HOLISTIC HOMESCHOOLING: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO A MOTHER'S MOTIVATIONS FOR HOME EDUCATING

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Doctor of Philosophy.
Nipissing University

2017

HOLISTIC HOMESCHOOLING: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO A MOTHER'S MOTIVATIONS FOR HOME EDUCATING

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SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

NIPISSING UNIVERSITY
SCHULICH SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
NORTH BAY, ONTARIO

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SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
THESIS/DISSERTATION CERTIFICATE OF EXAMINATION

Certificate of Examination

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entitled
HOLISTIC HOMESCHOOLING: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO A MOTHER'S MOTIVATIONS FOR HOME EDUCATING

is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

December 12, 2017
Date

(original signatures on file)

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Abstract

Holistic homeschooling is an outlook on home education that acknowledges the interconnectedness of the homeschooling lifestyle. Situated in the realm of third-wave feminist theory and embracing a holistic worldview, this interpretive qualitative study explores my values and motivations for offering our children the opportunity to homeschool. Using Narrative Inquiry as a methodology and personal journals collected over a period of 5 years as a source of data, I have reflected on my experiences as a homeschooling mother. Theoretical frameworks of maternal desire, self-determination theory, and ethic of care are used as tools for interpretation. From this interpretation, I present the prism of connection that represents my homeschooling lifestyle at this stage of my life as a homeschooling mother.

Acknowledgements

To my supervisor, Dr. Carlo Ricci, thank-you for accompanying me on this journey. I am forever grateful for the years of mentorship, encouragement, feedback, and friendship you have provided me. To my committee members Dr. Michael McCabe, and Dr. John Vitale, and to my examiners Dr. Christine Cho, and Dr. Kellie Rolstad, thank-you for your thoughtful questioning and valuable input.

Thank-you to Dr. Glenn Hanna for being my cheerleader, and to the rest of my Nipissing cohort members for being available and supportive when a chat was needed. To Catharine Crawford for your friendship and for your ear.

Thank-you to my parents for instilling in me the perseverance needed to accomplish this degree. Both of you, and Dan, have taught me so much with your love.

I dedicate this work to my husband and to my two boys. Without you, this would not have been possible, or as enjoyable as it was. Thank-you for your patience and your love, always.

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Chapter One: Introduction and Background

The decision to homeschool is, above all else, a lifestyle decision. When a family chooses to homeschool, the decision reaches beyond the pedagogy of education at home and how it relates to children, it reaches all members of the family and diverse aspects of their daily lives (Neuman & Guterman, 2017). As Davies (2015) has explained, homeschooling is an interconnected approach to family life:

> The experience of home educating shapes the relationship between parents, children and siblings, and itself comes to be a part of the characterization of family life. The approach to family life, is a fluid affair, in which parental dispositions, resources, context, broader community activity, and the experiences of children, and parents as home educators, combine in complex ways to direct EHE (Elective Home Education), and change it over the period the child is being home educated. (p. 546)

Neuman and Aviram (2003) have devised the notion of "holistic homeschooling" as an outlook that acknowledges the interrelatedness of homeschooling families lives. Despite the holistic nature of homeschooling families' lifestyles, the current trend in homeschooling research considers "homeschooling as a pedagogical choice alone and perpetuates the separation between life and education" (Neuman & Guterman, 2017, p. 162). Furthermore, Davies (2015) has argued that home education researchers "ought to focus more clearly not on the approaches to education per se, but on approaches to family life and the kinds of relationships between members of the family" (p. 546). Holistic homeschooling, as described in this study, acknowledges the interconnectedness of home educating families lives, and the blurred lines between life and education.

Holistic education, and holistic homeschooling, begin with the “principle of holism, rather than reductionism, [which] means that we never lose sight of the fundamental interconnectedness of all phenomena” (R. Miller, 2000, p. 22). As I see it as a practitioner and researcher, holistic homeschooling recognizes the interconnectedness of our values, family, community, humanity, and nature. I feel that when we live with a holistic worldview, we live with an awareness of our interrelatedness. We maintain our spirituality as a “*reverence for life*—for the life that mysteriously and spontaneously arises from deep within each of us” (R. Miller, 1990, p. 58; emphasis in original). Finally, we acknowledge that we are each a “dynamic constellation of experiences, feelings, ideas, dreams, fears and hopes” (R. Miller, 2000, p. 68). We each have many elements to our wholeness, and all aspects of human life are connected. Holistic homeschooling interweaves the foundations of a holistic worldview with the lifestyle lived by homeschooling families.

As noted by Gaither (2017a) home education is “frequently labelled ‘homeschooling’ (especially in the United States), ‘home-schooling,’ and ‘home schooling’” (p. 1). In the U.K. homeschooling is often referred to as Elective Home Education (EHE), and home educating parents as “EHE practitioners” (Davies, 2015). Throughout this paper I will employ the labelling of Canadian authors Brabant and Dumond (2017) and use the terms home education and homeschooling interchangeably (p. 271). Neuman and Guterman (2017) have defined homeschooling as a “practice in which parents do not send their children (of any age) to school, but educate them at home instead” (p. 148). However, as Gaither (2017b) has suggested, when discussing homeschooling, a distinction needs to be made between “homeschooling as a deliberately chosen alternative institutional schools” and “the pragmatic use of the home to educate children” (p. 7). The deliberately chosen alternative to institutional schools is the “self-

consciously alternative practice" that emerged in the 20th century as a reaction to "compulsory school laws and public school bureaucracies" (Gaither, 2017b, p. 7). Saiger (2016) has furthered the discussion on this distinction by exploring the impact virtual schooling has on the public/private binary; he has argued that the "most important long-run effect of virtuality, however, is to defeat the public/private binary and make room in the public discourse and in its institutions for homeschooling generally" (p. 314). The introduction of virtual schools as a method of accessing school content has changed the landscape of homeschooling. There are now a range of options for families, with regards to the level of outside instruction they wish to access. Depending on families' philosophies on living and learning, children can learn at home without any virtual supports, or they have the option to enrol in online courses, such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) as supplementary support for their home learning. Moreover, families have the option to enrol their children in cyber schools, where they would receive the same curricula as any student in a bricks and mortar school (Mann, 2017). As Saiger (2016) has posited, this use of virtual schools leads to homeschooled children looking quite similar to those in the public system. Gaither (2017b) has referred to families who engage in cyber schooling, as engaging the pragmatic use of the home to educate, and labels it "domestic education" (p. 7).

As a family, we have decided to home educate. At this stage of our homeschooling journey, our family does not participate in virtual schooling or domestic education, and identifies with those who choose to homeschool as a "self-consciously alternative practice" and as a "deliberately chosen alternative institutional schools" (Gaither, 2017b, p. 7). I am a mother of two boys, who at the time of this study are ages 6 and 8, born in 2010 and 2009. Together, my husband and I have decided to offer our children the opportunity to homeschool. We are a close family and our children have both a mother and a father in their lives. Although I am presenting

my story, I have decided to use “our” throughout this study when referring to our children out of respect for my husband, and the relationship he has with our children. Our children have chosen to homeschool, both knowing it is their choice to make and they are free to enrol in school if they choose. When our eldest child was of school age, we explained to him that it was his choice to attend school, or to stay home. We shared with him what his days would look like at school. We tried to present this perspective without bias, and presented the pros and cons of both opportunities to him. He chose not to enrol. When our youngest child was of school age, we informed him that he was of age to attend school if he wished, and again attempted to share an unbiased perspective on what school would look like. He too, chose not to enrol. From that point on, both children have chosen not to attend school. Our children have friends in school and we live one block away from the public school our children would attend. From our home, we can hear the school bells and see the children walking to and from school. We have an ongoing dialogue about life at home versus life at school. Our children are curious about school and at times they discuss what their days are like with their friends. At times, our eldest child expresses interest in attending school for social reasons and for the school sports, but the structure and schedule of the school day do not appeal to him. They have attended full-day programs at the local museum. When they return home from these experiences they comment that they missed the freedom and serenity of their life at home. Furthermore, we have discussed the differences between the curriculum and attendance requirements of elementary school, high school, post-secondary, and graduate school. Our children are aware of the increasing freedom that is given within the various institutions as you progress through the system, and know they are free to access formal schooling, or not, depending on their interests and needs.

Holistic homeschooling as a focus for this study situates this work within the collective homeschooling literature, and we offer our children the opportunity to home educate as a "self-consciously alternative practice" to what is occurring in schools (Gaither, 2017b, p. 7). However, our decision to homeschool was in part, inspired by the unschooling movement. As Gray and Riley (2013) have explained, "Unschoolers do not send their children to school and they do not do at home the kinds of things that are done at school" (p. 7). As they have expressed further, "Life and learning do not occur in a vacuum; they occur in the context of a cultural environment, and unschooling parents help define and bring the child into contact with that environment" (p. 7). How we go about providing that environment for our children is by following a "willed curriculum" approach to homeschooling. As Ricci (2012) has described, the willed curriculum is an emergent approach to learning where children learn inspired and driven by their will. As Ricci (2012) has defined it, the willed curriculum allows our children to decide which curriculum they will subscribe to:

> The willed curriculum is about love, trust, respect, care, and compassion. It is about allowing young people to unfold and create themselves in ways that are driven by their souls, their spirits, and their internal motivation. It is about allowing young people, and all people, to learn in the world, to use whatever available resources, methods, and tools the learner chooses. (p. 142)

Our children are learning all the time and what this looks like in our home varies from day to day, week to week, and month to month. At the heart of it, we are allowing our children to "unfold as individuals through their own discovery" (Ricci, 2012, p. 112).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study has been to explore the values that I hold as a homeschooling mother and how they have shaped my decision to offer our children homeschooling as an alternative to attending school. This study provides an in-depth personal contribution to the existing literature discussing families' motivations for homeschooling. I have used Narrative Inquiry as my methodology and conducted a self-study, using personal journals as a source of data. The theories of maternal desire, self-determination theory, and ethic of care were used as theoretical frameworks for this study. The relationships these theories hold to one another, and to my values, reflections, and personal experiences, are part of my interpretation and understanding of my decision to engage in homeschooling. These connections characterize the interrelatedness of our homeschooling lifestyle, from my perspective as a homeschooling mother. As I explore the interconnectedness of my life, I turn to the literature on holistic education to gain a deeper understanding of a holistic worldview. I understand a holistic worldview as one that acknowledges the interconnectedness of our lives, and the wholeness of each person. I also understand awe and reverence for both our daily lives and the mysteries of the universe, and a spiritual understanding, to be a part of a holistic worldview. I use my reflections and interpretations, theoretical frameworks, and a holistic worldview to develop my understanding of holistic homeschooling, at this time in my life as a homeschooling mother.

Background of the Problem

It was not until the late 19th century that the school system, as we know it now, was introduced in Europe, and then North America as a response to the changes in society brought on by the Industrial Revolution (Neuman & Aviram, 2003). With the creation of the school system came compulsory education, where "when the child reaches whatever seemingly arbitrary ages their respective country has chosen," the child is expected to (and in some

countries legally required to) attend school (Rothermel, 2015). It was not until the late 1970s in North America that a movement of activists grew, dedicated to homeschooling as a deliberately chosen alternative to institutional schools (Gaither, 2008a, 2017b). From the efforts of grassroots activists, homeschooling has now become an "increasingly popular" choice for families, and homeschoolers are "recognized as more mainstream given their diversity and numbers" (Collom, 2005, p. 307). Furthermore, as noted by Gaither (2017a), since the 1970s homeschooling has grown into an "established phenomenon around the world. Given its dynamic growth, its intrinsic interest as an alternative to conventional schooling, and its association with political interest and countercultural ideologies, it has increasingly been attracting scholarly attention around the world" (p. 1). Part of this increased scholarly attention has been focused on understanding why families choose to home educate. As Murphy, Gaither, and Gleim (2017) have pointed out, "analysts over the last three decades have devoted considerable energy exploring the reasons that parents choose to educate their children at home" (p.93). As Lois (2017) has explained, previously conducted research has attempted to quantify homeschoolers motivations, however, people's motivations are complex and there is often overlap and changes to their motivations over time:

> To make the matter more complicated, studying motivations is tricky because people often have multiple reasons for their behaviour, which may not always be fully represented by the predetermined choices they are offered on a survey. Furthermore, the reasons people begin things are not always the reasons they continue to do them. (p. 189)

Furthermore, it can be difficult to capture motivations using quantitative methods, and the very idea of categorizing all homeschooling motivations into specific rationales has been called into question (Lois, 2013). As Collom (2005) explained, "homeschooling has become

more mainstream" and there are "a host of middle-grounders with varying rationales" for homeschooling their children (p. 309). In a more recent overview of the literature, Murphy et al. (2017) explained the current approaches to research conducted on families' motivations for homeschooling:

> At one end of the workbench are investigators who present answers in unbundled form; that is, in list of motives. At the other end of the workbench are researchers who aggregate rationales to create more comprehensive motivational categories. Collectively, these motivational detectives provide an especially rich understanding of the calculus of departure, that is, why families are turning to this historically unorthodox educational option. (p. 93)

Continued research on this subject has enriched the literature by beginning to capture the complexity of families' motivations. As Murphy et al. (2017) have reasoned, "research consistently reveals that the attribution of uniformity in homeschooling motives often seen in popular literature is inaccurate. Studies generally confirm that the motives of homeschooling families are multidimensional" (p. 88). With a growing understanding of the complexity of families' motivations, Davies (2015) has argued, "the only element these parents necessarily have in common is that they have decided to home educate their children as opposed to relinquishing that responsibility to the school" (p. 536).

Neuman and Aviram (2003) have offered a homeschooling outlook that encompasses the complexity of homeschoolers' motivations. They described "holistic homeschooling" as a way to view the alternative choice to homeschool as a lifestyle. They suggested homeschooling research that considers the reciprocity between motivations and explores how motivations "affect each other" and "develop alongside one another" to be an interesting addition to the

literature. Furthermore, they proposed that "viewing the homeschooling phenomena through the prism of connection" would provide an "interesting and comprehensive picture" (Neuman & Aviram, 2003, p. 142). Murphy et al. (2017) touched on the holistic aspect of homeschooling families' motivations when they noted the five domains homeschooling parents are trying to protect:

> Deeply embedded in the studies that investigate parental motivations for homeschooling is the trenchant belief that public (and private) schools at a minimum expose children to harm and at worst actually damage them. According to parents and homeschool support groups, damage can stretch across five domains: spiritual, academic, physical, emotional (psychological), and social. (p. 106)

R. Miller (2000) has argued that holistic education seeks to heal and prevent the damage homeschooling parents are attempting to protect their children from: "A holistic education seeks to heal the many divisions our civilization has induced between mind and body, intellect and emotion, rationality and intuition, science and art, individual and community, humanity and the natural world" (p. 42). By exploring motivations for homeschooling with a holistic worldview, the interconnectedness of these domains, and how they impact families' decisions, is acknowledged.

Significance of the Study

As Clandinin, Pushor, and Orr (2007) have reminded us, "a central element in narrative inquiry, as in other forms of inquiry, is the justification, the reasons why the study is important" (p. 24). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explained that "for narrative inquirers, it is crucial to be able to articulate a relationship between one's personal interests and sense of significance and larger social concerns expressed in the works and lives of others" (p. 122). In addition,

Dhunpath (2000) has argued that biographies are "trivial pursuits" if the study is not located "in a larger tapestry of individual, community, and institutional enquiry" (p. 545).

As I attend to the significance of this study, I employ the three kinds of justification noted as important for narrative inquirers to guide my discussion: the personal, the practical, and the social (Clandinin & Huber, 2010; Clandinin et al., 2007; Kim, 2016). The personal justification places the inquiry in the context of my own lived experiences, outlines my interest in the inquiry, and why it matters personally to me as a researcher. The practical justification discusses how the study will be "insightful to changing or thinking differently about a subject" (Clandinin et al., 2007, p. 25), as well as deepening my understanding of the subject. Finally, the social justification addresses the "*so what* and *who cares* questions important in all research undertakings" (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p. 8; emphasis in original), and addresses questions not explored in the larger research community.

Personal justification. Understanding my values and motivations for homeschooling has been the focus of my thoughts since we began this journey as a family. In an article I wrote for the *Journal of Unschooling and Alternative Learning* I articulated my thoughts on why I chose to offer homeschooling to our children. At that stage, we were just beginning our journey as a homeschooling family. The narrative I presented in that paper reflects my thoughts at the time of writing. As Clandinin and Huber (2010) explain, "narrative inquiry is a process of entering into lives in the midst of each participant's and each inquirer's life. What this draws attention to is the importance of acknowledging the ongoing temporality of experience when it is understood narratively" (p. 10). Using narrative inquiry as a methodology for this study, I enter my story in the "midst," and I must acknowledge the temporality of my experiences. When the aforementioned paper was written, home education had not yet begun in our home as our

children were just at school age. At this stage of my life as a mother of two school-age children, I have different experiences to draw on. I am curious about how my values have shaped my decision to offer home education to our children, and I have used theoretical frameworks as tools explore my experiences and motivations.

Practical justification. Conducting a self-study allows for an in-depth personal look at my lived experiences in relation to my research questions. By revisiting my personal journals with the focus of understanding my values and motivations, I am able to deepen my self-understanding and present my story to others as a place of connection and/or reflection. Furthermore, when reviewing the literature on families' motivations for homeschooling, I saw little representation of myself in the literature. Within the motivational frameworks and categories presented in the research, I found I could either not relate, or found considerable overlap in many categories of motivations. My intention has been to gain a deeper understanding of my personal values and motivations, and add another representation to the research that has been conducted thus far.

Social justification. As previously mentioned, when reviewing the literature discussing parents' motivations for homeschooling their children, I saw little representation of myself in the literature. By gaining a deeper understanding of my values and how they have shaped my motivation to offer homeschooling to our children, I am able to tell my story as a homeschooling mother. By telling my story, I am adding another voice to the literature on home educating parents' motivations, and telling a story that is "not only useful in my life but is potentially useful in the lives of others" (Conle, 2000, p. 208).

Lois (2017) has offered an interesting perspective on why I did not feel my story was represented in the existing literature. She has noted, "it is a curious circumstance that the

research on homeschoolers' motivations so often masks parents' gender and fails to consider how motherhood (and fatherhood) impact individuals' and families' reasons for deciding to homeschool their children" (Lois, 2017, p. 189). Often in homeschooling literature, homeschooling parents were not referred to as "mothers" or fathers"; rather, a more gender-neutral term "parents" was used. Lois (2017) has referred to this strategy as "degendering." In a study conducted by Morton (2010), homeschooling parents were degendered to prevent excluding fathers:

> In order not to exclude the contribution of those fathers who were active in home education this paper often refers to "parents," however it is to be remembered in the reading that home education appears to be predominantly a project of motherhood. (p. 46)

Morton and Lois have both recognized "[t]he vast majority of homeschooled children are taught by stay-at-home mothers in two-parent, heterosexual families with a father supporting the family in the paid labour workforce" (Lois, 2017, p. 186). The discussion of gender and how it impacts a parent's decision is relevant to parental motivations to home educate:

> Given that mothers are more likely to be the primary parent teachers, it stands to reason that gender takes an even more pronounced role in conquering the logistics required to homeschool than can be captured in attitudinal survey research examining parents' motivations only. Yet in the research that investigates the factors that facilitate families' ability to homeschool, the discussion again tends to be degendered, which limits our understanding of how gender ideology may influence who homeschools and why. (Lois, 2017, p. 192)

What is missing from the conversation when mothers are degendered is how mothering ideologies and "expressive logic" impact the decision making process (Lois, 2017, p. 193). Furthermore, Lois has argued that there is a "scholarly trend of degendering homeschoolers' motivations," and this trend may be "masking the potentially important ways gender plays a role in parents' decisions to homeschool" (p. 188). By telling my story as a homeschooling mother, and applying the theoretical frameworks of maternal desire, self-determination theory, and ethic of care, I am honouring my voice as a woman and mother, while contributing to the existing literature.

Limitations

By choosing to share my story, I am sharing an inquiry into my values and how they have contributed to my motivations. Using personal journals as data sources, and reflecting on my lived experiences, I have created a representation of my perspective as a homeschooling mother. Furthermore, I have related my experiences to the theoretical frameworks of maternal desire, self-determination theory, ethic of care, and a holistic worldview. Some limitations to this style of autobiographical narrative research include favouring the individual voice, and research being conducted within a limited context.

As both the author of, and participant in this study, only my voice and reflections are present to relate to theoretical frameworks and the existing literature. This autobiographical narrative inquiry work could be labelled "idiosyncratic and narcissistic" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 121). As Trahar (2009) has indicated, "making oneself apparent via such reflexivity, however, carries with it a danger. One risks making oneself more central to the discourse and pushing 'other' voices out to the margins" (p. 5). Furthermore, Trahar has remarked that narrative inquirers at times oppose a collective understanding being derived from their work in

favour of the individual voice. In reality, both the individual voice and collective understandings are possible in narrative inquiry. As Trahar (2009) has affirmed, “narrative inquirers can build a knowledge base without relinquishing the respect for the individual voice” (p. 6). This study provides a contribution to the existing literature and provides a place for connection to readers. As previously mentioned, narrative inquiry is not only useful in my life, but also has the potential to be useful in the lives of others (Conle, 2000).

In addition, this study is written within the context of my personal circumstances at this time in my life. As Clandinin (2014) explained, narrative inquirers understand that “once knowing comes into existence as a present situation, idea, practice or event, it is already a past” (p. 247). Embodying a narrative ontology, means understanding that as the author of this self-study, I have a past, present, and future (Kim, 2016). I am writing this current study from my stage of life as a mother with two young children engaged in homeschooling. The understandings gained from this study are relevant to my current context, but they are also part of my ongoing journey as a narrative inquirer engaging in an “active, ongoing social project” (Dhunpath, 2000, p. 545).

There are limitations to an autobiographical form of inquiry, but what is gained from this style of research is a “richness of depth” and a “rich tapestry of human experience and emotion” which is often stripped from positivistic research approaches (Dhunpath, 2000, p. 548). As Kim (2016) has elucidated, emergent qualitative narrative research and positivistic studies both offer relevant research contributions:

> Conducting qualitative research is like walking in the swamp, not an easy path, but one that explores the complex issues of what it means to be human. A number of scholars

> now recognize that both scientific research and qualitative research should exist in tandem and be valued without privileging one over the other. (p. 4)

This study offers an in-depth, personal, and gendered perspective to the existing literature discussing families' motivations for homeschooling.

Research Questions

The focus of my research questions is to explore my values and motivations as a homeschooling mother. When referring values and motivations, I am using definitions from the work of Parks and Guay (2009) in which motivation is defined as "an energizing force that induces action" and therefore relates to "*what* we choose to pursue . . . and *how* we pursue it" (p. 679; emphasis in original). Values are defined as "learned beliefs that serve as guiding principles about how individuals ought to behave" (p. 676). Furthermore, Parks and Guay have noted two value models consistent within the literature: values as preferences and values as principles; as they explained further, values as preferences are "essentially attitudes" (p. 676). Values as preferences have been studied in relation to job satisfaction, and "typically do not relate to behaviour" (p. 676). Conversely, values as principles are personal values and general beliefs about how someone ought to behave, and are "more ingrained, more stable, and more general than attitudes" (p. 676). From this point forward in this study, I will be referring to values as principles as "research and theory suggest that they are more closely linked to motivation" (p. 676).

Parks and Guay (2009) have discussed values further, noting that values are both evaluative and general. By evaluative, they mean values "guide individuals' judgements about appropriate behaviour for both oneself and for others" (p. 676). Values are general as "they transcend specific situations" (p. 676). As I conduct this inquiry, I discuss the values that guide

how I interact with our children, and why I have chosen to offer homeschooling to our children. Moreover, as I reflect on my experiences, it becomes clear to me how values "transcend specific situations" as connections are made, deepening my understanding of my values and motivations.

In addition, I reference Schwartz's value circumplex in my research questions. This taxonomy of values is considered "the most widely used and most well-developed value theory" (Parks & Guay, 2009, p. 676). As discussed by Schwartz (2012), this circumplex "defines ten broad values according to the motivation that underlies each of them" (p. 4). The 10 broad values discussed are self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism (Schwartz, 2012). As Schwartz (2012) has reasoned, the basis of the value structure is "the fact that actions in pursuit of any value have consequences and conflict with some values but are congruent with others" (p. 8). The value circumplex portrays the relations of congruity and conflict among values (Schwartz, 2012). As Parks and Guay (2009) have explained, "more highly correlated values are situated closer together, while lower correlations create more distance between the points. Values that are across from one another on the circumplex will tend to conflict" (p. 676). For example, as Schwartz (2012) has described, conformity and tradition are located in a single wedge because they share the same motivational goal.

Schwartz developed a value survey as an instrument to measure values. This study is an emergent and interpretive study, and I have chosen not to complete this survey. Rather, I have taken a reflective approach and explored the motivational continuum through my personal journals. By choosing not to use the values survey, I feel I have maintained a reflective interpretive approach to this study, as opposed to the quantitative statistical analysis used by the

survey. Schwartz's value circumplex is discussed in further detail in chapter 4, and my interpretations in relation to the circumplex are discussed in chapter 5.

Keeping the aforementioned context of values and motivations in mind, my research questions include the following main research question and four sub-questions:

- At this stage of my life, what values do I hold that could be considered as significant in contributing to my motivations to engage in homeschooling with our children?

Sub-questions:

- For the purposes of exploration in this study, where do I feel my values are placed on Schwartz's value circumplex?
- As I reflect on my lived experiences and personal journal entries, what experiences and influences have contributed to the shaping of my values at this stage of my life?
- What are the connections between the values that have emerged as significant within this study, and my motivations for engaging in homeschooling? And, at this point in time, is there friction or harmony between them?
- At this point in time, is my well-being affected by my homeschooling lifestyle?

The following dissertation is a discussion of my values and motivations at this stage of my life as a mother home educating two young children, as I use these research questions to guide my interpretations.

