

A Descriptive Survey of Why Parents Choose Hybrid Homeschools

Introduction

Several factors in American education policy have been converging to cause parents to seek out new options for their children's schooling. A consensus among elite policymakers has emerged, focusing on "college and career readiness," along with a push for more centralized, standardized practices, such as the Common Core State Standards. At the same time, however, more choice options are becoming available to parents, including online options, more charter schools, a greater number of various private choice programs within the states, and a growing acceptance of homeschooling. One option that has also been growing in popularity, alongside the growth in full-time homeschooling, is the concept of *hybrid homeschools*. This study is a descriptive survey which explores the reasons parents in the metropolitan area of a city in the state of Georgia in the southeastern United States say they choose to send their children to *hybrid home schools*. *Hybrid home schools* for the purposes of this study are schools in which students attend school with other students for two or three days per week in traditional classroom settings, and are homeschooled the balance of the week. These are not online schools, but are instead a combination of homeschooling and brick-and-mortar schooling, which give students the experiences of being homeschooled as well as the experience of having a traditional classroom setting with teachers and other students. Often these schools are called *university model schools*. Some of the schools in this study use that term. "University Model Schools," however, is also a brand name; one school in this study is a formal "University Model School," another uses the term informally, and the others do not use it at all. The term *hybrid homeschool* will be used hereafter to include all such schools which follow this organizational structure. While work has been done on reasons parents choose private schools, or homeschooling, very little has been done to explore hybrid homeschools and their particular appeals, specifically.

To learn parents' stated preferences, an electronic survey was sent to four schools' respective lists of parents. This paper addresses three questions: 1. What are the characteristics of families who choose to send their children to hybrid homeschools? 2. What do these parents say they value as part of a hybrid homeschool education? 3. What sources of information do these parents say they seek out and value as they make their decision about this school option?

Literature Review

Very little work has been done to study hybrid homeschools specifically. These schools have grown from the homeschooling movement, from the traditional private school sector, and, more recently, from the public sector, due to improvements in technology. Examining this phenomenon by comparing hybrid schools to homeschooling groups, and also to outgrowths of private and public models will help define it. Some work has been done on university model schools, which are a type of hybrid homeschool, and so those schools as well some particular public school analogs are the closest comparisons to this phenomenon as a whole in the literature. Finally, work on the reasons parents choose homeschooling or choose private schools

can help to indirectly address the central question in this study: why do parents choose hybrid schools for their children?

Homeschooling:

The homeschooling population in the U.S. has been larger than other segments of the school choice movement, such as the charter school population, for some time (Murphy 2012; Bauman 2002). Ray (2011) estimated the homeschooling population at over 2 million students. Recent estimates suggest approximately 3 percent of school-aged children in America are homeschooled; in Georgia estimates range from between approximately 50,000-73,000 students being homeschooled statewide (Coalition for Responsible Home Education, 2011). A fraction of these students would be attending hybrid homeschools and registered as homeschoolers with the state, depending on the structure of their particular school.

Murphy (2012) has written the most comprehensive account of the various forms of homeschooling now current in the U.S. Murphy describes four frameworks for parents' reasons for choosing homeschooling, and categorizes them as:

- religion;
- academic deficiencies in the assigned public school;
- social/environmental problems in the assigned public school; and
- other family-based motivations (such as a desire to be with one's children, or for special needs or other special circumstances).

All of these frameworks appear in some form in the parent responses to this survey, and will be discussed below.

Hybrid Schools:

Hybrid homeschools might be considered more formal, structured versions of homeschool cooperatives ("co-ops"). Muldowney (2011) has written about the nature of homeschool co-ops specifically, though she notes that the existing research on them is minimal. She writes that, "According to Topp, one benefit of joining a co-op is that homeschoolers have an opportunity to be around people with similar values since co-ops are formed by parents with likeminded goals. Co-ops also allow homeschooled children to socialize with similar-aged children and to get a 'taste' of group learning without being overwhelming (2008, 6)." (p. 35). Co-ops tend to be more ad hoc arrangements than the hybrid schools considered in this study. In co-op arrangements, students often take a select number of classes, and a driving reason is for some social interaction; hybrid schools are generally full-day schools on the days they are in session. The hybrid schools choose curriculum, hire teachers, set day-long schedules, etc., and generally take more of a leading role in academic instruction compared to co-ops. Still, the reasons for the existence of hybrid homeschools are similar in many ways, as noted below.

