratives of homeschoolers and the coalitions that defend their rights while equally contributing to literature so that policy-oriented learning may invoke policy change.

Statement of the Problem

Research often emerges from a perceived problem in our world that requires investigation (Locke et al., 2000). Equally, a researcher often identifies these problems their personal experience, and such is the case with this study. As an educator in Missouri, I have encountered numerous situations in a public school setting where the lack of homeschooling regulation contributed to children's educational, emotional, and physical neglect. This problem was magnified when I realized that if I had encountered this many incidences of homeschool neglect within one small school building of 300 students, how many more could exist across our entire state? Missouri does not require a parent to notify any state agency of their intent to homeschool, nor does the state require the parent to provide any ongoing evidence that learning is taking place. Because of this, some homeschooled children are disenfranchised and kept from accessing their educational rights and state protections. What follows is an elaboration on Missouri state statutes related to homeschooling and how these current statutes present both a policy and educational practice problem.

Problem of Policy

Missouri homeschooling state statutes demonstrate a problem of policy in two ways. First, as shared previously, RSMo 167.042 does not require a homeschooling parent to provide notice of their intention to homeschool. Because of this, there is currently no way to verify or deny the number of Missouri children enrolled in a home school nor the extent of child maltreatment in the home school setting. Goodpasture et al. (2013) refer to these children as invisible because a parent could potentially hide their child from their community under the

pretense of homeschooling. An example of this policy problem was experienced by this educator when child protective services forced an illiterate homeschooling parent to enroll her eight-year-old in public school after an investigation revealed the child was sexually abused. Having never been enrolled in school, the child did not recognize letters or numbers and had limited interactions with the public and peers. Because of RSMo 167.042, this parent could claim she homeschooled while keeping the child from exposure to the educational community designed to protect them. Suppose Missouri required a notice of intent to homeschool. In that case, abuse like this might be avoided because the life and existence of the child would be known, and the likelihood of public agency interactions would increase.

Second, Missouri's compulsory attendance law, RSMo167.031, neglects children's rights by providing unenforceable guidelines to homeschooling parents with recommendations for maintaining evidence of instruction. Again, considering the previous scenario, if the parent were required to provide proof of teaching and academic progress, this incident and its longevity may have been avoided. Most concerning is that RSMo167.031 prevents child protective service workers from viewing a home school's educational documents in response to a report of suspected abuse. So, while both provisions sound appropriate and comprehensive, the restrained language of the statutes makes them unenforceable. Thus, Missouri state statutes on compulsory attendance and homeschooling create loopholes that leave some Missouri children without rights and at risk for educational neglect, physical abuse, and even sexual exploitation (Garth, 2016).

Problem of Practice

Child maltreatment in any setting unnecessarily burdens the already limited resources of public school systems. While few would argue that society would like to end child abuse and that most educators readily accept any challenge because of their commitment to children, it is

especially burdensome when improved policies could prevent these problems. So, while there is no literature on how homeschooling regulation impacts public schools (Dwyer & Peters, 2019; Reich, 2008), this study offers the following perspectives from my education experience and practice. First, I imagine educators are misguided and uninformed regarding the state's responsibility to protect child rights and the statutes governing the parental right to homeschool in Missouri. These confusions can then hinder any efforts on the part of an educator to advocate for children who may need state protections. Understanding both child educational rights and parental homeschooling rights in the context of Missouri's low regulatory requirements can better equip educators to fulfill their child advocacy obligations.

Equally, a second problem of practice presents a moral and ethical challenge to educators. Missouri law is inequitable because it does not "offer homeschooled children the same protections given to public school students" (Barnett, 2013, p. 348). This lack of protection offers a dilemma to educators who are bound to protect children's rights. While the problem of practice presents with procedural problems, it is also essential to consider that "what [also] matters here is the [moral and ethical] justice we owe to [all] children, that they receive an education that cultivates their future citizenship, their individual freedom, and that teaches them...academic skills (Reich, 2008, p. 23).

Study Purpose

According to Jones et al. (2014), "policy narratives communicate important information about policy problems and policy solutions" (p. 27). This study aims to analyze the varying narratives within the homeschooling policy arena to understand better why homeschooling in Missouri remains unregulated. By telling the narratives of homeschoolers, this study will identify any discrepancies between study participants' and coalition narratives. Thus, adding to the

literature on homeschooling, this study's findings may bring about the type of policy-oriented learning necessary for policy change (Sabatier, 1988, Jenkins-Smith, et al., 2013). Change is required if the rights of all Missouri children are to be safeguarded. Again, for this study's purpose, homeschooling is defined as the teaching and learning that occurs within the home as a matter of parental choice. This study's data and analyses does not consider the public school practices during the COVID-19 pandemic that forced virtual instruction into students' homes as homeschooling.

First, this study seeks to identify any discrepancies between homeschooler and coalition narratives related to regulatory practices. By collecting homeschooling narratives, this study will provide verbal, symbolic, or communicative data that, when analyzed, will provide valid inferences, and create the potential for policy-oriented learning. In defining the Advocacy Coalition Framework's (ACF) policy-oriented learning hypothesis, Sabatier (1988) explained that "'knowledge' does not suddenly appear, become universally accepted, and [thus] suggest unequivocal change" (p. 154). Instead, findings that challenge the acceptance of policies "tend to emerge gradually over time, be challenged by those who perceive their interests being adversely affected and thus give rise to...debate" (Sabatier, 1988, p. 154). These debates tell stories, and stories provide narratives. As individuals, we find "there is something about story – or narrative – that feels uniquely human" (Jones et al., 2014, p. 1). Thus, to understand homeschooling, we must understand the narratives that form this policy reality and measure its movable (or immovable) variables (Jones et al., 2014).

A second purpose of this study is to add to the body of literature that promotes positive child rights within the home school policy arena. This addition may result in the enlightenment function of policy-oriented learning (Sabatier, 1991; Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014). As shared

above, the knowledge that leads to change often occurs gradually. And, as a change in thinking occurs, “enlightenment” alters individual perceptions of a policy problem (Sabatier, 1991). So, where alterations of thought can occur, behaviors and belief systems can adapt and shift, resulting in the type of policy-oriented learning that fosters policy improvement and change (Hecl, 1974; Sabatier, 1988).

In all, this study aims to collect the narratives that indicate why Missouri homeschooling remains unregulated and to add to the body of literature that promotes positive child rights in the homeschooling policy arena so that policy-oriented learning may occur. Banning homeschooling or providing homeschooling statutes free of regulation are flawed policy extremes (Dwyer & Peters, 2019). Instead, this study encourages all Missouri citizens and policy advocates to think about and engage in discourse that includes all sides of the issue. And, while the answers reached here may be complicated and void of neatly compartmentalized belief systems, we should nonetheless engage in this democratic debate so our community sees the children suffering from abuse and neglect as belonging to us all (Shulman, 2014). As suggested in the ACF’s Learning Hypothesis 5, “even when the accumulation of technical information does not change views...it can have important impacts on policy...by altering views” (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014, p. 200).

Research Questions

This study will consider the policy narratives advocacy coalitions utilize to obstruct or promote the regulation of homeschooling by asking:

- 1) What policy narratives do the HSLDA and CRHE use to communicate their positions on the regulation of homeschooling?
- 2) What alignment or discrepancies exist between advocacy coalition narratives on homeschooling and the narratives of homeschoolers?

Significance of the Study

The study's significance is in its contribution to scholarship and educational practice. Current Missouri state statutes on homeschooling do not require a parent to give notice of their intent to homeschool. These unenforceable statutes put some Missouri children at risk for experiencing educational neglect or other atrocities because their educational interests are not necessarily protected once homeschooled. As a matter of educational practice, it is unclear how informed Missouri educators are on the parental right to homeschool. This confusion adds to the moral and ethical dilemma of educators sworn to protect child rights but who may be ill-equipped to advocate when they are made aware of homeschool neglect. In addressing these problems, this study's significance is realized.

First, to analyze Missouri's homeschooling policies, this study will contribute to scholarship by applying the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) to the homeschooling policy arena. The ACF has framed numerous environmental and energy policy studies, yet its application within social science has been limited (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Also contributing to scholarship is this study's use of the ACF for qualitative research and in the context of Missouri. Because of the ACF's popularity within environmental policy arenas, its methods have been quantitative (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Qualitative work focused on the state of Missouri that includes the narratives of homeschoolers is limited.

Second, this study seeks to address a problem of educational practice. Many public school educators are unaware of the legal nuances of the parental right to homeschool. These misunderstandings can lead to frustrations with child protective services because the educator who reports suspected neglect perceives that no action is taken to protect a child. This study will inform public school educators about Missouri homeschooling laws and the corresponding

federal protections for parents that permit homeschooling without regulation. As a result, these clarifications will better equip educators to advocate for children when they suspect neglect in a home school setting.

Summary

Homeschooling in America and Missouri is a strongly contested topic between those who advocate for parental rights and those who advocate for child rights. Those with no personal experience or knowledge of homeschooling are uninvolved in this debate and, as a result, unwittingly condone a policy that leaves some Missouri children without their guaranteed state protections. However, because few citizens would willingly ignore child neglect or abuse, this study aims to inform Missouri citizens, policy advocates, and educators why current state statutes leave room for egregious child abuse and protect the perpetrators carrying out these crimes. As an educator, I am both a representative of the state and a protector of children. Thus, this study reflects my burgeoning passion for addressing the state policies that impede the protection and rights of Missouri children.

Section 2 - Scholarly Review

This study will examine the narratives of homeschooling advocacy coalitions to understand better why Missouri homeschooling remains unregulated. Current Missouri homeschooling state statutes leave children who attend school at home with weakened state protections because parental authority over a child's education is traditionally prioritized above a child's guarantee of state protections (Bartholet, 2020; Dwyer & Peters, 2019). However, one of these protections includes a child's right to receive an adequate education. The tradition of valuing parental authority over a child's right to an appropriate education exists and continues because of the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA)'s role in supporting and defending parental rights within homeschooling policy (Bartholet, 2020; Carlson, 2019; Green, 2015). The HSLDA justifies this advocacy as a matter of liberty rights under the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and the religious freedoms contained within the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment. When applied in the context of homeschooling, these federally protected interests and freedoms confound the state's constitutional responsibility to ensure a child receives an adequate education.

Conversely, the Center for Responsible Home Education (CRHE) stands in contrast to the policy positions of the HSLDA. The CRHE advocates for the prioritization of justiciable child rights in the home school setting. By examining and understanding the advocacy coalition narratives that inform this legal stalemate, this study will contribute to the theoretical concept of the enlightenment function within the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), which produces policy-oriented learning and change (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014).

This literature review will discuss the conflicts and controversies within the literature on homeschooling as they pertain to federal parental rights and state jurisdiction over education.

Understanding the anomalies within the law will support an understanding of why Missouri homeschooling remains unregulated and continues as a source of conflict within and between advocacy coalitions. Next, I explain how this study connects to the existing literature and adds to research by filling in existing literary gaps on homeschooling in Missouri. Finally, the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) is defined and explained to demonstrate how its assumptions, hypotheses, and concepts have evolved to meet the growing needs of policy analysis studies.

Conflicts and Controversies within the Homeschooling Literature

Depending on one's background and experiences, the topic of homeschooling can conjure up images of frontier homesteading in the 1800s to the more recent homeschooling ideologies born from a place of deep dissatisfaction with American public schools. This section will first introduce the conflicts within homeschooling literature about parental and child rights. The disputes between two prevalent researchers during the early 2000s are shared, followed by an explanation of how these early discussions have framed and evolved into more contemporary homeschooling policy positions. Then, a review and discussion of publications on international trends and constitutional law regarding parental and child rights are provided. Lastly, there is an examination of the existing gaps within the literature that inform this study's purpose. These legal conflicts and research trends spotlight and explain the foundational narratives of anti-regulatory and pro-regulatory homeschooling advocates while clarifying and explaining Missouri's existing homeschooling policy inertia.

As explained in the background of this study, the literature on homeschooling will be presented through the lens of historical and legal events that pushed the practice of homeschooling to the forefront of American culture during the 1970s and 1980s. And, while this study does not define homeschooling as the virtual instruction provided by public schools within

student homes during the COVID-19 pandemic, this study does consider COVID-19 as a historical disruption to public school choice (Musaddiq et al., 2021). Considering the influences of COVID-19 also informs the ACF's concept of how external events can influence advocacy coalition inputs and outputs (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014).

Conflicts Between Pro- and Anti-Regulatory Researchers

A search of the literature on homeschooling reveals two diverse theoretical thinking lines. Such as, who is ultimately responsible for a child's education? The parent or the state? And whose rights and interests should be prioritized? The state-protected rights of the child or the federal parental right to raise and educate the child (Bartholet, 2020; Brewer & Lubienski, 2017; Glanzer, 2008; Goodpasture, 2013; Reich, 2008)? These opposing spectrums are evidenced here by the early works of Rob Reich, a professor of Political Science at Stanford University, and Perry Glanzer, a professor of educational foundations at Baylor University. During the early 2000s, Reich published numerous reports weighing in as a supporter of child autonomy and as a pro-regulation advocate of homeschooling (Reich, 2002b, 2002c, 2008). Conversely, Perry Glanzer (2008), an advocate of parental homeschooling freedoms, countered Reich's interpretations and recommendations by challenging the state's authority in the home and Reich's concepts on child autonomy. So, while Reich and Glanzer are not the only researchers on the topic of homeschooling regulation, their early debates created a foundation that remains central to today's conflict within homeschooling policy and the literature on homeschooling.

First, in 2002, Reich wrote the text *Bridging Liberalism and Multiculturalism in America* along with other papers on homeschooling policy and case law (2002a, 2002b, 2002c). Reich (2002a) theorized that a child deserves minimalist autonomy toward their education and life choices, defining minimalist autonomy as "a person's ability to reflect independently and

critically upon basic commitments, values, desires, and beliefs...and to enjoy a range of meaningful life options” (p. 92). Here Reich (2002c) shared that “to achieve minimal autonomy requires that a child know that there are ways of life other than that into which he or she was born” (p. 299) and that this experience was not necessarily possible in the homeschool setting. However, Glanzer (2008), as an anti-regulation advocate, countered Reich’s ideals on minimalist autonomy by arguing that Reich failed to provide evidence that minimalist autonomy would be improved with state regulations or that child autonomy even existed in any school setting. So, while Reich (2008) and Glanzer agreed that “becoming autonomous is a worthy educational goal...many homeschooling defenders reject outright that children have any interest in autonomy” (p. 17). Where Reich believes autonomy should be a state-protected right of the child, Glanzer argues that its existence is too elusive to measure no matter the educational setting.

Second, Reich (2002a, 2002c) asserted that too much parental authority over a child’s education could potentially interfere with cultivating citizenship in an increasingly diverse society. On this point, Reich (2002c) emphasized that parents have “independent interests in exerting authority [over] the education of [their] children” (p. 283), an interest that may not always serve the best interests of the child or our increasingly diverse society. Reich (2002c) viewed unregulated homeschooling as a parental self-interest and that a parent should prove that the homeschooled child receives instruction beyond the self-serving interests of the parent. Glanzer (2008), however, proposed that Reich’s stance on too much parental authority did not equate to the parent having an educational burden of proof. The parent should not have to prove that their educational intentions limit the child's interests unless the state can prove that parental interests negatively influence the learner (Glanzer, 2008). Here, Glanzer (2008) shared that the state should “use the same approach to homeschooling as we do for other child welfare issues”

(p. 7). Thus, if the state has an education concern, they are in the authoritative position to investigate it through long-established child welfare processes. Reich and Glanzer's responses to the educational burden of proof authentically capture an additional narrative that separates this policy subsystem. Where Reich purports that too much parental authority over the homeschooled child's education harms the child and society, Glanzer asserts that the state must first prove that too much parental authority is a detriment before questioning a child's home school education.