Dissertation Overview

Chapter 2 begins with a review of the literature that explores the history of mass education, the history of the homeschooling movement, and the current research discussing families' motivations for offering homeschooling to their children. As a resident of Ontario, Canada, I focused my research on the history of mass education on the early establishment of

the school system in Ontario in the 1800s, formally known as Upper Canada. As Houston and Prentice (1988) explained, “Upper Canada (and then Ontario) was a pioneer in the creation of centrally administered, province wide school system . . . [and] few jurisdictions in the western world outstripped Ontario’s efforts in this regard” (p. x). Moving forward in time, I explore the homeschooling movement as it began in the 1960s and 1970s. As Gaither (2017b) has remarked, the homeschooling movement erupted worldwide at roughly the same time:

> While we lack any complete account for a particular country, region, or continent, in general it can be asserted that movement of homeschooling emerged in many countries outside the United States at roughly the same time as it did in the States, though usually on a much smaller scale. (p. 8)

As the homeschooling movement developed, key figures that have been determined as influential in the United States were John Holt, and Raymond and Dorothy Moore. Their work, and the grassroots work of homeschooling families, laid the foundation for the homeschooling movement in America. According to American author Gaither (2017a), the homeschooling movement in the United States has always been the largest and strongest:

> Because the home education movement has always been largest and strongest in the United States, the lion’s share of the scholarship has been produced by scholars in the United States studying US homeschooling. Scholarship in other countries, while growing every year, has not yet reached the volume and specificity of US scholarship, in fact much of the literature coming from scholars around the world often draws heavily from US sources. (p. 2)

In my review of the homeschooling movement, I use works authored in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. While Canada and the United States do have similarities with

their proximity, interaction and North American culture, Canada's homeschooling history does have its own story (Brabant & Dumond, 2017). In my review of literature I explore the history of the homeschooling movement in general, Canada's homeschooling history, including Canada's own homeschooling pioneer Wendy Priesnitz. In addition, I share a review of the literature discussing families' motivations for homeschooling, and situate this study within the conversation.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology and methods used to conduct this study. I have used Narrative Inquiry as my methodology and conducted a self-study, using my personal journals collected since 2012, as a source of data. I have embraced a narrative ontology acknowledging that we live storied lives. Conducting my study, I have entered my story in the midst, and re-emerged with a retelling and reinterpretation. Narrative frameworks and interpretations are applied to my story to create meaning, and to invite readers to engage in meaning making with me. As I present my story, I layer excerpts from my personal journals, relevant literature, and excerpts from other home educating mothers' relevant blog posts that are posted in the public domain. Ethical attitudes, protocols, and consents are discussed.

I have chosen to include a separate chapter to discuss the theoretical frameworks used within this study. These theories are discussed in detail in chapter 4. The theories presented in chapter 4 have been used as tools and layered with my personal story (in chapter 5) to shape my interpretations. Third-wave feminist theory acknowledges the plurality of my voice as a homeschooling mother, and that my story is "socially situated." Gilley (2005) has maintained that "an awareness of and respect for multiplicity even within one's self" is central to third-wave writing (p. 189). As I write at this stage of my life, I am aware that I am writing from the position of homeschooling mother, who is a former teacher, middle class, and White, straight,

able-bodied, and an atheist. Even as I acknowledge my socially situated position, my story within this study is not to be presented as universal. As Snyder (2008) has explained, third-wave feminists "rightly reject the universalist claim that all women share a set of common experiences, but they do not discard the concept of experience altogether. . . . Indeed, the personal story constitutes one of the central hallmarks of third-wave feminism" (p. 184). Moreover, Snyder (2008) has declared that third-wave feminist research offers the "inspiration for critical engagement with the lived messiness of contemporary life" (p 193). It is with this outlook in mind that I note the interpretations presented in this study are to be recognized as individual, and not generalizable on behalf of others. As Snyder (2008) has elucidated, third-wave feminist theory responds to a postmodern world "in which all foundations of grand narratives have been called into question" (p. 187). However, the work of a narrative inquirer is to share the individual story, offering a place for reflection and/or connection to the reader, and contribute to the collective understanding established in the existing literature. This perspective acknowledges this study as being situated within a realm of postmodern interpretive qualitative research.

I have presented an interpretation of holistic homeschooling at this stage of my life, to be a prism of connection, connecting maternal desire, self-determination theory, and ethic of care. Maternal desire provides me with the language to express how offering homeschooling to our children is being responsive to their needs, as well as my own. Self-determination theory and values frameworks offer an understanding of self-direction, autonomy, and how they affect one's well-being. Finally, ethic of care provides a framework for a caring relationship based on the foundations of moral behaviour.

Chapter 5 is both a continuation of my inquiry and a presentation of the interpretations that emerged from my personal journals. My proposed research questions directed my thinking as I explored the data within my personal journals. For this exploration, the theoretical frameworks of maternal desire, self-determination theory, and ethic of care were used as tools to understand the relationships between my values and experiences, as I layer excerpts from my personal journals with relevant literature to present my inquiry and interpretations.

In chapter 6, I review the literature on holistic education to develop my understanding of a holistic worldview. I use this understanding to discuss holistic homeschooling in relation to my own personal experiences. In addition, using the blogs of homeschooling mothers, I present personal and reflective accounts of mothers' motivations for homeschooling, in relation to a holistic worldview. Furthermore, I discuss why I feel at this time in my life as a home educating mother, I am engaging in holistic homeschooling. Lastly, I conclude with chapter 7, offering a summary of this study, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

The following review of literature explores the history of mass education, the history of the homeschooling movement, and the current research exploring families' motivations for offering homeschooling to their children. In the introduction to his book *Kingdom of Children: Culture and Controversy in the Homeschooling Movement*, Stevens (2001) stated "one of the first things home schoolers taught me is how central school is to the structure of modern life" (p. 10). As a homeschooling parent, I often forget how significant school is to the structure of modern life, as our days are not bound to the system. The school system, as we know it, is a relatively new introduction to our society; however, as Stevens continued, "few parts of our biographies are untouched by the institution of schooling (p. 10). Gray (2013) affirms this, noting "realtors tell us that the main concern of most young families in finding their first home is the rank of the local public school on test scores" (p. 223). Moreover, as Davies (2015) has remarked, school has become the prominent discourse for education of children:

> The period leading up to 1900 represents the last period when children's education was not dominated by a view of education embedded in the discourse of school. In contemporary policy and public debate, however, the school, and discourses which relate specifically to the school, are taken to be *the* discourse about the education of children. (p. 537)

Furthermore, as Davies (2015) explained, "in the twenty-first century, the ubiquity of schooling is so pervasive in contemporary society that in many places 'education' has become synonymous with 'schooling" (p. 534). As the homeschooling movement has grown, so has the research surrounding the history of the movement. As Gaither (2017b) has explained, most

researchers covering the history of the homeschooling movement break the overall history down into three stages:

> A pre-compulsory school period characterized by institutional diversity and significant domestic education, a compulsory school period characterized by near universal attendance at either public schools or private schools, and a post-compulsory period characterized by the growth of the oppositional homeschooling movement. (p. 15)

For this review of literature, I have focused my research on the compulsory and post-compulsory periods. As I conducted my research, a number of questions emerged: what was happening in society that fostered the institution of schooling? Why did mass education become the norm for children? Why did parents so willingly hand their children over to the school system to be educated? Or did they? As a homeschooling parent, I wanted to have a better understanding of the roots of the system I was eschewing.

My quest for understanding continued as I followed the timeline from the development of mass education to the beginnings of the homeschool movement. As I explored the early history of the homeschooling movement, the work of homeschooling advocates such as John Holt, and Raymond and Dorothy Moore emerged as influential. As Gaither (2017b) has indicated, the work of Holt and the Moores was central to establishing the homeschooling movement in America:

> Historians have consistently found two core founding traditions, each with its own key national leader. On one hand is the liberal left, whose founding father was John Holt. On the other is the conservative Christian right, whose founding father was Raymond Moore. Though they represented polar opposite political and often religious convictions, the two traditions in the early years of the movement worked hand-in-hand to facilitate

> homeschooler networking and to fight to make homeschooling easier to do by securing friendly court decisions and changing state laws. (p. 15)

Their ideologies were imprinted on the early objectives of the movement. However, the homeschooling movement has grown dramatically since its inception, and families' motivations for offering homeschooling to their children have diversified with its growth.

My review of literature begins with an examination of the history of mass education in Upper Canada, considering societal changes, school reformers values, and parental values. I continue with an exploration of the homeschool movement in its early years, exploring the influences of John Holt, and Raymond and Dorothy Moore in the United States, and the beginnings of the homeschooling movement in Canada. I conclude this section by exploring more current literature discussing the homeschool movement and families' motivations for offering homeschooling to their children, and situating my study within this discussion.

History of Mass Education in Upper Canada

Before we can understand the homeschooling movement, we need to have an understanding of the school system that many homeschooling families are rejecting. By looking back to the roots of mass education, we can get a sense of how, and why, our system has been designed as it is. I have focused the review of literature on the development of the school system in 19th century Upper Canada for two reasons: First, as Houston and Prentice (1988) explained, "Upper Canada (and then Ontario) was a pioneer in the creation of centrally administered, province wide school system . . . [and] few jurisdictions in the western world outstripped Ontario's efforts in this regard" (p. x); and second, as a resident of Ontario, I wanted to understand the history of our provincial school system. I have reviewed a wide range of books, articles, and web pages written by historians from the period of 1972 to 2015. As one historian

noted, it is difficult to completely understand the pulse of the public and their feelings towards mass education due to the lack of documentation (Gaffield, 1991). The paper trail left by politicians and educational administrators provides a more complete picture of the sentiments of the educational reformers. However, as Houston and Prentice (1988) have explained, the families and individuals that resided in Upper Canada during the 19th century did not leave as much documentation:

> Written records, especially records reflecting the views of ordinary parents, children, or teachers, are relatively scarce. Equally as important is the fact that the written records that have survived are not mutually consistent, any more than are the assessments of more recent historians writing on the subject. (p. 3)

Nonetheless, what I have attempted to do is use the literature presented by historians to get a sense of the politicians promoting mass education's values, and a sense of the values parents held towards mass education during the 19th century. In addition, I have considered the changing society of Upper Canada during the 19th century due to the Industrial Revolution, to present a synthesis of the major factors that influenced the creation of the Ontario public school system.

In the pre-industrial society of early Canada, it was not in schools that the vast majority of children "learned the skills they would need to function as adults" (Houston & Prentice, 1988, p. 6). Education was informal and voluntary, and learning occurred in the home, workshop, and field (Prentice, 2004). According to Houston and Prentice (1988), reading and writing "were frequently taught by mothers and fathers to their own offspring, or by mistresses and masters to their apprentices and servants" (p. 6). Furthermore, we must take into account "all the vital social and household skills, the agricultural, hunting, craft, and even professional skills, that

were passed on from adults to young people in the family or household setting" (Houston & Prentice, 1988, p. 6). However, as Prentice (2004) described, some children were educated more formally,

> some by family tutors, others in small schools which men and women ran as private ventures, most often in their own rooms or houses. There also existed, in the larger towns, a few relatively large monitorial schools, run by religious societies for the instruction of the poor. (p. 15)

This mix of casual and formal education seems to have produced "a basic literacy for the majority of people in the province" (Prentice, 2004, p. 16).

As the population in Upper Canada grew and societies' needs changed, administration and bureaucracy emerged to provide order to the informal educational systems that were developing over time (Gidney & Lawr, 1980). Moreover, as Gidney (1972) described, bureaucracy aided in the promotion and formalization of schooling:

> The education of the people was one of the great crusades of the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century, and in most parts of Europe and North America an extension of the powers of the state was seen as one of the most important means of encouraging mass education. (p. 35)

By the 1840s in Upper Canada, there was already a network of "state-aided common schools, a handful of grammar schools, and a rudimentary administrative apparatus to oversee their operation" (Gidney & Millar, 1985, p. 445). In addition, in urban centres where there were "more people and greater wealth . . . most schools had been founded by voluntary effort financed primarily by parental contributions either in the form of subscriptions or tuition fees" (Gidney & Millar, 1985, p. 446). Through matching funds, property taxes, and grants, the

School Act of 1843 gave trustees, elected by the parents of school children, the power to develop and manage local schools (Curtis, 1983). As Curtis (1983) explained, “Local trustees controlled the curriculum, pedagogy, the internal management of the school, teacher evaluation and working conditions, hours of attendance and so forth” (p. 105). Between 1843 and 1871, a group of politicians—regularly referred to as the “school promoters”—researched, promoted, debated, drafted, and reformed public policy (Gaffield, 2015). This policy, the School Act of 1871, “ended twenty years of muddle in public policy,” and closely resembles the school system in Ontario today (Gidney & Millar, 1985, p. 465). The progression of the school system was a function of society’s changing needs, the values the school promoters held and professed, and the values parents held for their children.

Society’s changing needs. As the Industrial Revolution unfolded in Upper Canada, “[t]he school systems reflected the new social organizations of cities, the new demands for industrial workers, and the need to integrate the numerous immigrants into their new society” (Gaffield, 1991, p. 162). The development of a school system addressed the population standardization social leaders were seeking. The population of Upper Canada was still growing, and the societal changes brought on by the Industrial Revolution caused the education reformers to react to social distress that was developing (Houston & Prentice, 1988). The commercial economy was expanding and employment opportunities were shifting into new fields. For some, the new industrial economy led to poverty and idleness.

The school promoters were looking to shape a common set of values the next generation would share. As Houston and Prentice (1988) described, the goal of the education department was standardization; it was not “simply a bureaucratic phenomenon. Standardization was an integral part of a crusade that asserted one set of values at the expense of others . . . [and]

everyone belonged to a minority" (p. 274). The implementation of textbook use fostered standardization and uniformity, as well as allowed classing, rather than individual instruction, which reflected the pedagogy of the times (Gaffield, 1991). As Curtis (1983) described, "The appropriation of state-generated knowledge came to be an important dimension of citizenship" (p. 113).

Furthermore, as Houston and Prentice (1988) explained, the role of children at home was changing with the developments that came with the Industrial Revolution:

> Schooling would take care of the idle, urban boys who could not find proper apprenticeships because of the diminishing or wildly fluctuating profits of small tradesmen and the changing nature of production. Equally, it would take care of the idle girls, who especially in urban environments, but even to some extent in the countryside as well, were no longer kept busy from dawn to dusk with tasks like spinning and weaving. (p. 105)

Between urbanization and technological advancements, the youth became a population that was becoming idler, and facing poverty. As Houston and Prentice (1988) noted, "[q]uite simply, in their world, there were fewer and fewer alternatives to going to school. The myriad of family responsibilities that had absorbed so much of the waking hours of children and young people in earlier times had diminished" (p. 343). According to educational reformers, ignorance, variable employment, poverty, and idleness led not only to crime and vice, but also to revolution. The school system would contribute to social peace, as well as create a population that could be governed (Houston & Prentice, 1988; Love, 1982). As the school system expanded, the benefits of school to society were promoted. As time went on, more and more children went to schools on regular basis, and "people gradually became convinced that all children ought to go regularly

to school" (Prentice, 2004, p. 20). However, the school promoters, and their push for increased school attendance, were not without an agenda.

School promoters' values. Reverend Egerton Ryerson was Upper Canada's superintendent of schools from 1844 to 1876, and is noted as being the most vocal missionary of the school system (Prentice, 2004). As Gaffield (2015) described, "Egerton Ryerson visited more than 20 countries during 1844 and 1845 when he was developing his proposals for a public school system" (Schooling after the British Conquest section, para. 5). His values were greatly ingrained in the design of the Upper Canada school system in the 19th century, as well as the influence of other school promoters such as the Reverend Dr. John Strachan, George Brown, and Edward Blake (Houston & Prentice, 1988). The school promoters were Christian men, and their belief in divine law contributed to their vision for the schools (Prentice, 2004). They believed that if they appealed to individuals' sentiments and reason, then the latter would be more easily governed. Furthermore, as Curtis (1983) explained, they "sought to make the individual a willing participant in his own governance, giving him "Christian character" so that there could be a "Christian nation" (p. 114). In his *Report on a System of Public Elementary Instruction for Upper Canada* from 1847, Ryerson devoted 30 pages to what he called "our common Christianity," in contrast to a few lines on poverty and crime at the outset of the report (Curtis, 1983). As Curtis (1983) noted, "Ryerson repeatedly stressed the *'absolute necessity of making Christianity the basis and cement of the structure of public education.'* Without Christian education there would be no 'Christian state,' and since Canadians were Christians, their educational system should also be Christian" (p. 111).

The school promoters' personal belief systems also shaped their views of society. They believed in a dualistic view of society where there were only two ways of living, either with

chaos or with order (Prentice, 2004). This viewpoint was apparent in many of their speeches and writings on the benefits of the school system. As Houston and Prentice (1988) described, “Nineteenth-century educational reformers were fond of an agricultural metaphor when it came to the provision of more or better schooling. Even good land, they noted, had to be cultivated; otherwise, ‘noxious weeds’ sprang up” (p. 31). The school system would provide a means of cultivating the chaotic lives of children. Ryerson argued that the school system would “bring sanctity and order to human affairs” (as cited in Prentice, 2004, p. 25), and the school-promoters movement argued that schools more than anything would make the savage children civilized (Prentice, 2004).

As they promoted order and civilization for the children of Upper Canada, the school promoters also addressed class and status. Their dualistic view extended to those who were “educated,” and those that were “uneducated.” By being educated, one could join the respectable classes of society, and by being uneducated, “a drop in social and economic status seemed almost inevitable” (Prentice, 2004, p. 66). Moreover, they pointed out the value of an educated populace to the greater community, “a community that was encumbered with ‘an ignorant, and therefore unenterprising, grovelling, if not disorderly population’ would surely see the value of property fall, in sharp contrast to a place where everyone was ‘enterprising, intelligent and industrious’” (Houston & Prentice, 1988, p. 106).

Finally, the school promoters argued that the best place for children was schools, and parents had a duty to see their children educated. As Prentice (2004) described, “educators in this period increasingly felt that the social conditions to which children were exposed were unsavoury, that the transition from childhood to the real world held many dangers” (p. 40). In addition, they felt that the education parents were providing was inadequate. As Prentice (2004)

noted, “[b]y the mid-1860s Egerton Ryerson was arguing that parents should see their duty to have their children educated as more imperative than their obligation to see them clothed and fed” (p. 61).

Society and the economy in Upper Canada were changing rapidly during the 19th century. These changes left the school promoters divided as they were both fascinated and repelled by their changing environment (Prentice, 2004). The changes that were occurring outside the home were also impacting life inside the home. Families changing needs and values also contributed to increasing school attendance during the mid-19th century.

Families’ changing values. Early in the 19th century, families accessed schools as they saw fit. Choosing to send their children at times, hiring tutors at times, apprenticing, traveling, spending time with family, or working, then attending school in the evening. For “young Upper Canadians, there was much more to ‘education’ than attendance, all day, five days a week, at a ‘school’” (Houston & Prentice, 1988, p. 15). Children were still involved in the labour needed to keep the home operating, and this contributed to sporadic school attendance. As Houston and Prentice (1988) explained, “[m]arginal poverty and economic insecurity dominated the lives of the majority of nineteenth-century families, who struggled, by various means and degrees to make ends meet at the best of times” (p. 215).

By mid-century, more schools were being built, as children’s contributions to home life were lessening, and school attendance was increasing. At this stage, the school programs were still being tailored to the needs of the student. In the Grammar School Act of 1853, there was “no prescribed programme of study. Students chose the subjects they or their parents thought they might need for the future” (Gidney & Lawr, 1979, p. 445). By 1865, “[p]arents were using the schools to babysit their children. . . . Many parents had grown accustomed to sending their

children to school all day" and they wanted them out of the way and off the streets (Houston & Prentice, 1988, p. 213).

As children's responsibilities at home dwindled, many parents had no issues with sending their children off to school. They saw school as a place for children to spend their time off the streets, while providing them with the opportunity to better their position in life. This is partly due to how parents felt about their children during the 19th century. According to Gaither (2008a), "[c]hildren under five accounted for 40 percent of all yearly deaths throughout the nineteenth century" (p. 55). It is suggested that high infant mortality, and undeveloped health care and vaccinations meant that children were loved, but not cherished in the way they are in the 20th century (Houston & Prentice, 1988). Upsettingly, as Prentice (2004) described, "[a] child became an object to be played with, but still not to be taken too seriously because so many of them died" (p. 36).

In addition, parents saw sending children to school as an investment in their future. Parents were sending their children to school, not to gain upward social mobility, but rather to prevent downward social mobility. It was seen as a way for children to achieve "economic competency" (Gaffield, 1991). Furthermore, as Gaffield (1991) illustrated, "In stylized terms, it might be said that the formal education of children increasingly replaced the transmission of property (especially land) as the central strategy by which families attempted to reproduce their material circumstances" (p. 186). It is also interesting to note, according to Gaffield (1991), that mothers were in favour of sending their children to school in an effort protect their own futures:

> While a man could reasonably expect to be taken care of until death by his wife, a woman would probably end up depending on her children. . . . It is this possibility which may have encouraged mothers to promote schooling for their children; such schooling

> may have been seen as making it less necessary for children to migrate elsewhere, especially if neighbouring land could not be secured to establish their own households. (p. 187)

While many families were embracing the development of the school system and the benefits it provided, other families were attempting to maintain their home values despite what the school system was offering. The conformity and standardization that the school system was prescribing “did not accord with the reality of a diverse society” (Gaffield, 2015). As Gaffield (1991) noted, “rural parents were well aware that the schooling was not value free” (p. 174). The school promoters used the metaphor of the family when describing schools in an attempt to appeal to families; however, a single institution in the public sector could not be created without compromising some family values (Gidney & Millar, 1985). As Gidney and Millar (1985) explained, “people of property and substance, in other words, were creating a school system designed primarily not for other people’s children, but their own” (p. 467). Furthermore, it is important to note that in the 19th century, the school system was primarily designed for, and used by, the male population. The history of education has been quite different for women and men (Gaffield, 2015).

In the early 19th century, some girls were attending schools for a few years to gain a basic school education, and then returning to the home to continue with their expected duties and home education. By mid-century, girls were staying in school longer and their enrolment was increasing. As Gidney and Millar (1985) explained, “until the early 1860s, most grammar school students were boys. During that decade, however, female enrolment rose to 38 per cent. In effect, though girls remained a minority, their numbers were increasing at a faster rate than boys” (p. 463). Although their attendance was increasing, by the late 19th century, girls’

curriculum still consisted of home-economics programs as the expectation was that they would be returning to the home (Gaffield, 2015). When historians refer to pupils, they are actually referring to boys, as "girls were treated as the exception to the male norm" (Houston & Prentice, 1988, p. xii). However, as Gaffield (2015) explained further, "while the proper sphere for women was considered the home, young single women came to be viewed as ideal teachers for younger children who could benefit from their supposedly inherent nurturing qualities" (Culture and Discrimination in Education section, para. 4). The women teachers were supervised by male superintendents, who considered themselves to be the real educators. This idealization of women as nurturers contributed to the feminization of the teaching force, and even later in the 20th century the pattern remains much unchanged (Gaffield, 2015).

The fundamental structural features of the school system in Ontario have been essentially unchanged for a more than a century (Gidney, 1999). As Gidney (1999) has remarked, the school experience of 1959 "was not entirely unlike that of 1890" (p. 30). In 1919, school attendance became compulsory between the ages of 8 and 16, and as Gidney has indicated, by 1950, "most children were enrolled in grade 1 before they reached the age of eight" (p. 13). In 1954, based on recommendations from the Hope Commission, the law was changed to make school attendance compulsory from age 6, with nearly all children ages 6 to 16 enrolled in school (Gidney, 1999).

It would be inappropriate to discuss discrimination in Canada's education history without acknowledging the residential school system. The Residential Schools were custodial schools for Canada's Aboriginal children that operated from the 1880s until the closure of the last school in 1996 (J. R. Miller, 2015). The political leaders of the 19th century considered the Aboriginal peoples "half civilized" and deemed children to be most suitable for complete

assimilation and transformation (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014, p. 13). Aboriginal children were removed from their homes and forced to attend the residential schools; if parents resisted, they faced severe punishments (Bombay et al., 2014). As Bombay et al. (2014) have explained, "children at these schools not only had to endure the traumatic experience of being torn from their communities, but most were also subjected to widespread neglect and/or abuse" (p. 14). A full discussion on the residential schools and the damaged they caused to Aboriginal communities is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is relevant to note that the mission of the residential schools is consistent with the school promoters' vision for a Canadian population that could be governed, possessed state-generated knowledge, and held a strong Christian character.

The Homeschooling Movement

The nature of the school system as it was designed went largely unchallenged for nearly 100 years (Basham, 2001; Knowles, Marlow, & Muchmore, 1992; Neven Van Pelt, 2015). However, as noted by Mercogliano (2007), between 1900 and 1950 there were a series of developments that would steadily question the institution of schooling, one development being the decline in birth rate—"smaller families and conscious conception meant that children were felt to be more precious than before" (p. 1)—and another being the development of the field of psychology, and children being included in the scope of research. Gidney (1999) has linked the critiques of the Ontario school system to three central ideas: (a) "[u]rbanization and industrialization demanded a new sort of curriculum more relevant to the modern world"; (b) challenges to the traditional organization and pedagogy of the classroom, based on the emerging field of child psychology; and (c) "the widening of democracy in society at large prompted called for parallel progress in education" (p. 30). Additionally, as Bruno-Jofre (2014) noted,

"after the Soviet Union launched the Sputnik satellite in 1957, the US educational system came under criticism, and this criticism also reached Canada" (p. 775). The 1960s was a period of civil unrest and countercultural activism. As Gidney (1999) has indicated, although the "defining moments of the 1960s mostly occurred outside of Canada, young people in Ontario, absorbed the messages, shared the sentiments, and made the causes their own" (p. 41). Priesnitz has furthered this account by capturing the sentiments of the 1960s:

> Although there inevitably would have been some influence from the U.S., due to the close alignment of culture, media, etc. between Canada and the U.S., I believe that the modern home education movement erupted somewhat spontaneously in a number of countries around the same time. The 60s were a time of massive social change and Canada experienced its own rich brew of university ferment, questioning of authority, the women's movement, free schools, etc. (As cited in Brabant & Dumond, 2017, p. 273)

As Knowles et al. (1992) explained, "for the first time in decades, society at large questioned the mechanism, processes, and goals by which established institutions operated" (p. 206). Between the 1960s and 1970s a grassroots homeschooling movement grew out of the radical thinking of the time, parents' dissatisfaction with the institution of schooling, and their desire for an alternative for their children.

Educational reformers of the 1960s and early 1970s brought awareness to the many shortcomings of public education (Knowles et al., 1992). Critical approaches to education were published in the 1970s by Paulo Freire (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) and by Ivan Illich (*Deschooling Society*). Intellectual groups and educational reformers reached two vastly different groups with their activism: "Protestant fundamentalists and John Holt-inspired 'unschoolers'" (Davies & Aurini, 2003, p. 64). As Gaither (2008b) has explained, "both the

countercultural right and the countercultural left reacted, for different reasons, against the twentieth century expansion of public education into a near-universal experience" (p. 227). Gaither (2008a, 2008b) has outlined four reasons why homeschooling happened, and has sought to understand why two groups, from the left and right of the political spectrum, came together to advocate for homeschooling.

According to Gaither (2008b), "First, homeschooling happened because the countercultural sensibility became the mainstream American sensibility" (p. 233). Anti-institutionalism sentiments crept throughout society from the radical leftists to the conservative Christians. Second, families' changing lifestyles and suburbanization contributed to the "segregation of the population by race, income level, age, number of children and cultural style" (Gaither, 2008a, p. 113). As Gaither (2008b) explained further:

> Suburbia was a breeding ground for libertarian sentiments and anti-government activism. It gave homemaking women a set of causes to champion and a base from which to operate their campaigns. And not the least, it provided some of these women with the physical space they would need to teach their kids. (p. 233)

Thirdly, Gaither (2008b) argued, "homeschooling happened because of the American cult of the child. . . . Countercultural leftists['] . . . instinct was to liberate kids from what they took to be the deadening effects of institutionalisation by keeping them at home" (Gaither, 2008b, p. 234). Finally, "homeschooling happened because of changes in both public schooling and in families during the second half of the twentieth century" (Gaither, 2008b, p. 234). Families felt increasingly alienated by the large, impersonal, and bureaucratic public schools.