A common form of hybrid homeschool is the *University Model School* (UMS). *University model* is a brand name, which many of these schools formally adopt, though others call themselves "university-model schools" more informally. UMS schools follow a college-style schedule, with students taking some classes as a group, and working at home on other days. The schools emphasize character development, parental involvement, and a college-preparatory

curriculum. Little research has been done on these schools, though some that has been done suggests that graduates are similar to many homeschoolers in terms of their reasons for choosing such an arrangement and in terms of their academic success – a desire for parents to have more influence over their children’s academic development and slightly better than average academic scores on standardized tests (Brobst 2013).

Recently, hybrid schools have appeared in the context of public schools as well, often driven by the improved quality and accessibility of technology. State-sponsored online schools such as the Florida Virtual School (Gaither 2009) are one example of the hybridization of schooling (though this school, fully online, does not typically include the physical classroom aspect the hybrid schools considered in this paper do). Another example, closer to the hybrid homeschools surveyed here, is that of at least one public school system experimenting with a very structured form of hybrid schooling. Forsyth County, Georgia schools recently experimented with a small, select group of high school juniors, allowing them to study in a synchronous online environment at home twice per week, and attend school as a traditional student the rest of the week (Wearne 2013). In addition, some public schools are beginning to use technology to eliminate snow day makeups and are having their students work from home when schools are closed, solving the problem of missed instructional time by using something of a temporary hybrid homeschool approach (Farr, 2015).

Finally, entities dubbed *micro-schools* have started appearing, often in technology industry centers such as Austin, Texas and the San Francisco Bay Area. These are mostly private schools, with different areas of curricular emphasis, but with structures similar to university-model/hybrid homeschools (Horn 2015). Ultimately, parents, school systems, and other organizations are experimenting with various methods of personalizing instruction, with a variety of motivations and formats.

What Parents Value:

A recent nationwide survey attempted to address what parents valued in their school options: most valued some version of academic success or “college and career readiness” (Zeehandelaar and Winkler, 2013). Indeed, that study classifies approximately 71 percent of parents (“Pragmatists,” “Test-Score Hawks,” and “Strivers,” in the paper’s terms) as mainly favoring some form of “college and career readiness” as their primary value. Ray (2015a) and Murphy (2012) have reported on the reasons parents specifically choose homeschooling as an option for their families, which often differ from the reasons public and private school parents gave to Zeehandelaar and Winkler. For example, respondents to Zeehandelaar and Winkler were much more likely to name academic success or “college and career readiness” as a value, rather than religious, family, or other social values suggested by Murphy’s four frameworks.

Schneider et al (2002), as well as Stewart and Wolf (2014) discuss the demand side of school choice, and have found that parents mostly prioritize issues other than test scores and other academic metrics when choosing schools. Similarly, Greene, et al (2015), and Greene, Kisida and Bowen (2014) have discussed schooling aspects that parents value other than typical academics or school structures (and which seem to have a positive academic impact as well) –

museum and live theater visits. Hybrid homeschools exist in between homeschools and traditional schools, and the motivations of parents to choose them – whether they act more like “test score hawks,” for example, more like poor or wealthy parents, or more like full-time homeschool parents has not been explored.

In a particular local context relevant to this study, Kelly and Scafidi (2013) surveyed low-income parents receiving tax credit scholarships in Georgia to attend private schools regarding what they valued in the private schools they chose, why they chose them, and what information parents valued in making their choices. Georgia’s Private School Tax Credit program allows individuals to receive state tax credits for donations to approved “Student Scholarship Organizations (SSOs). SSOs then pay out scholarships to (typically) low-income students to pay for the cost of private schools. These authors found that the parents in their survey typically valued issues such as school climate, discipline, safety, and smaller classes ahead of academic reasons such as test scores. Parents choosing schools in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, similarly, chose factors other than academics, including school location and extracurricular activities, ahead of academic performance (Harris and Larsen, 2015). Trivitt and Wolf (2011) and Cheng, et al (2015) examine the effects of branding on parents’ private school choices, among families participating in private choice programs, and find that certain brands do affect parents’ choice. The choices made by hybrid homeschool families, specifically, have not been examined.