Third, besides addressing concerns for child autonomy and the perceived imbalances between parental and state education interests, Reich (2002b) went on to author a review of these disparities as they related to the established case laws of *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972) and *Mozert v. Hawkins County Board of Education* (1987). Reich (2002b) reports that the Yoder ruling exempted Amish children from compulsory school attendance laws because school attendance beyond the eighth grade violated the parent's First Amendment right to religious freedom. In doing so, the Court conjectured that few other religious groups could make such claims (Reich, 2002b). Thus, according to Reich (2002b), for homeschooling families to argue that state regulation of their home school would infringe on their religious freedoms could be unfounded when referencing the *Yoder* case (Bartholet, 2020; Dwyer & Peters, 2019; Dwyer, 1996). Another matter of case law that influences homeschooling policy positions is the idea of exposure. In the *Mozert* case, the Court ruled that the parents were "obliged to accept the curricular materials provided by the public schools" (Reich, 2002b, p. 447) because exposure to content did not equate with harm to the child even when said materials oppose the preferred views of the family. Thus, the Court determined that the public school's content did not infringe on the parent's religious freedoms. In response, Glanzer (2008) agreed that there are "too many scholars focus[ed] on *Yoder* and *Mozert*" (p. 2) and added that researchers should give effort to

understanding the growth and “widespread phenomenon of homeschooling” (p. 2). Still, Glanzer (2008) included that these historical case laws contribute to the policy positions that protect parental homeschooling freedoms.

Today, the early policy positions of Glanzer and Reich are historically significant and pertinent to this study for the following reasons. First, they demonstrate the linguistic evolution of homeschooling policy narratives while demonstrating the traditional policy positions that span the past three decades. What Reich (2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2008) and Glanzer (2003, 2008, 2010) consistently described as child autonomy is now more likely to be referenced as the positive rights of a child within both anti- and pro-regulatory homeschooling narratives (Bartholet, 2020; Cheng & Donnelly, 2019; Dwyer & Peters, 2019; Gaither, 2017). Second, where Glanzer (2008) and Reich (2008) battled over who should have the educational burden of proof for a child, current researchers focus on the conflict between the state’s authority over child rights and the federal government’s responsibility to protect parental rights (Bartholet, 2020; Brewer & Lebienski, 2017; Cheng & Donnelly, 2019; Gaither, 2017). And third, while Glanzer and Reich interpreted the rulings of *Yoder* and *Mozert* to support their respective policy positions, today, these formidable case laws are more likely to be glossed over while more contemporary debates consider whether the decision to homeschool is a protected parental right or a sacred trust which can be regulated (Shulman, 2014).

Thus, while the policy positions of Glanzer and Reich by no means demonstrate the full array of policy positions on homeschooling, these basic arguments continue today. And though the homeschooling policy vernacular may have changed, including these preliminary arguments fulfills two concepts of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). First, a long-term perspective is necessary for understanding any policy arena. And second, the ACF is especially effective in

translating the opposing belief systems that comprise a high-conflict policy topic, such as the right to homeschool (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014; Sabatier, 1988).

A Conflict of Rights

As this discussion continues between the state's authority to protect children's educational interests and the federal government's responsibility to protect parental authority, these themes also emerge within international law, constitutional provisions, and the state's legal duties. While the theoretical conflicts on homeschooling demonstrate opposing values, the literature also provides opposing legal paths on homeschooling policy and regulation. These conflicts can be represented internationally but also by comparing the federal government's obligation to not interfere with the assumed rights of a homeschooling adult against the state's responsibility to guarantee a child's educational rights. When considering legal policy positions on homeschooling, children's positive rights are defined as "those that require the government to do or provide something" (Zackin, 2013, p. 40). Homeschooling parents retain negative rights, which are those that "require...the government [to] refrain from doing something" (Zackin, 2013, p. 40). Thus, at any level, the conflict within homeschooling policy reveals a conflict of rights. A child has positive rights that guarantee access to education and the homeschooling parent has negative rights that prevent the government from interfering with their liberty interests in educating their child. What follows is how these rights play out internationally, federally, and at the state level of legal discourse.

International Trends. The International Center for Home Education (ICHER) was founded in 2012 and exists today to "provide nonpartisan information about homeschooling" (2022) based on analyses of responsible homeschooling research. According to ICHER (2022), "the legality of home education is a matter of interpretation since the terms 'homeschooling' or

‘home education’ are rarely used in laws and regulations” (Regulations section). ICHER’s (2022) worldwide regulation map identifies countries where homeschooling is permitted, the level of oversight and requirements, or if homeschooling is illegal in a country. The Center’s work includes U.S. policies, where regulations vary from state to state, and policies from 56 other countries that are representative of all six of the world’s inhabited continents. Policy variants on homeschooling are demonstrated in the U.S. and across the globe. For example, Germany only permits homeschooling for children whose stay in the country is limited, and a public school teacher conducts the education. Yet in France, Germany’s neighbor to the southwest, parents are permitted to homeschool and can choose from various methods so long as they register each year with their municipality. South America offers yet another policy contrast where in Argentina, school attendance is required by law, but the right of the parent to choose to home school is protected. Yet to the north of Argentina in Brazil, homeschooling is illegal. Australia is a final example of the diverse policies that comprise homeschooling regulations worldwide. Like the U.S., homeschooling is legal, yet requirements and oversight vary from territory to territory (HSLDA, 2022; ICHER, 2022).

Still, while this research demonstrates that homeschooling policies vary worldwide, one global policy consideration remains an outlier. When comparing international homeschooling policies, the positive rights of a child could be considered primarily ignored in the U.S. for the following reasons. The U.S. has failed to ratify The Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), an international human rights treaty which “demands that nations honor child human rights equally with adult human rights” (Bartholet, 2020, p. 60). This treaty also obligates nations to prioritize a child’s right to an education. The U.S. has also failed to ratify The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which when “broadly

ratified...provides a wide range of positive rights and requires that nation states ensure their full realization” (Bartholet, 2020, p. 61). Of the 193 member states of the United Nations, numerous countries have ratified these treaties (OHCHR, 2023). The U.S., however, remains one of a handful of United Nations members that have yet to approve either of these treaties, which asks countries to consider the positive rights of children equally with their obligation to negative adult rights (United Nations Treaty Collection, n.d.). So, while children's rights to receive an education and protections from maltreatment have grown internationally and are largely justiciable, the U.S. Constitution is and continues to emphasize and apply negative rights (Bartholet, 2020). It is here where the conflicts begin within U.S. borders in that our country's most powerful document and court system has sometimes prioritized parents' negative rights to homeschool without government interference above the positive rights of children to be guaranteed an appropriate education.

Federal and State Rights of U.S. Citizens. Many researchers theorize that the legal gridlock to regulate homeschooling within state oversight of education can be attributed to the U.S. Constitution not balancing parental rights and child interests (Bartholet, 2020; Dwyer & Peters, 2019; Shulman, 2014; Zackin, 2013). Two assumed parental rights are within the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment and the liberty rights under the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (Barnett, 2013). The Free Exercise Clause ensures that the government will not interfere with citizens' right to practice their religion. So, whenever homeschooling is practiced as a religious freedom, those who homeschool for spiritual purposes “enjoy special constitutional protection from state regulation” (Shulman, 2014, p. 10).

Still, while some may conceptualize homeschooling as a religious freedom that exists to promote a favored ideology, there are many other reasons families choose to homeschool. Dwyer

and Peters (2019) share that beyond those who desire to encourage their faith in the home school, some families pedagogically disagree with traditional schooling. As shared previously, families also pursue homeschooling to individualize their child's educational interests, oversee their child's special needs, or remove their children from bullying or failing schools (Brewer, 2017; Dwyer & Peters, 2019; Green, 2014). When the parental desire to homeschool differs from a religious purpose, the Fourteenth Amendment Due Process Clause may be applied. Here, "advocates claim that heightened oversight would infringe on parental liberty [interests]" (Barnett, 2013, p. 349). The Due Process Clause gives parents the right to direct their child's education. It does not, however, circumvent the state's ability to oversee educational matters (Barnett, 2013). Thus, because the federal government guarantees not to interfere with a parent's religious freedoms or liberty interests, one might assume that it is difficult for the state to exercise and oversee its responsibility to provide an adequate education to children (Bartholet, 2020; Dwyer & Peters, 2019; Shulman, 2014). However, if it were impossible for the state to oversee its educational responsibilities in the home school, our nation would not reflect such wide variations of homeschooling policies.

State-by-State Policy Comparisons. Missouri is one of 11 states in our country that requires no notice from a family of their intention to homeschool and has low regulatory practices (CRHE, 2022; HSLDA, 2022). Three of Missouri's border states, Iowa, Illinois, and Oklahoma, are also considered low-regulatory states. However, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Kansas, and Nebraska are considered low regulatory but require notification. Requiring a family to provide notice indicates a state's intention to prioritize a child's right to an education (Bartholet, 2020; Brewer, 2017; Dwyer & Peters, 2019). However, being qualified as a low regulatory state often means that the policies in place are mainly unenforceable and may include

guidelines or expectations in the event of a legal matter (HSLDA, 2022). However, beyond no requirement of notice to homeschool and low regulatory practices, 17 states have adopted moderate to high regulatory rules for families wishing to homeschool. Washington state requires notice to homeschool but has also included teacher qualifications, mandated subjects, and assessment requirements for homeschooled families and their children. Equally, New York state has similar policies but requires families to submit an Individualized Home Instruction Plan (CRHE, 2022; HSLDA, 2022). Thus, the conflicts between the federal rights of a parent and the state's authority to guarantee a child's right to an education and the discrepancies in homeschooling policy from state to state all contribute to this study's intention to understand why Missouri homeschooling remains unregulated.

Gaps in Homeschooling Literature

This study will contribute to the literature on homeschooling by addressing at least three significant information gaps. First, this study will add to the body of literature that employs the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) in the less utilized field of social science (Weible et al., 2011). Second, this work will contribute to the homeschooling research specific to Missouri. And lastly, this study will compare the policy positions of homeschooling parents and homeschooled adults with the policy positions of their respective coalitions. While data that includes the voices of homeschoolers exist, I have not identified data that compares their policy positions to coalition positions thus far. And the narratives of homeschoolers are often difficult to collect due to allegiance and guidance from some homeschooling advocacy coalitions (Bartholet 2020; Brewer, 2019; Dwyer & Peters, 2019; Reich, 2008).

First, the application of the ACF within research and the policy arena of homeschooling has not been identified. To date, the ACF is primarily applied to environmental and natural

resource policy arenas, with quantitative methods as the primary source for data collection (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014). For this study, the ACF will be applied in the less frequented arena of social science and employ the even less utilized qualitative data collection methods. In doing so, the study contributes to the need for “more attention to the role of science and policy analysis in public policy; and a need for a more realistic model of the individual rooted more deeply in psychology” (Weible et al., 2011, p. 349).

Second, while there are numerous references to the state of Missouri and its homeschooling statutes, Missouri, its state statutes, and the influence of advocacy coalitions have not been studied exclusively. Only two of the thirty plus homeschooling articles identified by the author thus far have explicitly focused on homeschooling in Missouri (Barnett, 2013; Walden, 2017). The Barnett (2013) publication identified child abuse data and resulting hypotheses based on the state’s current homeschooling regulations. Barnett echoed the work of other researchers in their belief that the constitutionality of a parent’s right to homeschool infringes on a child’s right to receive an adequate education (Bartholet, 2020; Dwyer, 1986; Dwyer & Peters, 2019). Walden (2017), however, used Missouri as the platform for consideration of judicial bypass as a possible means “that would allow a child to attend public school without parental consent” (p. 177) and permit the state to “recognize the child’s right to an adequate education” (p. 177) above and beyond parental authority. Four additional articles reference Missouri. Bartholet (2020) and Brewer and Lewbienski (2017) reference Barnett’s (2013) work, while Green (2015) and Yuracko (2008) only reference Missouri state statutes in combination with other examples of states with low regulatory requirements. Therefore, of the literature collected thus far, only two relate specifically to homeschooling in Missouri, and those works are referenced in only four other identified publications on the topic. The awareness and condition of homeschooling in

Missouri are absent from research and public awareness. This policy situation leaves many Missourians unaware and uninformed of the complexities this conflict of rights creates.

Third and lastly, no literature has been identified comparing and contrasting the policy positions of homeschoolers against subsystem coalitions. The NHERI is the research arm of the HSLDA, and the HSLDA encourages its members not to participate in research that does not originate from their institute (Bartholet, 2020). Still, this study has identified several participants willing to share their narratives regarding their beliefs and convictions on the federally protected parental right to homeschool and the state-guaranteed rights of the child to receive an education. So, while searches have yielded publications that included homeschoolers, I have yet to identify articles that evaluate any policy position differences.

Theoretical Review

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) is a “comprehensive approach to understanding politics and policy change over time” (Jenkins-Smith et al. 2014, p.184). The ACF supports this study because the unit of analysis rests on policy subsystems. Within the homeschooling subsystem, actors and organizations can be aggregated by belief systems, opportunity structures, stability, and dominance within a defined political arena. All these factors contribute to or circumvent policy-oriented learning and change within government systems. Because this study seeks to understand the coalition narratives that keep Missouri homeschooling unregulated, the ACF is relevant because it goes beyond a traditional research focus on political science and government institutions to dissect the narratives and strategies of the actors within this policy subsystems (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014).

Paul Sabatier is credited for developing and evolving the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). Sabatier spent one year at the University of Bielefeld in Germany during the 1980s.

During his time there, Sabatier engaged with scholarly researchers such as Vincent and Elinor Ostrom, and Hugh Hecllo. These, and many other philosophical engagements, influenced Sabatier's thinking about research approaches to policy-oriented learning and change. Later, Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith collaborated around similar understandings of policy processes, yet their theoretical perspectives on research weaknesses differed. Sabatier's approach toward refining and addressing the shortcomings of policy research were more conceptual, while Jenkins-Smith had real-world experiences within policy subsystems. Their collaboration over several years of application and data collection resulted in verifiable practices that left room for evolution and change within policy analysis research (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014). Today, the ACF is recognized for its adaptability within research contexts that seek to understand the narratives, belief systems, and influences of advocacy coalitions within policy change (Sabatier, 1991).

Revisions and Adaptions of the Advocacy Coalition Framework

The evolution of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) is best depicted by analyzing the literature reports from its inception in the mid-1980s to its modernized application within contemporary policy analysis research. These changes are captured here by examining the adjustments made over time within the ACF assumptions, hypotheses, and the conceptual categories of its flow diagram. While aspects of the ACF have remained steadfast, the growth and development of the framework provide the necessary scaffolds I seek to ensure trustworthiness within this qualitative study.

First, the theoretical assumptions within any framework communicate the truths or foundational beliefs of the framework. Within the ACF are seven critical assumptions important for understanding policy processes. These seven contemporary assumptions define the policy

subsystem as the primary unit of analysis while also considering the relevant actors within each subsystem. Equally, the ACF assumptions recognize that aggregating policy actors helps the researcher identify the belief systems and implicit theories that keep policy actors rational within specific political arenas. Still, the most substantive assumptions of the ACF rest in the reliance on scientific and technical information applied to a long-term perspective of policy processes over time (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014). So, while an empirical reflection by Paul Sabatier (1988) on the ACF listed only three causal assumptions, these three original assumptions are still embedded within the now seven assumptions of the contemporary ACF. First, the subsystem must be the primary unit of analysis to understand policy learning and change. Second, policy designs can be interpreted as translations of coalition belief systems. And third, a long-term perspective is necessary to understand policy and policy change over time within a subsystem (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014; Sabatier, 1988; Weible et al., 2011). What follows is a more detailed commentary on the current yet foundational assumptions of the ACF.