Although Gaither is writing from an American perspective, the sentiments of the times and the countercultural thinking of the 1960s and 1970s are relevant to the history of the

homeschooling movement in Canada. As Neven Van Pelt (2015) has written, the Canadian history of the homeschooling movement has parallels to the American movement:

> In the years following Canada's confederation, schooling became funded and regulated by provincial ministries of education and delivered largely through local school districts. Only in the late 1970s and 1980s did home-based schooling reassert itself and again become a practiced approach to K-12 education, adopted particularly by parents who recognized they could have a larger role and responsibility in the education of their children. (p. 1)

Throughout North America, the aforementioned social forces were rousing a grassroots movement. However, as Gaither (2008a) explained, "Homeschooling was not simply the inevitable result of these broad social forces. It happened because real people engaged in a multipronged effort to challenge the dominant approach to childhood education. Intellectuals articulated the vision. Parents tried it out" (p. 114). Prominent leaders of the homeschooling movement that articulated that vision for families were John Holt, and Raymond and Dorothy Moore.

John Holt. John Holt coined the term "unschooling" to describe an alternative to school where children's natural curiosity is cultivated and learning follows the interests of the learner (Davies & Aurini, 2003). Holt's first book *How Children Fail* (1964) was a bestseller and is still a classic statement of the critique of schools in the 1960s (Gaither, 2008a). Holt's *How Children Fail*, along with his sequel *How Children Learn*, have sold over 1.5 million copies. By the 1970s, Holt was considered North America's most popular education writer, and one of the homeschooling movement's earliest and most influential advocates (Gaither, 2008a; Holt, 2016; Stevens, 2001). He has written eight other books and "his work has been translated to more than

40 languages" (Holt, 2016, p. 608). In 1977, Holt founded his newsletter *Growing Without Schooling* (*GWS*) and provided homeschoolers in America, as well as Canada, with a network for their grassroots movement. It should also be noted that in 1976, *Natural Life* magazine was launched by Wendy Priesnitz in Ontario to provide Canadians with a homeschooling publication. Priesnitz and Holt communicated with each other and provided homeschoolers across North America with a place for support and advice (Priesnitz, 2015).

Holt's work is based on his anecdotes as a teacher in the public school system. As Stevens (2001) noted, Holt was "famously elusive about his own educational background" (p. 36). Rather, his perspective, and appeal, came from "his remarkable ability to meld an incisive institutional critique with a compelling philosophy of human potential" (Stevens, 2001, p. 36). As Gaither (2008a) described, Holt's critique is that "compulsory schooling destroys children's native curiosity and replaces it with a self-conscious and fearful desire to please the teacher. Kids learn not rich subject matter but skills necessary to pass tests and charm authorities" (p. 123). Holt (2004) began his book *Instead of Education: Ways to Help People Do Things Better,* with an explanation of his perspective: "This is a book in favour of *doing*—self-directed, purposeful, meaningful life and work—and *against* 'education'—learning cut off from active life and done under pressure of bribe or threat, greed, and fear" (p. 3). In issue 10 of *Growing Without Schooling*, Holt (2016) explained that unschooling and learning are not separated from life, and "that we are all teachers and learners" (p. 240). Holt's unschooling movement is a lifestyle that offers a perspective on living, and learning, for both children and adults. As Gray (2013) has explained, unschoolers "believe that learning is a normal part of all life, not something separate that occurs at special times" (p. 228).

As Gaither (2008a) remarked, "Holt's fame, rhetorical skill, and tireless activism quickly

made him the *de facto* leader of the homeschooling movement. His leadership was one of sacrifice and service" (p. 126). Holt became a regular spokesperson for the homeschooling movement in the media. Radical leftist homeschoolers, as well as conservative Christians, identified with Holt and his child-centred ideological perspectives. He is credited with "providing the ideological underpinnings for educational innovation" (Knowles et al., 1992, p. 202). As Stevens (2001) eloquently stated, "through his prolific work, Holt articulated core tenets of homeschooling philosophy: that children are unique individuals from the moment of birth, and that their essential beings are demeaned by conventional schools" (p. 37).

Raymond and Dorothy Moore. John Holt was a foundational figure in the homeschooling movement throughout the 1960s and 1970s. However, Raymond and Dorothy Moore were also foundational figures in the homeschooling movement, with most of their writings and influence occurring in the 1970s and 1980s. The Moores were Seventh-Day Adventists and their influence was strong in the evangelical Christian homeschooling movement, as well as the homeschooling movement as a whole. As Stevens (2001) has noted, Raymond Moore's "rhetoric was squarely evangelical, but he eagerly made common cause with the Mormon Freeman Institute, with Roman Catholic Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum, with John Holt, and with anyone else committed to educating children at home" (p. 133).

Dorothy and Raymond had nine children, two biological and seven adopted. In the 1940s Dorothy began to teach her children at home. She had an M.A. with a focus on remedial reading programs, and was influenced by the writings of Seventh-Day Adventist founder Ellen G. White. Raymond Moore had a Ph.D. in developmental psychology and teacher education, and worked for the U.S. Office of Education from 1964 to 1967. Together they began to shape their views on child-rearing and schooling, and with a donation from the Hewitt family in the late

1960s, they founded the Hewitt Foundation, with Raymond as the co-founder and director (Gaither, 2008a; Stevens, 2001). The work of the foundation focused on finding research to support the Seventh-Day Adventist view that children are not ready for school until much older than the public school system demanded:

> Their foundation set out on an ambitious project to synthesize over 3,000 studies of childhood development to ascertain the impact of early school attendance on children. They found that children were not emotionally, mentally, or physically ready for school until the age eight to ten. (Gaither, 2008a, p. 130)

The culmination of the research was originally published in *Phi Delta Kappan*; however, in July of 1972, a piece entitled "The Dangers of Early Schooling" was published in *Harpers.* According to Gaither (2008a), the article was well-received because of its "winsome combination of moral outrage at bureaucratic mismanagement and appeal to the commonsense instincts of the average parents even as it claimed scholarly rigor and scientific legitimacy" (p. 131). From the success of that initial writing, they went on to publish other books articulating further development of their views including: *Better Late Than Early*, *School Can Wait*, *Home Grown Kids*, and *Home-Spun Schools* (Gaither, 2008a; Stevens, 2001). Raymond Moore became a visionary for the evangelical Christian homeschooling movement when he became a regular on James Dobson's radio program, *Focus on the Family,* in 1977 (Gaither, 2008a).

At the root of their perspective, is a point the Moores called "integrated maturity level" (IML). This is when children's development is sufficiently evolved for them to be able to function in a classroom setting (Stevens, 2001). The Moores argued that each child will reach "his or her IML at a different time, and formal schooling was detrimental to the child who had not yet attained it" (Stevens, 2001, p. 39). Furthermore, they emphasized a vision where children

are not autonomous beings; rather, they require careful instruction from appropriate authorities—the appropriate authorities being their parents.

Although Holt and the Moores were homeschooling advocates, their approaches to home education differed. Holt valued self-determination for children and an emancipatory pedagogy, whereas the Moores valued the hierarchical relationship of parent and child, and a school at home approach. Nonetheless, they both provided homeschooling families with “arguments that enabled parents to do something unconventional with a bit more peace of mind” (Stevens, 2001, p. 41). As Stevens (2001) noted, “coherent arguments alone may not change the world, but they do provide maps for behavioural innovation and elicit the convictions that propel people into action” (p. 41).

As the homeschooling movement in North America progressed, initially there was camaraderie amongst homeschoolers. However, in time, the two divided groups emerged. Through the 1980s there were two clear advocate and motivational groups: the “countercultural or libertarian political left,” and the Christian group “largely from the political right” (Collom, 2005, p. 309). The political left were influenced by the work of John Holt and were interested in “improving instructional processes” (Collom, 2005, p. 309). The political right were “seeking to impart religious values on their children” (Collom, 2005, p. 309). In a review of the literature on the North American homeschooling movement, ties to the early activists in the homeschooling community are still evident, but the movement has diversified.

Motivations for Homeschooling

A review of the literature surrounding families’ motivations for homeschooling shows a clear shift from two advocate groups early in the movement, to a diverse range of motivations in the present movement. As Basham (2001) described,

> in the 1960s and 1970s most home schooling parents were members of the counter-cultural Left, principally advocates of new age philosophies, ex-hippies, and homesteaders. By the mid-1980s, however, most homeschooling parents could accurately be described as part of the Christian Right. (p. 6)

The roots of the homeschooling movement and their public advocates are reflected in the literature. Following the untimely death of John Holt in 1985, the shift to the Christian population was “clearly identifiable” (Knowles et al., 1992, p. 227). In 1988, Van Galen named the work of the “political left” inspired by John Holt the *pedagogues*, and more recently they have been named *earth based* (Stevens, 2001). The work inspired by the “political right” have been named the *idealogues* (Van Galen, 1988), and more recently, *heaven based* (Stevens, 2001). Van Galen’s binary breakdown was useful for many years as a typology for researchers (Nemer, 2002). However, according to Basham (2001), “there has been a very rapid growth in home schooling in both Canada and the United States over the past 20 years” (p. 6). With significant growth in the homeschooling movement, Smith and Nelson (2015) have observed, “home education is no longer the preserve of conservative Christians or left wing liberals but instead includes families from different backgrounds who have numerous reasons for engaging in this provision” (p. 323). Furthermore, as Morton’s (2010) research has indicated, in reality families who home educate do not match the assumed stereotypes that originated with the roots of the movement:

> Common perceptions of home educators are of social “misfits”: either “tree-hugging hippies”, religious fanatics or “hothousing” parents determined that their offspring should achieve academic excellence at an early age. My research and that of others suggest that the reality is much more diverse and complex and that home educators cover a broad spectrum between and beyond the stereotypes often presented. (p. 46)

As the homeschooling movement has grown, researchers have applied various frameworks and categorical names to families' motivations in an attempt to gain an understanding of their decision making. Some of these categorical names include: Socio-relational homeschoolers, "New Age" homeschoolers, and Black homeschoolers (Lois, 2013). In addition, ethnic, racial, and linguistic minorities, are choosing homeschooling to escape racism, low expectations, stereotypes, oppression, and to preserve their linguistic and cultural distinctions (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Nemer, 2002). Furthermore, special education needs are also cited for reasons for homeschooling, including gifted students and those with developmental needs.

In Basham's (2001) review of the literature, he has presented a list of the most common reasons for homeschooling in North America:

- "The opportunity to impart a particular set of values and beliefs";
- "Higher academic performance through one-on-one instruction";
- "The opportunity to develop closer and stronger parent–child relationships";
- "The opportunity for the child to experience high-quality interaction with peers and adults";
- "The lack of discipline in public schools";
- "The opportunity to escape negative peer pressure (e.g., drugs, alcohol, and premarital sex) through controlled and positive peer social interactions";
- "The unaffordability of private schools"; and
- "A physically safer environment in which to learn." (p. 9)

More recent studies on the homeschooling movement show overlap with previous studies on families motivations:

> Reasons for making this decision are also numerous and include, among others, criticism of the current education system, criticism of the conditions in which the children must learn, the quality of the teaching staff, and also the lack of relevance of the curriculum to daily life. Additional reasons for choosing to home educate include concern for the children's personal safety in the school environment, which the parents view as violent and dangerous, special needs of children which the public system is not equipped to handle, the child's difficulty adapting to studying in the public education system, the parent's ideological and pedagogical views, which do not correspond with those found in the public education system, and more. (Neuman & Guterman, 2016, p. 360)

Futhermore, Murphy et al.'s (2017) most recent review has delineated home-educating families motivations into four catagories:

> We provided a framework that pulled together all existing research on motivation to homeschool into four categories: religious-based reasons; schooling-based reasons, academic; schooling-based reasons, socialization; and family-based reasons. We unpacked each of these into its component elements, being cognizant, however, that overlapping and changing motivations give this topic a dynamism that cannot be fully captured by any taxonomy. (p. 112)

In addition, they have noted that in comparison to the past hierarchy of motivations, academics concerns are rising in importance to homeschooling families. As they have explained, "two tributaries of critique mix to form the larger river of academic discontent fueling homeschooling: the sense that the current system of public education is failing and the belief that it is incapable of reforming" (Murphy et al., 2017, p. 102)

With the growth of the homeschooling movement and the research surrounding families'

motivations for home educating, the diversity and fluidity of homeschooling families and their motivations is being recognized. As Ray (2016) remarked, "most parents and youth decide to homeschool for more than one reason" (para. 6).

People's motivations are complex and there is often overlap and changes to their motivations over time. Previously conducted research has attempted to quantify homeschoolers' motivations, which can be difficult to capture using quantitative methods (Lois, 2013). Furthermore, the very idea of categorizing all homeschooling motivations into specific rationales has been called into question. As Collom (2005) explained, "homeschooling has become more mainstream" and there are "a host of middle-grounders with varying rationales" for homeschooling their children (p. 309). There are homeschoolers who will still fall into listed motivational categories; however, studies have noted considerable overlap within the categories (Collom, 2005). At one time, the homeschool movement would have consisted of families on the fringe of society. Now, the homeschooling population is diverse and varied, and represents a broad cross-section of North American society (Nemer, 2002). As Davies and Aurini (2003) explained, "as it becomes more legitimate, homeschooling is also diversifying. With many legal battles resolved, it is easier for families to engage in homeschooling. With greater ease of entry, homeschooling is attracting a wider range of participants" (p. 66). With a larger population of homeschooling families, the labelling and categorizing motivations for homeschooling becomes more difficult. As Nemer (2002) has explained, families' motivations for homeschooling can be difficult to categorize due to their fluid nature:

> Many families begin homeschooling for one set of reasons but continue for another set of reasons. Homeschooling is a continuous choice; at any time, parents can rethink their decision and choose to send their children to traditional school. The reason(s) that a

family currently chooses to homeschool may differ from those that originally motivated them to undertake this endeavor. (p. 15)

Smith and Nelson (2015) echoed Nemer's position on the fluidity of families motivations when they observed the contribution of family dynamics: "The reasons for home education were therefore many and varied and in some cases the motivation provided for home educating one child may not be the same as the motivation for home educating another" (p. 323). As Neuman and Guterman (2016) have reasoned, "It is important to note that home education is a diverse and changeable phenomenon in which practice and philosophy is varied and irregular. Home education parents adhere to different educational ideologies as well as to different instructional practices" (p. 360). Considering the fluidity of homeschooling families' motivations, a common denominator that has emerged is the importance of "choice" for families. Parents who have chosen to offer homeschooling to their children have thought about what constitutes a "good education." Parents see the decision to homeschool less as a political statement, and more as another alternative to schooling for their children (Davies & Aurini, 2003). Homeschooling is being done by "so many different kinds of people for so many different reasons," for an increasing number of families, "it's just one option among many to consider, for a few months or for a lifetime" (Gaither, 2008a, p. 223).

As families make the choice to offer homeschooling their children, they are considering their values for living and learning. According to Nemer (2002), if they choose homeschooling, "they consider their values and beliefs to be incompatible with standard methods of schooling" (p. 16). A consistent ideological thread that emerges in the literature is parents' sentiments that they have the ability, and it is their responsibility, to offer their children a "good education," no

matter which pedagogical approach they take (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; McDowell, 2000; Morton, 2011).

From an international perspective, homeschooling movements in other parts of the world have grown out of social and political processes (Neuman & Aviram, 2003). In a review of the literature in Australia, English (2015) noted "[t]he research reports in the motivations of parents who home educate, argue that they are generally philosophical" (p. 4). As Rothermel (2003) has described, in the homeschooling movement in the U.K., the "Christian Right does not exert significant impact in Britain, unlike it's huge influence in the USA" (p. 82). According to Jones (2013) "the central reason for choosing to home educate in the U.K. is dissatisfaction with the school system" (p. 107). Smith and Nelson (2015) have described homeschooling families in the U.K. to be as diverse as the North American literature has presented:

> In general recent research into the prevalence and characteristics of the home educating population in the U.K. have revealed them to be a diverse group which tends not to be confined to a particular geographical location, family type, occupational background or ethic group. (p. 316)

From this diverse population Smith and Nelson have classified families' motivations into four categories: "school related reasons, logistic reasons due to housing, special circumstances and philosophical or religious reasons" (p. 320). With the diversity of families in mind, Rothermel has proposed "The Rothermel Classification/The Stratum approach" to understand motivations for homeschooling (Rothermel, 2003, p. 83). This approach has suggested that homeschoolers can be "classified and understood on four levels; first as a superficially homogenous group; second, as a collection of diverse groups with home education in common; third, as families; and fourth as individuals" (Rothermel, 2003. p. 83). Rothermel's stratum approach moves us

from seeing homeschoolers as the categories that the literature often references and "allows for changes in motives for home education within the family to be accommodated" (p. 86).

Canadian Perspective

With Canada's proximity to the United States, and frequent interaction, the home education movement in the two countries have commonalities (Brabant & Dumond, 2017). As Brabant and Dumond (2017) have inferred, the homeschooling movement emerged in Canada a few years behind the United States:

> Because of a lack of historical research on the Canadian homeschooling movement, it is hard to develop a reliable account of it. However, traces and earlier studies help us sketch its evolution. The surfacing of a movement promoting home learning as an alternative to schooling is generally recognized as starting at the end of the 1960s. According to Common and MacMullen (1986), the movement follows a similar evolution to that of the United States, only a few years behind. (p. 272)

Canadian homeschool pioneer Wendy Priesnitz founded the Canadian Alliance of Home Schoolers in 1979 and "launched herself as Canada's first homeschool advocate" (Zur Nedden, 2008, p. 57). As Zur Nedden (2008) described in her life history account of Priesnitz's life, Wendy home educated her two daughters and "helped establish the pan-Canadian homeschooling associations" (p. 2). In addition, in 1976 she launched "*Natural Life* magazine, including homeschooling as part of its 'alternative lifestyle' back-to-the-land focus" (Brabant & Dumond, 2017, p. 272). With *Natural Life* magazine and the Canadian Alliance of Home Schoolers, Priesnitz was positioned as Canada's authority on home education, however, not all Canadians were aware of her work. As Zur Nedden (2008) has described, Canadians often wrote to John Holt for support:

> Many Canadians wrote to Holt asking for advice on homeschooling, rather than responding, Holt regularly gathered the letters, put them in a larger envelope, and mailed them to Wendy. Although she appreciated the gesture, she was mildly irritated by this reality. It did not matter that she was gaining visibility in Canada as an expert on homeschooling; people still directed their letters to the American, who, at the time, knew absolutely nothing about the Canadian context. (p. 58)

Although the context of the Canadian homeschooling movement has parallels to the context of the United States, there are some differences. According to Priesnitz (2015), "homeschooling has always been legal in Canada, with language and procedures differing slightly from province to province" (para. 5). Whereas, as Brabant and Dumond (2017) have described, "homeschoolers in many American states had to fight for the right" (p. 273). In the 1970s and 1980s, some families in Canada still faced intimidation by school authorities; however, through the efforts of the grassroots movement, families found support with each other through local, provincial, and national groups. In time, each province crafted their policies and procedures for homeschooling families.

According to Braband and Dumond (2017), the Canadian Constitution with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms of 1982 is central to Canadian homeschooling families' freedom to home educate:

> In sum, the Canadian Constitution with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms of 1982 facilitates the recognition of homeschooling as an alternative education option, finding a balance between the rights of the state and those of the parents, in a spirit of compromise which is, according to Lagos, recognized as a Canadian virtue. (p. 294)

Furthermore, in Canada, "there is no federal jurisdiction in education. Consequently, as the

country is divided into ten provinces and three territories, coast to coast there are thirteen different legal frameworks for homeschooling" (Brabant & Dumond, 2017, p. 273). The exception to this are the First Nations communities, where Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) provides funding for students ages 4 to 21 who live on reserves across Canada, and are enrolled in and attending elementary or secondary school (Government of Canada, 2016).

Revisiting the Ontario focus of this study, it is worthwhile to note, according to the Education Act of Ontario, a person is excused from attendance at school if they are "receiving satisfactory instruction at home or elsewhere" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1990, section 21.2). In June 2002, the Ontario Ministry of Education released Policy/Program Memorandum 131, which provides guidance to parents and school boards concerning homeschooling policies. As Davies and Aurini (2003), explain "the Ontario government now recognizes homeschooling as a 'viable alternative to public education' and permits education experiences that are 'unique to each family" (p. 66).

The research conducted on Canadian families' motivations for homeschooling again shows differences in the context of the Canadian movement. According to Brabant, Bourdon, and Jutras (2003), there are both similarities and difference in the literature:

> A recent summary of the home education phenomenon in North America by the Fraser Institute suggests that Canadian and US home educators share the same ideological profile (Basham, 2001). But studies in English Canada (Arai, 2000; Priesnitz, 1995) underline many differences between the discourses of the Canadian and US parents. (p. 115)

Furthermore, as Kunzman and Gaither (2013) have also noted, in Canada, "religious motivations are much less prominent in parents' decision to homeschool, as is the categorical rejection of

state intervention in education, compared with the U.S. data; instead, parents emphasize an alternative conception of family life" (p. 32). Finally, in a more recent review of the literature, Brabant and Dumond (2017) point to differences in the literature as well, noting Canadians' distinction from the roots of the American movement:

> The results suggest that the Canadian parents did not have exactly the same reasons for choosing homeschooling as American parents. . . . The main conclusion of this research was that the dichotomy of classification proposed in American research, separating parent according to either ideological or pedagogical motivations, does not apply to [Canadian] parents who instead express an amalgamation of motives. (p. 278)

It appears in the American homeschooling moment, the two distinct ideologies present in the founding of the movement, carried through to families' motivations for engaging in home education. However, from an international and Canadian perspective, the research shows families motivations to have always been broad. According to Murphy et al. (2017), more recently, "There is some important empirical work that reveals that the motivational geography of homeschooling is changing" (p. 89). With the growth of the homeschooling movement, research conducted shows current homeschooling families' motivations overall to be more diverse, multidimensional, and fluid.

Situating This Study

As the homeschooling movement grows, approaches to categorization and classification become more complex (Collom, 2005; McDowell & Ray, 2000; Rothermel, 2003). Green and Hoover-Dempsey (2007) and McDowell (2000) have argued that more in-depth qualitative studies are needed to explore homeschooling families' thinking. As Lois (2013) has noted, there are limitations in trying to capture homeschoolers motivations within distinct categories. Green

and Hoover-Dempsey (2007) have called for more qualitative studies to "provide a richer and deeper understanding" of parents decisions to homeschool (p. 282). Rothermel (2003) has argued that labelling homeschooler motivations "obscures the complexity of their motives" (p. 82). Finally, McDowell (2000) has noted that the "why" is missing from the quantitative research conducted on homeschoolers' motivations.

Neuman and Aviram's (2003) holistic homeschooling acknowledges that "the choice of homeschooling affects many areas of family life beyond education" (p. 136). It is more than an educational choice; it is a lifestyle (Morton, 2011; Rothermel, 2003). As Murphy et al. (2017) have concluded, "many families' motives for homeschooling are a piece of a larger perspective on life (Kunzman 2009); they are nested in a web of motivations that power particular lifestyles (Nemer 2002)" (p. 89). Davies (2015) has added that homeschooling families are "on a journey in which their understanding of education and the home develops, and becomes more complex" (p. 536). Furthermore, as Lois (2017) has observed, the research conducted on homeschooling families' motivations "so often masks parents' gender and fails to consider how motherhood (and fatherhood) impact individuals' and families' reasons for deciding to homeschool their children" (p. 189). This study offers a personal and in-depth account of my values at this time of my life as a homeschooling mother, and how they have influenced my motivations to offering homeschooling to our children.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The following chapter outlines the methodology and methods I have used to explore my values and motivations for offering our children the opportunity to homeschool. Situated within the interpretive qualitative research paradigm, the methodology I have used is Narrative Inquiry. To explore my values in relation to my holistic homeschooling lifestyle, I have conducted a self-study and used personal journals as a method of data collection. I have loosely applied two narrative frameworks to my collected data: the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry (temporality, sociality, and place) (Clandinin et al., 2007), and the focus of four directions—inward, outward, backward, and forward (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Moreover, Polkinghorne's (1995) analysis of narratives was more directly applied to my collected data as a method of interpretation. I have used a layered account when transitioning my story to manuscript form, where segments of my personal journals are juxtaposed with relevant literature, to allow spaces for readers' connection and interpretation (Kim, 2016). Finally, although this is a self-study, this is not only my story but also the story of others in my life (Ellis, 2007). When transitioning my story to manuscript form, I have worked to honour and protect those in my life; I have maintained an ethical attitude, and obtained ethical consent as needed.

Narrative Inquiry

While conducting this study, I have embodied both the method of narrative inquiry and the phenomenon as I have embraced a narrative ontology (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Huber, 2010; Clandinin et al., 2007; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2006). As I embrace a narrative ontology, I acknowledge that we live storied lives. As Clandinin and Murphy (2009) expressed, experience is a "storied phenomenon" and narrative research is a "methodology for inquiring into storied experiences" (p. 598). As

they explained, "[l]ives are lived, told, retold, and relived in storied ways on storied landscapes. In order to study experience narratively, we understand it as a storied phenomenon" (p. 598). My story begins in the midst of my ongoing experiences (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). I have explored my motivations and values as a homeschooling mother at this moment in time. My intention has been to enter into my story as it is being lived, but through the research I have conducted in this process I have emerged with a retelling, and a reinterpretation, of my experiences. Bruner (2004) has declared that "life as led is inseparable from a life as told—or more bluntly, a life is not 'how it was' but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold" (p. 708). By applying a narrative form to my story, I have developed an understanding of, and given meaning to, my values and motivations as a homeschooling mother (Trahar, 2009).

Qualitative Research

Narrative inquiry is situated within the paradigm of qualitative research. Qualitative research studies the experiential lives of people, and brings awareness and meaning to their lives through interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Merriam, 2002; Polkinghorne, 2005). Through interpretive practices, researchers gain an understanding of individuals' experiences within particular contexts and at particular points of time in their lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Merriam, 2002). There are a variety of research methods clustered under the "umbrella term" of qualitative research, each method having their own analytic tools (Polkinghorne, 2005). Narrative inquiry falls within the realm of interpretive research approaches, where emotion and intellect coalesce (Sandberg, 2005).

Qualitative interpretive approaches to research reject "claims for objective knowledge" and acknowledge that "the human world is never a world in itself; it is always an experienced world, that is, a world that is always related to a conscious subject" (Sandberg, 2005, pp. 41-44).

As I conducted my interpretive self-study, I acknowledged that I am “not bound, static, atemporal, and decontextualized” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 11). As Clandinin and Murphy (2009) explained, “we work under partial, complicit, context-dependent situations, and these are what we can represent in our research texts” (p. 601). My story is contextual, and as it is written, rewritten, and interpreted, it is not to be read as “omniscient,” but situated within my institutional, linguistic, social, and cultural narratives (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009).