Methods

The respondents to this survey were drawn from a convenience sample of parents of students in hybrid homeschools with the metropolitan area of a large southeastern city. Approximately 8 formal hybrid homeschools were identified around this area. All were contacted and invited to participate in this survey; four agreed. Three of these schools are nondenominational Christian schools, and the fourth is Catholic (though not affiliated with the Archdiocese). The schools served an average of 183 families, with a high of 353 and a low of 45. A link to a survey within an invitation to respondents (parents of students at each school) to participate was sent to the school leaders at the four schools and all four school leaders sent the invitation and link to their then-current list of parents. In total, approximately 700 families were contacted, and 136 surveys were completed, for a response rate of 19 percent. Although response rates for external online surveys are generally lower than for other types of surveys (Nulty, 2008), this rate is still low and may not warrant generalizations. The respondents are also very homogeneous, though there may be reasons for this, as discussed below.

The survey was modeled after Kelly and Scafidi’s (2013) survey, which asked parents of students receiving state tax credit scholarships in Georgia why they chose the particular private schools they did. The two surveys were likely given to very different sets of parents, as described below, though both attempted to learn why parents made the educational choices they did for their children. Parents in these hybrid homeschools likely considered the questions in very personalized contexts – the students in these schools come to them from full-time homeschool environments, from traditional public and private schools, and some have always

attended hybrid schools. When asked to compare their hybrid schools to other options, then, respondents likely had varying alternatives in mind. Both this survey and Kelly and Scafidi’s survey asked questions concerning income range, educational attainment, and other demographics. They also asked parents to choose and rank reasons regarding why they sent their children to a private school or, in this case, hybrid homeschool, or to add their own reasons. Finally, both surveys asked what kinds of information parents would seek out in making their choices.

Results

Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 reports summary demographic data for respondents.

Table 1
Summary Data for Respondents

Income	Percent
\$0-\$24,999	0.0
\$25,000-\$49,999	2.6
\$50,000-\$74,999	9.5
\$75,000-\$99,999	19.8
\$100,000-\$124,999	29.3
\$125,000-\$149,999	9.5
\$150,000-\$174,999	9.5
\$175,000-\$199,999	5.2
\$200,000 and up	14.7

Educational Attainment	Percent
Did not graduate high school	0.0
Graduated from high school	1.6
Some college	13.9
Undergraduate degree	50.8
Graduate or professional degree	33.6

Marital Status	Percent
Married	96.7
Not Married	3.3

Race/Ethnicity	Percent
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.8

Asian/Pacific Islander	0.0
Black or African American	3.3
Hispanic American	2.5
White/Caucasian	92.6
Multiple ethnicity/Other (please specify)	0.8

Urbanicity	Percent
Urban	0.0
Suburban	91.8
Rural	8.2

Most respondents to this survey reported a family income of in the \$100,000-\$124,999 range; the great majority of parents (84.4 percent) have at least an undergraduate degree. Respondents tended to be white (92.6 percent) and married (96.7 percent), and to live in a suburban area (91.8 percent). Kelly and Scafidi’s respondents, by comparison, had a lower income (57.3 percent earned \$60,000 or less), 68.4% had at least an undergraduate degree, 72.8% were “White or Asian” (racial/ethnic categories were slightly different between the two surveys), 73.1% were married, and 61.0% lived in a suburban area.

Reasons for Choosing a Hybrid Homeschool

The first research question this study analyzes is: Why do parents choose hybrid homeschools? To address this question, survey respondents were first asked the following: “There are many possible reasons why families send their children to a hybrid school, rather than to some other kind of school. Please select each of the following reasons you had for sending your child to a hybrid school (you may mark as many or as few reasons as applied to your situation).” Table 2 reports parents’ responses to this question.

Table 2

Answer Options	Response Percent
Religious education	81.7
Better learning environment	79.4
Smaller class sizes	79.4
Less time wasted during the school day	76.2
More individual attention for my child	64.3
Better education	59.5
Better preparation for college	54.8
More meaningful opportunities for parental involvement	54.8
More responsive teachers and administrators	53.2
Greater respect for my rights as a parent	53.2

Other students would be a better influence on my child	51.6
Better student discipline	46.8
Greater sense of community	46.8
More attention to the unique needs of my child	42.9
Improved student safety	38.9
Other parents would be more concerned about their children's education	38.1
Less gang activity	23.0
Other (please specify)	23.0
Higher standardized test scores	19.0
Would prefer full-time private school, but the hybrid is more affordable	14.3
More extracurricular opportunities	13.5
More tutorial and other supplemental learning services than at a five-day school	9.5