The enduring assumption of the ACF is that the policy subsystems must be the main unit of research analysis. In 1988, Sabatier defined a policy subsystem as the collection of “actors from a variety of public and private organizations who are actively concerned with a policy problem or issue” (p. 131). In refining and evolving this founding premise, Jenkins-Smith et al. (2014) similarly asserted that the policy subsystem is “defined by a policy topic, territorial scope, and the actors directly or indirectly influencing policy subsystem affairs” (p. 189). While the attempt to define policy subsystems has remained similar, the definition has also met with challenges from founding researchers who have called for “a more complex view of subsystems [that] include both researchers and intergovernmental relations” (Weible et al., 2011, p. 349). So, while subsystems have remained the primary focus of study within the ACF, expanding the

researcher's view of the subsystem members has adapted to current policy analysis research needs.

An additional and formative assumption within the ACF relates to policies reflecting subsystem beliefs (Sabatier, 1988). Belief systems exist within every individual, and a “defining characteristic of humans is their ability to examine alternatives, estimate their consequences, and then select one which allows them to achieve their goals” (Sabatier, Hunter, & McLaughlin, 1987, p. 449). Individuals will gravitate to and connect with others whose belief systems align with their own. In the context of policy and policy change, individuals with similar core belief systems or values become the policy actors within advocacy coalitions and the larger subsystem. Belief systems are the most practical means of aggregating policy actors into groups for focused study (Sabatier, Hunter, & McLaughlin, 1987).

A final foundational assumption of the ACF focuses on the necessity for a long-term perspective on policy processes and change. In his 1988 publication, Sabatier notes that “understanding the process of policy change – and the role of policy-oriented learning therein – requires a time perspective of a decade or more” (p. 131). This time perspective provides a more accurate analysis of the policy problem because it is in the “cumulative effect of findings from different studies...that has the greatest influence on policy [change]” (p. 131). This same premise has remained over the decades of ACF use because policy processes are cyclical and void of a beginning or end (Sabatier, 1988). Still, this perspective is not a literal application of ten or more years but rather a long-term analysis of the “temporal processes that characterize public policy over time” (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014, p. 193).

The next evolutionary consideration of the ACF is a review of the framework's hypotheses. These hypotheses relate directly to the foundational assumptions while specifying

more directly the functions of subsystems, their beliefs, and why a long-term perspective informs the potential for policy-oriented learning. To date, there are five hypotheses related to advocacy coalitions:

Coalition Hypothesis 1. On major controversies within a policy subsystem when policy core beliefs are in dispute, the lineup of allies and opponents tends to be rather stable over periods of a decade or so.

Coalition Hypothesis 2. Actors within an advocacy coalition will show substantial consensus on issues pertaining to the policy core, although less so on secondary aspects.

Coalition Hypothesis 3. Actors (or coalitions) will give up secondary aspects of their belief systems before acknowledging weaknesses in the policy core.

Coalition Hypothesis 4. Within a coalition, administrative agencies will usually advocate more moderate positions than their interest group allies.

Coalition Hypothesis 5. Actors within purposive groups are more constrained in their expression of beliefs and policy positions than actors from material groups (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014).

Comparing the hypotheses in Sabatier's 1988 work and the ACF hypotheses listed above reveals that three of the five coalition hypotheses have remained steadfast. Those that have remained aligned from 1988 to today reference the stability of core beliefs during major controversies within the subsystem. First, Coalition Hypothesis 1 states that when significant disputes arise, "the lineup of allies and opponents tends to be rather stable over periods of a decade or so" (Sabatier, 1988, p. 141; Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014, p. 195). Thus, the ACF has consistently rejected the idea that subsystem actors could be "primarily motivated by their short-term self-interest" (Sabatier, 1988, p. 141). Next, Coalition Hypotheses 2 and 3 reveal that policy actors

will remain in consensus on issues that challenge policy core beliefs. However, a consensus is less likely and can be aborted within secondary belief levels (Sabatier, 1988; Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014). Sabatier (1988) surmises that once a concept is adopted as a core belief, no matter how powerful the evidence may be, “organizational forces [will] create considerable resistance to [the] change” (p. 147). From here, Advocacy Coalition Hypotheses 4 and 5 diverge from Sabatier’s 1988 work and instead focus on the predictability and constraints of coalition responses. Coalition Hypothesis 4 purports that “within a coalition, administrative agencies will usually advocate more moderate positions than their interest group allies” (Jenkins-Smith, 2014, p. 195). And Coalition Hypothesis 5 states that purposive groups, which are motivated by ideology, will show more restraint in communicating beliefs than policy actors from more material groups focused on economic gain. (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014; Sabatier & Weible, 2007). According to Jenkins-Smith et al. (2014), support for Coalition Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 has remained dependable, while Hypotheses 4 and 5 remain inconsistent due to their underdevelopment within research.

Next, to understand the adaptations and evolution of the ACF’s policy-oriented learning hypotheses, one must know that such learning is interpreted as the “enduring alterations of thought or behavioral intentions which result from experience[s]” (Sabatier, 1988, p. 133) and conflicts within policy subsystems. When these alterations to belief systems occur, policy change can occur. The ACF’s hypotheses on policy-oriented learning are:

Learning Hypothesis 1. Policy-oriented learning across belief systems is most likely when there is an intermediate level of informed conflict between two coalitions...

Learning Hypothesis 2. Policy-oriented learning across belief systems is most likely when there exists a forum that is: (1) prestigious enough to force professionals from different coalitions to participate and (2) dominated by professional norms.

Learning Hypothesis 3. Problems for which accepted quantitative data and theory exist are more conducive to policy-oriented learning across belief systems than those in which data and theory are generally qualitative, quite subjective, or altogether lacking.

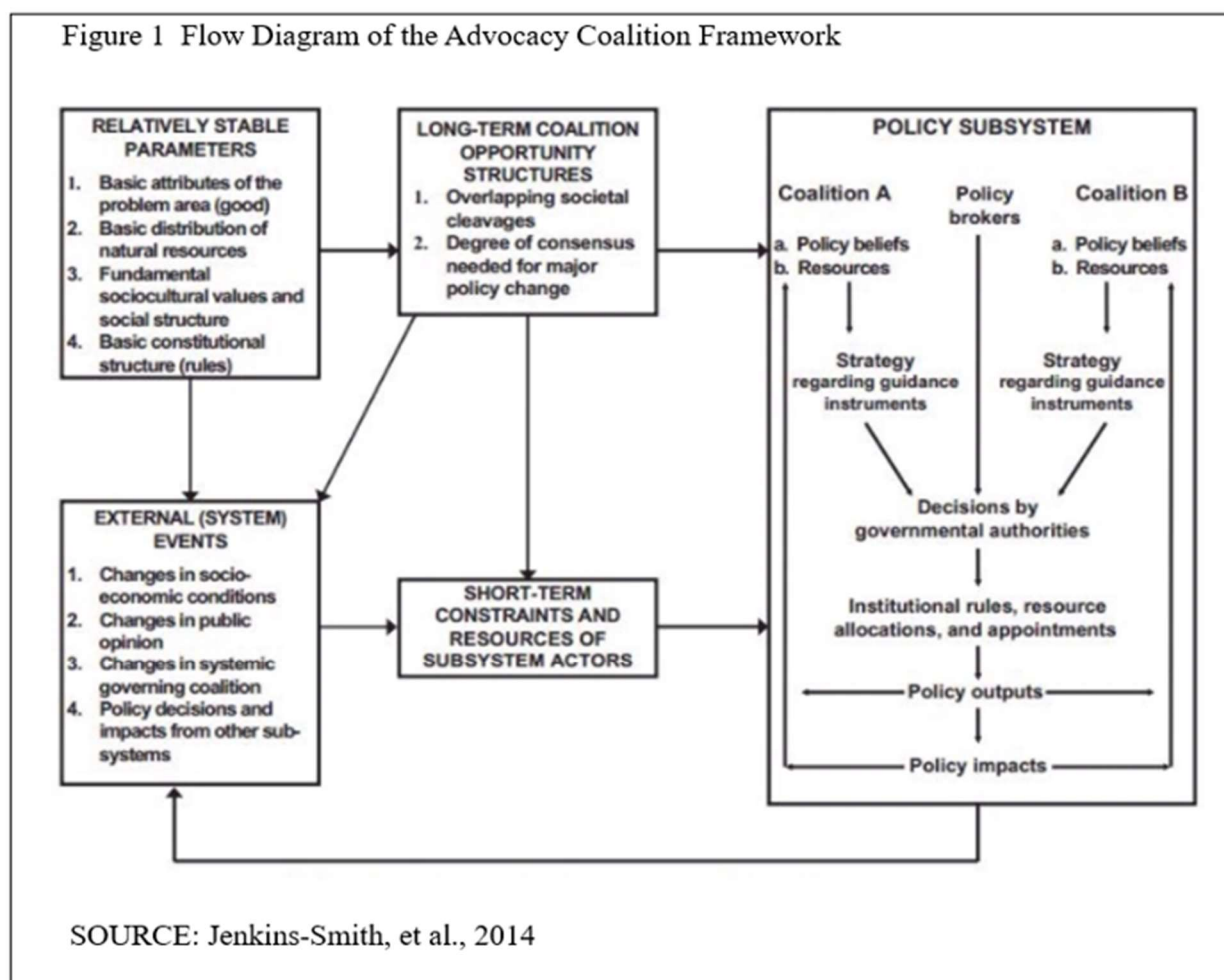
Learning Hypothesis 4. Problems involving natural systems are more conducive to policy-oriented learning across belief systems than those involving purely social or political systems...

Learning Hypothesis 5. Even when the accumulation of technical information does not change the views of the opposing coalition, it can have important impacts on policy – at least in the short run – by altering the views of policy brokers (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014).

Learning Hypotheses 1 and 2 assume that learning is more likely to occur when a conflict between opposing coalitions is an “intermediate level of informed conflict” and where a powerful platform with professional norms exists (Sabatier, 1988, p. 155; Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014, p. 199-200). Learning Hypotheses 3 and 4 predict that policy-oriented learning is more likely to occur for conflicts with “accepted quantitative data and theory” or data based on natural systems (Sabatier, 1988, p. 156; Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014, p. 200). From here, Jenkins-Smith et al. (2014) reveal that Hypothesis 5 speculates that even when “the accumulation of technical information does not change the views of the opposing coalition, it can have important impacts on policy...by altering the views of policy brokers” (p. 200). Sabatier (1988) defines policy brokers as those who find compromises within policy conflict. This study’s purpose relates

almost exclusively to Learning Hypotheses 3 and 5 because the qualitative methods will require explicit technical processes for policy-oriented learning to occur in this adversarial context.

Finally, the last consideration within the revisions of the ACF is a review of the ACF's flow diagram (Figure 1). Since the publication of Sabatier's 1988 review of the ACF, critical structures of the diagram have remained consistent, none have been omitted, but other vital constructs have been added or expanded. The constructs that have remained consistent within the



ACF flow diagram are the ebb and flow of subsystem actors. These interactions are illustrated by considering the opposing coalitions (A and B) and their policy beliefs, resources, and strategies. Still, the addition of opportunity structures, such as the degree of consensus needed or subsystem openness in the political arena, are complimentary measures to analyze stability between

opposing coalitions in the policy subsystem. Still, of great interest to this work is the research study that utilized the ACF to consider the types of resources available to coalitions A and B. Borrowing from the work of Sewell (2005), Sabatier and Weible (2007) introduced a breakdown of coalition resources to aid in the understanding of coalitions beyond their belief systems. These typologies of resources include formal legal authority, control of public opinion, information collection, ability to mobilize, financial resources, and the skill set of coalition leadership (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). These specific resources will help to define Coalition A and B while strengthening this study's significance within policy analysis literature.

To summarize, while the ACF has undergone many adaptations and clarifications within its assumptions, hypotheses, and conceptual categories, these modifications are balanced by the argument that "the capacity to revise the ACF...is a strength of the framework and a productive path of science" (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, p. 208). The ACF is the most applicable framework for this study because its features align with the research questions and the ACF assumption that the policy subsystem is the basic unit of analysis.

In closing, this review reveals the conflicts within the literature and how authors and advocates are at a legal crossroads where federal parental rights and state-authorized child protective rights are concerned. To understand who retains the burden of proof for a child's education is to understand the belief systems that undergird this policy arena. Equally, this review has defined the gaps in the literature, which this study will fill by contributing to the shallow body of research on homeschooling in Missouri and by applying the ACF in a qualitative social science field. And lastly, while many constructs of the ACF have remained intact since its inception, the evolution of the framework's coalition typologies will contribute to the literature

and benefit this study. By comparing resources while analyzing contrasting narratives, one can better understand how Missouri homeschooling remains unregulated.

Section 3 - Theoretical Framework

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) is a collection of time-tested assumptions, conceptual categories, and hypotheses that provide a theoretical foundation to advocacy coalition research, policy-oriented learning, and policy change (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014; Sabatier, 1988). In this section, I will briefly describe the framework, its primary components, and key ACF terms critical to this study. These concepts are then specific examples of how the ACF assumptions, concepts, and hypotheses relate to this study and why the ACF is the most appropriate theoretical framework for this proposal and subsequent dissertation on the topic of homeschooling in Missouri.

Framework History

The ACF is “a comprehensive approach to understanding politics and policy change over time” (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014, p. 184). While Paul Sabatier (1988) is credited as the founder of the ACF, his work and several research colleagues' work led to the framework's advancement and adaptation within contemporary political research contexts (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014). Sabatier combined what he understood about rational choice and the influences of social and economic conditions on policy change to introduce a framework for understanding policy-oriented learning and policy change within political subsystems (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014). The ACF's features extend beyond traditional policy analysis and explain how coalition belief systems, resources, and stability influence policy and policy subsystems. This study considers how the narratives of homeschooling advocacy coalitions reflect the belief systems and values of their respective policy actors and can thus influence the rational choices of their constituents.

Framework Components

A theoretical framework should provide a “foundation for descriptive and prescriptive inquiry by establishing a set of assumptions, scope, and general classifications and relations among key concepts” (Weible et al., 2011, p. 351). The ACF meets these requirements by providing seven assumptions for understanding policy processes, a flow diagram demonstrating policy processes between coalitions and within policy subsystems, and hypotheses framing coalition and policy-oriented learning within a subsystem. Thus, the ACF assumptions, flow diagram, and hypotheses are the overarching structural concepts that define how this framework will support an inquiry into Missouri homeschooling law.

ACF Assumptions

Seven assumptions create the foundation for applying the ACF in a policy research setting:

1. The policy subsystem is the primary unit of analysis for understanding policy processes.
2. The set of relevant subsystem actors include any person regularly attempting to influence subsystem affairs.
3. Individuals are boundedly rational with limited ability to process stimuli, motivated by belief systems, and prone to experience the “devil shift”.
4. Subsystems are simplified by aggregating actors into one or more coalitions.
5. Policies and programs incorporate implicit theories reflecting the translated beliefs of one or more coalitions.
6. Scientific and technical information is important for understanding subsystem affairs.
7. Researchers should adopt a long-term perspective (e.g., ten years or more) to understand policy processes and change. (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014, pp. 189-192)

First is the assumption that “the policy subsystem is the primary unit of analysis for understanding policy processes” (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014, p. 189). A subsystem is defined by a policy topic, the relevant laws that define its scope, and by the actors who influence the subsystem’s involvement in an explained policy arena. This study's policy topic and scope are homeschooling and the relevant constitutional amendments and Missouri laws that impact the homeschooling policy subsystem. A subsystem often includes some type of authority and comprises independent advocacy coalitions. This study will contrast the influence of the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) with that of the Coalition for Responsible Home Education (CRHE). These two coalitions also meet the conditions for an ACF study because they function separately within the subsystem but have overlapping policy foci, scope, and beliefs. So, in alignment with the ACF, the unit of analysis for this study will be the homeschooling policy subsystem, the laws that influence the subsystem narratives, and the designation of a dominant and minority coalition.