Self-Study

As I have explored my personal experiences, I have embarked on what Atkinson (1995) and McIlveen (2008) have described as *soul work.* Using the experiences of my own life as data for my narrative inquiry has allowed me to bring insight and interpretation to my story. I have been able to “clarify experience as it is lived and constituted with awareness” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 138). By bringing awareness to my values—and how they have influenced my motivations to offer homeschooling to our children—I not only contribute to homeschooling literature, but offer a place of connection with other homeschooling families. By turning inward, self-study researchers are not only conducting important psychological work (Bruner, 2004), but providing work that is both “emotionally as well as intellectually interesting” (Conle, 2000, p. 190). As self-study researchers share our stories, we are inviting readers to engage in “meaning making” with us (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009).

Journals

In September of 2012, my husband and I decided together to offer our children the opportunity to homeschool. Our children have chosen to take that opportunity and pursue their education at home, knowing they are free to attend school if they wish. Upon making this decision, I started a journal of my thoughts and feelings as a homeschooling mother. For this

study, ethics approval has been granted to access my journals from September 2012 to present. I have maintained a journal since September 2012, and as I began the doctoral program in July of 2013 my personal journal and academic journal became one. In actuality, my personal journal has two forms including a hardcopy moleskin journal that is kept in my home office, and an electronic file accessed through a secure online drive via my personal computer or smart phone. Having access to both of these formats has allowed me to document my thoughts whenever the urge to write appeared. My intended research focus has always revolved around homeschooling, and my personal and academic lived experiences cannot be separated.

My personal journal provides an "inner dialogue that connects thoughts, feelings and actions," a mirror for my "heart and mind," and helps me develop an understanding of the connections between myself and the world around me (Hubbs & Brand, 2005). As Vitale (2013) has remarked, "multiple diary entries come together in a synergistic way providing profound insight and meaning into your life that the words alone cannot provide" (p. 41). As I turn to my personal journals for data collection, I could be accused of self-indulgence (Koch, 1998), however, as Philaretou and Allen (2006) described, "the utility of personal documents should not be underestimated . . . they can be particularly effective in delving into a person's moods, intrapsychic states of being, and most intimate thoughts and actions" (p. 3). Furthermore, as Vitale (2013) has claimed, by revisiting our personal journals, we can discover the blueprints of our lives. Accessing my journals turns my critical gaze inward. As my personal story becomes the focus of my research, "my lived and my academic routes become one road" (Conle, 2000, p. 193).

Research Process

As Pinnegar (2007) has described, our lives are organic and emergent:

> Narratives began as living things created in the moment-to-moment action and

> interaction of a particular people in a particular place, at a particular time, engaged in particular events. We shape stories to create them with beginnings, middles, and ends, but in the living the boundaries are less clear, more organic. (p. 3)

I began writing in my personal journal with the focus on my thoughts as a homeschooling parent; however, my writing quickly moved to broader spaces of my life as I wrote organically. To me, writing organically means writing freely to pursue a "sub-conscious question mark" (Conle, 2000, p. 190). As Conle (2000) has described, when writing with a subconscious question mark, we write about things that are both emotionally as well as intellectually interesting. As Conle (2000) has described of her organic writing, "felt ideas seemed to push me onward to an unspecified goal, fulfilling a yet unspecified purpose" (p. 195). As Dewey (1934) explained in *Art as Experience*, I was writing to a whole that was "not yet articulated" (p. 191). In writing this way, one "finds direction because feeling-qualities of ideas are an intellectual 'stop and go'. If a thinker had to workout the meaning of each idea discusively, he would be lost" (Dewey, 1934, p. 120). My writings explored many topics, some including: homeschooling, motherhood, relationships, community, theory, philosophy, and reflections on experiences in my past, and present. In addition, at times my journal writing focused on my doctoral studies with potential dissertation topics being explored, and reflections on readings from my review of literature. Accessing these journals for the purposes of this study has given me a rich source of data. It has allowed me to visit my experiences in the midst of my storying, and emerge with a retelling and refocus exploring my posed research questions.

Throughout this academic exercise, I did not read back within my journals until after my research proposal and ethics proposal was approved. As Conle (2000) has explained, within this study there was a past and a future, and the process of narrative inquiry was dynamic:

> These gains can be characterized as hinging on the roles that the past and the future play in narrative inquiry: The past shaped the inquiry through living tensions and subconscious question marks that pushed for "lived answers," and the future beckoned, implicitly offering those lived resolutions. The resulting process constituted a dynamic that was created by the narrative activity itself and continued to propel the inquiry. (p. 193)

It was not an intentional choice to not read back on my journals, I was simply moving forward with the process I was in, and, being my own personal journals, I assumed I had a sense of what was written in them. After the necessary approvals were granted, I focused my writing in my journals on my research questions. For approximately two months, my journaling honed in on my research questions and I explored more focused ideas including: our holistic homeschooling lifestyle, my values, Schwartz's value circumplex, lived experiences, influences, connections, conflicts, and factors that affect my well-being. I still consider my writing at this stage to be organic as I was exploring both the emotional and intellectual, reflecting on my past and present lived experiences. However, my sub-conscious question mark now had a quest; my research questions propelled my inquiry forward. As Conle (2000) has suggested, it is the "quest that gives a research quality to narrative inquiry. It is what drives the data generation" (p. 198).

After I felt comfortable in my exploration of my research questions, I returned to the beginning of my journals and began to read. I printed my journal entries from my online drive, and read both my printed journal entries and handwritten hardcopy journal over completely. Within my journals, there were some memories and reflections I had expected to read; however, I was also surprised at some of the topics my writing focused on, and at areas of my life that I did not write about. I discovered my journal entries mirrored how Clandinin and Connelly

(2000) described field texts where "story lines interweave and interconnect," silences and gaps become apparent, tensions emerge, and "continuities and discontinuities" appear (p. 131). Once again, I returned to my journal and wrote about these initial reflections, adding to the growing, organic, and dynamic source of data I was building. This re-reading, reflecting, and writing was part of the dynamic inquiry process. As Conle (2000) has related, "methods of narrative inquiry, rather than being externally defined, emerge out of the inquiry activities. They are not as much means to an end as they are part of the ends achieved" (p. 201). After re-reading my journals a number of times, I began to make notations in my journals around segments that were standing out to me. Some of these segments were particularly interesting, or emotional. Other segments stood out as I began to see connections or themes emerging. Others were particularly relevant to my research questions. When telling my story, I was reflecting on my reflections documented in my journals. As I look back at my writing, I am looking through a different lens than when the reflective journal entries were written. As Richardson (1997) has inferred, this selecting and reflecting simultaneously presents both a fractional and multifaceted story:

> The story of a life is less than the actual life, because the story told is selective, partial, contextually constructed and because the life is not yet over. But the story of a life is also more that the life, the contours and meaning allegorically extending to others, seeing themselves, knowing themselves through another's life story, re-visioning their own, arriving where they started and knowing "the place for the first time." (p. 6)

The process of writing was reflective, dynamic, and ongoing. Each time I visited my journals, I read and wrote with further life experiences to draw on, conceding to the temporality of the narrative inquiry in process.

Having such a large source of data in two forms, meaning a moleskin journal and

electronic file, made navigating my writing challenging. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) have related, “matters become increasingly complex as an inquirer pursues this relentless rereading” (p. 131). As well, I felt the need for something tangible to work with, to be able to play and explore within my work. To fulfil this need I rewrote on 3 by 5 inch cards, segments of my journals that stood out as important or relevant to this study. In addition, I rewrote my initial journal notations and further thoughts on the back of the cards, to preserve my reflections within the process.

When the process of moving my journals to cards was complete, I had 88 cards that I was able to work with. With these cards I was able to physically move my ideas around and explore relationships and connections between my data. It is within this process that the prism of connection emerged that shaped what I describe as holistic homeschooling. Connections to the theories of maternal desire, self-determination theory, and ethic of care were revealed within these segments of my journal entries. Each of these theories was given a colour code. With this colour code I was able to note each segments relationship to a theory. From this, the connections between the theories emerged and I became aware of their relationships to holistic homeschooling. With three key theories to focus on, the relationships between these theories to consider, and a colour coding system, I returned to my hand written and printed electronic journals once again to ascertain if there were any other segments of my writings relevant to the direction I was going. Returning to my journals with the focus of my prism of connection re-affirmed my interpretation of my data.

Embracing a narrative ontology means embracing the organic emergent way our lives, our stories, unfold. As Clandinin and Connelly (1994) reminded us, “Experience is messy, and so is experiential research” (p. 417). I entered my story while still in the midst, played and

explored within my data, and emerged with a retelling of my story with a focus on answering my posed research questions. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) have commented that there is no one way to move from field text to research text:

> The move from field texts to research texts is layered in complexity in still other ways. There is no smooth transition, no one gathering of the field texts, sorting them through, and analysing them. Field texts have a vast and rich research potential. We return to them again and again, bringing our own restoried lives as inquirers, bringing new research puzzles, and re-searching the texts. (p. 132)

As I maintained a narrative ontology while moving my data to research texts, I loosely applied two narrative frameworks to my story, and more directly applied Polkinghorne's (1995) analysis of narratives to my interpretation.

Narrative Framework

As I situated my research, explored my research questions, and began my data interpretation, two approaches to a narrative framework were loosely applied to the data I collected in my personal journals. These narrative frameworks are: the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry (temporality, sociality, and place) (Clandinin et al., 2007), and the focus of four directions—inward, outward, backward, and forward (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994).

Three commonplaces of narrative inquiry. As Clandinin and Huber (2010) explained, "[t]hinking narratively about a phenomenon, key to undertaking narrative inquiries, entails thinking within the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry—temporality, sociality, and place" (p. 9). Caine (2013) related these commonplaces to being in the midst: "we see experience as lived in the midst, as always unfolding over time, in diverse social contexts and in place" (p. 575). This framework has also been called the "three-dimensional narrative space" (Pinnegar, 2007, p. 3).

Temporality illuminates how our lives are always in process, in transition. Clandinin et al. (2007) explained: “events and people always have a past, present, and a future”(p. 23). Within this mind-set, we also acknowledge the evanescence of our experiences as “once any knowing comes into existence as a present situation, idea, practice, or event, it is already a past” (Pinnegar, 2007, p. 3). As I tell my story, I am aware of the temporality of my lived experiences. I acknowledge that I am entering my story in the midst of my experiences, from my time in life as a homeschooling mother with young children.

The dimension of sociality has more importance to studies that include a researcher and participants (Clandinin et al., 2007); however, as Clandinin and Huber described (2010) “Narrative inquirers attend to both personal conditions and, simultaneously, to social conditions” (p. 4). By sharing our story, narrative inquiry self-study researchers offer dialogue that moves our story from the personal to the social. As I share my story as a homeschooling mother, I am not speaking for others, but adding another voice to the conversation on homeschooling parent’s motivations. Furthermore, I invite readers to consider thinking reflectively—or perhaps even reflexively, about their experiences, values, and motivations.

In terms of place, Clandinin and Huber (2010) have explained, “our identities are inextricably linked with our experience in a particular place or in places and with the stories we tell of these experiences” (p. 4). A narrative inquiry always has a place in which it occurs and identifying this is the third commonplace of narrative inquiry. Families homeschool from many places; I am homeschooling from the place of a white middle class woman in a nuclear family. From this place, my lived experiences have shaped my values and contribute to my motivations for offering homeschooling to our children. As I write from a place of third-wave feminist theory, I feel I must acknowledge the socially situated place I am writing from and recognize

that my perspective is based on my personal experiences.

Focus of four directions. Another approach to conceptualizing a personal narrative is to explore experiences by looking inward, outward, backward, and forward. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) have explained this approach:

> Methods of the study of personal experience are simultaneously focused in four directions: inward and outward, backward and forward. By *inward* we mean the internal conditions of feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions, and so on. By *outward* we mean existential conditions, that is, the environment or what E.M. Bruner (1986) calls reality. By *backward* and *forward* we are referring to temporality, past, present, and future. To experience an experience is to experience it simultaneously in these four ways and to ask questions pointing each way. (p. 417)

This conceptualizing of my narrative inquiry allows me to focus my thoughts in the four directions outlined as I reflect on my values, intrinsic, and extrinsic motivations, and how they affect my decisions as a homeschooling mother.

Within the context of my current research focus, I have made connections that have helped me explore my values and motivations. As Freeman (2007) described, there is more to autobiographical research than storytelling, in writing of our experiences we are able "to understand it, to make sense of it, to fashion meanings that were not, and could not be, available in the flux of immediate experience" (p. 132). Revisiting my journals, and exploring my experiences, has offered insight into my holistic homeschooling lifestyle. I have explored how my experiences have shaped my values, and how my values have shaped my choices. As I revisit the stories of my past, I have created a dialogue between my past, present and future. By engaging in this dialogue, I have been able to explore the impact my choices and values have on

my growth and well-being, to give form and meaning to my self-to-be (Freeman, 2007).

I have lightly utilized these two approaches—the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry and the focus of four directions—as narrative frameworks to guide my interpretations as I explored my research questions within my journals. However, as I conducted my study, I have also been mindful of the organic emergent process that is my research journey. Kim (2016) has proposed we approach our narrative interpretation "with a notion of flirtation, using our imagination and creativity, we can adapt, modify, and deepen existing analysis methods to address our individual narrative research design and purpose" (p. 222).

Analysis of Narratives

In addition to the two aforementioned narrative frameworks, I have more directly employed Polkinghorne's (1995) analysis of narratives to my data interpretation. Polkinghorne discerns between paradigmatic and narrative modes of thought and has noted that "both types of narrative inquiry produce valued products" (p. 12). Analysis of narratives falls under the paradigmatic mode of interpretation, and narrative analysis falls under the narrative mode of interpretation (Kim, 2016). While I was conducting my study, I was open to whichever mode of interpretation was best suited to my story. As Kramp (2004) has argued, it is possible to use both analysis of narratives and narrative analysis in our research, they do not need to contradict, and can be complementary. However, as I began to play within my data, connections emerged that directed me towards a paradigmatic mode of interpretation, analysis of narratives.

Polkinghorne (1995) has reasoned that the "power of paradigmatic thought is to bring order to experience by seeing individual things as belonging to a category" (p. 10). He continues that "much qualitative analysis is not content simply to identify a set of categories. . . . It seeks a second level of analysis that identifies the relationships that hold between and among the

establish categories" (p. 10). The first step of my interpretation was choosing the theories that I felt were relevant to my motivations for home educating: maternal desire, self-determination theory, and ethic of care. The second step of my interpretation was when I discovered the connections between these theories that appeared within my data. When these connections became evident to me, the prism of connection that makes up my holistic homeschooling lifestyle emerged. Writing my story in relation to the prism of connection that I developed was an inquiry in itself. To understand holistic homeschooling further, I turned to the literature on holistic education to understand my holistic worldview.

As Kim (2016) has indicated, Polkinghorne has described two types of paradigmatic analysis: "(a) one in which the concepts are derived from previous theory or logical possibilities and are applied to the data; and (b) one in which concepts are inductively derived from the data" (p. 196). My lived and academic worlds are one, and this study is a part of an academic exercise. Throughout this journey, I have read many theoretical positions that could have been applied to my data. As my studies progressed and comprehensive examinations were to be completed, theoretical frameworks were selected that were most relevant to the study I was conducting. These theoretical frameworks were selected based on their relevance to the story I was entering in the midst, and my recollections of past journal entries. Unintentionally, or intentionally, maternal desire and self-determination theory conceptually fit with the excerpts I had pulled from my journals. Ethic of care was not a part of my initial theoretical frameworks, however, care theory was something I had been reading about and reflecting on, both personally and throughout this academic process. As Bruner (1997), has reasoned, this act of layering theories with my experiences, reflections, and interpretations was a metacognitive pursuit,

> like reconceiving some familiar territory in order to put it into a more general topology.

> We create the mountain ranges, the plateaus, the continents, in retrospect, by our reflective efforts: We impose bold and imaginative metastructures on local details to achieve coherence. This is not to say that the local details are not experientially real in our memories. It is only that they need to be placed in a wider context. (p. 155)

With this organic and emergent study, and with the lines blurred between personal and academic, it is hard to distinguish which of the two types of paradigmatic analysis that Polkinghorne speaks of has been utilized, whether these theories were applied or inductively derived. Nonetheless, from the prism of connection, I was able to see the interconnectedness of my homeschooling lifestyle, and its relationship to a holistic worldview. Writing Chapter Five: Inquiry and Interpretation, was a continuation of the ongoing and dynamic inquiry I was conducting. As with Richardson (1997), "I write because I want to find something out. I write in order to learn something that I didn't know before I wrote it" (p. 87). In writing chapter 5, I was writing as a dynamic and creative process. Retrospectively, I was seeking a metastructure to apply to my experiences. Using the three theories of maternal desire, self-determination theory, and ethic of care to shape a prism of connection provided me with coherence, and tools to be used for my inquiry and discussion. I used them to provide a topology for my discussion, but I also used them to present ideas that emerged in my personal journals, in lieu of personal excerpts, in order to protect our children while sharing my story.

Storying

There are different ways a story can be gathered, told, and represented. None truer, or more privileged than another (Freeman, 2007; Trahar, 2009). Nevertheless, working within an emergent method, I am mindful of transparency in this process. Moreover, I am mindful of "the Hollywood plot" in narrative research. As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) described, this is "the

plot where everything works out in the end" (p. 10). I have not written this to tell "the good story" (Caine et al., 2013, p. 583). My intent has not been to have all of the answers to my questions solved, or to resolve all of the internal conflicts I hold. I have explored my values in relation to my growth and well-being, but my intent has not been to emerge with a prescription for happiness as a homeschooling mother. Rather, it has been to share a part of my journey in the midst—to enter into my story and offer a place of connection to readers, and emerge with new interpretations of my self-to-be. As Freeman (2007) described, I am sharing my unfinishable self and working through the process of "autobiographical understanding" (p. 139).

When transitioning my story to manuscript form, I have used a layered account. As Kim (2016) has explained, "a layered account is a juxtaposition between the author's experience and relevant literature" (p. 209). My story is layered with excerpts from my personal journal entries, literature relevant to my discussion, and excerpts from the blog posts of other homeschooling mothers. As Garden, (2011) has expressed, one genre of the blog range is the online diary. These blogs reveal the personal experiences and feelings of the author (Garden, 2011). Through a quick online search for homeschooling mother's blogs, I found a number of germane blog posts in the public domain. I chose excerpts from these blogs that were relevant to my story. When choosing excerpts to include, I employed narrative smoothing. This process involves selectively reporting some of the data, while ignoring others to present a relevant and coherent picture (Kim, 2016). Clandinin and Murphy (2009) have noted the importance of leaving endings open to "invite meaning making on the part of the reader" and to honour the "nature of the storied experience itself" (p. 600). By using a layered account, I have attempted to "present layers of experience and analysis in which spaces are created for readers to fill with their own interpretation" (Kim, 2016, p. 209).

Furthermore, as discussed by Bruner (1997) above in referencing this process as a metacognitive pursuit, using layered approach with my experiences and theories has provided me with a topology for my interpretation. I have used this topology when telling my story as a homeschooling mother to protect our children. Five years of personal journals with reflective accounts of my experiences as a homeschooling mother means there are many stories of our children documented. When re-reading my journal entries and beginning the interpretation process, I used my colour coding system throughout my journals as part of the research process, marrying a specific journal entry with a theory or theories. However, as I began to write my story and transition my reflections to manuscript form, at times I chose to refer to the general ideas presented in the excerpt in relation to the theories, as opposed to including specific excerpts. I chose to do this to protect our children and limit how much of their experiences I shared.

Crystallization

As my story is revealed, fidelity in the research process, and to the life that is shared, has been considered. Narrative inquiry is an interpretive method, and a different understanding is offered from the style of research I am conducting. As previously mentioned, a review of the current homeschooling literature has revealed that much of the conducted research thus far has attempted to quantify and categorize homeschooling motivations (Collom, 2005; Lois, 2013). Exploring my motivations as stemming from my values has offered a more in-depth perspective to the literature, and honours the complexity of the holistic homeschooling lifestyle. As Freeman (2007) explained, narrative inquiry "practices fidelity *not* to that which can be objectified and measured but to the whole person, the whole human life, in all of its ambiguous, messy, beautiful detail" (p. 134). There are many ways in which research conducted in the interpretive

tradition can be justified, the criteria must be in accordance with the underlying epistemology and ontology of interpretive research (Sandberg, 2005). Conle (2000) has reminded us of the importance of the reader in the self-study process: "It is therefore a legitimate question to ask, whether my personal, narrative inquiry was not only useful in my life but is potentially useful in the lives of others" (p. 208). The connection to the reader is a guidepost for self-study research.

Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) deconstructed the traditional notion of triangulation for research fidelity, and in its place offered the multi-faceted crystal:

> The central image is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, and are altered, but they are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of reprose—not triangulation but rather crystallization. (p. 963)

With the image of the crystal, they have explained an approach to research in-line with interpretive research's epistemology and ontology:

> Crystallization, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of "validity"; we feel how there is no single truth, and we see how texts validate themselves. Crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, and thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. Ingeniously, we know there is always more to know. (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 963)

With no single truth, entering and emerging from a story in process, the legitimacy of the research will reside in fidelity to the process and the sincerity of the offering to the reader.

Ethics

Although I have conducted a self-study, consideration for those in my life that are a part of my story is of utmost importance. In keeping with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS 2) (2014), I have maintained "respect for human dignity" and been "sensitive to the inherent worth of all human beings and the respect and consideration that they are due" (p. 6). I have been granted ethical approval to access previously written personal journals that are relevant to my study from September of 2012 to present.

I continued to write in my personal journal in a way that is natural and sincere; however, when moving my story from the personal to the academic, I have been mindful of how those that are in my story are represented. My story is not my own story, it is also the story of others in my life (Ellis, 2007). In terms of the scope of my journals, my personal journal is a collection of reflections, inspirations, questions, doubts, and memories. As I moved these journals from personal to academic, my experiences have been presented as my personal interpretations.

Even with this approach, there is potential for self-identification within my research. With this in mind, I use Tolich's (2010) 10 foundational guidelines for self-study researchers to shape my path forward. Tolich organizes his 10 guidelines into three sections for consideration, including: (a) consent—consent throughout the research process to ensure those that are potentially identifiable are informed and give their consent prior to the creation of a manuscript; (b) consultation—nothing will be included in the study that I would not show to those persons mentioned in the text; and (c) vulnerability—be aware of the risk to myself as the author and to others and take steps to minimize the harm. As Tolich describes, research with intimates requires a depth of thinking and I will demonstrate respect for those in my life by using the

noted 10 foundations as a basis for my study.

I have approved consent, as outlined in the relevant sections of Chapter 3 of the TCPS 2 (2014), from anyone who could be identified within my research and they have the right to "participate in research according to their own values, preferences and wishes" (p. 26). This consent has been ongoing throughout the research process. As I revisited my personal journals and begin the manuscript writing process, I have approached those that could be implicated in my work. This includes consent from my children and consent from my husband, their father, acting as an "authorized third party while ascertaining the child's assent or dissent" (TCPS 2, 2014, p. 52). In addition to ongoing consent, I have removed both direct and indirect identifiers from my text to respect the privacy of those in my life. When pulling excerpts from my journal that were to be used as support in my manuscript, I embodied an ethical attitude and honoured my approved ethics protocol to respect those in my life, and therefore a part of my story. At times, I chose to omit relevant segments of my journal entries; instead, I have referred to general ideas and related theories in lieu of specifics. Admittedly, this was challenging as it meant leaving out my reflective accounts of specific encounters with my children that could provide insight into my experiences as a homeschooling mother. However, protecting our children as I write this study is of upmost importance and trumps the specifics of conversation that could have been presented in this study.

When more specific journal entries were used, ethical consent was obtained (Appendix A). Those that could potentially be identified in my research have had the opportunity to review their sections of my work and have it removed prior to manuscript completion if they do not consent to their involvement. This includes any time our children are mentioned, as well as conversations with my husband or friends. As I moved my journal entries from my personal

writings to an academic manuscript, I have embraced an ethical attitude towards my research. As Josselson (2007) described, this "is not a matter of abstractly correct behaviour but of responsibility in human relationship" (p. 538).

Conclusion

I have embraced a narrative ontology and entered my story in the midst. The journals I have written since 2012 have provided me with an interesting and in-depth account of my values and motivations for offering homeschooling to our children. By applying narrative frameworks, an analysis of narratives interpretation, and layering my story with relevant literature, I have gained an understanding of the experiences and theories that have contributed to my decision to engage in holistic homeschooling. My full collection of journal entries that has been created throughout this interpretive and dynamic research process provides a collection of my many voices, some including woman, mother, daughter, teacher, homeschooling mother, and narrative inquirer. I began by writing organically, with emotion and intellect coalescing, as I pursued a subconscious question mark. With the focus of research questions, my inquiry turned to a quest. In seeking coherence in my reflections, metastructures were applied to shape my story into a more general topology, in the form of a prism of connection. My journal writing was dynamic, however, I always maintained Dewey's (1934), "intellectual 'stop and go" and found direction with the feeling qualities of ideas (p. 120). Layering excerpts from my journal entries with theory and literature has allowed me to protect our children in this process, and created spaces that invite readers to join me in my interpretation.

Chapter Four: Theoretical Frameworks

Throughout this process, my personal and academic roads have become one. My personal journals have been written, and revisited, as I have participated in this academic exercise. Theories and literature that have been read throughout this process have infused my reflections and experiences, and influenced the direction this study has taken. This chapter outlines the theoretical frameworks which I have used throughout this study.

As Kim (2016) has explained, “we cannot make sense of the stories told without the help of a theory or the intersection of multiple theories” (p. 76). Kim has argued that a narrative inquiry must have theories at the macro, meso, and micro level. Macro-level theories are at the “holistic level for all qualitative research” and establish the interpretive paradigm (p. 32). For this study, third-wave feminist theory is at the macro-level, situating this study in the realm of postmodern qualitative interpretive research. The meso-level is the methodological level, for this study being narrative inquiry. Finally, at the micro-level is the content specific to the study, in this case being discussed here are maternal desire, self-determination theory, ethic of care, and lastly, holistic education, as discussed in chapter 6.

I employ these theories as “intellectual tools” to help me better understand the meanings within my story (Kim, 2016, p. 34). Third-wave feminist theory has been used to acknowledge the plurality of my voice within my personal narrative. As I share my perspective as a homeschooling mother, I use a theoretical framework of maternal desire to explore my relationship with our children. I explore how maternal desire fits within the context of feminist theory, and supports my personal well-being. Schwartz’s value circumplex and a Self-Determination Theory of Values, are used to explore self-direction, autonomy, and my values in relation to my well-being. Finally, I use an ethic of care to gain a deeper understanding of the caring relationship I strive for with our children.

Third-Wave Feminist Theory

As I write my story, I am writing from many places, including the place of mother, homeschooling parent, and woman. Acknowledging the differing voices I have moves me to consider my voice, and its place within the literature. As I recognize the plurality of my own voice, and the voices of others, I situate my work in third-wave feminist theory. Feminist theory allows for the different voices of knowers to "open up intellectual and emotional spaces" and "*disrupts* traditional ways of knowing to create rich new meanings" (Hesse-Biber, 2012).