“Religious education” was listed as a reason by the highest percentage of respondents, which might be expected as all four schools are parochial. This is a reason similar to that stated most by parents in Ray’s (2015a) survey of African-American homeschooling families. This particular reason will be discussed more below. “Better learning environment” and “smaller class sizes,” the second- and third-most common choices for these respondents were the also among the three most-common choices for respondents to Kelly and Scafidi, and were within 2 percentage points in responses to both surveys. Respondents’ higher-ranked answers are similar to those given by homeschooling parents in general (Ray 2015b). It should be noted, however, that while nearly all of the respondents to Kelly and Scafidi have had some experience with traditional public schools (a requirement of the state tax credit scholarship program), many students attending these hybrid schools come to them from various environments: public schools, private schools, and full-time homeschools. For the purposes of these surveys, “Better learning environment,” for example, means better, in the responder’s opinion, than their other available school options or experiences.

The least-common reasons for choosing a hybrid school were “More tutorial and other supplemental learning services than at a five-day school” (9.5 percent) and “More extracurricular opportunities” (13.5 percent). Additionally, 14.3 percent of respondents reported that they “Would prefer full-time private school, but the hybrid is more affordable.” Finally, unlike Kelly and Scafidi, where the total was 34.6 percent, only 19.0 percent of respondents to this survey reported choosing hybrid homeschools for “Higher standardized test scores.”

“Other” reasons respondents provided involved items such as increased time with family, or influence by family (e.g., “Family as primary sphere of influence,” and “We chose a hybrid school so that we would remain the main influence in our children’s’ lives, they would have more time with siblings learning together, we would be able to partner with teachers in their education and have time to developed specific interests.) – “family” reasons were the most common “other” response. Additional “Other” reasons included religion more specifically (e.g., “Biblical world view,” as stated by two respondents); specifics about homeschooling (e.g.,

“homeschooling support”, and “No after school homework, as all is completed in school day”); and finally, general flexibility for non-academic pursuits (e.g., “Flexibility for travel and lifestyle,” and “schedule, my daughter is an elite gymnast”).

The following tables reflect additional questions about what parents valued in their hybrid homeschools. Table 3 reports parents’ responses to the question: “What is the MOST important reason for choosing a hybrid school for your child(ren)?”

Table 3

Answer Options	Response Percent
Other (please specify)	16.7
Better learning environment	13.0
Better education	13.0
Religious education	13.0
More individual attention for my child	8.7
More meaningful opportunities for parental involvement	5.8
Better preparation for college	5.1
Greater respect for my rights as a parent	5.1
Smaller class sizes	4.3
More attention to the unique needs of my child	3.6
Other students would be a better influence on my child	2.9
Less time wasted during the school day	2.9
Better student discipline	1.4
Would prefer full-time private school, but the hybrid is more affordable	1.4
Improved student safety	0.7
Greater sense of community	0.7
Other parents would be more concerned about their children’s education	0.7
More tutorial and other supplemental learning services than at a five-day school	0.7
More responsive teachers and administrators	0.0
Better teachers	0.0
Higher standardized test scores	0.0
Less gang activity	0.0
More extracurricular opportunities	0.0

In this case, the highest response was for “Other” reasons. As above, the most common “other” reasons in these responses were “family” reasons (e.g., “Spend more time with my children,” or “More time to build relationship with my child”), followed by homeschooling support or other education-specific reasons (e.g., “Balance of school and homeschool,” and “Looking for education model that promotes joy in learning vs. learning to pass a test”), and

finally, general flexibility (e.g., “More opportunities for real life learning, for example, via field trips”). Several respondents also named specifically religious or political reasons for making this choice. A sample of “Other” responses are categorized in Table 4. Versions of some responses (particularly the religious and political answers) were given by multiple respondents.