The ACF's second, third, fourth, and fifth assumptions all relate to the actors within a subsystem and how belief systems influence the policy subsystem. The ACF defines a policy actor as any individual who “directly or indirectly influences subsystem affairs” (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014, p. 190). These actors can represent any level of government, the private sector, non-profit organizations, the news media, academia, consultants, or any faction interested in a subsystem’s policy or scope (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014). The ACF views belief systems as the mutual, fundamental, normative values that help individuals reason and justify their decisions and actions (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014). Specifically, according to assumptions two and three, an actor influenced by beliefs regularly attempts to persuade subsystem affairs, but their responses may exaggerate opposing positions on the policy (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014). According to

Sabatier (1988), this tendency to “perceive one’s opponents as being more hostile and powerful than they are” (p. 140) is another means of aggregating policy actors.

These assumptions about actors and belief systems apply to this study in that opposing beliefs fuel the conflict within the homeschooling policy arena. Where the HSLDA supports a citizen’s presumed constitutional right to homeschool, the CRHE supports the state’s responsibility to oversee education and protect children. Second, the subsystem is better understood by clustering actors with similar beliefs. The HSLDA and CRHE both support homeschooling while showing conflicting views on regulatory requirements. These positionalities speak to the assumption that the policies and programs of a coalition will reflect its beliefs. For example, the HSLDA promotes and protects the adult citizen’s constitutional right to homeschool, whereas the CRHE is “committed to ensuring that the interests of the homeschooled child are respected” (CRHE, 2021). The congruent and incongruent beliefs of these coalitions validate these ACF assumptions and reveal how the narratives of their respective actors influence subsystem events.

Lastly, the two final assumptions of the ACF speak to the practices that will support policy-oriented learning, which aligns with this study’s purpose to inform Missouri’s homeschooling policy arena. Policy-oriented learning refers to the “relatively enduring alterations of thought or behavioral intentions which result from experience, and which are concerned with the attainment (or revision) of policy objectives” (Sabatier, 1988, p. 133; Heclo, 1974). The sixth assumption declares that “scientific and technical information is important for understanding subsystem affairs” (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014, p. 192). As previously mentioned, policy beliefs define policy subsystems, so it is essential to recognize that these belief systems can be abstract and difficult to measure. However, because of this description, the ACF is not

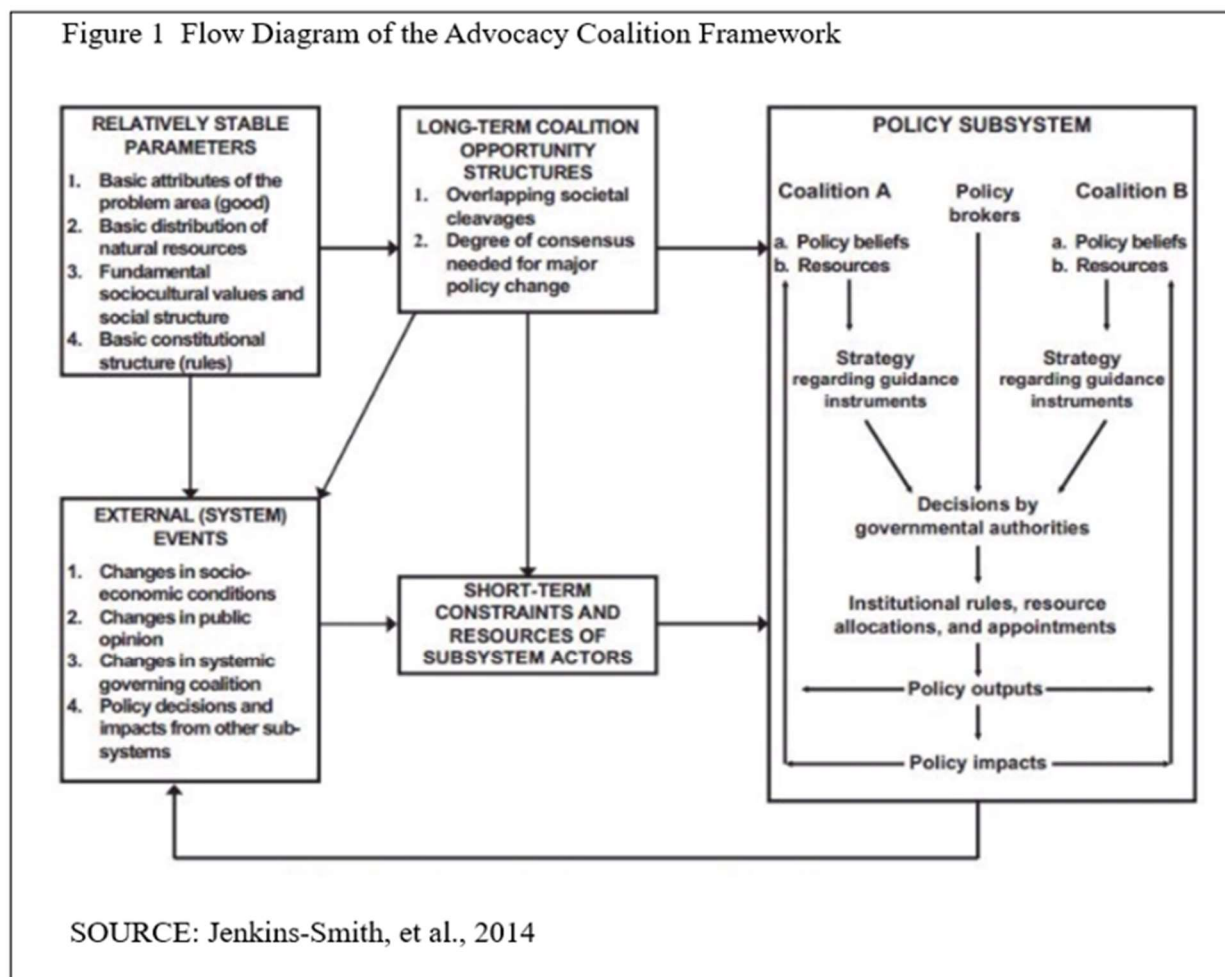
explicitly relegated for use in quantitative methods. Instead, this assumption asks the researcher to consider “how scientific and technical explanations [can be] integrated into (or deflected from) belief systems” (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014, p. 192). Applying this assumption strengthens the analysis of debates and negotiations so that policy processes and the potential for policy-oriented learning can be better understood. Here, I have utilized the methods and strategies offered by Shenton (2004) that foster credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability within qualitative studies to increase the possibility of policy-oriented learning from this study.

The seventh assumption of the ACF concludes that “researchers should adopt a long-term perspective (e.g., ten years or more) to understand policy processes and change” (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014, p. 192). Like the previous, this assumption also has the potential for misinterpretation. However, it is not declaring that an ACF study should be longitudinal. Instead, this assumption acknowledges that policy processes are ongoing and understanding them requires focusing on policy processes or changes that have occurred over time (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2019). This assumption is demonstrated within this study in that both the legal debates and literature that have formulated the homeschooling policy arena span from the 1923 Supreme Court decision on *Meyer v. Nebraska* to the recent literature on the parental right to homeschool and the child’s right to an education (Bartholet, 2020; Dwyer & Peters, 2019; Shulman, 2014). These seven assumptions frame the application of the ACF within this study so that the policy actors, their belief systems, and the potential for policy change can be analyzed, understood, and anticipated within the homeschooling policy subsystem.

Conceptual Categories of the ACF

The ACF’s flow diagram illustrates its conceptual categories of policy processes (Figure 1). First, the policy subsystem is defined as a conceptual category of the framework and

comprises two identified advocacy coalitions, Coalition A and Coalition B. For this study, Coalition A is identified as the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) and the dominant coalition because of its involvement at both the federal and state levels of homeschooling policy (HSLDA, 2021; Bartholet, 2020; Dwyer & Peters, 2019).



Equally, the HSLDA encompasses many of the resources identified in the ACF, such as legal authority, an ability to mobilize troops, financial resources, and skilled leadership (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). In contrast, Coalition B is identified as the Coalition for Responsible Home Education (CRHE) and will be considered the minority coalition. The CRHE supports the home school and regulatory practices but has resource limitations compared to the HSLDA.

The ACF flow diagram's application in this study permitted me to identify each coalition's policy beliefs, resources, and strategies so their relative strengths or weaknesses could be confirmed or denied. All these influences then flow directly back into coalition beliefs and resources or feed into the other conceptual categories that impact the policy subsystem and its coalitions. For example, the conceptual category of external (system) events considers factors outside the subsystem yet can impact the subsystem's beliefs, resources, or policy outputs. As illustrated in Figure 1, examples of external impacts that can alter the flow and positionality of coalitions and subsystem processes are changes in socioeconomic conditions, public opinion, governing leadership, or other policy subsystems. Yet, the impact of these influences is conditional based on a coalition's stability, referenced as the "relatively stable parameters" in Figure 1.

And lastly, between the policy subsystem and the concepts of stable parameters and external events are the intermediary concepts of long-term coalition opportunity structures and short-term constraints and resources of subsystem actors. The long-term opportunity structures are "some of the important by-products of having relatively stable parameters" (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014, p. 194). Short-term constraints and resources of actors demonstrate how "changes outside the subsystem provide short-term opportunities for coalition exploits" (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014, p. 194). The ACF flow diagram captures the short, intermediate, and long-term factors influencing coalition stability. Still, the diagram and its contents are not intended to be an exhaustive list but rather illustrative of the interconnected features of a policy subsystem and the conditions that can influence policy stasis or policy change (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014).

Theoretical Emphases

To date, the ACF contains five hypotheses on advocacy coalitions and five on policy-oriented learning (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014). These hypotheses are discussed at length in Section Two of this paper. Here, a summary is offered on the five ACF Coalition Hypotheses and the five ACF Learning Hypotheses to define how these specific components may influence and direct this study. These hypotheses speak to how coalitions will behave and interact within the policy arena, as demonstrated by the flow diagram, while indicating any potential for policy-oriented learning and change within the policy subsystem.

Advocacy Coalition Hypotheses. Coalition hypotheses identify how coalition beliefs will influence coalition responses to policy outputs. For example, Coalition Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 indicate that any potential for policy agreement depends on a policy's impact on a coalition's core or secondary beliefs. Jenkins-Smith et al. (2014) define core beliefs as the mutual, fundamental, and normative values that are not necessarily policy specific and can thus be applied in various policy settings. However, "policy core beliefs are bound by scope and topic to the policy subsystem and thus have territorial and topical components" (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014, p. 191). Secondary beliefs are more pliable values and have more potential for compromise if challenged by a policy output. Coalition Hypotheses 4 and 5 predict agency responses with interest group allies and how responses are influenced by whether coalition objectives are more purposive or material (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014). Coalition Hypotheses 4 and 5 are essential distinctions on how groups and coalitions within a subsystem will respond to policy changes or new policy outputs. First, governmental agencies will communicate moderate policy positions, while their interest group allies will be more inclined to communicate policy extremes. And second, purposive groups, motivated by ideology, will be more restrictive in expressing their beliefs than more material groups. Here, one can conjecture that purposive

groups are restrained because ideology can be difficult to measure. In contrast, material groups who are motivated by economic self-interest may have scientific and technological data in their favor.

These coalition hypotheses supported and challenged this study's intentions for the following reasons. First, the study topic sought to consider the assumed federal right of a citizen to homeschool while contemplating the state's authority to protect and educate all children. Thus, this study aligned with the first two coalition hypotheses. The research sought to understand a long-standing core policy belief of the HSLDA; the parental right to homeschool without government interference or oversight. Second, this study aligned with the third and fourth hypotheses because I sought to identify the secondary beliefs of the coalitions and their actors so that the necessary conditions for policy-oriented learning and change may occur. And finally, because both the HSLDA and the CRHE represent purposive groups, the fifth hypothesis informed the methods of this study because these actors ascribe to ideologies, they were unyielding in their beliefs.

Policy-Oriented Learning Hypotheses. The policy-oriented learning hypotheses of the ACF identify the necessary conditions for policy change to occur within a subsystem and between coalitions. Learning Hypotheses 1 and 2 specify the probability for learning and policy change based on the level of conflict and the data type, quantitative or qualitative, available on the topic. Learning Hypotheses 4 communicates that the potential for policy-oriented learning within the subsystem depends on whether the policy relates to natural or more social or political systems. Learning Hypotheses 5 addresses the potential for policy change even when all other learning conditions cannot be met.

Of specific application to this study was hypothesis one, which stressed that learning is likely when a policy conflict is at an intermediate level. Because of this, interview questions were designed to respect belief systems while pinpointing any room for moderating policy positions. Equally, hypothesis five was interesting to this study because it casts a wide net of optimism for policy-oriented learning and policy change attempts. Hypothesis five conjectures that “even when [the] accumulated technical information does not change views...it can have important impacts on policy” (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014, p. 200) by altering the views of individual policy brokers. This speculation, though challenging to measure, connects directly to the purpose of this study in that a long-term perspective to understand policy processes and change can reveal and add minute changes in policy, coalition beliefs, and within the policy subsystem.

In closing, the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) provides a structure for understanding policy subsystems and coalition processes and determining the potential for policy-oriented learning and change within a policy arena. Its history and evolution provide strength and adaptability to policy studies, while its conceptual categories clearly define the many nuances that can occur in a policy subsystem. The ACF assumptions, flow diagram, and theoretical emphases provided the perfect scaffolding for a review of the narratives that keep Missouri homeschooling unregulated and to measure the potential for learning and change within the policy subsystem.

Section 4 – Research Methodology

This descriptive qualitative study on Missouri homeschooling uses the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) as its conceptual framework. This section details the researcher's worldview, epistemology, and ontological perspectives. It explains why a qualitative study supported by the ACF is the design of choice for considering why Missouri homeschooling remains unregulated. Also included are this study's setting, participants, data collection, data analyses, and positionality of the researcher.

The philosophical foundation of this study is that of a transformative worldview with a critical epistemological and ontological approach. A transformative lens “holds that research inquiry [should] be intertwined with politics and a political change agenda to confront social oppression” (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). Because this study considers both the political influences that keep Missouri homeschooling unregulated and the unintended outcomes of the law that contribute to the social oppression of some children, a transformative worldview is the lens of this inquiry. Next, critical epistemology was utilized because there is a perception that the Fourteenth Amendment liberty rights of a parent supersede the guaranteed rights of a child to be protected and receive an adequate education. This orientation confronts social injustice and seeks change, aligning with this study's purpose to promote policy-oriented learning and change (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). An additional caveat to a critical perspective is in the critical ontology of this study. Multiple realities reside within the political and social context of homeschooling. Again, there is a general perspective that a parent's federal rights outweigh a child's educational rights. Yet, the contrasting legal view of *parens patriae* holds that the state can and must intercede for any child whose rights are neglected (Bartholet, 2020; Dwyer & Peters, 2019; Walden, 2017). These conflicting perspectives, and the views of those that seek

homeschooling compromises, all exist in a political, social, and cultural context where multiple viewpoints conflict. Thus, this work is framed within a critical ontological perspective because it will consider the multiple realities within this political context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This inquiry is approached with a transformative worldview and a critical epistemology and ontology because of the political, change-oriented, and social injustice contexts within the subject matter.

Qualitative Methods

This study is framed as a descriptive qualitative inquiry because of the phenomenon created between my experiences as a public school educator and as a former homeschooler. As a homeschooler involved with homeschooling families and organizations, I did not witness the educational neglect of homeschooled children. Yet, as a public school educator, I worked with several children who experienced abuse or neglect while homeschooling. These inconsistencies caused a desire within me to seek meaning and question how educational, emotional, and physical neglect could occur for some homeschooled children and what role current Missouri law plays in leaving some children without state protections and guaranteed rights.