Feminist theory is often discussed as "flowing through three waves" (Swigonski & Raheim, 2011, p. 11). According to Swigonski and Raheim (2011), the first wave of feminist theory was "committed to national progress and women's freedom and equality with men" (p. 11). As hooks (2015) explained, "feminist theory had its primary goal explaining to women and men how sexist thinking worked and how we could challenge and change it" (p. 19). Throughout the second wave, feminist theorists adopted the rallying cry "The personal is political" (Swigonski & Raheim, 2011, p. 12). Second-wave feminist theory explored diversity, difference, gender, power, love, and care. As Snyder (2008) explained, second-wave theorists argued that in "patriarchal society women share common experiences" and by sharing those experiences oppression becomes apparent and the "personal becomes political" (p. 184). In contrast, Snyder (2008) has presented the third wave of feminist theory as against grand narratives:

> Third-wave feminists rightly reject the universalist claim that all women share a set of common experiences, but they do not discard the concept of experience altogether . . . the personal story is one of the central hallmarks of third-wave feminism. (p. 184)

As Swigonski and Raheim (2011) explained, third-wave feminist theory strives to be "inclusive,

non-judgemental, multifocal, and multivocal and use personal narratives to illustrate the multiple perspectives and intersectionality" of experiences (p. 18).

As I situate my work in the third wave of feminist theory, and I give voice to my story as a homeschooling mother, I have shared a position that is "socially situated" and offered a perspective that is based on experiences. As Crasnow (2009) shared, "not all knowers share the same relevant characteristics, and the same relevant characteristics are not relevant in all circumstances" (p. 190). Echoing Crasnow's views, Swigonski and Raheim (2011) explained:

> There is no one feminist truth; there are feminist truths that approximate fuller or more accurate descriptions and analyses of the everyday lived realities of the diversity of human beings who call themselves women, and all of it is open to be contested, even the simple claim of being a woman. One of the clearest lessons to emerge from feminist theorizing is that women's' lives do matter and that not all women hold the same views or share the same political goals, moral values, or even interests. (p. 19)

With this in mind, I have shared my story. I choose to offer our children the opportunity to homeschool. I live in accordance with my values, and acknowledge my maternal desire to care for our children. I am not telling my story as a truth that should be followed by any other, but as an exploration of living in a manner that I feel is sustainable, and contributes to my growth and well-being.

Maternal Desire

I have used maternal desire, as described by de Marneffe (2004), as a framework to explore my motivations and experiences as a homeschooling mother. In a framework of maternal desire, mothering is responsive to children, but it is also a way for a woman to be responsive to the self. When being responsive to the self, we must consider the range of goals

that mothers have. In maternal desire, we can understand "mothers' desire to care for their children as a feature of their self-development and self-expression, rather than its negation" (de Marneffe, 2004, p. 25). Nurturing children does not have to be an intensive experience. When a child comes into a mother's life, not only is a physical being created, but a relationship is created. The desire to participate in that relationship and the felt need to "progressively come to know the other" is the desire to mother (de Marneffe, 2004, p. 50).

Maternal desire is a framework for women who desire to care for their children. de Marneffe (2006) has noted that the "interesting question is how we assume biological, historical, and social roles and make them our own; how we use structures creatively to express vital, authentic aspects of personality" (p. 245). She is careful to "avoid collapsing the existence of maternal desire with the essence of female reproduction" and has noted that "not every woman who gives birth yearns to nurture and form a relationship with her child" (Kawash, 2011, p. 990). In addition, she has acknowledged the roles of fathers and their relationships with their children (de Marneffe, 2004, p. 22). However, maternal desire as a framework is the "longing felt by a mother to nurture her children; the wish to participate in their mutual relationship; and the choice, insofar as it is possible, to put her desire into practice" (de Marneffe, 2004, p. 3).

de Marneffe (2004) wrote *Maternal Desire* to "provide a framework for thinking about women's desire to care for their children in a way that is consistent with feminism and free from sentimentality and cliché" (p. xv). Women are pulled in many directions from social and economic incentives. These incentives do not always align with women's valued goals or individuality. In addition, as de Marneffe (2004) explained, "In the current milieu, women rarely perceive their desire to care for their children as intellectually acceptable, and that makes it less emotionally intelligible as well" (p. 13). The desire to care for, and be with their children, does

not receive serious discussion, but it is an issue that is relevant and important to women's lives. As Kawash (2011) described, maternal desire is a "positive framework for expressing a form of desire that is otherwise dismissed by some as self-destructive" (p. 989). Moreover, she has explained maternal desire as "a different sort of feminist perspective, one that begins from women's desires and pleasures, and from their own sense of the value and meaning of what they do" (p. 989).

Maternal desire and feminism. For some women, wanting to care for children is an "actively pursued and authentic means of self-expression" (de Marneffe, 2004, p. xiv). Yet, there is a cultural image of stay-at-home motherhood as fostering the oppressive patriarchy that feminism has worked to free women from. For some women, staying home to care for children may be oppressive, and it may not be their choice. However, as de Marneffe (2004) argued, the feminist movement has not considered the woman who *wants* to care for her children:

> Though feminist activism has helped secure for women the public power previously denied them, it has done little to challenge the assumption that women who spend time caring for children are powerless, un-self-actualized, and at the margins of cultural life. (p. xv)

Women's care for children has been interpreted as self-limiting, a form of drudgery, oppressive, unreasonable, and unjust (de Marneffe, 2004, p. 10). As de Marneffe (2004) explained further, "Whereas the past ideal may have hindered women's search for autonomy and self-determination in the wider world, the current ideal makes it hard to express their desire to care for their children" (p. 11). Radical feminist arguments suggest that women's choice to care for their children is "foisted on them by purely external economic and ideological forces" (de Marneffe, 2004, p. 24). Other feminist writings on motherhood have noted the "inherent

contradiction" between self-determination and motherhood (de Marneffe, 2004, p. 33). Out of all of these views and writings, de Marneffe (2004) has drawn an insightful interpretation:

> People really are different; they want different things. There are as many forms of feminism as there are feminists because of what each of us wants bears the stamp of our unique history of relationships. Whatever understanding of the world we've created out of our experience of those relationships feels desperately central to who we are. (p. 49)

Maternal desire has acknowledged that there are many ways to mother, and that we can "refuse to judge our own or other's maternal choices in terms of rigid ideals" and to "live by the knowledge that mothering is not about perfection but about love, acceptance, responsibility and engagement, toward our children and ourselves" (de Marneffe, 2004, p. 333).

Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory (SDT) explores growth and well-being in relation to intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. SDT is strongly influenced by the humanist psychology movement and the theories of Maslow and Rogers (Kasser, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2002). As Kasser (2002) has elucidated, "At the core of SDT, both literally and figuratively, is the self" (p. 125). Autonomy and wellness are central to SDT theorists' understanding of the self. As a more current psychological movement, in relation to the long tradition of psychology research, they have applied their understanding of autonomy to "the problems of engagement and wellness in ways fitting with recent economic and sociological analyses" (Ryan & Deci, 2006, p. 1558).

As Ryan, Huta, and Deci (2008) have explained, SDT began with an exploration of *intrinsic motivation,* "the pursuit of an activity because of its enjoyability" (p. 146). From there they moved to "how activities are adopted and enacted" with *extrinsic motivation* (p. 146). As activities are integrated and assimilated with personal values, they become internalized and

"thus more autonomously pursued" (p. 146). The integration of external relations and values to the self has become "the central focus of SDT" (Ryan et al., 2008, p. 146). In order for the self to engage in its inherent tendency towards growth, the individual must experience "competence (efficacy and sense of control), relatedness (social significance and connection), and autonomy (volition and self-endorsement of behaviour)" (Ryan, Randall, & Deci, 2013, p. 61).

It is important to note that autonomy differs from independence. As Ryan and Deci (2006) have explained, "Within SDT, *autonomy* retains its primary etymological meaning of self-governance, or rule by the self" (p. 1562). When acting autonomously, one is acting in consent with both internal values and external demands by "taking reflective interest in possibilities and choices"(Ryan & Deci, 2006, p. 1563). Furthermore, the SDT movement has noted that there are now "several hundred studies" that show by allowing autonomous "regulation of values, practices, and goals," the greater one's well-being (Ryan, Legate, Niemiec, & Deci, 2012, p. 224).

Values. As discussed in self-determination theory, when activities are assimilated and internalized with one's values, they become autonomously pursued. By exploring and understanding values, we can better understand the motivations behind the choices we make. As Kasser, Koestner, and Lekes (2002) have explained, values are an important part of people's lives:

> Psychological research has made substantial progress in the past decade toward understanding the nature of human values and demonstrating that these "guiding principles" or "conceptions of the desirable" are important features of personality that affect a variety of aspects of people's lives. (p. 826)

The research on values has demonstrated the ways in which values affect our lives including offering criteria, meaning, and impetus for our actions, choices, judgments, and

preferences (Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004; Rokeach, 1979; Williams Jr., 1979). As Rokeach (1979) has described, “values are the core conceptions of the desirable within every individual and society” (p. 2). Furthermore, Williams Jr. (1979) has noted that based on our values, we are “continually regarding things as good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, beautiful or ugly, appropriate or inappropriate, true or false” (p. 16). The values that shape our experiences are determined and internalized by society, culture, sociodemographic variables, psychological needs, and personal experience (Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004; Rokeach, 1979). Schwartz’s value circumplex (see Figure 1) is the “most widely-used and most well-developed” demonstration of value domains (Parks & Guay, 2009). This circumplex is based on “the degree to which values support or oppose one another” (Gray, 2002, p. 518), and offers a visual demonstration of value categories and correlations. I reflect on these domains, in conjunction with the SDT value propositions, in my personal journals.

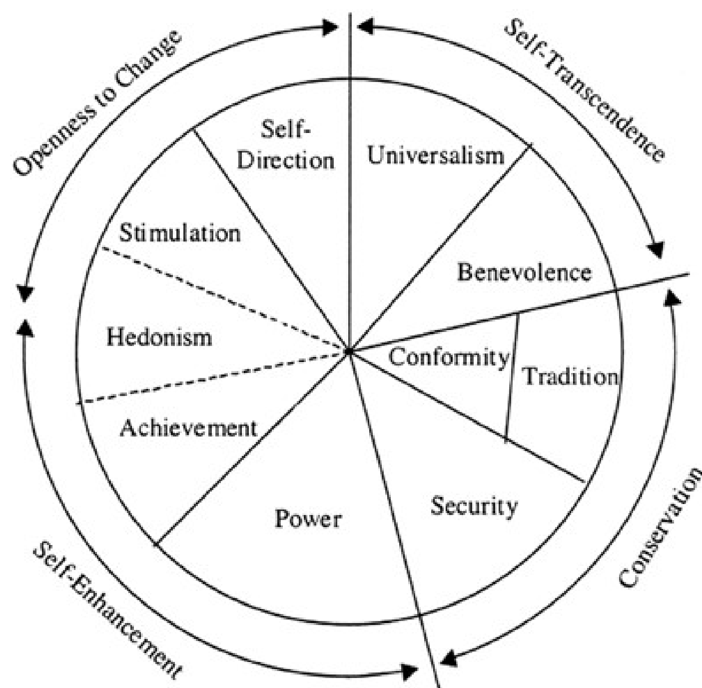

Figure 1. Schwartz’s value circumplex. Circumplex formed by the 10 universal core values. Source: Brosch & Sander (2013).

Self-determination theory framework of values. Kasser (2002) has developed six propositions of values based on self-determination theory that integrate value theory, motivational theory, human experience and behaviour. He has noted that values are "guiding principles of life" that "organize people's attitudes, emotions, and behaviours, and typically endure across time and situations" (p. 123). By exploring values within an SDT framework, we can understand the enduring motivations that emerge from the self, and how the self tends towards experiences that facilitate growth and well-being (Kasser, 2002). Figure 2 summarizes the six propositions of values as written by Kasser (2002):

Proposition	Key concepts
One: Valuing Originally and Ideally Emerges from the Self	In an attempt to "feel authentically behind its behaviours", to integrate and grow, the self "engages in activities it finds intrinsically motivating and "seeks out activities that it values" (p. 125).
Two: Values Derive, in part, from Needs	In order for the self to grow, one needs autonomy (they freely choose their behaviours), relatedness (they have close connections with others), and competence (they are effective in the activities they undertake). Values are the "ways that the self goes about trying to grow and satisfy its needs," and orient one "towards some behaviours and away from others" (pgs. 126-127).
Three: Values Reflect both Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations	"People's behaviour is not always intrinsically motivated" and group pressures, societal demands, praise, rewards and security can affect values. (pgs. 127-131).
Four: On Average, People are More Oriented Toward Intrinsic Values than toward Extrinsic Values	"People will orient most toward values that support growth and integrative processes and fulfill universal human needs, but will tend not to focus on values that are counter to the development of the self and the fulfillment of basic needs" (p. 132).
Five: When Environmental Conditions Thwart Need Satisfaction, People Will Increasingly Orient toward Extrinsic Values	When people see that their inherent desires for growth (expression, autonomy, and relatedness) are not being satisfied, they turn towards extrinsic values as a "compensatory strategy to attain at least some satisfaction and some feelings of worth and security" (p. 134).
Six: People Oriented Toward Intrinsic Values Experience Greater Well-being than People Oriented Toward Extrinsic Values	When engaged with intrinsic values, people have relatively high well-being as their values lead them to engage in experiences associated with self-integration, whereas, those engaged with extrinsically motivated values have low well-being due to the alienation from the "growth processes of the true self" (p. 135).

Figure 2. Summary of a self-determination theory of values Adapted from Kasser (2002).

This framework ties theories of values to SDT's tenets of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, relation, and autonomy. By exploring experience within this framework, we can gain an understanding of how people orient towards motivations and decisions, which are shaped by their values, and contribute to their growth and well-being.

Ethic of Care

Milton Mayeroff and Nel Noddings are noted as being foundational to the body of work known as "care theory" (Yasui, 2014). I use the works of these two authors to develop my understanding of an ethic of care, and how this ethic pertains to my relationship with our children. When referring to the two parties participating in the caring relation, Noddings (1984) uses the names 'one-caring' to refer to the first member, and 'cared-for' to refer to the second member (p. 4). I will utilize these terms as needed, when discussing the members of the caring relationship.

Mayeroff (1971) has interpreted the major ingredients of caring to be: knowing, alternating rhythms, patience, honesty, trust, humility, hope, and courage. In caring for another, the most significant purpose is to "help him grow and actualize himself" (p. 1). As the one-caring helps the cared-for grow, there is not an imposed direction; rather, the one-caring allows "the direction of the other's growth to guide what I do, to help determine how I am to respond and what is relevant to such response" (p. 9). Fundamental to the caring relationship is the acknowledgment of the cared-for's individual journey. If the one-caring's intention is to mould the other into what they think they ought to be, or to remain fundamentally dependant, then they do not care. In such cases, the care-for "feels basically uncared for because he realizes he is not perceived as an individual in his own right" (p. 49). In caring for another, one must "see the other as it is and not as I would like it to be or feel it must be" (p. 25). Although it may appear

that the cared-for's needs take priority in a caring relationship, in actuality the one-caring does not lose themselves for the sake of a caring relation. The one-caring must "retain their own identity" (p. 54). As Mayeroff has explained, "only because I understand and respond to my own needs to grow can I understand his striving to grow; I can understand in another only what I can understand in myself" (p. 54).

In her book *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education,* Noddings (1984) has acknowledged Mayeroff's (1971) book *On Caring* as a "significant start" to the discussion on care theory (p. 9). Akin to Mayeroff, Noddings (1984) has indicated, when one-caring is engaging in a caring relationship she "does not abandon her own ethical ideal . . . but she starts from a position of respect or regard for the projects of the other" (p. 176). Moreover, in the caring relationship, the one-caring "resists the temptation—the mandate—to manipulate the child, to squeeze him into some mould," instead, "she establishes a climate of receptivity" (p. 60). Where Mayeroff and Noddings differ is in hierarchical dynamics of the caring relationship. Mayeroff (1971) sees the relationship between the one-caring and the cared-for as existing on the same level: "I neither condescend to him (look down on him, place him beneath me) nor idolize him (look up at him, place him above me). Rather, we exist on a level of equality" (p. 54). In contrast, Noddings sees the one-caring meet the cared-for "directly but not equally," meaning the one-caring and the cared-for are existing, and relating, but on different levels (p. 177). Noddings has argued that at times, the cared-for must be led to "choose for himself and not against himself" (p. 64).

Noddings (2005) has described a caring relation as "connection or encounter between two human beings—a carer and a recipient of care, or cared-for" (p. 15). Noddings' work has moved the conversation on care theory, to the conversation of an ethic of care, by claiming that

there is a "form of caring natural and accessible to all human beings" (Noddings, 1984, p. 27). As explained by Sprengel and Kelley (1992), "the capacity to care is the foundation of moral consciousness," and therefore, "the capacity to care is a prerequisite to ethical behaviour" (p. 233). They go on to note further, that "ethics and caring are not really separable" (p. 233). This ethic does not seek justification or universalizability; rather, it is an "ethic of relation" (Noddings, 2005, p. 21). Ethic of care is a "needs- and response-based ethic," situational rather than universal (Noddings, 2005, p. 21). It is about completion and fulfillment in the lives of the cared-for, and the one-caring (Noddings, 1984). As Noddings (1984) has explained, "what I seek is completion in the other—the sense of being cared-for and, I hope the renewed commitment of the cared-for to turn about and act as one-caring in the circles and chains within which he is defined" (p. 95). As the circles of caring continue, care "forms the foundation of the ethical response, and the role of caring reflects the interpersonal features of relationships" (Sprengel & Kelley, 1992, p. 233)

In addition to moving care theory to an ethic of care, Noddings has described caring as essentially feminine. She has argued that an ethic of care is "feminine in the deep classical sense—rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness" (Noddings, 1984, p. 2). This does not mean that an ethic of care cannot be shared by men, rather, she has reasoned that an "ethic of caring arises, I believe, out of our experience as women, just as the traditional logical approach to ethical problems arises more obviously from masculine experience" (Noddings, 1984, p. 8). Returning to the plurality of voices discussed in third wave feminist theory, an ethic of care does not "claim to speak for all women," nor does an ethic of care exclude men (Noddings, 1984, p. 97). Noddings (1984) has situated her work in the feminine, with the caveat that "all of humanity can participate in the feminine as I am describing it" (p. 172).

Conclusion

Interpretive research explores individuals' experiences in particular contexts at particulars points of time in their lives. Since 2012, I have written in my personal journal on a broad range of topics. Writing organically allowed my many voices to be present within my journals. Acknowledging the plurality of my voices and sharing them within this study, situates my work in third-wave feminist theory. With the lines between personal and academic blurred, the theories of maternal desire, self-determination theory, and ethic of care have been used as tools to interpret my experiences. I use the three theories to create the prism of connection that shapes my holistic homeschooling worldview.

Chapter Five: Inquiry and Interpretation

The discussion within this chapter explores my reflections on my experiences as a homeschooling mother. Writing this chapter has been an extension of the personal, ongoing and dynamic inquiry that I have been conducting as I complete this study. Together, my husband and I have decided to offer our children the opportunity to homeschool. Our children are free to enrol in school at any time; however, they have chosen to take the opportunity to be educated at home. The conversation within this chapter is around my experiences, the values I hold, and how they impact our homeschooling lifestyle, from my perspective.

As previously discussed, my research questions include the following main research question and four sub-questions:

- At this stage of my life, what values do I hold that could be considered as significant in contributing to my motivations to engage in homeschooling with our children?

Sub-questions:

- For the purposes of exploration in this study, where do I feel my values are placed on Schwartz's value circumplex?
- As I reflect on my lived experiences and personal journal entries, what experiences and influences have contributed to the shaping of my values at this stage of my life?
- What are the connections between the values that have emerged as significant within this study, and my motivations for engaging in homeschooling? And, at this point in time, is there friction or harmony between them?
- At this point in time, is my well-being affected by my homeschooling lifestyle?

These research questions were created for this study to facilitate my understanding of my values and motivations for offering homeschooling to our children at this time in my life. In turning to

my personal journals to answer these questions, I have directly written and reflected on them, but also indirectly used them as guides through which to explore my journal entries. As I present my understandings within this chapter, I take an interpretive approach and share connections and excerpts that I feel are relevant to understanding my values and motivations. As I conclude this chapter, I relate my interpretations, reflections, and connections more directly to my proposed research questions.

As I explored my personal journals and reflected on my experiences as a homeschooling mother, three theories were relevant to my journey and used as tools for interpretation in this study: maternal desire, self-determination theory, and ethic of care. Reflection on Neuman and Aviram's (2003) holistic homeschooling, in conjunction with my personal journals and lived experiences, led me to develop the following relationships with the noted theories: the connections between maternal desire and self-determination theory, the connections between self-determination theory and ethic of care, and the connections between ethic of care and maternal desire. The relationships these theories hold are represented in Figure 3.

As previously noted, Neuman and Aviram's (2003) holistic homeschooling has considered the values and motivations of homeschooling families, how they are connected, and how they shape their lifestyle. Through reflections on my personal journals and lived experiences, I have understood the "prism of connection" in my holistic homeschooling lifestyle to be the relationship between the aforementioned theories. The relationships these theories hold to each other, and my lived experiences acknowledge that "the choice of homeschooling affects many areas of family life beyond education" (Neuman & Aviram, 2003, p. 136).

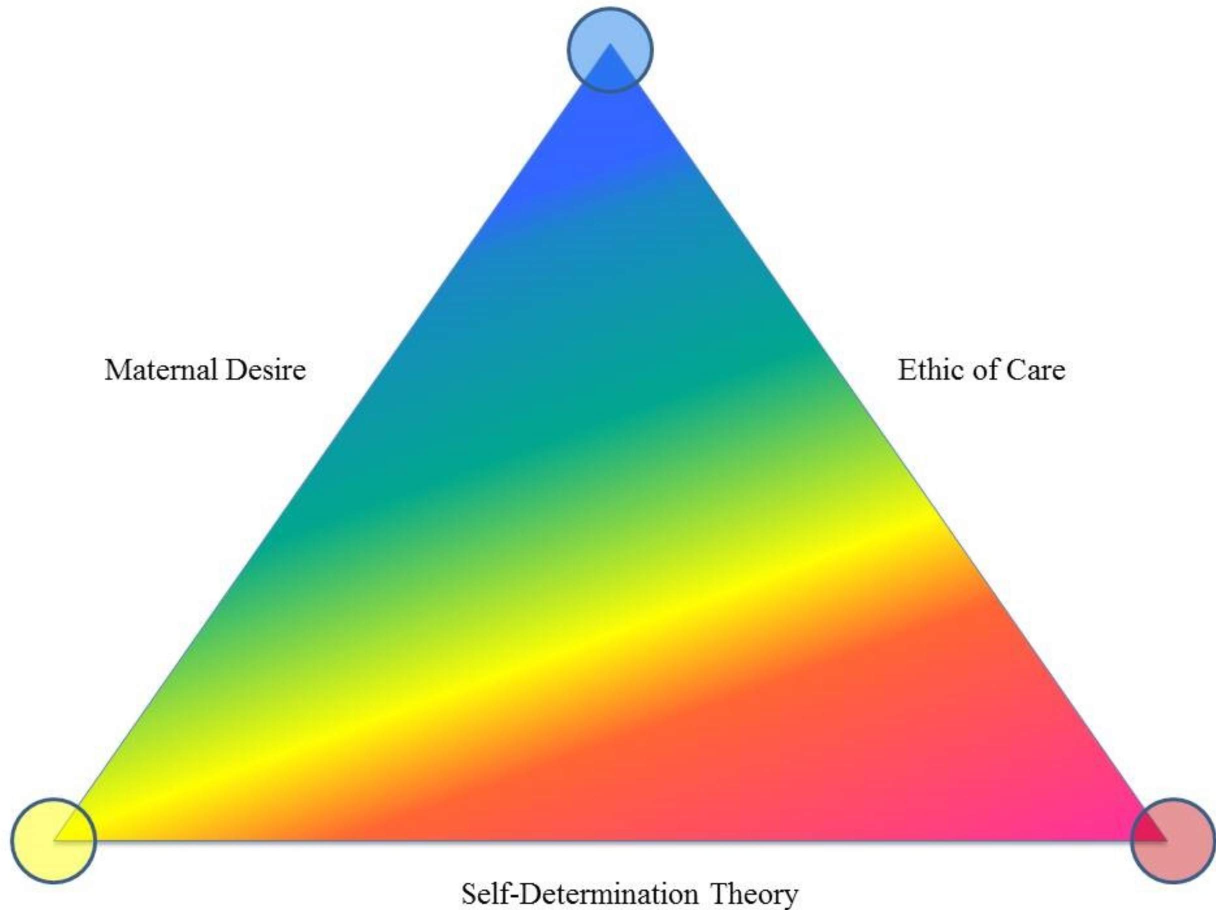

Figure 3. Holistic homeschooling prism of connection.

I begin my exploration of these theories with maternal desire and self-determination theory. This vertex within the prism of connection focuses on my experiences as a homeschooling mother. I consider moments of joy I experience with my children, the reasons I left my career of teaching, and staying true to my values—despite our choices being an alternative to the norm. As I have reflected on these matters, it has become clear to me that choosing to engage in a relationship with my children, leaving work that was unfulfilling, and staying true to my values, has brought happiness to my life. These conclusions are consistent with the research on self-determination theory and well-being, and de Marneffe's discussion on happiness and maternal desire.

I continue with the vertex of self-determination theory and ethic of care. I believe that a parent/child relationship rooted in care is one where the parent supports the child's autonomy. Here I explore the self-determination theory literature on autonomy-supportive parenting, in relation to care theory as described by Mayeroff (1971) and Noddings (1984). By honouring our child's wishes to attend preschool, and offering our children freedom in their learning experiences, I strive to maintain a caring autonomy-supportive relationship. In addition, I explore my interactions with my children during learning experiences. As Ricci (2012) has explained, Holt's notion of the "devil teacher" as "a style of teacher that is very controlling and wants to correct everything" (p. 65). When the "devil teacher" emerges in my interactions with our children, I explore how I reconcile those feelings and navigate my way back to the values that I hold.

Finally, as I explore the vertex of ethic of care and maternal desire, I explore the caring relationship I strive to maintain with our children and tensions that arise between my values. As our children grow, I progressively come to know our children and our caring relationship is strengthened. However, there are times when I struggle with maintaining my valued path of "trustful parenting" when my "mother bear" instincts emerge. These tensions are not resolved; rather, I maintain an awareness of them and consider the dialogue I hold with myself, and with our children, when they emerge.

As I present each of these vertices, I will revisit relevant aspects of my theoretical frameworks to highlight the connections that I found meaningful in relation to my values and motivations. These theories, as well as other relevant literature, are layered with excerpts from my personal journals to present my interpretations of what I value as a homeschooling mother at this time in my life.