Table 4
“Other” Responses

Type of Reason	Respondents’ Stated Reasons
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend more time with my children • More family time • More time to build relationship with my child • More time at home with family • Retaining parental Influence is our primary reason. • Being the primary influence on our child during formative years • Family as primary sphere of influence
Homeschool Support/Education-Specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-traditional environment Classical, Catholic - creative, outside the box thinking • Homeschooling support • Balance of school and homeschool • Avoiding peer pressure at traditional school • The children as well as mom benefit from the rhythm of two days at school, three days at home. By being with other students those two days and being accountable to an outside teacher in addition to mom, my children get a better grasp of what personal responsibility is and apply it. • Looking for education model that promotes joy in learning vs. learning to pass a test • Next best thing to homeschooling
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule flexibility • More flexible schedule • More opportunities for real life learning, for example, via field trips • Flexibility for travel and lifestyle • Schedule, my daughter is an elite

	gymnast
Religious/Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biblical World View (multiple respondents) • No Common Core (multiple respondents)

Of the given response options, parents also said they valued a “better learning environment,” “better education,” and “religious education” as their next-most common choices. Those three answers (“better learning environment,” “better education,” and “religious education”) account for 39.0 percent of the Most Important reasons these respondents choose hybrid homeschools. No respondent chose “More responsive teachers and administrators,” “Better teachers,” “Higher standardized test scores,” “Less gang activity,” or “More extracurricular opportunities” as their Most Important reason.

Respondents were also asked to name their top five reasons for choosing a hybrid homeschool. Those results are reported in Tables 5.

Table 5

Answer Options	Response Percent
Better learning environment	60.0
Religious education	55.2
Smaller class sizes	48.8
Better education	44.8
Better preparation for college	31.2
More individual attention for my child	29.6
Greater respect for my rights as a parent	29.6
More meaningful opportunities for parental involvement	29.6
Less time wasted during the school day	24.0
Other (please specify)	24.0
More attention to the unique needs of my child	20.8
Other students would be a better influence on my child	19.2
More responsive teachers and administrators	16.0
Better student discipline	14.4
Greater sense of community	11.2
Improved student safety	8.0
Other parents would be more concerned about their children’s education	8.0
Would prefer full-time private school, but the hybrid is more affordable	8.0
Better teachers	6.4
More extracurricular opportunities	4.8
Less gang activity	1.6

More tutorial and other supplemental learning services than at a five-day school	1.6
Higher standardized test scores	0.8

“Better learning environment” (60.0 percent), “Religious education” (55.2 percent), “Smaller class sizes” (48.8 percent), “Better education” (44.8 percent), and “Better preparation for college” (31.2 percent) were the next five reasons listed by respondents. Overall, the fewest respondents said they valued “Better teachers” (6.4 percent), “More extracurricular opportunities” (4.8 percent), “Less gang activity” (1.6 percent), “More tutorial and other supplemental learning services than at a five-day school (1.6 percent), or “Higher standardized test scores” (0.8 percent) as one of the top five reasons for choosing a hybrid homeschool.

Information and Decisionmaking

In addition, the survey asked respondents about the types of information they would value and seek out in making the decision to send their children to a hybrid homeschool, as did Kelly and Scafidi (2013). In Table 6, respondents were asked, “What information about hybrid schools is most important in helping select the best private school for your child? (you may mark as many or as few reasons as applied to your situation).”

Table 6

Answer Options	Response Percent
The curriculum (i.e., content of instructional areas) and course descriptions	80.8
The ratio of students per teacher and the average class size	72.8
Evidence that the school is accredited by a recognized school accrediting agency	71.2
Whether the private school teaches your religion or any religion with which you are comfortable	67.2
The percentage of students who are accepted and attend college	53.6
The duration of the school year and the hours spent by the students in class	44.0
Evidence that the private school teaches character education	43.2
Whether parents have access to the head of school to express any concerns	35.2
The years of teaching experience and credentials of the teachers at the school	33.6
The disciplinary policy of the school	31.2
The financial condition of the school	25.6

The graduation rate for students attending the school	24.8
The quality and availability of extracurricular activities	24.8
The average performance on standardized tests by students in different grades	24.0
The colleges attended by graduates of the school	24.0
The percent of teachers and administrators who leave from year-to-year	24.0
The frequency and nature of disciplinary actions	16.8
The governance of the school, including the members of the board of trustees	16.0
Whether computers are used effectively in classroom instruction	8.0
Whether students have access to tablet, laptop, and classroom computers	7.2
Other (please specify)	7.2
The racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic makeup of the student population	4.8