In addition, this study is qualitative because I was the primary instrument of data collection and I followed a largely inductive data analysis process, creating abstract categories of concepts from both the narratives of participants and the documents of the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) and the Coalition for Responsible Home Education (CRHE). I anticipated that once the analysis was complete, findings would characterize and reveal a detailed description of homeschooling in Missouri. In all, a qualitative design best suited this inquiry because I sought to make meaning of personal experiences through an inductive process and was the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Positionality

I was raised in a conservative Christian home, and my education was conducted in a public school setting from elementary to high school. After graduating with my bachelor's degree in education, I taught at a private school. However, a few years into this teaching experience, I chose to step away from classroom teaching and homeschool my child, who was eight at the time. Coming from the classroom, I was surprised to learn that there were no requirements for communicating that my child was to be homeschooled or for documenting instruction and learning. Still, a homeschooling family member encouraged me to keep records. While homeschooling, my child and I participated in a homeschooling co-op that offered instruction in art, music, and physical education, and I had the opportunity to interact with many homeschooling families. Still, after one year, I grew disillusioned with homeschooling, and my child was ready to return to school with friends. As I returned to classroom teaching, I eventually chose public schools as my permanent vocation, and I have spent the last 20 years as a public educator in rural, suburban, and urban settings. I am currently a public educator, and it has been in this setting, I have witnessed the adverse outcomes of the lack of homeschooling regulation in Missouri. Outcomes to which I was completely unaware while in the homeschooling community and during my private school teaching experience. It is from these experiences that this inquiry was born.

I approached this study from a place of bias for modest regulation of homeschooling. However, I remain a steadfast proponent of homeschooling that can protect children's interests. My current position stems from the literary evidence collected for this study but also from my personal experiences and friendships with home school teachers and families. My experience with both extremes of this political spectrum created an advantage for me in this work. First, I had access to narratives that can be difficult to collect because the HSLDA discourages its

members from participating in any research that their organization does not conduct. Second, however, remains the fact that my experiences as a public school educator have indicated the existence of unintended, adverse outcomes with the lack of homeschooling regulation. This is a reality I find unethical and immoral as an educator and child advocate. Because of these varying experiences, my position balances this work in that I support homeschooling, yet I have seen the negative side effects of no regulation. I accounted for my own biases by utilizing participants and advisors as reviewers of this work and in the collection and analysis of data so that by following the premises of the Advocacy Coalition Framework, policy-oriented learning and change might come from this study's findings.

Setting

The setting for this study is the state of Missouri, the HSLDA, and the CRHE. Missouri remains one of only 11 states in our nation with no regulation of homeschooling, and no notice is required or collected when a parent decides to homeschool their child (HSLDA, 2022). This lack of regulation contrasts with some of Missouri's bordering states, such as Arkansas, Kansas, and Tennessee, which require notification, and some require homeschool teacher qualifications (HSLDA, 2021). Specific organizational details about the HSLDA and the CRHE are shared in the theoretical framework and briefly below. As a reminder, the HSLDA is identified as Coalition A within the Advocacy Coalition Framework because of its dominance and influence within the homeschooling policy subsystem. The CRHE is identified as Coalition B because of its resource limitations compared to the HSLDA.

Missouri's Political Climate. According to Rishi Samarth (2021), the political landscape of Missouri has shifted in the last ten years from a bellwether state consistent with predicting presidential outcomes regardless of party affiliation to electoral results that are now more

characterized by Republican victories. This is evidenced by the fact that, to date, “the Republican Party controls the offices of governor, secretary of state, attorney general and both chambers of the [Missouri] state legislature” (Ballotpedia, 2022). The political context of Missouri is significant to this study for the following reasons. First, as shared in section one of this study, the birth of modern homeschooling was provoked by the public school criticisms of conservative religious leaders. Second, the advocacy coalitions of focus for this study represent two opposing political viewpoints. The HSLDA aligns with understood conservative values that support the negative rights of parents and seek to limit government involvement in the affairs of families and child-rearing. The CRHE, however, advocates for child protection in the home school. This stance for positive rights is a uniquely moderate or liberal political position. So, while it is evident that the right to homeschool can be politically polarizing, understanding Missouri’s political context informs the potential for policy-oriented learning and change.

Organizational Details. The HSLDA was founded in 1983 when two attorneys, Mike Farris, and Mike Smith, met at a homeschooling conference in Sacramento, California. The two homeschooled their children and, as attorneys, had represented several homeschooling families whose right to homeschool was challenged in the courts. The two shared a commitment to “start a non-profit membership organization aimed at making homeschooling legal in every state” (HSLDA, 2022), and thus the HSLDA was born. The HSLDA provides legal and educational services to its over 100,000 member families while working with legislators to keep or adopt pro-homeschooling policies. The selection of the HSLDA for this study was based on the coalition’s dominance at both the state and federal levels of policy-making and for the organization’s alignment with the Advocacy Coalition Framework’s resource typologies (Bartholet, 2020; Barnett, 2013; Dwyer & Peters, 2019; Jenkins-Smith et al. 2013).

The Coalition for Responsible Home Education (CRHE) is a non-profit organization established in 2013 by five homeschool alums who met through various online homeschooling forums (CRHE, 2022). These alumni had varied homeschooling experiences, but all had direct or indirect knowledge of homeschool neglect. Two of these founding members, Rachel Coleman and Heather Doney, completed graduate-level research on homeschooling, and Coleman went on to create Homeschooling's Invisible Children (HIC) (2022). This website database collects documented child abuse and neglect cases in homeschool settings. Together, these individuals became committed advocates due to their “growing concern [for] the widespread lack of protections” (CRHE, 2022) for homeschooled children. Today, their mission is to “empower homeschooled children by educating the public and advocating for child-centered, evidence-based policies and practices” (CRHE, 2022) on homeschooling.

To compare, the HSLDA and the CRHE are non-profit coalitions within the homeschooling policy arena. Their history is similar in that individuals with aligned beliefs on homeschooling policy founded both organizations. However, differences exist between these two coalitions regarding age, policy foci, funding, and employment. The CRHE has existed since 2013, while the HSLDA began in the early 1980s. The CRHE's mission is focused on empowering children and providing for their guaranteed protections, while the HSLDA exists to empower and protect homeschooling parents. Equally, the CRHE does not retain membership but accepts donations for funding. The HSLDA is funded through both donations and a fee-collecting membership base. And lastly, one can note a rather substantial difference between these two coalitions by reviewing their current job postings. The CRHE describes their organization as “an equal opportunity employer committed to creating a diverse, inclusive working environment” (CRHE, 2022), while the HSLDA asks that applicants be “a committed

Christian who supports HSLDA's mission" (HSLDA, 2022). This difference is significant to this study because it models the political climate while demonstrating the differences in core coalition beliefs within the same policy subsystem. Where the CRHE is committed to restoring and protecting the positive rights of children, the HSLDA views homeschooling as a means of retaining and protecting conservative Christian values and the federally protected negative rights of parents. So, while the CRHE and the HSLDA reside in a common policy arena, these similarities and differences also affect each coalition's potential for influence, mobilization, and policy change.

Participants

This study utilized a purposeful sample of adults the researcher identified as meeting the following criteria. The participants must have been homeschooled in Missouri and were either current homeschool teachers, former homeschool teachers who homeschooled in the last three decades, or homeschooled adults. I added the stipulation of former homeschoolers teaching during the previous thirty years to increase the sample pool. But, Missouri's homeschooling statute was enacted in June of 1986 and has not been revised since that date (Missouri Revisor of Statutes, n.d.). Thus, the interview responses of current and former homeschoolers would be from the same context of the law. At the proposal of this study, I identified approximately 20 potential participants who met one or more of the participant criteria. Still, the data collection goal was to include the narratives of 6-10 participants since this number would likely satisfy data saturation and leave room to collect varying opinions on the topic. In the end, six interviews were conducted. Three participants were from the greater Kansas City metropolitan area, two from rural areas in northwest Missouri, and one from mid-Missouri.

Data Collection

Two types of data were collected for this study. First, published documents were collected from the HSLDA and CRHE websites. These coalition documents consisted of legal communications and press releases conveying coalition positions on policy and responses to internal and external policy developments. The content analyzed dates back no further than 2019, and 12 communiques were identified and analyzed from each coalition. Documents for analysis were kept within three years to ensure communications yielded data within the current political climate. Also, by adhering to this period, coalition responses were published during two opposing presidential leaderships: the republican leadership of former president Donald Trump (2017-2021) and the Democratic leadership of President Joe Biden (2022-present). The content analysis of coalition documents was fundamental when considering external subsystem events' and their influence on the homeschooling policy arena. As indicated by the ACF's flow diagram, responses to external events such as socioeconomic conditions or changes in public opinion were anticipated data sources that would measure the potential for policy-oriented learning within the subsystem.

Second, interview data were collected after participant approval of this study's informed consent (Appendix A). While the goal was to conduct interviews face-to-face, participants were offered virtual interviews with Zoom or phone interviews. All six participants requested phone interviews. Interview questions (Appendix B) included a few structured questions for demographic purposes yet also had semi-structured and unstructured questions. Including semi-structured and unstructured questions permitted me to respond adequately to emerging views and allowed participants to elaborate on their homeschooling perspectives. Interviews were approximately 30 minutes long. Interview questions were written to avoid using binary, political,

or other positional languages so participants would feel comfortable sharing their beliefs and opinions on homeschooling policy and practice.

Data Analysis

The process for analyzing both the coalition documents and participant interviews was similar. However, there was one deviation in the analysis of interviews, explained below. I created Excel Workbooks for both the document analyses and the interview analyses. A tab was created for each article within the document analysis workbook and likewise for each interview participant within the interview workbook. What follows are the specific processes utilized to compile the codes of 24 documents into four themes and the codes of six interviews into three themes, two overlapping with the document themes.

The sequence for analyzing all 24 documents was two HSLDA publications followed by two CRHE publications. I created this arrangement to protect myself from developing any generalizations or biases if I had analyzed one coalition at a time. To begin, I read a document, then reread it, open-coding the writing line by line. While the research questions and findings from the literature review were prevalent in my thoughts, I worked to stay open-minded by asking myself, “What is the one or even two words this author wants me to hear?”. Once open coding was completed, I added the codes to the document's corresponding tab within a Microsoft Excel workbook. I then used the open codes to determine axial codes for each document segment. An axial code was assigned to each paragraph, but I did not force the axial code onto open codes when there was no linguistic alignment. After axial codes were completed, they were grouped by related topics and placed under focused codes on the same excel tab. Most documents resulted in 4 to 6 focused codes. Several focused codes began duplicating by document ten, which included six HSLDA articles and four CRHE articles. Again, I looked for

new policy positions by asking myself, “Is anything deviating from previous writings?”. At the end of the document analysis, each article had an individual tab within the Excel workbook that included the article’s open, axial, and focused codes. An additional tab was then added to move the 25 focused codes into six themes. I then ranked the focused codes from the greatest to the least number of times they occurred across all of the documents. I used this ranking system to identify and name the strongest themes and then placed each remaining focused code under an established theme, ensuring the focused code’s definition aligned with the newly created theme definition. Doing this also permitted me to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the HSLDA and the CRHE related to the ACF's assumptions, hypotheses, and resource typologies (Sabatier & Weible, 2007).

Similarly, interviews were recorded and edited as transcribed to remove characteristics of casual speech and repetitious phrases. While transcribing, I occasionally added a word within parentheses that communicated the emotion associated with the response. I wanted the transcription to read like a conversation for clarity and coding. Interview times ranged from 17 to 40 minutes. Within the Excel workbook, I transcribed each interview onto a worksheet formatted to simulate a Word document with 1-inch margins. I did this so that the codes per line would be consistent for each document and stay in the Excel format so that open, axial, and focused codes could be easily added and located like the document codes. After transcription of all six interviews, I did add one analysis process that differs from the document analyses. Borrowing from the work of Seidman (2013), I chose to create participant profiles before coding. I made the participants' demographic and policy profiles using specific interview questions. This step informed the secondary research question by visually displaying if homeschooler policy positions align with coalition policy positions. After the profiles were created, interviews were

open-coded line by line, then axial and focused codes were added. And, like the documents, these focused codes were then moved into themes. These 20 focused codes resulted in three themes, two of which were also themes that surfaced within the document analyses.

Finally, I created and dated notes within the cells of respective tabs through both the document analyses and interview analyses. I added notes when I needed to verbalize and capture a question, agreement, or disagreement within analyses. These notes were used to provide rich descriptions of this study's findings and discussion sections. An additional Excel workbook documented any code abbreviations and detailed focused codes and themes by adding definitions and examples. This workbook was extremely helpful as I progressed through analyses because it permitted me to check for previously identified labels, so I did not create focused codes that, by definition, were too similar.

Limitations, Assumptions, and Design Controls

For this study, I ascribed to the strategies Shenton (2004) outlined for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative studies. Shenton elaborates on the constructs of Guba (1981) to demonstrate that trustworthiness in qualitative studies can be accomplished. The following outlines Shenton's guidelines for credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability within qualitative research and how this study can or cannot yield to these considerations.

First, is the question of credibility or how this study will "measure or test what is actually intended" (Shenton, 2004, p. 64)? Shenton identifies random sampling and data triangulation as criteria for establishing credibility. Random sampling is impossible for this study because there is no database of Missouri homeschoolers where I could identify potential study participants. Equally, due to preferred study completion targets and the scope of this work as a dissertation-in-practice, data collection cannot extend beyond document analysis and interviews. I recognize

that the organization of focus groups and observations of political efforts in this policy arena could contribute to the credibility of this study. Still, I will utilize member checks to ensure that participant narratives are accurate and peer scrutiny and feedback to promote greater credibility (Shenton, 2004).

Second is the issue of transferability or the extent to which these findings could be applied to other situations (Shenton, 2004). Here it is recognized that qualitative results generally involve such a small number of individuals that it is impossible to apply the findings to other situations. Equally, there is a political context to this study that, perhaps, if used in another state, would not yield the same results. However, the clarity and specificity of data collection and analysis provide an important context that might increase this study's potential for transferability within another region (Shenton, 2004).

Third, Shenton (2004) shares that dependability is strengthened in qualitative work when "the processes within the study [are] reported in detail, [thus] enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results" (p. 71). This section communicated and detailed the methods, data collection, and analysis. The processes of these specific areas were carefully documented so that dependability could be a strength of this study.

Lastly is the concern for confirmability, or the "investigator's comparable concern for objectivity" (Shenton, 2004, p. 72). My personal experiences have created a bias toward the regulation of homeschooling. However, my homeschool experiences also make me an advocate for the practice. I did not want biases to interfere with a participant's willingness to openly share their opinions and perspectives on the topic of homeschooling. So, while I seek policy oriented-learning and change within the homeschooling policy arena, I remained aware of the potential for my personal biases to surface, and I worked to remain objective throughout data collection. I

checked my biases by regulating my emotions and asking, “From what belief system does this position stem?”. Considering the policy positions of others helped me to understand better and process varying opinions.

In conclusion, this section has detailed the methodologies of this study by providing evidence as to why a qualitative design supported by the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) was the best methodology to inquire into the policy positions of advocacy coalitions and actual homeschoolers. My positionality as a former homeschooler turned public school advocate promoted a balanced and less biased collection of data. Equally, because I was diligent in keeping open notes related to my exact data processes from the onset of data collection and analyses, I can publish these steps with clarity and offer a level of dependability to the findings of this study.

Section 5 – Findings

This study identifies the policy narratives of the Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) and the Coalition for Responsible Home Education (CRHE) to understand if these narratives influence the regulation of homeschooling in Missouri. A secondary consideration compared the policy positions of homeschoolers and advocacy coalitions to identify if any alignment or discrepancies exist in policy positions.

Research Question 1: The Narratives of Homeschooling Advocacy Coalitions

This section presents the data collected to address the first research question: *What policy narratives do the HSLDA and the CRHE use to communicate their positions on the regulation of homeschooling?* As shared in the methodology section, I analyzed 12 documents from the HSLDA and 12 documents from the CRHE to discover what policy narratives the HSLDA and the CRHE use to communicate their positions on the regulation of homeschooling. Based on the document analyses, I made the following discoveries:

1. Policy Knowledge, (responses to) External Forces, Coalition Influence, and the Use of Narratives were the predominant themes emerging from the document analyses.
2. The HSLDA is more skilled at responding to external forces than the CRHE.
3. Both coalitions exhibit the capacity to influence the policy subsystem, but the HSLDA is superior.
4. The HSLDA uses narratives to demonstrate the positives of homeschooling and to evoke a fear of losing homeschooling rights.
5. The CRHE uses narratives to induce shock and outrage at the lack of homeschooling regulation.
6. The resources of the HSLDA influence and control the regulation of the home school.