Maternal Desire and Self-Determination Theory

As previously discussed, de Marneffe's (2004) maternal desire is a longing for a mother to participate in a mutual relationship with her children. de Marneffe has considered mothers' range of goals and how mothers' desire to care for their children is a "feature of their self-development and self-expression" (p. 25). Her discussions on maternal desire are compatible with the research conducted on self-determination theory, intrinsic motivations, values and well-being. As de Marneffe (2004) explained, "the meaning with which a person endows a given activity has a great deal to do with whether she inwardly consents to do it" (p. 51). Furthermore, by putting maternal desire as the focus of personal exploration, one can move "toward greater awareness and a truer model of the self" (de Marneffe, 2004, p. 6). As the discussion on self-determination theory has described "all individuals have natural, innate, and constructive tendencies to develop an ever more elaborated and unified sense of self" (Ryan & Deci, 2002, p. 5). Moreover, a coherent sense of self offers "a sense of wholeness, vitality, and integrity. To the degree that individuals have attained that sense of self, they can act in accord with or be 'true' to, that self" (Ryan & Deci, 2002, p. 3).

Staying true to ourselves requires staying true to our values. Values are the "guiding principles" of our lives that shape our emotions and behaviours (Kasser, 2002; Kasser et al., 2002). A considerable amount of research has concluded that those who make choices, and engage in experiences, that are motivated by intrinsic values, experience greater well-being (Kasser, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryan et al., 2008). As Ryan, Huta, and Deci (2008) have described "Intrinsic aspirations, such as those for personal growth, deep relationships, and generativity, were empirically distinguished from extrinsic aspirations, such as those for wealth,

fame, or image, and shown to have differential relations with psychological and physical wellness" (p. 147).

Three areas of focus emerged in my personal journals and reflections that led me to explore the connections between maternal desire, self-determination theory, and well-being. The areas of focus are my moments of joy as a homeschooling mother, my feeling of schools as prisons, and our decision to go against the norm by choosing home education. I regularly wrote of, and have experienced, moments of joy as a homeschooling mother. My awareness of these moments led to reflections on de Marneffe's discussions on happiness and my personal well-being. I wrote of my conversations and reflections on my former career as a teacher in the public school system. Revisiting my journals reminded me of how I struggled to reconcile my values with that of the school system, and my fervent comparisons of schools to prisons. Finally, I acknowledge that there have been moments of uncertainty on our homeschooling journey, but staying true to my values has trumped conforming to the norm. The combination of these reflections has led me to appreciate living autonomously, in the self-determination theory sense, with volition.

Moments of joy. Joy is a brief emotion, with a higher threshold of intensity than happiness, which arrives as a sense of insight and leaves just suddenly as it arrived (Cottrell, 2016; Sloan, 2011). Following a joyful experience, one becomes aware of a deep illumination (Sloan, 2011). Frequently throughout my journal I wrote of joyful experiences as I observed and spent time with my children. I write about how much I enjoy being home with them (Personal journal, September 4, 2012), how I rarely feel the need for a break to pursue other tasks (Personal journal, September 11, 2012), how much our family loves homeschooling (Personal journal, December 10, 2012), and how I appreciate that we are all free from the time constraints

of the school system (Personal journal, July 20, 2016). More specifically, I refer to the experiences that bring me joy as a homeschooling mother:

> I love sipping my tea and listening to their laughter and chatter. I love looking out the window and seeing their red noses and cheeks, and their eyes lit up with excitement. The looks of delight as they watch a flock of geese fly overhead. These things bring me joy. These fleeting moments of their childhood I want to savour. So, if they enjoy being home and homeschooling, if it is in line with our values on living and learning—why not? (Personal journal, October 18, 2015)

As I reflect on what I relish about being a homeschooling mother and the specific experiences that bring me joy, I also reflect on how grateful I am to be home to enjoy those experiences:

> I also often think about how challenging I would find it to have the kids up and out the door presentable in the morning with lunches made in time for school! Sure, I would have more time for myself. But, the thing is, I like spending time with my kids. It brings me a lot of joy to spend my days with them. I am not teaching them or playing with them all day. We have a harmonious co-existence. We do things together, but they often go off and play together and I will read, do school work, cook, clean etc. I have heard people say they could never homeschool their kids, it would be too much work or too hard. I think it would be hard to organize our lives around the school day. We have made the choices we have in terms of where, and how, we live to make it possible. I appreciate that my kids days are not tied to the system, and mine are not either. I don't miss participating in the working world. Even though I don't bring in a pay check now, I enjoy my "work" and find it fulfilling. I feel it is valued in our family. Feeling fulfilled

> and valued is what I wish for my kids. I wish it for everyone, but I wish it for them now and in their adult life. (Personal journal, September 15, 2016)

My joyful experiences are regular reminders of why I chose to leave my work as a teacher and stay home with my children. They are affirmations of why we have chosen to offer our children an alternative to attending public school.

Schools as prisons. As I re-read my personal journals, I notice that my journal entries discussing what has led me to offer our children the alternative of homeschooling, and leave the school system as a teacher, were prompted by the combination of discussions with others, personal reflections, and reflections on readings. However, in conversations with others, I often restrain myself from speaking freely about my opinions on the school system.

When our decision to homeschool comes up in conversation, people often question what it is that I do not like about the school system:

> Someone asked me the other day what I do not like about the school system. I guess I could have rambled off half a dozen things that I don't like about it. There are some simple things—children grouped by age and postal code spending the entire day together. The time table. Why can't they spend more or less time on activities any particular day? The imposed curriculum, with no variation for each child. They say they are doing differentiated instruction etc. But really, how different can things get when they are all expected to achieve the same learning expectations at the same level, at the end of the day? (Personal journal, July 19, 2016)

I have noted a handful of issues with the school system in this journal entry; however, in conversation I usually do not get into that much detail. I often state simply that we have different views on living and learning than the school system. In the article I wrote for the *Journal of*

Unschooling and Alternative Learning I attempted to articulate why I chose to offer homeschooling to my children (Haugh, 2014). Some of those reflections were on my frustrations as a teacher in the public school system and they are echoed again in my personal journals:

> I struggled to meet the demands of my role as a teacher, and reconcile my inner values. I am not the type to close the door and just do what I want. I was taking home a pay check from the board with the expectation I was delivering on their expectations. I tried to be an advocate for the students, to have the expectations of the board and ministry met with the least amount of negative impact on the students. I was constantly negotiating with my inner voice to find a way to do that. (Personal journal, July 19, 2016)

In conversation, my frustrations as a teacher are rarely discussed. The topic often focuses on the system from the perspective of the students. However, I do still reflect on my experiences as a teacher and the discrepancies between my values and that of the public school system. If I am going to be more candid, a quote I noted in my personal journal, January 18, 2014 sums my feelings up nicely: “Schools are still modelled on a curious mix of the factory, the asylum and the prison” (Townsend, 2002, p. 24). I do see schools as a prison for both teachers and students. How those in the schools system spend their days are pre-determined to the minute, from where they are to be, what they are to be doing, how they are to be doing it, including when they can eat, drink, and use the facilities. Yet, when I am asked about the school system, I do not say this. As Gray (2013) noted, it is not polite:

> Everyone who has ever been to school knows that school is prison, but almost nobody beyond school ages says it. It’s not polite. We all tiptoe around this truth because admitting it would make us seem cruel and would point a finger at well intentioned people doing what they believe to be essential. (p. 67)

I chose teaching as a career hoping that I would be making a valuable contribution to the lives of others with my work. However, early into my career I began to question many aspects of the school system, and my personal views on learning and living evolved. As my personal views evolved, it became apparent that teaching within a school board was not the fulfilling work I had anticipated it would be.

Against the norm. As we venture further into our homeschooling journey, moments of uncertainty emerge less frequently. However there have been, and still are, times when I have questioned our decision to go against the mainstream decision to enrol our children in school. I have questioned whether I would have enough time for my studies, and how I would respond to naysayers (Personal journal, September 1, 2012). However, time for myself has not been something that I have coveted as we have progressed on our homeschooling journey, and I have been confident enough in our decision making as a family that naysayers have not concerned me. I have been told by some people that it is brave of us to homeschool and that we are making exciting lifestyle choices (Personal journal, July 19, 2016). I do not feel that this is a "brave" decision as I feel that is reserved for much more noble causes. However, it is fair to acknowledge, as Thomas and Pattison (2008) have noted, that "it takes courage to question let alone depart from the security of this highly professionalized system" (p. 8). I suspect that the courage that they speak of also refers to going against the norm. As Neufeld and Mate (2005) have discussed, it is more common for us to defer to mainstream decisions, than question them:

> We seem to have this obsession in North America with being "normal" and fitting in. Perhaps we as adults have become too peer-oriented ourselves that instead of seeking to express our own individuality, we take our cues for how to be and how to act from one another. . . . What is regrettable is that we as adults should dignify this homogenizing

> dynamic by honoring it and deferring to it. (p. 248)

As previously mentioned, I struggled to reconcile my personal values with those of the public school system. Leaving teaching and offering our children the opportunity to homeschool has allowed me to honour my views on living and learning, and has been a joyful experience. If I were to stay with the "normal" path, which for me would have been continuing to teach and enrolling our children in school, I would have been giving in to extrinsic forces and taking cues from the mainstream approach to education. However, staying true to my values has contributed to my personal well-being and happiness (Ryan et al., 2013).

Based on my personal experiences, I concur with the conclusions that have been drawn from the research conducted on values, intrinsic motivations, and well-being. Furthermore, I can relate to de Marneffe's discussion on the desire to engage in a relationship with our children and the happiness that comes from that engagement. My experiences as a homeschooling mother have brought me many joyful moments. I can sympathize with how de Marneffe (2004) has described happiness and gratification from mothering:

> There is the pleasure of being "alone together," of doing things near one another, feeling comforted by the presence of the other while attending to our own activities. There is also the enormous gratification of watching children develop, grow, and change, and of being involved in the people they become. (p. 9)

Additionally, I chose to leave my career as a teacher to pursue experiences that were more in line with my personal values. Leaving my career required giving up a stable job, a regular paycheque, and a pension. de Marneffe (2004) has questioned as to "why economics should constitute the only legitimate measurement of what are obviously intrinsically valuable activities" (p. 38). Moreover, my work as a teacher and the extrinsic reward of a paycheque

undermined my intrinsic motivation and diminished my autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Fortunately, we were able to make decisions as a family that allowed for changes to have not only mine, but my husbands and children's needs and aspirations met. Finally, the decision to go against the norm by leaving work and offering our children the opportunity to homeschool has not come without moments of uncertainty. However, I have remained true to my values and not given in to coercions external to our family (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Because of my commitments to motivations which are intrinsic and "authentic (literally, self-authored or endorsed)," I have experienced heightened "self-esteem, and general well-being" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 69).

The joy I have experienced as a mother, the frustrations I experienced as a teacher, and my commitment to my views on living and learning, have all contributed to evolving awareness of my values. As Ryan et al. (2013) have eludicated, "[l]iving well requires acting with awareness, which allows the individuals to experience greater autonomy and integrity and to more consistently pursue valued goals, resulting in greater happiness" (p. 69). In their research, Ryan et al. (2008) have inferred that living in accordance to one's values is "a way of living" that leads to living well. Neuman and Aviram (2003) describe holistic homeschooling as a way of life. Based on my connections between maternal desire and self-determination theory, this way of life has contributed to my well-being as a homeschooling mother.

Self-Determination Theory and Ethic of Care

According to the research conducted on self-determination theory, the three needs essential for healthy social, personality, and developmental human functioning are competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2002). As I explore my experiences, and find commonalities with the ethic of care theory, I will focus my discussion on autonomy. As previously mentioned, within self-determination theory, autonomy does not mean independence;

rather "*autonomy* retains its primary etymological meaning of self-governance, or rule by the self" (Ryan & Deci, 2006, p. 1562). This notion is furthered by Williams (2002) when he described autonomous as to "feel volitional or willing to engage in a behaviour" (p. 236). When one is acting with autonomy, their behaviours and actions are not imposed; instead, they are free to take a reflective stance on their choices and possibilities (Ryan & Deci, 2006; Ryan et al., 2012). The research on self-determination theory has also focused on autonomy-supportive parenting and the implications for children. As I explore this vertex of my prism of connection, I will explore my efforts at being an autonomy-supportive parent.

As Mayeroff (1971) described in *On Caring*, when living with autonomy "direction emerges from within my life, instead of being something pre-determined or forced on me from the outside" (p. 97). In a relationship based on care, the autonomy of the cared-for is respected. As Mayeroff (1971) explained, "I enable the other to grow in its own time and in its own way" (p. 23). As we respect the autonomy of the cared-for and allow them to grow, we must "consider their natures, ways of life, needs, and desires. And, although I can never accomplish it entirely, I try to apprehend the reality of the other" (Noddings, 1984, p. 14). This is the basis of the caring relationship, honouring the autonomy of the cared-for. As Noddings (1984) affirmed, "Caring involves stepping out of one's own personal frame of reference into the other's" (p. 24). By stepping out of our own frame of reference, we can be open to receiving the other and meet their needs in the caring relationship. Noddings has maintained that even in a parent/child relationship, the autonomy of the other is honoured: "The parent who cares, who receives the child, allows him to take hold of what he can do. She does not keep him in a subservient position but welcomes his growing competence and independence" (p. 62). With care as the basis of the parent/child relationship, the intention is to act with respect and trust for the cared-for's autonomy.

Throughout my personal journals, I write of the relationship of care I have with our children and how I strive to respect their autonomy. I explore being open to, and honouring, our son's wishes to attend pre-school, even though I did not want him to attend. I explore my views on learning, and allowing our children the freedom to be self-directed. Finally, my inner struggles to suppress the "devil teacher" in me, and not control their learning experiences.

Pre-school dropout. Around the time we had decided to offer homeschooling to children, our oldest child's friends were being signed up for pre-school. Our oldest son expressed interest in signing up, so we enrolled him 2 days per week, for 3 hours per day. Shortly after enrolling him, I regretted it:

> I regret signing him up for pre-school. His little friends were going and he voiced interest. His brother was a baby. I thought he would find it fun and give me a break. It is a good program. The teacher is great and they can do what they want. It is pretty free and he likes it sometimes. Other times he does not want to go. I am hoping he drops out! The problem is, it gears them up for Kindergarten. (Personal journal, September, 2012)

For approximately 2 months I struggled with my feelings around my son attending pre-school. Although I would have preferred he did not attend, I struggled with ensuring it was his choice to make. We had discussed homeschooling as a family and he was aware of his options, however, I did not want him to choose staying home because that is what he thought I would have wanted. He was 3½ years old at the time. I journaled about how "it is hard to read a 3½ year old," and how I feared he was expressing interest in not going because of me (Personal journal, September, 2012). Ageism is something I think of when interacting with our children. As Ricci (2012) has observed, "young people are among the last 'acceptably' oppressed group—we can do things to children that we would never dream of doing to another adult human being" (p.

139). I was very aware of ensuring my son's feelings were being honoured. As Noddings (1984) has expressed,"We are sometimes thrown into conflict over what the cared-for wants and what we think would be best for him" (p. 24). Even though I had thought it would be best for him not to attend pre-school, I enrolled him when he expressed interest. My struggle was setting my feelings aside and trusting that he was expressing how he wished to spend his days. As Peter Gray (2013) posited, children today are underestimated:

> I doubt there has ever been a human culture, anywhere, at any time, that underestimates children's abilities more than we North Americans do today. Our underestimation becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, because by depriving children of freedom, we deprive them of the opportunities they need to learn how to take control of their own behavior and emotions. (p. 209)

I wish to empower our children to take control of their behaviour and emotions. Our son was curious about pre-school; he was enrolled for about 2 months and attended when he wished. After 2 months, he chose to leave: "Last week we pulled our son out of pre-school. He decided not go anymore. He said to me 'I just like our days.' What an amazing complement—made my heart melt. He has officially dropped out of pre-school!" (Personal journal, October, 2012). From the fall of 2012 to present, neither of our children has been enrolled in school, with the intention to homeschool as long as they desire.

Freedom to learn. In my personal journal I reflected on Schwartz's value circumplex. In my reflections I note that I am most drawn to the domain of self-direction: "freedom, privacy, self-respect, independent, curious, creativity, choosing own goals. These are values I hold for myself. But, this is what I also wish for our children" (Personal journal, July 19, 2016). The value domain of self-direction opens many possibilities for reflection; however, as I explore my

journals further, freedom to learn reappears frequently. Early in our homeschooling journey, I found myself reflecting on learning:

> The other day I was feeling this need to define my views on learning theory. How is it that I feel people learn best? What philosophy do I ascribe to? My Master's thesis described my views already though: learning cannot be categorized into one theory, it is personal, messy, emotional, organic, and individual. No one theory fits each learner and situation perfectly. (Personal journal, January 19, 2013)

These sentiments were echoed by Gatto (1996) when he noted that "It cannot be overemphasized that no body of theory exists to define accurately the way children learn, or which learning is of most worth" (p. 46). With this in mind my reflections moved forward to self-direction, "whatever learning theory is used does not matter—it is the imposition that matters. I need to consider free will, how that is lived for us. Ultimately, it is the learner's choice" (Personal journal, October 8, 2014). I furthered my thoughts with reflections on learning and education: "I think people mistake not valuing the school system with not valuing education and learning. I love learning. The trouble is when you are told what and when you should be learning, instead of being allowed to learn freely" (Personal journal, July 19, 2016). As Gray (2013) explained, when a learner is given the freedom to make choices for their education, they take responsibility for their education:

> An implicit and sometimes explicit message of our forced school system is this: "If you do what you are told to do in school, everything will work out well for you." Children who buy into that message stop taking responsibility for their own education. They assume, falsely, that someone else has figured out what they need to do and know to become successful adults. (p. 70)

I value an approach to education where a learner is given freedom to be self-directed and takes responsibility for their learning. As a teacher, I struggled to reconcile my views on education with the expectations of the school system. As a parent, I have chosen to offer our children an alternative to the model of learning in the public school system, and offer them the opportunity to be free to learn.

There have been a number of times since 2012 that our children have shown me that this is the right approach for our family. When reflecting on one of our children tackling a learning experience in a completely different way than I could have suggested, and arriving at the correct destination, I noted "every time we have moments like these, it reaffirms my faith in self-determined learning" (Personal journal, March 6, 2014). I have noted that they get where they need to get, their own way, and, at times they resist our feedback and comment, "just let me learn on my own" (Personal journal, April 29, 2014). They are vocal about their needs as learners and how I can help them achieve their goals. At one of their suggestions I commented: "I thought that was such an interesting suggestion, as it is not something I would have ever proposed" (Personal journal, June 18, 2014). There is a regular pattern of them finding their way as learners, and being vocal with their likes and dislikes in the process.

As I noted in my personal journals, my values for our learning at home are in line with the aims of Summerhill School, as explained by Readhead (1996): "To allow children freedom to grow emotionally; To give children power over their own lives; To give children the time to develop naturally; To create a happier childhood by removing fear and coercion by adults" (p. 110). From my worldview, the aims of Summerhill School are not the same as the aims of the public school system. Even though I embrace the aims of Summerhill School, there are times when my experiences, as both a student and teacher in the public school system, influence me and the urge to "teach" can be hard to suppress.

Devil teacher. In *How Children Learn,* John Holt (1983) reflected on intervening with a child's learning experience:

> Even though I understood very well that Tommy could learn to speak without me teaching him, the teacher devil in me was saying, "But if you're clever, and you *are* clever, he'll learn *even more* if you do teach him." (p. 98)

Ricci (2012) described Holt's notion of the "devil teacher" as "a style of teacher that is very controlling and wants to correct everything" (p. 65). As Holt (1989) explained further, "any teaching *that the learner has not asked for* is likely to impede and prevent his or her learning" (p. 28). Although I wish to give our children freedom in their learning experiences, the devil teacher emerges at times, and I often reflect on it in my journals. There are times when there is a "nagging in the back of my mind that they should be doing more school work," and I comment that I need to "deschool myself" (Personal journal, October 14, 2014). I assert that even though I believe that children should be free to learn, "The trouble is living it and letting go. The devil teacher in me keeps popping up!" (Personal journal, July 9, 2013). I note that "I need to reconcile with the devil teacher in me" (Personal journal, March 3, 2015). Finally, I reflect that "I am constantly questioning and doubting if I should intervene more. Then, the boys do something to show me that we are on the right path. They always find their way" (Personal journal, April 15, 2016).

Reflecting on my experiences with our children, my experiences as a learner and a teacher, and readings, positions me back on the path I wish to be on. However, sage wisdom from like-minded friends have become my mantras for suppressing the devil teacher. A perceptive friend related my approach to dealing with our children to her approach to her clients: "When all else fails, look at the patient—when all else fails, look at the child" (Personal journal,

July 8, 2014). This conversation comes to mind when I am considering offering unsolicited help with a task. I stop, and I really look at our children, I remember they are on the journey and will reach out to me if I am needed. In the following journal entry, I paraphrase a like-minded mentor:

> Respond authentically—don't turn everything into a lesson. Deal with our kids as human beings. Don't turn it into parent/teacher to child. It is a human to human interaction. Children know how to learn and their way is not mine. (Personal journal, May 9, 2015)

The "human to human" interaction is regularly in the forefront of my mind when I am connecting with our children. Far beyond teaching moments, I evoke this sentiment in our day to day interactions, and I am conscious of maintaining a respectful relationship with our children. Finally, when the devil teacher has won and I have intervened, I reminded of conversations I have had with a dear friend and like-minded homeschooling mother. As she reflects on our experiences interacting with our children, she describes them as "a continual dance between parent and child" (November 2016). A dance of dependence and independence, where we step in at times, and step away, but we maintain the connection we have through our caring relationship.

Reminded of Neuman and Aviram's (2003) holistic homeschooling, this relationship is a way of life for us. As Ricci (2012) described, this way of life is based on "mutual love, mutual trust, mutual respect, and mutual compassion" (p. 139). With this way of life, I give our children control over their emotions, and allow them to be free to learn. I attempt to stifle the devil teacher to allow them to follow their "willed curriculum" (Ricci, 2012). Ricci explained this way of life beautifully:

> It is about allowing young people to unfold and create themselves in ways that are driven

> by their souls, their spirits, and their internal motivation. It is about allowing young people, and all people, to learn in the world, to use whatever available resources, methods, and tools the learner chooses. (p. 142)

This way of life respects the autonomy of the cared-for, and is fostered through a relationship of care.

According to Ryan and Deci (2000), "studies showed that autonomy-supportive parents, relative to controlling parents, have children who are more intrinsically motivated" (p. 71). This is because imposed goals and directives are like "tangible rewards, they conduce toward an external perceived locus of causality" (p. 70). However, opportunities for self-direction, honouring the feelings of the other, freedom, and choice "were found to enhance intrinsic motivation because they allow people a greater feeling of autonomy" (p. 70). I relate this to care theory as described by Mayeroff (1971), where the care relationship is described as intrinsically motivated by the cared-for, rather than extrinsically imposed by the one-caring:

> In helping the other grow I do not impose my own direction; rather, I allow the direction of the other's growth to guide what I do, to help determine how I am to respond and what is relevant to such a response. I appreciate the other as independent in its own right with needs to be respected: as we sometimes say in the context of inquiry, "we follow the lead of the subject matter." (p. 9)

As noted in my explorations of my personal journals, by listening to our children, offering them the freedom to learn, and attempting to suppress the devil teacher, I am striving to maintain a respectful relationship of care where our children are allowed greater autonomy.

In contrast to Mayeroff's (1971) description of a caring relationship, Noddings (1984) unapologetically maintains a power dynamic between the one-caring and the cared-for. Where I

interpret the care relationship as described by Mayeroff as allowing the child to grow and learn autonomously, Noddings maintains a level of control over the relationship. She acknowledges that one cannot force a child to learn, however, the control a parent or teacher has over the environment means the cared-for's experiences can be manipulated:

> The principle of the leading out of experience does not imply letting the child learn what he pleases; it suggests that, inescapably, the child will learn what he pleases. That means that the educator must arrange the effective world so that the child will be challenged to master significant situations. The initial judgement of significance is the teacher's task. (Noddings, 1984, p. 63)

Noddings furthers this, noting "[t]he educator or parent, then, is not powerless. On the contrary, her power is awesome" (Noddings, 1984, p. 64). Finally, Noddings contrasts her views on relationship of care with that of A.S. Neill, the founder of Summerhill School, whose aims I noted above:

> The one-caring as teacher is not necessarily permissive. She does not abstain, as Neill might have, from leading the student, or persuading him, or coaxing him toward an examination of school subjects. But she recognizes that, in the long run, he will learn what he pleases. We may force him to respond in specified ways, but what he will make of his own and eventually apply effectively is that which he finds significant for his own life. This recognition does not reduce either the teacher's power or her responsibility. As we saw earlier in our discussion for the cared-for, the teacher may indeed coerce the student into choosing against himself. He may be led to diminish his ethical ideal in the pursuit of achievement goals. The teacher's power is, thus, awesome. (Noddings, 1984, p. 176)

I do not deny that as a parent, one has more control over certain matters, for example, living

arrangements, budget decisions etc. Within the boundaries that are appropriate for our family, and in regards to their learning experiences, our children are given more freedom to be autonomous than how I have interpreted Noddings to deem a caring relationship. While she acknowledges and celebrates the power the one-caring has, as Mayeroff (1971) has reasoned, the one-caring should attempt to diffuse the power:

> Instead of trying to dominate and possess the other, I want it to grow in its own right, or, as we sometimes say, 'to be itself,' and I feel the other's growth as bound up with my own sense of well-being. (p. 8)

Furthermore, this interpretation of a caring relationship is a part of our way of life as a homeschooling family and it is based in trust:

> I do not experience being needed by the other as a relationship that gives me power over it and provides me with something to dominate, but rather as a kind of trust. It is as if I had been entrusted with the care of the other in a way that is the antithesis of possessing and manipulating it as I please. (Mayeroff, 1971, p. 9)

This approach to a relationship of care emanates from my values of self-direction and self-determination.

I consider a caring relationship rooted in self-determination theory to be autonomy supportive. As an autonomy-supportive parent, I "encourage children to solve their own problems, take children's perspectives, and minimize the use of pressures and controls" (Grolnick & Apostoleris, 2002, p. 161). I consider our children's perspectives and parent from the trust established in our caring relationship. This is not a detached or permissive relationship, but a respectful, considerate, and democratic relationship (Joussemet, Landry, & Koestner, 2008). As Joussemet et al. (2008) have concluded, "such autonomy support in the familial

context is associated with a host of positive child outcomes" (p. 198) including high intrinsic motivation, and overall well-being.