Most respondents indicated that they would find value in information about a hybrid homeschool’ s curriculum, its class size and accreditation status, and its religious nature and success in sending graduates on to college. The five most-named responses in this survey are the same as the top five in Kelly and Scafidi’s survey (though in a different order). At least six respondents found value in every type of information suggested on the list, and nine respondents added others, most often a desire to have a strong parental influence within the context of the school and classroom environments (i.e., “The systems in place to make the partnership between parent and teacher work well,” and “The ability to have a say/influence in education. To be true partners with teachers at school”). One respondent also gave a more extensive answer to this question: “While the checkboxes above are important, many other factors are equally important: non-traditional/living books/original source documents, creativity in teaching (sometimes best teachers not those with teaching degrees/less lecture, more student initiative), less worksheets, less time on assessments, more ‘real’ learning, Socratic discussion, teaching students to think critically, not check boxes or just learn material for tests, opportunities for students to take courses of interest/use to them personally.”

Respondents were then asked to select the one most important piece of information in helping them choose their school: “What information about hybrid schools is MOST important in helping select the best hybrid school for your child?”

Table 7

Answer Options	Response Percent
Evidence that the school is accredited by a recognized school accrediting agency	26.1%

The curriculum (i.e., content of instructional areas) and course descriptions	25.2%
Whether the private school teaches your religion or any religion with which you are comfortable	25.2%
The ratio of students per teacher and the average class size	13.0%
The percentage of students who are accepted and attend college	5.2%
Other (please specify)	5.2%
The graduation rate for students attending the school	1.7%
The average performance on standardized tests by students in different grades	0.9%
The years of teaching experience and credentials of the teachers at the school	0.9%
Whether parents have access to the head of school to express any concerns	0.9%
The frequency and nature of disciplinary actions	0.9%
The disciplinary policy of the school	0.0%
Evidence that the private school teaches character education	0.0%
The quality and availability of extracurricular activities	0.0%
The colleges attended by graduates of the school	0.0%
The financial condition of the school	0.0%
Whether students have access to tablet, laptop, and classroom computers	0.0%
The percent of teachers and administrators who leave from year-to-year	0.0%
Whether computers are used effectively in classroom instruction	0.0%
The racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic makeup of the student population	0.0%
The governance of the school, including the members of the board of trustees	0.0%
The duration of the school year and the hours spent by the students in class	0.0%

When asked to name the most important piece of information they would use to make this decision, only three answers given by a quarter or more of respondents: evidence that the hybrid school is accredited, the content of the curriculum, and religious instruction with which the respondents are comfortable. 11 of the given responses were chosen by no respondents as the most important piece of information; in Kelly and Scafidi, all but two response options were selected at least once. Additional “other” responses to this question were focused on the content of a school’s curriculum, or the school environment, such as, “School's philosophy on education,” “the feeling of family - all the teachers care about my children,” “Their ability to support our Biblical world view,” or “the authentic teaching of the Catholic faith.”

Respondents were then asked about how they would obtain information about hybrid homeschools, how confident they felt about their ability to obtain it, and how a lack of information might affect their school choice: “What steps would you take to get desired information about hybrid schools? (you may select as many or as few steps as you choose).”

Table 8

Answer Options	Response Percent
Attend an information meeting for potential families sponsored by the school	95.1
Ask to tour the school	94.3
Review the school website in detail	94.3
Ask neighbors, friends, relatives, or other parents for their views	81.3
Review information available on the internet	74.0
Determine how convenient the private school is to where I live	67.5
Ask to observe a class being taught	45.5
Ask to meet privately with the head of school	42.3
Other (please specify)	4.9

Over 90 percent of respondents said they would attend an information meeting, ask to tour the school, and /or review the hybrid school’s website in detail. In Kelly and Scafidi, only asking to tour the school drew over 90 percent of respondents. Six respondents to this survey also said they would, for example, “review curriculum that is taught,” “talk to existing families that attend the school,” or “pray about it.”

Finally, respondents were asked whether they felt they could obtain the information they would need to make an informed decision, and what they would do if they could not obtain that information:

“In your experience, how confident are you that you could obtain the desired information about possible hybrid schools to which you might send your children?”

Table 9

Answer Options	Response Percent
I believe I could typically get enough information to make an informed decision	91.9
Unless the hybrid school provided me additional information, I would be unable to make an informed decision	8.1

Most respondents (91.9%) believed they could get enough information to make an informed decision about a particular hybrid homeschool. 83.3 percent said they were confident to Kelly and Scafidi.

“If a hybrid school declined to provide you with some of your desired information, would it impact your decision to enroll your child(ren) there?”