Policy Knowledge

The most prevalent theme that emerged from the data was Policy Knowledge. I defined the theme of Policy Knowledge as “when a coalition or individual specifically states their position on a policy and/or its context within the law” (Garth, 2022-2023). Of the 25 occurrences of focused codes within Policy Knowledge, the HSLDA documents contained 14 of these codes, and the CRHE had 11 codes. They were contained within each coalition’s literature and in contexts that communicated its interpretation of constitutional law, case law, current court decisions, and legal actions. Because of their polarizing positions on homeschool regulations, the HSLDA opposing regulation, and the CRHE supporting regulation, it is not surprising that the HSLDA codes were related to the Constitution, federal laws, and parental rights. Statements within HSLDA documents such as, “the 10th Amendment to the United States Constitution...does not mention education” (Smith, 2021, p. 1) and that “the Fourteenth Amendment protects all of us from ‘unreasonable’ searches without cause” (Kamakawiwoole, 2022, p. 11) portrays the strength of their policy knowledge without pretentiousness. The HSLDA also reminds its members and supporters of their foundational beliefs with statements that testify to their involvement in state and Supreme Court cases (Smith, 2021). Alternatively, CRHE codes centered on child rights and state laws. Young (2021b) shared that “homeschooled children lack guaranteed access to [state] programs intended to improve child welfare...[and] that monitor for child abuse and neglect” (p. 3). An additional CRHE document stated that “current homeschooling laws have few measures in place to ensure that homeschooled children receive the care and education they deserve” (Young, 2021a, p. 4).

The prevalence of policy knowledge aligns with the fifth assumption of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014) in that coalition policy positions will

reflect their beliefs, in this case, the HSLDA promoting parental rights and the CRHE promoting child rights. Equally, identifying Policy Knowledge as the more predominant theme informs the research question by showing that both coalitions produce legal narratives.

External Forces

I defined External Forces as “events, individuals, or organizations outside the coalition that cause the coalition to evaluate current organizational structures or communicate a response or action.” Responses that required consideration of coalition structures were exclusively related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Opposing policy positions were identified when the HSLDA would attack CRHE leadership or individuals supporting homeschool regulations. The CRHE attacked the HSLDA for the coalition’s prioritizing of parental rights and seeming apathy toward child abuses in the home school. Here, codes indicated that the HSLDA was exceptionally responsive to the needs of its constituents during COVID-19. Six of the 13 focused codes identified in HSLDA documents relating to external forces were associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. One HSLDA document by Mason (2021) entitled, *How to tell a Story*, addressed coalition adaptations to COVID-19 and how these changes improved responses to the policy positions of the opposition. Mason (2021) described how the HSDLA restructured some coalition processes sharing that “in response to COVID-19...our communications, legal, and educational consultant departments teamed up to launch an outreach campaign designed to help families unexpectedly at home with kids” (p. 6). Another document expounded on organizational adjustments and readiness to help families with college readiness exams as exam procedures changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic (McKneely, 2021). In the CRHE documents, only two codes related to COVID-19. One article credited the pandemic with creating “a modest increase in

homeschooling due to safety concerns” (Young, 2021b, p. 3), and the other communicated coalition actions that supported the efforts of social workers during quarantine (CRHE, 2020b).

However, analysis of documents indicated the HSLDA was more responsive than the CRHE during the COVID-19 pandemic; both coalitions are balanced in responses to the opposition. For example, an HSLDA article by Mason (2021) referenced coalition responses to Harvard Law Professor Elizabeth Bartholet’s (2020) anti-homeschooling law-review article, sharing how coalition attorneys published legal responses to each of her arguments. CRHE documents, on the other hand, would reference Mike Farris, board chairman and founding president of the HSLDA, sharing that Farris has “led efforts to strip away basic legal protections for homeschooled children in every state” (Young, 2021, p. 2). While residing within the same policy arena, both coalitions made their knowledge of the opposition and counter-narrative evident. However, the HSLDA responded to opposition with interpretations of the law. For example, Mason (2021) shared how the HSLDA “filed an amicus brief in a high-profile Detroit public school case in which [they] pointed out that the legal issue...would threaten homeschool freedom in exactly the way Professor Bartholet would have wanted” (p. 9). Mason (2020) went on to share that the “case resolved favorably” (p. 9). The CRHE, however, tends to respond and discredit the opposition by relying on media and data sources. In one CRHE article, Darkwater (2022a) referenced a New York Times report that alleged Michael Farris, the founder and current board chair of the HSLDA, “played a key role in attempts to overthrow the 2020 U.S. presidential election” (p. 2). In another article, Young (2021c) referenced the Southern Poverty Law Center and its classification of Farris’ group, the Alliance Defending Freedom, as a hate group.

External Forces and “Devil Shift”. The previous examples of coalition responses to external events demonstrate the narratives used by each coalition. Yet, while reactions to external events align with AFC concepts, these coalition responses also substantiate the framework’s assumption that “individuals...motivated by belief systems [are] prone to experience the ‘devil shift’” (Jenkins-Smith, et al., 2014, p. 190). I also found that the HSLDA and the CRHE are equally capable of demonstrating the “devil shift” by exaggerating the positions of their opposition.

The tendency to villainize one’s opponent surfaced when an HSLDA document accused Harvard Law Professor Elizabeth Bartholet of attempting to end religious freedoms sharing that “she clearly believes that serious Christians should not be able to homeschool [and] that children should [not] be brought up to believe...that Jesus is the only way to God and that the Bible is authoritative in our lives” (Farris, 2020, p. 5). I read Professor Bartholet’s (2020) article; some of its content is cited in this paper. Being one who has read the article in its entirety, I consider the claims of the HSLDA document (Farris, 2020) to exaggerate and mislead readers on Professor Bartholet’s position on the role of religion in the homeschooling policy arena. Bartholet’s writings do not disparage Christians or Christian positions on the inerrancy of the Bible. Instead, Bartholet uses evidence-based research to substantiate her positions, some of which are related to Christian-based efforts to protect homeschooling. Here, the HSLDA exhibits a “devil shift” by embellishing policy positions and utilizing their adopted vernacular to persuade readers instead of a direct quote from the article as evidence.

The CRHE published claims that HSLDA leader Michael Farris’ speeches are “fiction and rhetoric” (Young, 2021c, p. 2). The CRHE article stated that the organization is “leading the homeschooling movement toward a position that views children as property to be indoctrinated

into service as soldiers for his culture war” (Young, 2021c, p. 3). The HSLDA website (2022) was utilized for this study as an information resource and to identify coalition documents for analysis. The HSLDA documents and website do not substantiate the CRHE’s statements or indoctrination claims. Instead, the HSLDA documents I analyzed contained links to comments and resources to confirm their written claims. The HSLDA website (2022) also includes resources on how to respond when child abuse is suspected.

Finally, responding to external forces requires financial resources and policy knowledge so that a coalition can withstand and remain strong within the subsystem (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014). Of the analyzed documents, the HSLDA showed a solid aptitude to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic because of its significant financial resources and responsive leadership. These details were outlined in Section 4 of this study and align to the resource typologies of the ACF that define dominant and minority coalitions (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Still, both coalitions exercised their policy knowledge strength while disseminating responses to their respective oppositions. Responses were substantiated through either media or publication research but bound to interpretation by the belief systems that characterize each coalition.

Coalition Influence

Coalition influence is “when a coalition communicates its connections, power, and influences and/or encourages constituent action in the political arena.” This theme was associated with codes like “call to action,” “persuasiveness,” or “mobilize.” Coalition Influence codes occurred 17 times across the documents. I identified eleven codes within HSLDA documents and eight within CRHE documents. In one HSLDA document, readers are reminded that the HSLDA has been working for over 35 years to protect homeschooling families' rights in the courts (Kamakawiwoole, 2020). Recent homeschooling court decisions defended by the HSLDA from

Texas, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania demonstrate the coalition's influence within legal processes and the legal aptitude of its attorneys (Kamakawiwoole, 2020). Smith (2021), the current president of the HSLDA, shared how the organization is aware and ready to respond to a resolution prepared by the National Education Association that would increase home school regulation. He also shared that the "increased numbers in homeschooling and mass evacuation from the public schools could bring legislative scrutiny" (Smith, 2020, p. 3), encouraging members to work to preserve homeschooling freedoms actively.

Inspired by the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the CRHE's influence came with the formulation of a 2021 Bill of Rights for Homeschooled Children that raised awareness of home school abuses in the legislature and social media (CRHE, 2021). The CRHE (2019) also "assisted in the passage of a bill designed to protect homeschooled children in Georgia" (p. 1) and is strengthening its lobbying efforts with lawmakers.

Coalition Influence and Mobilization. Jenkins-Smith et al. (2014) share that an assumption of the ACF includes those who regularly attempt to influence subsystem affairs. Also within the ACF are coalition resources, or skill sets, that show that a coalition can quickly access information to mobilize and persuade constituents and public opinion. This influence is evident in both coalitions, yet the HSLDA exhibits a superior capacity to influence subsystem affairs. Besides the evidence that shows the HSLDA's legal authority and ability to anticipate and respond to legal issues, the coalition is adept at shaping elected officials' decisions and mobilizing its members. This influence is partly due to the financial strength of the HSLDA that equips the coalition with the technological resources to quickly communicate legislation to its large membership, who then act on the coalition's recommendations. Equally, the HSLDA's research arm, the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI), conducts and applies

public policy research to gain public and legislative support for its policy positions (HSLDA, 2022). This ability to access and disseminate information is also a recognized resource within the ACF (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014).

Influence and mobilization for the CRHE rely almost exclusively on press releases that address various policy proposals from multiple states and how CRHE policy positions inform the proposal (CRHE, 2023). How these statements are disseminated and to whom leaves the strength of their influence in the policy arena questionable. However, the founders of the CRHE created the database, Homeschooling's Invisible Children (HIC), before the development of the coalition. CRHE staff operate HIC, which collects documented news reports and court filings on home school abuses. This database is a rich resource for the CRHE when formulating responses to proposed homeschooling legislation. The theme of Coalition Influence is present in both coalition documents and was evidenced when a coalition provided information or data seeking to influence public opinion and mobilize constituents.

Use of Narratives

I identified the fourth theme, the Use of Narratives, as “when a coalition or individual uses a story to illustrate a policy position or decision.” According to Jones et al. (2014), “there is something about story – or narrative – that feels uniquely human” (p. 1) so it is little wonder this theme would surface within the documents of advocacy coalitions that seek to influence the beliefs of citizens. Of the 15 focused codes associated with this theme, the HSLDA documents contained 11, and the CRHE documents included four.

The HSLDA uses narratives to cast a positive light on homeschooling. They do this by featuring the stories of homeschooling members, the challenges they overcame, and how homeschooling addresses achievement gaps. For example, the article, *Homeschooling: Bridging*

the Academic Achievement Gap (Thoburn, 2020) includes the story of Jacqui Gittens, a parent living in the Bronx who was concerned about her children attending public school and overcame the worries and fears of starting a home school. Or the story of Sandra Kim, published in her article, *Between Three Cultures* (Kim, 2020), where Kim shares how she used homeschooling as a venue to celebrate her family's diversity while standing against cultural criticisms. Sharing the stories of homeschoolers of diverse ethnicities and cultures and those with limited resources sends a hopeful message to those considering homeschooling.

Based on my analysis, the CRHE's use of narratives is very different from the HSLDA. The CRHE uses narratives to spotlight the stories of individuals who have experienced abuse or neglect in the home school setting. One CRHE press release included the story of an Indiana teenager, Christian Choate, "who was starved to death in 2009 at age thirteen, after spending years living in a dog cage" (CRHE, 2020a, p2). The document detailed Choate's case to urge Indiana lawmakers to increase protections for homeschooled children. Other CRHE press releases included the stories of 7-year-old Genesis Sims, a homeschooled child "whose body was found buried in her parents' crawlspace" (CRHE, 2020b, p. 2), and that of the six Hart children who were "starved and eventually killed by their adoptive parents" (Young, 2021a, p. 2).

So, while the coalitions apply stories differently, the narratives are utilized by both the HSLDA and the CRHE to evoke an emotion that may cause a citizen to question their policy position. Where the HSLDA uses narratives to characterize homeschooling as a viable choice for all and to increase its membership potentially, the CRHE uses narratives to appall and influence policymakers. A conceptual pathway of the ACF that leads to policy change can be an external force with shock value (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014). Using substantiated stories from the HIC database, the CRHE mildly influences policy by keeping the reports of homeschooling abuses at

the forefront of policy decisions. The HSLDA counters this approach with numerous narratives on how homeschooling is an inclusive community that closes public school achievement gaps (Thoburn, 2020).

Conclusions on Document Analysis Findings

The four themes that surfaced through document analyses indicate the narratives of choice these two coalitions use to communicate their positions on homeschooling regulation. Both coalitions rely on their Policy Knowledge to keep followers informed and confident about their policy position. And while both organizations exhibit an ability to respond to External Forces and use their Coalition Influence, the data indicates that the HSLDA skill set in these areas is more significant. Similarly, both the HSLDA and the CRHE rely on the Use of Narratives, yet the HSLDA used stories more frequently and positively to promote their vision for homeschooling. The CRHE documents negatively used stories, often sharing the gruesome details of home school abuses. Subsequently, the document findings and the identified ACF organizational resources verify that the HSLDA is the dominant coalition of this policy subsystem and can influence home school regulations more effectively than the CRHE.

Research Question 2: Policy Agreement or Discrepancies?

The second research question asked, *What alignment or discrepancies exist between advocacy coalition narratives on homeschooling and the narratives of homeschoolers?* I conducted interviews with six participants and transcribed the interviews. One participant is a homeschool graduate, two were former homeschool teachers, and three are currently homeschooling their children. To inform this question, I created participant profiles (see Table 2) to compare participant responses and create a visual of their policy positions. The themes that evolved from

coding participant interviews were Policy Knowledge, the Use of Narratives, and Organizational Involvement.

Table 2

Participant Profiles

Questions	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Q1-3 background	Former HS S	Former HS	Current HS	Current HS	Current HS	Former HS
Q4 Decision to HS	Individualize	Individualize	Individualize	Flexibility	Individualize	Individualize
Q7 Benefits to HS	Pacing	Pacing	Enjoyment	Mental Health	Pacing	Relationships
Q8 Negatives to HS	Social	Emotional	Emotional	Emotional	Access to PS	Emotional
Q10 Organization Membership	Local	Local	Local	Local	Local/HSLDA	Local
Q11(a) Notice of Intent	Oppose	Support	Support	Support	Support	Oppose
Q11(b) Teacher Requirement	Oppose	Support	Oppose	Support	Support	Oppose
Q11(c) Academic Proficiency	Support	Support	Oppose	Support	Support	Oppose
Q13 Policy Recommendation	Academic Testing	Academic Testing	Indecisive	Academic Testing	Academic Testing	N/A

Note. P is Participant, followed by one of six participant numbers. Q identifies the interview question number (Appendix B). S indicates Student, HS represents homeschooler, PS represents public school. Individualize indicates a desire to meet their child's specific behavioral or academic need. N/A indicates not asked, not applicable, based on previous responses.

After I created the Participant Profiles and coded the interviews, I identified four findings related to the second research question:

1. Participants' policy positions aligned more closely with the CRHE, supporting a moderate home school regulation—one participant's positions aligned with the HSLDA.
2. All participants were pedagogues, rather than ideologues, who desired creative flexibility and to manage their children's education.
3. The theme of Policy Knowledge manifested as a lack of knowledge due to participants' misunderstanding of Missouri law.

4. All participants were members of a homeschool organization, and current homeschoolers were actively involved in a local group.

The specifics of these findings and how this data set informs the second research question are what follows.