Ethic of Care and Maternal Desire

As I close the prism of connection that represents the theories and experiences my holistic homeschooling lifestyle is comprised of, I consider all three theories. However, my conversation will focus primarily on ethic of care and maternal desire. As previously discussed, self-determination theory posits competence, relatedness, and autonomy as the three needs essential for healthy social, personality, and developmental human functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2002, p. 6). Relatedness refers to "feeling connected to others, to caring for and being cared for by those others" (Ryan & Deci, 2002, p. 7). As I care for our children, I am aware of care theory, being receptive to our children, and how my values affect our relationship. Neufeld and Mate (2005) declared that "parenthood is above all a relationship, not a skill to be acquired" (p. 55). Noddings (1984) remarked that "mothering is not a role, but a relationship" (p. 128). Maternal desire acknowledges a mothers desire to participate in that relationship with her children. However, as de Marneffe (2004) has observed about the mother and child relationship, "the personal meanings of mothering are endlessly complex, and the particular conflicts vary from person to person" (p. 12). My desire to engage with our children in a mothering relationship, at times, evokes conflict between honouring their needs, and my "mother bear" instincts. This vertex of the prism will explore my relationship with our children, and tensions I feel as my values conflict with my instincts as I make decisions in caring for our children.

Caring relationship. As a homeschooling mother, I do not separate my interactions with our children by changing my "hats," from mother or parent, to teacher or educator. I strive to maintain the "human to human" interaction I spoke of previously, regardless of our activities. In

my personal journal, I commented that as our children grow, our relationship grows as we get to know each other (Personal journal, May 5, 2013). As Mayeroff (1971) explained, getting to know one another is beneficial to the caring relationship:

> To care for someone, I must *know* many things. I must know, for example, who the other is, what his powers and limitations are, what his needs are, and what is conducive to his growth; I must know how to respond to his needs, and what my own powers and limitations are. (p. 19)

Although I am home with my children, and I spend a considerable amount of time with them, we are not interacting all hours of the day. There is a harmony to our home—we can be together, or a part, yet all growing in consonance. As de Marneffe (2004) has related, this harmony allows us to progressively come to know one another: “To feel fully engaged in this creative process does not necessitate round-the-clock togetherness or perfect attunement. But, it involves a physically felt-need for time together in which each person comes to discover and progressively know the other” (p. 50). As I get to know our children, our caring relationship grows, and I am better able to respond to their needs. Moreover, through maternal desire and our caring relationship, I have a growing understanding of my values and myself. As de Marneffe (2004) described, this brings an awareness my experiences that was not there before I become a mother:

> Motherhood puts women in a different relationship to themselves. It *really* does; not as some sort of pale “shifting of priorities,” but as a new relationship to experience. As such, it can cause them to reopen themselves to forgotten depths of emotional experience, and to rethink their identity in light of what they discover. (p. 112)

As a mother, I feel a need to have an understanding of my values as the decisions I make affect more than me alone, they also affect our children. In a caring relationship, I am receptive to my

needs, and the needs of our children. This means being aware of and honouring my values, as well as receiving them and their needs. As explained by Mayeroff (1971), this awareness is cyclical: "I do not try to help the other grow in order to actualize myself, but by helping the other grow I do actualize myself" (p. 40). At times the harmony I spoke of in our home is maintained, however, at times, there are tensions as we grow together. These tensions are discussed further as I explore my endeavours with trustful parenting.

Trustful parenting. In *Free to Learn*, Peter Gray (2013) described trustful parents as those who:

> Trust their children to play and explore on their own, to make their own decisions, to take risks and learn from their own mistakes. Trustful parents do not measure or try to direct their children's development, because they trust their children to do so on their own. Trustful parents are not negligent parents. They provide not just freedom, but also the sustenance, love, respect, moral examples, and environmental conditions required for healthy development. They support, rather than try to direct, children's development, by helping children achieve their own goals when such help is requested. (p. 210)

The values I hold of self-determination, autonomy, and an ethic of care, are in line with those of trustful parenting. Furthermore, I feel trustful parenting is to parallel autonomy-supportive parenting, as discussed in the previous section. However, as indicated in my journals, there are times when I struggle with trusting our children and their paths. When our children are struggling with their learning endeavours I question: "should I let him do it on his own time, or encourage him?" (Personal journal, August 25, 2014). I journal encouraging reminders to myself about trustful parenting:

> Trust. I know I need to trust our kids. When there is doubt, it is not with them, it is with

> me—if I have it in me to not intervene and be patient. We are doing this, offering them this opportunity to homeschool, so they can get there on their own time. But, for some reason I still doubt. I should know by now he always gets there. I should trust him. Trust both of them! Trust this journey. (Personal journal, March 19, 2015)

Furthermore, I reflect on what triggers my doubts:

> It seems to come in ebbs and flows. At times I am completely okay to let them be. Other times I doubt if I should be intervening more. I don't often intervene, but I think about it. I wonder what makes me doubt? Is it just when I see my boys behind in something that I doubt? When they are advanced I don't think twice, it is when they are behind I worry for them. It is not what people will think of us, but how being behind in something could play out for them. (Personal journal, March 23, 2015)

Being in a caring relationship with our children is what reassures me when I have doubts. Although the "devil teacher" does emerge at times when I am interacting with them, knowing that there has been a relationship of care established allows me to continue on our chosen path. They will reach out to me when needed, and I will be receptive to those needs.

Finally, there is another aspect to trustful parenting that, surprisingly, I did not journal about, but it is often on my mind. Peter Gray (2013) introduced his book *Free to Learn* reminiscing about his childhood and the freedom he was given to explore and play. From the age of 5, with friends, he was free to ride his bike throughout his village and the nearby countryside. He describes it as a "tragic and cruel loss," that children today are not given the independence to play free from adults, throughout their neighbourhoods and communities (p. 4). Although I have shared values with trustful parenting, I am not comfortable giving our children the level of freedom throughout our village that Gray experienced in his childhood. There are

limits to what I am comfortable with; in regards to distances and activities, I enable our children to participate in, without adult supervision. When I do think of allowing them to independently ride their bikes throughout the countryside, climb to the tops of tall trees, play at the park, I am irresolute. There are tensions between what I value for them with regards to autonomy and freedom, and a "mother bear" instinct that emerges from within. I do not push them towards independence, but when they seek more freedom, it becomes a dialogue—a dialogue both within me, and with them.

As Gray (2013) explained, it has been "over the past several decades" that there has been a decline in trustful parenting (p. 212). As Gray outlined, some of the causes for the decline in trustful parenting include:

- The decline of neighbourhoods and children's neighbourhood playgroups. "There is safety in numbers," and with less children playing outside together, neighbourhoods are less inviting, and therefore less children are playing outside (p. 213);
- There is a loss of competency with parenting. "Experts" authority on childhood dangers, and well-being arouse fear in parents (p. 214);
- News media feeds parents' worst nightmares about their children (p. 215);
- "Increased uncertainty about future employment" means parents worry about their children's abilities to secure a stable job as adults. Because of this, parents view "childhood as a time of resume building rather than a time of play" (p. 215);
- "Rise in the power of schools and in the need to conform to school's increasingly restrictive requirements" (p. 216);
- Finally, there is a "school-centric model of child development." Children's experiences should be programmed, adult directed, and sequential. Play should be limited after the

age of 4 or 5, but if it is permitted, children should be grouped by age (p. 217).

The societal factors Gray has outlined, that contribute to the decline in trustful parenting, have become part of my self-dialogue as I explore the tensions I feel. Two of the factors that I feel most affected by are the decline of neighbourhood play groups, and fears aroused by news media. The nearby park in our village is empty most days with children in school, and empty many evenings where I assume children are enrolled in programmed activities, or tired from their days at school. With no other children around to bring a diversity of ages together, and to look out for one another, I am hesitant to send our children out to play without adult supervision. Additionally, the story of trustful parent Danielle Meitiv's encounters with the authorities further contributes to my hesitations. Peter Gray's (2015) *Freedom to Learn* blog tells the story of Meitiv's family as the police, and child protective services, intervened when they allowed their 10 and 6 year old children to play at the park and walk home unsupervised. The decline of trustful parenting, and the voices of fear, have permeated our institutions. Adding to the list of accidents, predators, and delinquent peers, are now fears of the authorities as well.

Lastly, I recognize that my fears are aroused by stories in the news media. As Gray (2013) remarked, "the voices of fear are loud and incessant, and the fears are never completely unfounded" (p. 219). These fears play into my "mother bear" instincts when I feel protective over our children. When discussing factors that negatively impact parents' attempts at supporting their children's autonomy, Grolnick and Apostoleris (2002) have suggested that there are "built in hooks" that make parents vulnerable to controlling and protecting their children. "From the 'gene's eye view,' parents are invested in their children's welfare, in their offspring's surviving and reproducing" (p. 174). I suspect these "built in hooks" contribute to the tensions I feel remaining unresolved.

As our children grow and seek more independence, there will be a continual dialogue with myself, and with them—striving to maintain our caring relationship and maintaining the harmony of our home. Mayeroff (1971) has described a part of that dialogue within a caring relationship:

> My firmness in making such decisions is grounded in the belief that they will help to strengthen rather than weaken his decision-making powers, and in the end will further his independence and growth. If possible, I try to help him realize that my decision was not an arbitrary exercise of authority, by explaining the reason for it and by actions which show that it was made out of concern for him. (p. 58)

At times I will need to explain why I feel the need to make decisions, and at times they will be free to make their own decisions. The desire I have to engage in a caring relationship with our children establishes a caring and respectful dialogue, and hopefully, allows our children to grow their own way, on their own time.

Conclusion

Together, my husband and I have decided to offer our children the opportunity to homeschool. Our children have chosen to homeschool, knowing they have the freedom to enrol in school, if they so choose. The decision to offer our children the opportunity to homeschool is more than an educational choice, it is a lifestyle choice based on my holistic worldview as a homeschooling mother. Neuman and Aviram's (2003) holistic homeschooling acknowledges this lifestyle noting that "the choice of homeschooling affects many areas of family life beyond education" (p. 136). The purpose of this study has been to explore my values as a homeschooling mother, and how they have motivated me to offer home education our children. By writing this chapter and exploring my values, I have gained an understanding of my

motivations for offering our children the opportunity to homeschool; thus, contributing to the existing literature discussing families motivations for homeschooling.

My main research question asked, at this stage of my life, what values do I hold that could be considered as significant in contributing to my motivations to engage in homeschooling with our children? Personal journals, collected since 2012, have allowed me to explore my values with an intimate and in-depth lens. As Gray (2002) reminded us, “values are the general, relatively abstract attitudes that people claim as guiding principles behind their more specific attitudes and action” (p. 517). Through my exploration I have discovered the theories of maternal desire, self-determination theory, and care theory are central to the values that I hold. By exploring my experiences in relation to these values, I see that creation, exploration, autonomy and independence, creativity, freedom, love, trust, care, respect and self-respect, shape my motivations. From my perspective, the values that these theories reinforce are not in-line with those of the public school system. Therefore, I have chosen to offer our children an alternative path for education: homeschooling.

Schwartz’s value circumplex presents a demonstration of value domains and the “degree to which values support or oppose one another” (Gray, 2002, p. 518). One of the four sub-questions of this study was: For the purposes of exploration in this study, where do I feel my values are placed on Schwartz’s value circumplex? In my personal journal I reflected on the circumplex and discovered that I am most drawn to the domain of self-direction. Gray (2002) has indicated that curiosity, creativity, freedom, and independence are elements of the self-direction segment of the value wheel. Informed by my personal journals, I focused my exploration on self-direction and learning experiences. Reflecting on schooling and my experiences as a teacher, I discussed how I struggled to reconcile my values on learning with

those of the public school system. Having an awareness of my values of self-direction and freedom for learning has contributed to my decision to offer our children the opportunity to homeschool.

Another of my four sub-questions asked: as I reflect on my lived experiences and personal journal entries, what experiences and influences have contributed to the shaping of my values at this stage of my life? I have written in my personal journals since 2012, however, there have been many experiences throughout my life that have shaped the values that I hold today, including my experiences as a learner, teacher, friend, and mother. Respecting my family, friends, and the ethics protocol for this study, I have shared some of those experiences and reflections as excerpts from my journals. Furthermore, there are a number of authors that I have read for personal reading, and as part of this academic exercise, that have influenced my values. Some of these authors are included as support, and interwoven with my reflections, throughout this study.

Although I have gained a deeper understanding of my values by writing personal journals and authoring this study, there are still tensions between my values, and how they impact my interactions with our children. As I was beginning this study I was aware of these tensions and included another sub-question asking: What are the connections between the values that have emerged as significant within this study, and my motivations for engaging in homeschooling? And, at this point in time, is there friction or harmony between them? My intention has not been to resolve these tensions, rather to explore them and acknowledge them on this journey. An example of the friction and harmony between my values is included in the discussions of the “devil teacher,” and in the discussions of the relationship between autonomous and “trustful parenting,” and my protective feelings of a “mother bear.” As I

continue on my journey, these tensions will be revisited and new tensions will emerge. Continuing with my personal journals, and maintaining the reflective stance that I have taken throughout this study, will be beneficial to the future exploration of my internal conflicts.

Finally, as I explore my values within this study, I have questioned: At this point in time, is my well-being affected by my homeschooling lifestyle? Central to the research on self-determination theory is the understanding of the self, autonomy, and well-being. As previously discussed, when one is acting autonomously, they are acting in consent with their internal values and external demands. Those who engage in experiences that consent with their intrinsic values experience greater well-being. I have related the research on well-being, and self-determination theory, to reflections on joyful experiences as a homeschooling mother. Furthermore, choosing to leave a profession where the external demands conflicted with my own intrinsic values, has contributed to my greater well-being. Engaging in a caring relationship with our children, and honouring my values, is central to my holistic worldview. Based on my research and reflections throughout this study, engaging in holistic homeschooling contributes to my living well, with awareness, and with greater happiness (Ryan et al., 2013).

Chapter Six: Holistic Homeschooling

As I see it, holistic homeschooling embraces a holistic worldview and acknowledges the interconnectedness of family, values, living, and learning. In the previous chapter, I entered my story in the midst, and explored some of my personal journal entries and lived experiences to offer a glimpse of holistic homeschooling in my life. Using the theoretical frameworks of maternal desire, self-determination theory, and ethic of care, I discussed the interconnectedness of my experiences as a homeschooling mother. As defined by J. P. Miller (1996), "the word holistic comes from the Greek word 'holon' and makes reference to a universe made up of integrated wholes that cannot simply be reduced to the sum of its parts" (p. 3). Furthermore, Miller (2000) has remarked "as holistic educator Edward T. Clark Jr., has explained, holism rests on one very simple principle: Everything in the universe is connected, in some way, to everything else" (p. 21). This understanding of integration and connectedness is the basis of the holistic worldview. Beyond this understanding, a precise definition of holistic education is hard to articulate. As Miller (2000) has maintained, "Holism cannot be pinned down precisely, because by its very nature it embraces paradox, mystery, and outright contradiction" (p. 3). Forbes (2003) has echoed "Holistic education has no core text spelling out what it is and what it isn't" (p. 273). Nonetheless, through a reading of the literature discussing holistic education, I have been able to develop my personal understanding of a holistic worldview, and how it relates to my perspective as a homeschooling mother.

Miller (2000) has noted the "the roots of holistic education reach back over two centuries to the thinking of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Emerson, Alcott, Parker, Montessori, Steiner, and others" (p. 43). Again, Forbes (2003) has echoed Miller, when he listed the founding fathers of holistic education to be Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Jung, Maslow, and Rogers. These

thinkers may not have used the terms “holism” or “holistic education” in their work; however, their “interest in developing the whole person” has influenced our present day understanding of holistic education (Miller, 2000, p. 43). The emergence of a distinct “holistic” education movement as we know it “appeared in the 1970s and represented the convergence of several cultural and intellectual developments of that period” (Miller, 2000, p. 43). This countercultural movement parallels the development of the homeschooling movement. Two authors noted as foundational in our current understanding of holistic education are Ron Miller and John P. Miller (Mahmoudi, Jafari, Nasrabadi, & Liaghatdar, 2012; Nakagawa, 2015). It is through the work of Ron Miller and John P. Miller that I have developed my understanding of my holistic worldview.

I begin this chapter by exploring what a holistic worldview is comprised of, and focus on some specifics of this worldview, including interrelatedness, awe and reverence, spirituality, and elements of wholeness. Thereafter, I provide excerpts from the blogs of homeschooling mothers as examples of the holistic worldview in the home educating community. Finally, I relate the discussion on a holistic worldview to my personal perspective as a homeschooling mother.

Holistic Worldview

As Koegel and Miller (2003) have discussed, “holistic education involves more than a certain type of curriculum or teaching method, that it’s about nurturing the human spirit with love” (p. 11). I feel that part of the way the human spirit is nurtured is by understanding the interrelatedness of individuals, and life, and living with a sense of awe and reverence. Through spirituality we seek to understand the reverence of life, and finally, we must understand our lives are comprised of many elements that make up our whole. It is through these elements that I have shaped my understanding of a holistic worldview.

Interrelatedness. A holistic worldview is situated in postmodernism, and "opposes reductionism, positivism, and the Cartesian dualism of self and the world" (Miller, 2000, p. 41). Instead, a holistic worldview emphasizes "the ultimate unity, relatedness, and inherent meaningfulness of all existence" (Miller, 2000, p. 41), and "embraces diverse expressions of humanistic, spiritual, and ecological understanding" (Miller, 2016, p. 72). It is by understanding the interconnectedness of our lives that we gain meaning and understanding:

> Holism asserts that *everything* exists in relationship, in a context of connection and meaning—and that any change or event causes a realignment, however slight, throughout the entire pattern. "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts" means that the whole is comprised of a *pattern of relationships* that are not contained by the parts, but ultimately define them. Holism, then, stands in stark opposition to the method of *reductionism,* which holds that analysis, dissection, and strict definition are the tools of reality. Holism asserts that phenomena can never fully be understood in isolation; it asserts that reductionism can only give us a *partial* view of anything it dissects. (Miller, 2000, p. 21)

As John P. Miller (1996) has reasoned, this focus on interrelatedness puts nature at the centre of the holistic worldview:

> Holistic Education attempts to bring education into alignment with the fundamental realities of nature. Nature at its core is interrelated and dynamic. We can see this dynamism and connectedness in the atom, organic systems, the biosphere, and the universe itself. Unfortunately, the human world since the industrial revolution has stressed compartmentalization and standardization. The result has been the fragmentation of life. (p. 1)

Holistic homeschooling embraces the interconnectedness of life. From my perspective as a homeschooling mother, this study has explored some of these connections. The plurality of my voice as a homeschooling mother, the connections between the theoretical frameworks used as tools for understanding, and what I value for myself, and our children. Beyond this study in our day to day interactions, these connections are evident in our interactions with each other, our community, and nature. By honouring the interrelatedness of living, learning, and loving, I am embracing a holistic worldview, and that worldview translates to the life I live as a homeschooling mother.

Awe and reverence. When we attempt to grasp the magnitude of our interconnectedness with our values, family, community, humanity, nature, and the universe, one cannot help feeling a sense of awe and reverence. As Miller (2016) has explained, a holistic worldview acknowledges how profound these connections can be:

> Holistic approaches acknowledge, with a deep sense of awe and reverence, that human life has a purpose, a direction, a meaning that transcends our personal egos and our physical and cultural conditioning. Holistic thought accepts the possibility that humanity is connected, in a profound way, to the continuing evolution of life and the universe, and that the energies of this evolution are unfolding within each human soul. (p. 76)

For each individual, how these connections are made, and their magnitude, is a personal understanding based on their views of the nature of our existence. The poem *You Are Stardust* provides me with a continual sense of awe and reverence for the interconnectedness of our life. Below are the stanzas of the poem I find most profound:

> You are stardust.
>
> Every tiny atom in your body
came from a star that exploded

long before you were born.

You started life as a single cell,
so did all other creatures on planet Earth.

Like fish deep in the ocean,
you called salt water your home.
You swam inside the salty sea
of your mother's womb.

Salt still flows through your
Veins, your sweat, and your tears.
The sea within you is as salty
as the ocean.

The water swirling in your
glass once filled the puddles
where dinosaurs drank.

From ocean to sky to land and
back again, the same water
has been quenching thirsts
for millions of years.

Be still.
Listen.

Like you, the
Earth breathes.

Your breath is alive with the
promise of flowers.

Each time you blow a kiss to the
world, you spread pollen that
might grow to be a new plant.

You know how it feels to be a good
friend and so do other animals.

Bats and sperm whales get their
friends to babysit.

Elephants remain best buddies for life.

You, me, birds flying through the rainforest.

> We are all connected.
> We are all nature.
>
> We are all stardust. (Kelsey, 2012)

I reference this poem to provide context and an understanding of my holistic worldview, and acknowledge that the interconnectedness of life extends far beyond our home and homeschooling lifestyle. As Miller (2000) has reasoned, “Holistic education is not a romantic child-centred agenda, but a sense of awe in the presence of that which gives life. It is an attempt to return to the mysterious source of human creativity and authenticity for fresh inspiration” (p. 2). Each individual will seek their own mysterious source of inspiration. For many with a holistic worldview, awe and reverence stem from spirituality.

Spirituality. Miller (1990) has defined spirituality as a “*reverence for life*—for the life that mysteriously and spontaneously arises from deep within each of us” (p. 58). As Miller (2000) has elucidated, as we seek to understand this mystery, we must understand wholeness of the human being:

> The wholeness of the human being requires us to acknowledge that our minds, our feelings, our ambitions, our ideals all express some living force that dwells mysteriously within the core of our being. We cannot locate it physically; it is a nonmaterial reality, and invisible reality. (p. 73)

When we explore our spirituality, we are being receptive to “the more subtle, interior aspects of existence,” and searching for “deeper meaning to existence than is offered by the intellect or by social convention alone” (Miller, 2016, p. 19). Furthermore, spirituality is the “recognition that we are *connected*, at deep and profound levels, to the continuing evolution of life and the universe” (Miller, 1990, p. 58).

As Miller (2000) has illuminated, a holistic worldview attempts to reunite us with the

mysterious and spiritual aspects of life that inspire awe and reverence:

> The danger of our time is that in our cultural worship and personal pursuit of comfort, security, wealth and power, we have become disconnected from these sources of meaning. By learning how to control virtually every aspect of the world, we no longer know how to dwell in its mystery. We seek to alter, improve, or commodify everything, and therefore we cannot see the world's intrinsic beauty, discern its inherent patterns, or hear its spiritual secrets. Meaning is no longer found through the soul by dwelling in the world with reverence, but imposed by the calculating mind, which assigns everything a value or a utilitarian purpose. (p. 67)

In seeking this mystery and spirituality, some may use religious language, concepts and rituals, some may not. Some may involve a belief in a personal God, and some may not (Miller, 1990). What holistic education has championed is the "value and integrity of the life forces that mysteriously well up within the human mind and heart" (R. Miller, 2016, p. 210). Whether these forces are understood through "explicitly religious framework ('divine,' 'soul,' 'God') in psychological language ('archetype,' 'self-actualization'), or more recently, in the concepts of holistic biology and physics ('self-organization,' 'implicate order')," does not matter (R. Miller, 2016, p. 210). What does matter is honouring the mystery, awe, and reverence of life, each through our own reality:

> Each view of reality provides a unique piece of the vast cosmic puzzle, a particular path through the enchanted forest. Each one offers an important perspective on the whole. Holism, then, honours unity-within-diversity, or universal reality as expressed through relative points of view. (Miller, 2000, p. 34)

The spirituality embraced in a holistic worldview encompasses all:

> I am trying to suggest that the universe is not merely a vast collection of stars and galaxies that we can study through telescopes, but an interconnected whole that encompasses everything that exists and everything that *can* exist. . . . Beyond these few words—soul, spirit, cosmos, and wholeness—I am speechless. . . . It is a mystery. Let's leave it at that and hold it in reverence. (Miller, 2000, p. 73)

Wholeness. With a holistic worldview, there is an understanding that there are many areas of the individual that contribute to one's wholeness. When seeking to understand the elements of the whole, the literature on holistic education looks both inward and outward. As Miller (1990) has explained, the internal spiritual focus of the holistic worldview provides some of the human qualities of wholeness:

> Most fundamentally, the holistic worldview is essentially spiritual rather than materialistic. In the broadest terms, this means that the inner human qualities, such as mind, emotion, creativity, imagination, compassion, a sense of wonder and reverence, and the urge for self-realization, are recognized as vital aspects of human existence" (p. 58)

As Miller (2000) continued, "each person is a dynamic constellation of experiences, feelings, ideas, dreams, fears and hopes" (p. 68). These sentiments reference the spiritual internal elements of wholeness, but the interconnectedness of holism extends beyond the individual and outward to "the community, the society, the planet, and the cosmos" (Miller, 2000, p. 23). We are interconnected with the world beyond us. With holistic homeschooling, this translates to the daily lifestyle we are living with our children. As a homeschooling mother, I consider the internal spiritual elements of our children and honour them on their personal journey. It is for this reason that we follow willed curriculum approach to home education with our children. Furthermore, in the choices we make as a family, we strive to understand and celebrate our

interconnectedness to the community, humanity, nature, and the universe.

As Miller (2016) has elucidated, "holistic educators recognize that all aspects of human life are fundamentally connected. They contend that education must respect the dynamic and mutually supporting relationships between intellectual, emotional, physical, social, aesthetic/creative, and spiritual qualities of every person" (p. 212). From my perspective, the literature discussing families motivations for homeschooling acknowledges that "the motives of homeschooling families are multidimensional" (Murphy et al., 2017, p. 88), but what they do not provide are discussions for motivations for home educating considering a holistic worldview. These sentiments stem from feeling I was not represented in the literature conducted on families' motivations for home educating. Where a holistic worldview is discussed, are in the personal blogs of homeschooling mothers.

Homeschooling Mothers

By exploring the personal blogs of homeschooling mothers, I was able to find examples of mothers articulating their motivations for home educating their children, and how they relate to a holistic worldview. These mothers do not explicitly state they are embracing a holistic worldview, however, their personal reflections have references to holistic education. These references include connections between the family and community, connecting with nature, honouring the wholeness of their children, and the importance of spirituality in their lives.

These blogs offer personal, reflective, and gendered accounts from homeschooling mothers and include the "expressive logic" that is often missing from degendered accounts (Lois, 2017, p. 193). As Lois (2017) has claimed, "I found that mothers' satisfaction with their homeschooling roles were tightly bound to their gender and mothering ideologies" (p. 196). These personal blogs reflect their mothering ideologies and how they relate to their views on

education. This is not to say that fathers cannot, and do not share, in this holistic worldview. But, by exploring homeschooling through the perspective of "parents" we are "collapsing categories and blinding the reader to the significance of gendered parental motivations" (Lois, 2017, p. 188).

What follows are summaries and excerpts of eight homeschooling mothers' personal blogs. Of these bloggers, five are based in Canada, two in the United States, and one in Australia. On their blogs, these mothers question the education system, their relationships, their beliefs, and their values. They share these personal reflections and how they relate to home educating their children. In choosing excerpts from these blogs to relate to a holistic worldview, I have employed narrative smoothing. This process involves selectively reporting some of the data, while ignoring others to present a relevant and coherent picture (Kim, 2016). These excerpts demonstrate how these mothers are engaged in holistic homeschooling through interconnectedness, awe, reverence, and spirituality, and referencing elements of wholeness.