Policy Position Discrepancies. A strongest finding within the interviews was that five of the six participants' policy positions aligned with the CRHE, which advocates for home school regulation. Question 11, a three-part question, was designed to explicitly identify if these homeschoolers' policy positions aligned with the HSLDA or the CRHE. I asked participants if they would 1) support or oppose a Missouri home school policy that included providing notice of their intention to homeschool, or 2) if they would support a minimum teacher requirement of a high school diploma or equivalency, and 3) if they would support a policy that required proof of academic proficiency. I chose these three policy positions for the following reasons. The HSLDA (2022) categorizes state regulatory requirements as those states which require no notice or only notice to those with high regulations (see Table 3). Moderate regulatory requirements can include academic assessments and high regulations can consist of a degree requirement for the parent. Thus, the three parts of Question 11 reflect a low, moderate, or high regulation policy, and these regulations are based on the HSLDA's (2022) categories of states.

The responses to these policy regulations were a significant discovery. Four of the six homeschoolers said they would support a home school policy requiring notice of their intention to homeschool. Participant 2 stated, "I don't see why that would be a problem...I'm pretty sure that should be a requirement." (personal communication, December 12, 2022). And Participant 5 shared, "My political beliefs have really shifted in the last decade, where in the beginning I was really anti-government...I just feel differently [now]...I don't think there is anything bad or evil

about reporting” (personal communication, January 13, 2023). One participant was completely opposed, and another said they were opposed but indecisive about their position, sharing, “I just don’t know. I mean...kids will always fall through the cracks...not that it’s not a good idea, a fine idea...I just don’t think more government control is the solution ever” (Participant 6, personal communication, January 14, 2023). Thus, when considering the least restrictive policy to the home school, four of the six participants supported providing notice of intent, and three of those four are currently homeschooling.

Table 3

State Home School Regulation Categories

Category	Definition
No notice, low regulation	States that require no notification from parents to their local school district or any other governmental agency. Examples: Missouri, Iowa, Oklahoma, Idaho, New Jersey
States with low regulation	State that require parents to send a notification to their local school district. Examples: Kansas, Arkansas, Florida, California, Maryland
States with moderate regulation	States that require parents to send a notification, test scores, and/or professional evaluation of student progress to their local school district. Examples: Oregon, Washington, Minnesota, Ohio, Maine
States with high Regulation	States that require parents to send notification or achievement test scores and/or professional evaluation, plus other requirements (i.e., Curriculum approval by state, teacher qualifications of parents, or Home visits by officials). Examples: Pennsylvania, New York, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island

Note. HSLDA (2022). <https://hsllda.org/legal>

When participants were asked if they would support a homeschooling policy that included a teacher requirement of a high school diploma or equivalent, three of the participants were opposed to this policy, and two supported the idea. One shared that they would support the policy if it were applied with caution, stating, “There are so many people who like trade work who would be so good at homeschooling. But I think a high school equivalency, at a very minimum, is not a bad idea. I’m torn on that one” (Participant 5, personal communication, January 13, 2023). So, when presented with a regulation policy that is very restrictive to the home school, three of the six participants supported the idea of teacher requirements, with one of the supporters wanting the procedures that leave room for exceptions.

The most surprising finding was the participants’ responses to a policy change that would include proof of academic proficiency for the homeschooled child. By HSLDA (2022) standards, this policy would be considered a moderate restriction to the home school, yet four of the six participants supported this idea. However, all four supporters expressed one concern. Each participant voiced concern with the phrase “academic proficiency,” and all these concerns eventually evolved into an acceptance of the words “academic growth.” Here, Participant 5, a current homeschooler, shared, “Yeah, I think seeing people who were quote, homeschooling...but they weren’t...like if you want to homeschool, then do it. I really do feel like some kind of [academic] progress [or] growth should be monitored” (personal communication, January 13, 2023). And of particular interest was the response of Participant 1, who supported proof of academic growth but opposed providing notice and teacher requirements. They shared, “I’m going to have to say yes, but the policy would have to be very carefully made...you’re going to have to make sure you’re not pulling kids out of homeschooling

not because they aren't being taught well but because they are struggling [in a content area]" (personal communication, December 11, 2022).

Protecting the Rights of All. A surprising interview finding was related to Question 13 (Appendix B) which asked the participant to propose one policy recommendation they felt was most likely to protect the right to homeschool and ensure all Missouri children receive a quality education. Participant 5 suggested that public schools should review their finances, especially in central offices, and "designate someone who really got to know homeschoolers...and could facilitate check-ins and progress toward [academic] benchmarks" (personal communication, January 13, 2023). Participant 4 shared that they would be open to testing for academic growth, sharing that "if I needed to report what he scored, I wouldn't feel like that was an intrusion at all" (personal communication, January 8, 2023). Four of five participants said that academic testing to check for academic growth would be the least invasive to the home school, and it would be the most feasible way to protect all children. One participant was not asked this question out of respect for their responses to all components of Question 11. One of the five participants mentioned academic testing, but the remainder of their response was related to the challenges of making any policy change that could be enforced and minimally invasive, so I did not indicate a policy choice within their response. In the end, four of five participants said they would support moderate regulation and elaborated on ways to implement this policy change.

Ideologues or Pedagogues. Dwyer and Peters (2019) define homeschooling ideologues as those who believe the public school threatens their faith and parental authority. Conversely, pedagogues seek alternatives to traditional schooling and desire to develop their child's creative and intellectual talents (Dwyer & Peters, 2019). When I asked participants about the factors that led to their decision to homeschool, not one participant based their decision on religion or

ideology. Instead, Participant 5 shared that after visiting their 5-year-old's prospective school and asking if they could support his 4th-grade math skills, the principal said, "Don't worry, in a couple of months, he'll fall back down with everybody else" (personal communication, January 13, 2023). Participant 5 went on to share, "I clutched my sweet, precious five-year-old and could not run out of there fast enough...so that was a major part of the [decision]" (personal communication, January 13, 2023). And Participant 4, when sharing the factors that led to homeschooling, said, "I just love being with my children. I really love the time together. This is just an awesome opportunity to just have time together" (personal communication, January 8, 2023). This finding is a clear distinction from the policy positions of the HSLDA (2022) and the events from the 1970s that fueled anti-public school sentiments. Of the six participants, five indicated that they chose to homeschool based on a desire to meet their child's unique pedagogical need, and four of the five shared that the special needs of at least one child were a factor. One parent shared that her child was just "completely exhausted" at the end of a school day (Participant 3, personal communication, December 17, 2022). Participant 2 shared that her child completed 1st grade two times because he needed the time to mature (personal communication, December 12, 2022). Of the five participants that chose to homeschool to meet their child's pedagogical needs, all five indicated that they feared a public school setting would not be as diligent in meeting their child's needs. Participant 5 (P5) stated, "There are benefits to public school like socialization, but I wasn't crazy about how old they were or what peers they were with...it's so irrelevant [to learning]" (personal communication, January 13, 2023). Participant 6 shared, "My [child] has dyslexia...so if he would have been in a [public school] classroom and they found out he wasn't a good reader and needed to go to a resource class...he would have hated reading" (personal communication, January 14, 2023). Of the six participants,

Participant 4 indicated that the decision to homeschool was based on her work as a travel agent and that having the flexibility to take her children on trips was essential to her and their education (personal communication, December 17, 2022).

Homeschool Narratives from Practitioners. The Use of Narratives evolved as a theme in document analyses and participant interviews. The related codes for this theme within interview analyses were very similar to those of the documents because they were personal. These codes were prominent when participants detailed their pedagogical reasons for homeschooling. Here, participant narratives were emotional and characterized by feelings of inadequacy and fears of failure. As shared previously, the HSLDA uses stories, or narratives, to show the positives of homeschooling, like the stories of Jacqui Gittens and Sandra Kim previously shared. The HSLDA also uses a narrative to evoke a fear of losing the parental right to homeschool, and the CRHE uses stories to induce shock and outrage. All three of these, the participants, the HSLDA, and the CRHE share personal stories about homeschooling journeys. Within the HSLDA documents, real people overcame fears and family scrutiny to homeschool. Within the CRHE documents, real children died from abuse under the pretense of homeschooling. And within the participant interviews, real people shared the joy, emotional fortitude, and strength of character it takes to teach your child. Participant 2 shared, “It was hard! I would feel so frustrated...but in the end, it was our best decision” (personal communication, December 12, 2022). And Participant 4 conveyed that her child was “Type A like me...and when it’s not right or they are just not getting it, it’s frustrating. That makes me frustrated” (personal communication, January 8, 2023). Like the HSLDA testimonies on overcoming ridicule and cultural expectations, participant stories were narratives on overcoming fears and insecurities so a child's learning could be efficient, flexible, and tailored to their needs.

Policy Knowledge and Homeschool Practice. I defined the theme of Policy Knowledge as “when a coalition or individual specifically states their position on a policy and/or its context within the law.” This theme emerged in participant interviews differently than in the analyzed documents. Question 5 (Appendix B) asked participants to share their understanding of Missouri's homeschool requirements. Five of the six participants responded that they believed the contents of RSMo 167.031 (plan book, portfolio, testing records) were a requirement of their home school. Comments like, “I knew I needed to keep hours and so many hours had to be core and [others] extracurricular” (Participant 6, personal communication, January 14, 2023) and “I kept lots of good lesson plans and notes...making sure we were covered even though we were never contacted” (Participant 2, personal communication, December 12, 2022) show that participants believe there is oversight of the home school. One participant thought that if you were going to homeschool a child already enrolled in school, you were required by law to provide a notice of intent, but if the child was never enrolled in school, you were not required to provide notice. These responses reveal a concerning policy confusion and speak to the apathy of child protections in Missouri and the potential for policy change. In other words, if committed homeschoolers believe Missouri regulations are enforceable, why would there be a need for policy change?

The Priority of Organizational Involvement. The theme of organizational involvement was unique to the participant interviews. This theme indicates “when a participant references specifics about their involvement in a local or national homeschool organization.” Organizational Involvement emerged with only two focused codes, “local” and “national.” Numerous axial codes for “local” reflected the positives participants experienced by utilizing local homeschooling organizations, and all six participants mentioned involvement in these cohorts.

Participant 6 shared how her family would participate in co-ops where the Greek language and chemistry were taught by community members (personal communication, January 14, 2023).

Participant 1 elaborated on how they looked forward to the local organizational events because of several historical field trips (personal communication, December 11, 2022).

The “national” code related more to the participant’s involvement in other national homeschool organizations or their interest in HSLDA to stay informed on home school laws. One participant leads professional development for Bob Jones University, a nationally recognized homeschooling curriculum, and shared that they “travel the Midwest serving at four to five homeschool conventions each year” (Participant 3, personal communication, December 17, 2022). Still, there was no mention of the CRHE, and only three of the six participants mentioned the HSLDA. Two participants were preparing to join, and one was a current member. This finding is unusual regarding the participant responses on policy positions compared with the policy positions of the advocacy coalitions. I elaborate on this below.

Conclusions on Participant Interview Findings

The HSLDA (2022) protects and defends a parent’s Fourteenth Amendment liberty interest in their child’s education within the context of homeschooling and without governmental interference. The CRHE (2023) is a proponent of homeschooling, but they support and defend the child’s right to receive an education and advocate safeguarding this right. The secondary research question asked if homeschooler policy positions align with the policy positions of homeschooling advocacy coalitions. The answer is two-fold. While the number of participants in the study does not make the findings generalizable, it does inform this policy arena. It indicates that Missouri homeschoolers may be willing to accept homeschool policy changes. First, the participant responses indicate that Missouri homeschoolers may not oppose low (notice of intent)

or moderate regulations (academic testing). This finding is not in line with the policy positions of the HSLDA. Second, these responses do align with the policy positions of the CRHE. Yet, three of the six participants mentioned the HSLDA. Two of the three were preparing to join the coalition, and one was a current member of the HSLDA. Only one interview resulted in a conversation about the CRHE, which resulted from the participant's inquiry of study particulars. This participant had never heard of the CRHE.

Summary of Findings

This study's research questions sought to analyze the varying narratives of the HSLDA and the CRHE to discover how Missouri homeschooling remains unregulated and to identify if any discrepancies exist between the policy positions of these coalitions and those of actual homeschoolers. The themes of Policy Knowledge, External Forces, and Coalition Influence indicate that the HSLDA, and occasionally the CRHE, can influence any attempt to change Missouri homeschooling laws. Equally, the prevalence of ACF resources within the HSLDA also supports the idea that the HSLDA strongly influences the regulation of Missouri homeschooling. However, the interview findings show that even homeschoolers familiar with the HSLDA do not necessarily agree with the policy positions of the coalition. This finding was most evident when participants were willing to entertain the idea of a moderate policy change to measure homeschooled children's academic growth. So, while some ACF hypotheses suppose that policy-oriented learning is most likely when the conflict is intermediate, and the data is quantitative, the interview findings signify a potential for policy-oriented learning that will induce policy change.

Section 6 - Discussion

This study analyzed the narratives of homeschool advocacy coalitions to understand their potential influence within Missouri's homeschooling policy arena and if these narratives aligned with Missouri homeschoolers' policy positions. Along with the research questions, this study aims to contribute to the literature that employs the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) in qualitative research and to consider this study's ability to provoke policy change (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014). Jenkins-Smith et al. (2014) share that "learning is associated with changes in belief systems of coalition members that include...an understanding of the problem and associated solutions" (p. 198). This discussion will address how the scholarly review adds to these findings, how the data informs the research questions, and what potential exists for policy change. This section also includes the implications these results have on educational practice, policymaking, and scholarship.

The Research Questions

The first research question asked, *What policy narratives do the HSLDA and the CRHE use to communicate their positions on the regulation of homeschooling?* I found that the HSLDA uses policy narratives to construct a reality that homeschooling is a parental right based on the liberty interests contained in the Fourteenth Amendment's Due Process Clause and, when applicable, the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment. This coalition belief was evidenced in the literature by authors such as Bartholet (2020), Carlson (2019), Brewer and Lubienski (2017), Green (2015), and Barnett (2013). Barnett (2013) shared that the HSLDA "contends that parents have a fundamental right to homeschool their children...and that heightened oversight would infringe on parental liberty [interests]" (p. 349). This HSLDA position also aligns with the disputes between Reich (2008) and Glanzer (2008) shared in the Scholarly Review of this paper.

Yet, the Supreme Court has never held that the right to homeschool is constitutionally protected (Bartholet, 2020; Dwyer & Peters, 2019; Shulman, 2017).

The most vital themes identified between both coalitions were the use of 1) Policy Knowledge, 2) (response to) External Forces, and 3) Coalition Influence. For the HSLDA, these themes manifest in what I have identified as a narrative of fear. The HSLDA disseminates its policy knowledge to invoke a fear of losing homeschool rights, and its followers then respond to this external force by influencing the policy arena. Contacting legislators, inundating representatives with emails, and blocking phone lines of a state capitol may cause the organization to appear as a majority opinion to elected officials. This narrative of fear and its reactionary fallout is evidenced in the documents I analyzed and the HSLDA website (<https://www.hslda.org>). Green (2015) shared the example of how the “HSLDA rallied 4,000 homeschoolers in Illinois to voice opposition to a bill requiring parents to notify the school district of their intent to homeschool” (p. 1116). The HSLDA narrative is one of rights and freedoms, especially when the most noticeable statements on the organization’s homepage declare that “we’re here to advance and protect your freedom to homeschool...[and] protect your right to homeschool in court...[and] in state legislatures” (HSLDA, 2022).

The CHRE, on the other hand, uses a specific policy narrative to influence its constituents and the homeschooling policy arena. The CRHE uses the themes of Policy Knowledge and the Use of Narratives to remind followers of child rights and the state’s authority to protect and educate children. However, the CRHE, while supporting the home school, also relies on disturbing narratives to support its policy positions. I typify their narrative as one containing a shock factor. While their mission is to “empower homeschooled children by advocating for child-centered, evidence-based policy and practices” (CRHE, 2023), a scroll down their

website's opening page (<https://responsiblehomeschooling.org>) leads one to stories of coalition contributors and their personal experiences with the negatives of homeschooling. A search on the site using the word "Missouri" will lead to numerous media links detailing the abuse and neglect of Missouri children. A link is also available to Homeschooling's Invisible Children (HIC) database (<https://www.hsinvisiblechildren.org>), where child abuse, neglect, and deaths are documented state by state. These findings indicate that the narrative strategy of the CRHE is to influence policy by bringing to light the tragic cases of homeschool abuse. While this information about the CRHE aligned to descriptions in the literature, news about the CRHE was noted less often than the HSLDA.

So, how does the fact that the HSLDA appears to rely on fear to influence policy and the CRHE seems to depend on a shock to persuade policy relate to the research question of how these coalitions influence homeschooling regulation? First, the HSLDA does affect the regulation of homeschooling in Missouri as their parental-right narratives communicate when an assumed parental right may be in jeopardy. When these communications occur, the HSLDA has made the process of externally influencing the homeschooling policy arena and responding to this threat straightforward by providing scripted emails and legislator links for their members and non-members. Second, based on the resources identified within the ACF, I cannot find evidence that the CRHE and its child rights narrative wield the necessary power to mobilize and influence the homeschooling policy arena at the rate and consistency of the HSLDA. So, while the CRHE perhaps fails to influence Missouri homeschooling as effectively as the HSLDA, one must also consider that the CRHE advocates for child rights and children who cannot advocate for themselves.

The second research question considered, *What alignment or discrepancies exist between advocacy coalition narratives on homeschooling and the narratives of homeschoolers?* The answer to this question is yes and no. Yes, there are inconsistencies between the policy positions of the HSLDA and some of the participants in this study. As shared in the findings, four out of five participants supported the idea of a moderate regulation that would include testing a homeschooled child for academic growth. This position starkly contrasts the policy positions of the HSLDA, which believes the home school should not be regulated at all. However, there is alignment between participant policy positions and the CRHE. As previously shared, four out of five participants indicated they were open to a regulation requiring academic testing. Three of six participants said they would support a high regulatory policy that included a home school teaching requirement. Yes, there are alignments in policy positions between the participants and the CRHE, but as noted in the findings, no participant indicated a familiarity with the CRHE.

Potential for Policy Change

This study aimed to consider the ACF precepts on policy-oriented learning and determine the potential for policy change to occur. To address this question, I will review the ACF's policy-oriented learning hypotheses that speak to this goal:

First, Learning Hypothesis 1 purports that “learning across belief systems is most likely when there is an intermediate level of informed conflict between two coalitions” (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014, p. 199). I would not describe a policy recommendation that seeks to regulate Missouri homeschooling as an intermediate conflict. A policy to regulate homeschooling in Missouri would likely be a high-level conflict. If I applied this hypothesis in a more moderate or highly regulated state, the political environment might provide a low-level or intermediate conflict. In Missouri, however, the political climate reflects a Republican trifecta, where the

“offices of governor, secretary of state, attorney general, and both chambers of the state legislature” (Ballotpedia, n.d.) are a politically conservative majority. This majority believes that “individuals, not government, make the best decisions” (Ballotpedia, n.d.). Thus, Learning Hypothesis 1 suggests that policy-oriented learning that produces change is unlikely.

Second, Learning Hypothesis 3 contends that policy-oriented learning is more likely to occur when there is quantitative rather than qualitative data to support a shift in policy beliefs. Closely aligned with this theory is Learning Hypothesis 4, which asserts that “problems involving natural systems are more conducive to policy-oriented learning...than those involving purely social or political systems” (Jenkins-Smith et al. 2014). Since this study provides qualitative findings within the area of social science, the ability of this work to produce policy-oriented learning that elicits change seems unlikely based on these hypotheses.

Third, however, is Learning Hypothesis 5, which maintains that “even when the accumulation of technical information does not change the views of the opposing coalition, it can have important impacts on policy – at least in the short run – by altering the views of policy brokers” (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014). The greatest potential for this study to meet its purpose rests on this ACF learning theory but also on the dissemination plan outlined in Section 7 of this paper.

Implications for Practice

The study impacts educational practice because when abuse is suspected, Missouri public school educators can now be familiar with Missouri homeschooling law and better prepared to advocate for children in the home school. First, Missouri educators need to understand that there is no enforceable regulation of the home school and that most of those seeking to homeschool are sincerely interested in supporting their child. However, when homeschooling is unregulated, it

does mean that the Missouri educator who suspects abuse must be even more diligent than those educators within states where regulations exist. Missouri educators must not base child welfare concerns on opinions that could be judgmental or culturally biased. From my experience, concerns based on emotions and suspicions never warrant a child protective services (CPS) investigation on a home school. Instead, for the public school educator who suspects the abuse or neglect of a child, whether disenrolled from public school or enrolled after home school, the educator should diligently collect academic and anecdotal notes on the student. If the time comes to advocate for the child, these records will better equip the educator with evidence instead of emotion and memories.

Implications for Policy

The implications of this study on policy are relatively straightforward. These findings indicate that the narratives of the HSLDA can control the regulation of the Missouri home school. At the same time, the interviews suggest that homeschoolers may be willing to accept low to moderate regulatory practices. If policy brokers could combine the CRHE narratives of abuse and neglect with the voices of homeschoolers who support regulation, there is room for policy-oriented learning and change. This type of effort may circumvent the influence the narratives of the HSLDA have within the offices of Missouri legislators. The potential for policy change is elaborated more thoroughly in Section 7 where my plans to disseminate these findings are shared.

Implications for Scholarship

Three precepts of the Advocacy Coalition Framework speak to this study's impact on scholarship. According to Sabatier and Weible (2007), the use of the ACF in social science research is limited. First, I have not identified any studies that apply the ACF to the

homeschooling policy arena or in Missouri. Second, the ACF is less likely to be used within qualitative research. Third, the ACF's Learning Hypothesis 5 asserts that the continuing collection of policy evidence can change policy positions and thus change policy. So, while this study's findings indicate that some Missouri homeschoolers are willing to accept regulations, I acknowledge that further evidence is required to impact policy. Both of these factors leave room for increased scholarship on this topic.

Discussion Conclusions

In closing, this section has discussed the answers to the research questions and how this study's findings can impact practice, policy, and scholarship. The literature review confirmed this study's findings about the HSLDA and the CRHE. The HSLDA's knowledge, financial resources, and the influence of their narrative permit them to affect policy processes in the organization's favor. However, the CRHE retains equitable policy knowledge compared to the HSLDA but has less influence because of the organization's relative age (Barnett, 2013; Bartholet, 2020; Brewer & Lubienski, 2017; Dwyer & Peters, 2019). And while no literature was identified for this study comparing the policy positions of coalitions and homeschoolers, the interview findings confirmed my suspicions. Homeschoolers are open to regulation. Yet, because of the HSLDA's resource strength and current political alignment with Missouri's political atmosphere, the HSLDA controls the regulation of homeschooling within Missouri. This fact is why Missouri remains one of 11 states with no justiciable regulation of the home school. In the following and final section of this paper, I outline how I will disseminate this information to educators and legislators and how this research has impacted my practice and scholarship interests.

Section 7

Scholarly Practitioner Reflection

As a practitioner, one of the targeted audiences of this study is the educators who serve in Missouri's public school systems. The state's educational interests are met in a child when academics and accountability result in an autonomous citizen (Reich, 2002). However, educators have a two-fold interest in education. First, they are conduits of the state's interests, and second, they are advocates of child interests and protections. Missouri educators have a dual role that can be confused by current homeschooling statutes. Therefore, beyond the children I seek to protect, educators are the intended benefactors of this work.

Upon completing this dissertation, I anticipate compiling this study's findings through a presentation, executive summary, and policy brief. I will begin this work during the fall of 2023. Reviewing and analyzing policy is a social and political endeavor (Bardach & Patashnik, 2016). I demonstrate this principle by reviewing policies impacting citizens' lives and well-being, including children while staying cognizant of how this work will influence education professionals and future policy (Bardach & Patashnik, 2016).

To reach my intended target audience, I will submit applications to present my findings at the conferences of Missouri's National Education Association, the Missouri State Teachers Association, the Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals, and the Missouri Association of Secondary Principals. Next, after synthesizing these findings into an executive summary and policy brief, I will contact the leadership of at least four district teacher's unions where my experience and connections as an educator afford me the most significant potential for a face-to-face meeting. The school districts of focus will be Columbia Public Schools, the Park Hill School District in Kansas City, the Raytown School District, and the Odessa R-7 School

District. I will share the executive summary and policy brief electronically with my current legislators, Representative Chris Brown and Senator Lauren Arthur. The content of this email will include a brief personal introduction, the content and findings of my work, and a request to discuss this policy brief either face-to-face or virtually.

Still, as a scholar, I desire to contribute to the literature on homeschooling regulation by preparing this study for publication in *The Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk* (JESPAR). JESPAR exists to improve the education of at-risk students while working to “facilitate communication between all stakeholders – researchers, policymakers, and educators” (JESPAR, 2022). This journal’s focus on research, policy, and education meets the scope of this study, which is to contribute to scholarship and educational practice while influencing policy. Current Missouri homeschooling statutes do not require a parent to provide notice of their intent to homeschool, nor does it require a home school teacher to provide evidence of academic growth. Because of this, some Missouri children have suffered abuse and educational neglect in the home school setting (CRHE, 2023). This abuse and neglect impact educational practice because these children then require ongoing academic interventions and are thus considered at risk of failing at school. In September of 2023, I will begin preparing a written submission for JESPAR that includes the following sections based on the journal’s structure guidelines (JESPAR, 2022): abstract, keywords, introduction, methods, results, discussion, acknowledgments, declaration of interest statement, references, appendices, tables, and figures. Beyond the scholarly effort to publish these findings, in June of 2023 I also intend to begin applying to the education departments of local colleges and universities in Kansas City. Higher education has always been my goal, and within this setting, I can inform public educators, influence policy, and continue to advocate for Missouri children through institutional research.

In closing, the topic of this study was born from my desire to understand how homeschooled children could arrive at public school without knowledge of the most basic academic skills. As my years in public school education passed, I witnessed more and more homeschool tragedies that conflicted with my experiences as a homeschooler. I then utilized my passion for advocating for children and the resources I could access in obtaining an advanced degree to investigate Missouri homeschool law. Through coursework, I drafted papers on homeschooling in Missouri and a policy brief that enumerated Missouri's "invisible children."

For me, the culmination of this study is more than attaining a degree. It is the opening of a door into a deeper analysis of the nuances of policy effectiveness. I will continue to advocate for homeschool regulation by sharing my stories, presenting these findings, and disseminating subsequent data on Missouri homeschooling. Based on the ACF's Learning Hypothesis 5, my goal is that the culmination of information may cause Missouri homeschooling statutes to reflect both a commitment to homeschooling and the rights of Missouri children.

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Appendix A

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Project Title: Homeschooling in the State of Missouri: How Advocacy Coalitions Influence the Regulation of the Home School

Principal Investigator: Carole B. Garth, Doctoral Candidate, University of Missouri, cbg89f@umsystem.edu

Academic Advisor: Dr. Emily Crawford-Rossi, Associate Professor, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, University of Missouri, crawford@missouri.edu

You are being invited to take part in a research project. You must be 18 years of age or older. Your participation is voluntary, and you may stop participating in this study at any time. The purpose of this research project is to identify any similarities or differences between the policy positions of homeschooling advocacy coalitions and those of home school practitioners. You are being asked to participate in an interview that will last no more than an hour. This interview will be audio-recorded. Any identifiable information that you provide will be kept private and confidential by data storage that is encrypted and contains password protection.

If you have questions about this study, you can contact the University of Missouri researcher at (816-838-8469, cbg89f@umsystem.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 573-882-3181 or muresearchirb@missouri.edu. The IRB is a group of people who review research studies to make sure the rights and welfare of participants is protected. If you want to talk privately about any concerns or issues related to your participation, you may contact the Research Participant Advocacy at 888-280-5002 (a free call) or email muresearchrpa@missouri.edu.

You may ask the researcher to provide you with a copy of this consent for your records, or you can save a copy of this consent if it has already been provided to you. I appreciate your consideration to participate in this study.

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. How many children do/did you homeschool?
2. What approximate years did you begin homeschooling and for how long?
(1990-2000, 2000-2010, 2010 – current)
3. What grade level is/was your child/ren during homeschooling?
 - (If applicable and not addressed) Did your child attend home school through 12th grade or did your home school instruction stop prior to 12th grade? When?
(Elementary, middle, or high school years?)
4. Tell me about your decision to homeschool. What factors weighed into your decision?
 - (If not addressed) Did the fact that Missouri has low regulatory requirements for homeschooling have a role in your decision?
5. What is your understanding of the requirements to homeschool in Missouri?
6. What is your understanding of the state's responsibility to guarantee a child's education?
7. Describe the benefits you and your child/ren experience/d with homeschooling.
8. Do/Did you have any negative experiences or frustrations with homeschooling?
9. (If indicated) What, in your opinion would remedy this situation?
10. Are you a member of any homeschooling organizations? Why or why not?
11. Are you open to any of the following homeschooling policy practices, why or why not?
 - Providing notice of your intent to homeschool?
 - Teacher requirement of high school diploma or equivalent?
 - Proof of proficiency in academic content such as reading or math?

12. What do you think is the best way to protect children from abuse and neglect by guardians who may use homeschooling loopholes to facilitate crimes against children?
13. If homeschooling policy could be changed to both protect the right to homeschool with little to no government interference and safeguard the rights of all Missouri children, what would such a policy include?

Appendix C

Document and Interview Analysis Themes

Document Themes

Theme	Occurrences	Occurrences per Coalition w/ focused code examples
Policy Knowledge	25	14x HSLDA, 11x (Federal Government, Fiscal Management, Policy Positions, Positions on Public Schools, Reminder of Rights, Rights, the Law, State Law 11x CRHE (Policy Positions, Child Rights, State Law, the Law)
External Forces	19	13x HSLDA, 6x CRHE (COVID Changes, External Forces, the Opposition, Coalition Adaptions)
Coalition Influence	17	11x HSLDA, 8x CRHE (Coalition Influence, Coalition Actions, Persuasiveness, Call to Act)
Use of Narratives	15	11x HSLDA, 4x CRHE (Narratives, Fears, Promoting the Home School)
Reliance on Data	7	1x HSLDA, 6x CRHE – (Coalition Data 1x HSLDA, 1x CRHE), (Authentic Data, 5x CRHE)
Communication of Vision	6	2x HSLDA, 4x CRHE (Coalition Vision)

Note. Occurrences indicate the number of focused codes that were organized under the theme.

The occurrences of focused codes within coalition documents were separated within the theme of Policy Knowledge and Reliance on Data due to significant differences in code terms.

Interview Themes

Theme	Occurrences	Focused Code Examples
Policy Knowledge	11	Child Rights, Child Protections, Research Policy Positions, Positions on PS, Parental Rights, HS Protections, Conflicted (w/position)
Use of Narrative	8	Individualized Education, Record Keeping, HS Responsibilities, Fears, Social Emotional, Narratives, Factors to HS
Organizational Involvement	2	Local, National

VITA

Carole B. Garth was born in Sedalia, Missouri, where she attended public schools and graduated from Smith-Cotton High School. She received her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from the University of Missouri – Kansas City in 1991. After ten years of teaching elementary students in private, public, and home schools, Carole pursued a Master's in Elementary Leadership, graduating from Park University, Kansas City, Missouri, in 2007. In 2014, Carole pursued her Education Specialist in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis through the University of Missouri – Columbia, graduating in 2016. Later, she was admitted to the 11th cohort class of the Statewide Cooperative EdD Program through the University of Missouri – Columbia, where she obtained her doctoral degree in May of 2023.

Carole has served in Missouri public schools as a classroom teacher and educational leader for over 20 years and has led and instructed in rural, suburban, and urban settings. She resides in Kansas City, Missouri, with her spouse, Tom, and works for the Raytown School District.