On her personal blog, Canadian homeschooler Bonnie Way has posted nine reasons why she has decided to homeschool her daughters. These nine reasons touch on many elements of a holistic worldview and include: faith, family, flexibility, no bullies or peer pressure, practical life skills, the child's pace, self-discipline and motivation, socialization, no commute (Way, 2017). As she explained each of these, she outlined the importance of relationships, the interconnectedness of their "school" work and lived experiences, and spirituality.

Australian homeschooling mother Sara has posted on her blog the questions she asked herself when she was considering homeschooling, and how that translated into her current beliefs and aspirations as a home educating mother. She questioned the age expectations for children attending school, straying from the norm, what 'education' means to her, and what she

wanted childhood to look like for her children. She discussed the relationships that are built with their immediate and extended family because of homeschooling, and how they connect with nature. The freedom for her children to go at their own pace, how homeschooling offers them "a life of loving learning together and inspiring each other, of questioning and curiosity, of witnessing them grow and discover. A well rounded education in more than just academics" (Sara, 2014). With these reflections she has offered her beliefs and aspirations for home education:

I believe…

- That children are whole people from the moment they're born, and are worthy of the same respect as adults
- That children can learn without punishment
- That learning without school is the best way to educate my children
- That children are more capable than people believe
- That what children need most is love, respect, understanding, freedom, and trust
- That we need to protect childhood
- That you can not spoil a baby
- That raising children is the best time of my life
- That life can be exactly as you imagine, if you're brave enough to try

I aspire to…

- Show people what home education *really* looks like
- Make people question
- Dispel some myths about unschooling
- Encourage more respect for children and childhood

- End childism
- Raise strong confident girls
- Live my dreams. (Sara, 2014)

These affirmations provide insights into Sara's motivations for home educating, and have elements of a holistic worldview. She has considered relationships, nature, awe and reverence, and I would argue she has considered the spirituality and wholeness of her children with the affirmations she has declared.

Canadian homeschooling mother Denise Faccini Bowman has described her home schooling lifestyle as "Wabi Wonderful" (Faccini Bowman, 2016). As she has explained, a Wabi wonderful life is one that celebrates everyone's unique gifts and flaws:

> There are so many reasons I love homeschooling; family-time, a custom-tailored education, character building moments, and frankly most (though not all) of the time, it's a lot of fun! It was hard at first to choose just one word, but as I reflected I realized that one of the big reasons we love our homeschool life is that it gives us the chance to fully appreciate the "*Wabi*" in it all.
>
> You may be asking; "What is this "Wabi" you speak of?" I first learned of the term in one of my all time most favourite books, They Have a Word For It. This book explores terms that don't have any direct equivalent in English. Here, in an excerpt from the book, is a description of what Wabi means:
>
> > To many people, who see the world through modern sensibilities, beauty is represented by … technological sleekness, smoothness, and symmetry… A highly prized Japanese teacup, which might fetch tens of thousands of dollars from a collector, might be very simple, roughly

> fashioned, asymmetrical, and plainly coloured. It would not be uncommon to find a crack. The crack –*the beautiful, distinctive, aesthetic flaw that distinguishes the spirit of the moment in which the object was created from all other moments in eternity* might indeed be the very feature that would cause a connoisseur to remark; "This pot has *wabi.*" (p. 75)

Or as our Canadian Bard, Leonard Cohen puts it; *"There is a crack in everything/That's how the light gets in."*

How do I see the *wabi* in our homeschooling? It is in the idea that we have the time together to create and appreciate those authentic moments; in the learning, in the playing, in the daily dross of chores, in the moments of failure and in the moments of joyful success, all of these factors come together in a completely singular manner. Our education is not institutionalized or packaged to conform to a preconceived norm, and it includes all aspects of life. I don't have to try and polish it to an outwardly impressive glow, in its' roughness we see beauty. As we travel this learning journey together, we have the freedom of a quantity of time that lets us create and appreciate who we are, both in relation to each other and individually. My children have learned well, that I am not the perfect Stepford Mother/Teacher, and my children are not perfect, factory made, automated prodigies, in this we are the same as all mothers and all children. We each have unique gifts and flaws. The way homeschooling allows us to celebrate the gifts and work through the flaws as we learn, brings us to the beauty of *wabi*.

In our homeschool we have seen the light of forgiveness, reconciliation, perseverance, creativity, and so on flow through the cracks of stubbornness, short tempers, defiance, impatience, a desire to give up and so on.

> If *wabi* is about loving the whole unique entity in a way that sees the beauty of things that are still imperfect and still incomplete, if it is a humble loveliness, one that does not depend on conventions or a standardized target that must be obtained, well then the homeschool life is the perfect place to experience this type of beauty. (Faccini Bowman, 2016)

In this personal and reflective post, we see how Faccini Bowman values the interconnectedness of life on many levels, and celebrates the awe and reverence of daily life, providing a connections to a holistic worldview.

Ana Willis is a homeschooling mother and blogger residing in Canada who created a post entitled "31 reasons I love homeschooling" (Willis, 2016). Through these reasons, we gain insights into what she values as a homeschooling mother and how these values relate to a holistic worldview. These reasons reference spirituality, relationships, wholeness, and the interconnectedness of life and include, in part: living and learning with nature, following curiosity and kids learning styles, character and responsibility, flexibility, a worldview perspective, a missions perspective, and community (Willis, 2016).

American home educating mother Mary Prather has posted on her blog her reasons for home educating her children, and passion for the way of life she is providing for her children. These passages provide a glimpse of her perspective as a homeschooling mother:

> It is IMPERATIVE that we raise thinking, discerning children—citizens who will not blindly accept what others tell them, but who will listen and weigh what they are hearing against their own internal sense of truth—their own moral compass.
>
> We homeschool because we want our children to see BOTH sides of an argument and evaluate them equally.

> We homeschool because we believe in giving our children a chance to be their own people—and to not always follow the crowd.
>
> We homeschool because we want to cultivate compassion, quiet contemplation, and thoughtfulness for those around us.
>
> We homeschool because we are fighting for our kids hearts and minds. (Prather, 2016)

With these statements, we see how this mother has considered the interconnectedness of life and her children's relationships, and how they relate to her the wholeness of her children. In addition, Prather discusses spirituality on her blog and its importance to their homeschooling life.

Canadian Lisa Marie Fletcher writes a blog as a resource for Canadian homeschooling families. A post on her blog entitled "My top 10 words for new homeschoolers," Fletcher provided a glimpse into the realities of homeschooling life (Fletcher, 2015). As I read this post, I see the references to the interconnectedness of the homeschooling lifestyle, and celebrating awe and reverence. Fletcher's 10 words are relax, play, ask, believe, support, network, enjoy, learn, listen, and frugality. She has reminded homeschoolers to have a faith in themselves and the choices they are making, to find community, and to appreciate the awe and reverence that comes with daily life as a homeschooling mother.

Canadian Rebecca Spooner was home educated as a child and has chosen to provide her children with the opportunity to homeschool. Her reflections tie her positive experiences being homeschooled with her current motivations, to provide a picture of her motivations for home educating. In this excerpt we see her holistic worldview when she discussed protecting her children's wholeness:

> Because they are homeschooled, in their day to day environment, my kids don't ever have to feel dumb, inadequate, unsure of themselves, embarrassed, self conscious, bullied, unsafe, or confused. They are comfortable 100% of the time. They are safe and secure in who they are and are free to express themselves in any way without fear of rebuttal or what people will think of them. Does this mean I protect my kids from the real world? Absolutely not! At this age, they still experience all those things in various groups or outings. Such as group classes they are involved in, friendships outside of our family, church, heck even the playground! They have felt bullied or dealt with kids that they just didn't know how to handle. They have dealt with peer pressure and been embarrassed or unsure of themselves. That is life, that is childhood. But it is not in their face every single day. And because of this, they are incredibly sure of themselves and self-confident. (Spooner, 2017)

In addition, she has discussed spirituality on her blog and how it relates to her homeschooling views.

Finally, the U.S.-based homeschooling community Wild + Free provides a space for homeschooling families to connect and share in their holistic homeschooling worldview. Wild + Free's founder, Ainsley Arment, has introduced her community with the following excerpt:

> Henry David Thoreau wrote, "All good things are wild and free."
>
> This quote is the inspiration for the Wild + Free community because it depicts an emerging group of mothers and homeschoolers who want their children to not only receive a quality education, but also to experience the adventure, freedom, and wonder of childhood.

> For as long as humans have lived on this earth, children have been schooled at home. Still, we homeschooling mamas often feel like pioneers forging a new path for the next generation.
>
> It's not easy, but with a community of women to support and encourage each other, we're going to make it and have incredible stories to share and inspire. Here's to being a pioneer! (Arment, n.d.)

With her site, Arment has focused on relationships, nature, a child's wholeness, the interconnectedness of life, and spirituality, each demonstrating the holistic worldview.

Miller has articulated two fundamental principles of holistic education, and they work in dynamic balance: "We start with the child, not abstractly but in reality—with the living child. But then we respond to the child, guided by a sensitive awareness of the world" (Miller, 2000, p. 70). These mothers have considered their children and their values on living and learning, and made the decision to home educate. In their posts we see their intentions with their children and their "sensitive awareness of the world," as they consider wholeness, interconnectedness, awe and reverence, and spirituality. Furthermore, as Miller (2000) has affirmed, "in holistic education, academics are secondary to human relationship. Curriculum is secondary to connection, or direct experience rooted in caring" (p. 72). The priority of these mothers is their relationship with their children, their children's wholeness, and their children's interconnectedness with family, community, nature, and their spirituality. I believe these mothers are demonstrating a holistic worldview.

Conclusion

As we see from the aforementioned excerpts from the blogs of homeschooling mothers, they are reflecting on their values, and basing their decision to home educate on the values they

hold. For these mothers, their decision to home educate is multidimensional and holistic. The reflections these mothers offer are not guided by research questions or surveys, but personal reflections based on their experiences. As Miller (2000) has related, “meaning emerges in context, in experience; holistic education is therefore essentially a responsiveness to the wholeness of experience as we live it in particular times and places” (p. 3). Within the context of these mothers’ particular times of writing, we see the holistic nature of their homeschooling lifestyles.

From my personal perspective, I can relate to some of these women and their motivations for home educating. I am engaging in holistic homeschooling, at this stage of my life, and interrelatedness, awe and reference, spirituality, and wholeness are a part of our approach to homeschooling. As Miller (2000) has explained, holistic homeschooling is not a theory or method to be followed unquestionably, rather it is a lifestyle:

> The art of holistic education involves responding authentically—that is, from wholeness and balance—to the children, to the subject matter, and to the social/cultural milieu of the living situation without having to follow a theory or method—or mandated standards—that rigidly dictate what one must or must not do. *This* is freedom in education. (p. 101)

Within this lifestyle, I am not striving to shape children into “some idealistic pattern” (Krishnamurti, 1953, p. 23). As Krishnamurti (1953) has reasoned, “when one follows a method, even if it has been worked out by a thoughtful and intelligent person, the method becomes very important, and the children are important only as they fit into it” (p. 25). With holistic homeschooling in our home, our children are offered the opportunity to homeschool, with the freedom to attend school if they choose.

As Ricci and Pritscher (2015) described of holistic pedagogy, "Our preference is to create truly learner centred, democratic spaces where people's minds, bodies, emotions, and spirits are nurtured and respected; as opposed to spaces of control, oppression, and abuse" (p. 217). This too, is what we are striving for as a home educating family. With these reflections, values and wishes for our children are discussed, but as Ricci and Pritscher (2015) have emphasized, the interconnectedness of a holistic worldview includes parents too:

> Parents should not forget that they are humans with needs and that their well-being is just as important as that of any other being or thing in the universe. If they are interested in quality willed learning, they will not forget to love, trust, respect, and have care and compassion for themselves as well. Being a parent does not mean that you sacrifice all of yourself for another but what it does mean is that you live harmoniously with the universe and all things in it. (p. 210)

As I explored my journals and lived experiences in the previous chapter, I discussed my experiences as a homeschooling mother, how my decisions stem from my values, and how living in accordance with my values positively affects my well-being. My intention with holistic homeschooling is to honour my mind, body, and spirit, as well as our children's.

In my discussion of maternal desire and self-determination theory, I have reasoned that by choosing to engage in a relationship with our children, I am contributing to my well-being. In my daily experiences as a homeschooling mother, I experience awe and reverence with the joy that our children bring me. My wholeness, including my mind, body, and spirit, are honoured by choosing to leave my career in the teaching profession and stay home with our children.

The connections between self-determination theory and ethic of care remind me of the interrelatedness of the holistic worldview. I value self-determination in my own life, and it is a

gift I wish to give our children. Ethic of care and self-determination theory allow my relationship of care with our children to be respectful, and honour the wholeness of our children. Our children's wholeness is honoured as we follow a willed curriculum approach to home education and offer our children freedom and autonomy.

My reflections on maternal desire and ethic of care highlight the relationship I wish to have with our children. Again, the interconnectedness of the holistic worldview is evident in the caring relationship I strive for with our children. The relationship I strive for is based on love and wholeness, and I am reminded that "each persons' wholeness needs to be honoured and supported, that we need to treat each person with reverence" (Koegel & Miller, 2003, p. 14).

The decision to homeschool is a lifestyle decision based on values. From my perspective as a homeschooling mother, and the perspectives of the aforementioned mothers within this chapter, the decision to home educate is based on a holistic worldview. As Miller (2016) has related, this worldview is based on interconnectedness:

> A holistic perspective is rooted in an epistemology of wholeness, context, and interconnectedness. Holistic thinking asserts that all phenomena are meaningful, and hence most fully knowable, in terms of contexts that hold their relationships to other phenomena. Nothing is whole in isolation. (p. 78)

As I consider homeschooling at this time in our lives, I consider my values as a homeschooling mother, our children's values and wishes, family, community, humanity, nature, and the universe. Within the context of this study, some of these aspects of our lifestyle are discussed. These elements of my lifestyle, together with awe and reverence, spirituality, and wholeness are all a part of the interconnectedness that is holistic homeschooling.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to explore my values as a homeschooling mother, and how they contribute to my motivations for offering homeschooling to our children. Throughout this discussion I have used Neuman and Aviram's (2003) holistic homeschooling, and considered the interrelatedness of my homeschooling lifestyle at this time in my life. Moreover, I have explored how living in accordance with my values affects my motivations, relationships, and personal well-being. I have used a qualitative interpretive methodology, narrative inquiry, to conduct this study, and personal journals collected since 2012 have provided an in-depth source of data. Narrative frameworks and analysis of narratives were used throughout the interpretation of data. Embracing a narrative ontology, I have entered my story in the midst. I have emerged from my story with a retelling and a reinterpretation of my experiences and reflections. Maternal desire, self-determination theory, and ethic of care were used as tools to explore my values. Exploring these theories in relation to my experiences has illuminated the harmony, conflicts, and connections that stem from my values, and offered insight into aspects of my holistic worldview. As I have developed an understanding of my holistic worldview and how it has contributed to my motivations to offer homeschooling to our children, I see the significance of interconnectedness, awe and reverence, spirituality and wholeness on my experiences. My story has been entered in the midst, and the personal reflections I have shared offer a glimpse of my life as a homeschooling mother at this stage of my life.

My story is presented as a contribution to the existing literature discussing families' motivations for homeschooling, and as an invitation to readers for connection and interpretation. Davies and Aurini (2003) have observed that more and more families are choosing "alternate forms of schooling that depart from mass 'one best systems.' This growing pluralism is imbuing

homeschooling with greater legitimacy" (p. 63). The choice has moved beyond choosing between schools, to "*whether* schools" (Nemer, 2002, p. 1). The growth of the homeschooling movement "merits both the respect of regulators and the further attention of researchers" (Basham, 2001, p. 16). Neuman and Aviram's (2003) holistic homeschooling offers an alternative approach to exploring families motivations for homeschooling.

Holistic homeschooling provides an interesting and comprehensive picture of the homeschooling phenomenon, through a prism of connection. This prism of connection acknowledges the interconnectedness of the values that shape the homeschooling lifestyle. As Neuman and Guterman (2017) have reasoned, exploring holistic homeschooling is a relevant contribution to the existing literature:

> Exploring homeschooling beyond its pedagogical aspect enables us to look at it as part of much broader social trends and in the overall context of human existence in terms of life and education—its connection to our past, what it means in the present, and perhaps also how it might help shape our future. (p. 165)

This qualitative interpretive self-study offers a personal and in-depth look at my motivations for offering homeschooling to our children at this time in my life. By using Neuman and Aviram's (2003) holistic homeschooling as an outlook for this study, I have explored how my values have shaped the prism of connection within my holistic homeschooling lifestyle.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Self-study work provides a valuable contribution to research, by offering an in-depth and personal account to existing literature. Writing about my own experiences, and with retrospect, offers a perspective to this study that could not have been obtained through a researcher-participant relationship. The act of storying, and restorying, brings insight and interpretation to my experiences and provides work that is "emotionally as well as intellectually interesting"

(Conle, 2000, p. 190). A limitation of self-study work, is that one voice is represented. As a single representive of the homeschooling comminity, the goal of this work has not been to produce answers that are universal and generalizable. Rather, as de Marneffe (2004) has articulated, "I intend to evoke readers' awareness of their own desires, not to offer my personal path as a one-size-fits-all response to such an awareness" (p. 8). This story is written to be an addition to the collective literature written on families' motivations for home education.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the holistic homeschooling lifestyle, more voices are needed within the collective literature. As previously discussed, homeschooling reaches all members of the family, and diverse aspects of their daily lives (Neuman & Guterman, 2017). In addition, As Lois (2017) has observed, there is a "scholarly trend of degendering homeschooler's motivations," and this may be masking potentially important ways gender plays a role in parents' decisions to homeschool" (p. 188). Moreover, as Lois (2017) has argued, by personalizing and gendering homeschooling families' accounts, the literature collective will be enriched:

> Not only will this illuminate some of the subtleties in mothers' experiences within the most common homeschooling family-configuration (stay-at-home, married, heterosexual), it will also allow researchers to give more attention to the experiences of fathers, single parents, and LGBTQ-identified parents. (p. 204)

Personal and in-depth accounts from homeschooling mothers, fathers, and children, would offer rich and multidimensional perspectives. Furthermore, these perspectives would add to the growing body of literature that acknowledges the diversity of the homeschooling community.

As Miller (2000) has affirmed, "as human beings, there are always blind spots to our knowledge of the world" (p. 116). As I present my interpretations within this study, I maintain a holistic worldview, however, this story has been written from the midst of my experiences and I

have provided a contextual interpretation. As Miller (2016) has reasoned, all knowledge is interconnected and contextual:

> Knowledge is not static but fluid; knowing requires an ongoing dialogue, a questioning and inquisitive attitude, an openness to new experience. Knowing is a moral and spiritual endeavor; in giving meaning to the world we define our relationship to it and act upon those relationships. (p. 213)

As I conclude, I invite readers to join me with in this "developing, incomplete and evolving situation" and ask them to "'re-think' and 're-evaluate' their own views, prejudices, and experiences" (Kim, 2016, p. 235).

Implications

Although this is a personal story, there are practical implications from the interpretations I have presented. I have endeavoured to share, that from my personal account of my experiences as a homeschooling mother, and from the excerpts presented from other mother's choosing to home educate their children, we homeschooling mothers embody a holistic worldview. Our specific values and motivations may not be the same, but we acknowledge the interconnectedness of life, want to inspire our children with awe and reverence, consider spirituality, and honour the wholeness of our children. For future scholarly research, this representation may be a springboard for future studies. However, more importantly, I feel that this understanding may be used to foster a sense of community amongst mothers who have chosen to home educate, nurturing connection, conversation, and understanding.

Conclusion

My intention with this study was to shape an in-depth personal account of the values that I hold, and how they have contributed to my decision to offer our children the opportunity to homeschool. As Neuman and Guterman (2017) have claimed, homeschooling is more than a

pedagogical choice, it is "associated with diverse aspects of daily lives" (p. 160). By revisiting my personal journals, I have been able to explore aspects of my daily life as a homeschooling mother and reflect on the interconnectedness of my homeschooling lifestyle, at this stage of my life. With an emergent qualitative study, the intent is not to answer all of the research questions completely, rather to share in the journey and exploration of the reflective research process. In keeping with the narrative inquiry methodology, engaging in this academic exercise has been "soul work," and provided me with a deeper understanding of my values, and how they affect my well-being. Furthermore, it has contributed to the homeschooling literature on families' motivations for homeschooling, and offered a place of connection with other homeschooling families. As I invite readers to engage in "meaning making" with me, I am not seeking complete answers, rather "*processes* of living, knowing, and loving" (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009; de Marneffe, 2004). As de Marneffe (2004), explained, "we seek after authentic relatedness with other people. We seek to get beyond appearances, and plumb the depths" (p. 321). As I move forward on this journey I maintain an awareness of my values as a homeschooling mother and my holistic worldview, moreover, I maintain an awareness of the caring relationship I strive to maintain with our children.

As I conclude this study, I offer a final reflective journal on my experiences as a homeschooling mother at this time in my life:

> We are about to enter another "school year." If our children were in school, they would be going into grades 2 and 3. We are aware of this, but do not follow the expectations and curriculums specifically. We don't even follow the school year calendar that closely as we have been living and learning all summer. That is one of the many gifts of this lifestyle. It is another example of the interconnectedness of this life, as we do not separate learning from living. I have presented our children with a new opportunity for

alternative education in our community. A Forest School is opening this autumn, and children can choose to attend one or two days a week. I shared this with them so they could be aware of their options and decide if that was something they would be interested in participating in. The children are in small groups and spend the entire day outdoors, all seasons. According to the Forest School model, the program is to be child-led. To me, it seemed like something they would enjoy—spending time with other children in nature. Surprisingly, neither of them was interested. Although our youngest child loves being in nature, he often says he prefers to be home and finds our way and pace of life relaxing; I was not as surprised he was not interested. However, it was our oldest child who I expected to be interested, and he was not either. He has told me he does not want someone else to dictate when he is in or out of doors, when he eats, plays, and how he is to spend his days. Oh how he has embraced a self-determined way of life! I am happy with their choice, whatever it may be. We enjoy getting out into nature every day, but we choose when, where, and how we do it. I feel that if I did not share this alternative schooling opportunity with them, I was not presenting them with all of the options and allowing them to make an informed decision about homeschooling. I do love spending time with them and having them home. But, I want it to be their choice in how they are living and learning. If I were not open and honest with them about these things, I feel I would be disrespecting them and their journey. With this, we move into another year at home together. They have expressed interest in more of a routine for the year, and we will see how it unfolds this fall with the topics they wish to explore. As I was writing the other day, from my window I could see them returning from a walk with their father. They were running up the hill through the trees and grasses to the house and their rosy

faces lit up when I hollered “hello” out the window to them. When their faces lit up, my heart lit up. These relationships, the joy, the time together, these are the gifts that I treasure at this stage of life, from this way of life. As long as they are happy at home, I am happily here with them. (Personal journal, August 25, 2017)

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Appendix A: REB Final Report

Project Info

File No:101081

PI: Ricci Carlo(Schulich School of Education)

Project Title: Holistic homeschooling: A narrative inquiry into a mother's motivations for home educating
Submitted:2017/12/19 01:26 PM

Submitted by: Brooke Haugh

Event No:101081-27164

1. COMPLETION DATE

#	Question	Answer
1.1	Please provide the date you completed your research.	2017/12/12

2. PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

#	Question	Answer
2.1	Provide the number of participants that have completed the study	1 (myself for self-study), 6 for potential of self-identification
2.2	Advise the number of participants that have withdrawn from the study.	0
2.3	If the withdrawal rate was higher than anticipated, please describe any know circumstances.	

3. PROJECT INFORMATION

#	Question	Answer
3.1	Have any research participants suffered any serious or unexpected harm?	No
3.2	Have any ethical concerns arisen while conducting this research?	No
3.3	Since the original ethics approval was granted, have there been any unidentified risks or benefits to participants?	No
3.4	If you answered Yes to any of the above questions, please provide details and what safeguards were provided to participants.	

4. RECORD RETENTION

#	Question	Answer
4.1	Please provide specific details as to the disposal of data (WHO, WHAT & HOW) collected in this project (records, video, audio, data etc.) and/or the time frame for record retention?	The data are personal journals and they will not be destroyed.

Appendix B—Informed Consent Form

There is potential for your self-identification in a research study entitled:

HOLISTIC HOMESCHOOLING: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO A MOTHER'S MOTIVATIONS FOR HOME EDUCATING

This study is being conducted by Brooke Haugh from the Schulich School of Education at Nipissing University. The results of this study will be used by Brooke Haugh in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Educational Sustainability) at Nipissing University.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please feel free to contact my research supervisor: Dr. Carlo Ricci at

The purpose of this study is to explore my personal values and how they have motivated me to offer the choice of homeschooling to my children. The current research conducted on homeschooling families' motivations does not include personal in-depth accounts from homeschooling parents. My study will offer an in-depth personal perspective to the existing research.

The data for this study will be taken from my personal journals. At times, my documented personal experiences include references to friends and family. Out of respect, when I write my manuscript I will be taking the following steps to protect the identity of those in my life:

- All personal identifiers including names, physical descriptions, locations, personal vignettes, and comments will be removed.
- Any references to children, family, and friends are generic references of a "child," a "mother," a "father," a "friend," and so on.

Even with the above steps being taken, there is potential for your identification within my manuscript. I have included with this letter the section in my journals that includes references to my experiences with you and how they will be modified to protect your identity. Please review this attachment and consider your consent to being involved in this study. This study is intended for use in a dissertation for partial fulfillment of a degree from Nipissing University; however, it may also be used in future presentations, articles, or other publications.

In addition, upon completion of my manuscript, I will provide you with any sections that you are referenced in for your review. You may withdraw your consent at any time throughout this study, up until publication.

Given the personal nature of this study, I have provided you with the following resources for counselling services if you feel they are needed:

- The Ontario Psychological Associations searchable database of psychologists: http://www.psych.on.ca/Utilities/Find-a-psychologist.aspx
- On-line e-counselling services: https://www.shepellfgiservices.com/ec/index1.asp.

You have the right to withdraw at any time without penalty or consequence; Participants are under no obligation to participate; are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice to pre-existing entitlements, up until publication.

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Participant consent:

As a participant in this research project, I clearly understand what I am agreeing to do, and that I am free to decline involvement or withdraw from this project at any time, and that steps are being taken to protect me. I have read this Consent Form and have had any questions, concerns or complaints answered to my satisfaction. I have been provided a copy of this letter.

If you agree, please initial:______

Parental or Legal Guardianship Consent (for minors):

As a parent or legal guardian of the child participating in this research study, I clearly understand what I am agreeing to do, and that I am free to decline my child's involvement or withdraw him/her from this project at any time; and that steps are being taken to protect my child. I have read this Parent(s) or Legal Guardian(s) Consent Form and have had any questions, concerns or complaints answered to my satisfaction. I have been provided with a copy of this letter.

If you agree, please initial:______

Name (please print):______________________________

Signature:______________________________________

Date:________________________

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Nipissing University's Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:

Ethics Administrator, Nipissing University, 100 College Drive, North Bay, ON P1B 8L7

or ethics@nipissingu.ca.