Table 10

Answer Options	Response Percent
It would impact my decision	72.1
It might impact my decision	27.0
It would not impact my decision	0.8

In addition, most respondents (72.1%) said it would affect their decision to attend a hybrid school if they could not get all of the information they desired, compared to 79.2 percent for Kelly and Scafidi.

Discussion

This study’s questions will be addressed in turn:

1. What are the characteristics of families who choose to send their children to hybrid homeschools?
2. What do these parents say they value as part of a hybrid homeschool education?
3. What sources of information do these parents say they seek out and value as they make their decision about this school option

Family Characteristics

1. What are the characteristics of families who choose to send their children to hybrid homeschools?

Respondents’ demographics are different from both the respondents in Kelly and Scafidi, and the overall demographics for their metropolitan area and state. They are typically married, white, and suburban, with a college degree and earn over \$100,000. While the demographics of the parents in this survey skew wealthier and more educated than those in the Kelly and Scafidi survey, and the response rate was somewhat low, there are reasons these parents likely do differ from Kelly and Scafidi’s respondents. Hybrid school parents bear the financial burdens that both

homeschool parents and private school parents face, to a degree. These parents must be available to homeschool their children (and so must have the means to support one parents staying home, or must have a relatively flexible job), and must pay tuition to the hybrid school.

These factors and the locations of these schools suggest that most of these students are likely coming from public school zones that would be considered “successful” in terms of academics, course offerings, etc. In fact, financial factors may partially help explain the fact that all of these schools are located in relatively wealthy areas. These families along several dimensions from the families in Kelly and Scafidi as noted above, although some of them also benefit from the same statewide tax credit program described in Kelly and Scafidi. As indicated in some survey responses, many of the families in this survey also come from full-time homeschooling environments. Also, although these parents are wealthier on average than are the parents in Kelly and Scafidi, many of them are not wealthy enough to send their children to full-time private school, especially if they have multiple children (as some parents noted in this survey). One school explicitly considers these middle-income families its target market, which may suggest an additional growth area for this type of school. Homeschool enrollment is rising, as is charter school enrollment, though charter school enrollment is not growing rapidly in suburban areas. Hybrid homeschools may be emerging in some instances to fill this demand for reasonably-priced school choice in the suburbs.

The Value of Hybrid Homeschools

2. What do these parents say they value as part of a hybrid homeschool education?

All four of Murphy’s (2012) motivational frameworks were given as answers by respondents for reasons they chose their hybrid schools. Based on the reasons respondents selected, it appears parents of hybrid homeschool students tend to value overall school structure (“Better learning environment,” “Better education,” etc.) over specific school outcomes (“Higher standardized test scores,” or “More extracurricular opportunities,” for example). Relatively few respondents listed aspects such as “Better student discipline,” “Improved student safety,” or “Less gang activity” compared to respondents to Kelly and Scafidi. No respondent in this survey listed higher standardized test scores as one of their top three reasons for choosing a hybrid homeschool, and only one respondent listed it in their top five (compare this to Zeehandelaar and Winkler, for whom 23 percent of parents were classified as “Test Score Hawks”). In addition, while 29.6 percent of respondents to this survey listed “More meaningful opportunities for parental involvement” as a top five reason in this survey, only 4.6 percent did so for Kelly and Scafidi. This suggests that these sets of parents have quite different motivations from each other in some ways. These findings are suggestive of similar discussions on the demand side of school choice, such as Harris and Larsen (2015), and support Stewart and Wolf’s (2014) findings that parents making school choices are not very motivated by test scores (compared to other things), and that they tend to prioritize their decision-making along Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Parents of students coming from lower-performing schools may be focused on, for them, the more pressing needs of safety and basic skills, while the parents in the market for hybrid homeschools,

having had those needs satisfied whether at home, or at their local private or public school, are looking for other things.

Finally, it is worth noting again that all of the schools in this study are explicitly religious. 81.7 percent of respondents listed religion as a reason they chose their hybrid homeschool, but only 55.2 percent listed “Religious education” as a top five reason, and fewer than 20 percent of responding parents included religion as the most important reason for choosing one of these schools, suggesting that religious education, while important to these parents, may not be as important as other, academic priorities (29.7 percent of respondents listed “Religious education” as a top five reason for Kelly and Scafidi, by comparison).

Sources of Information

3. What sources of information do these parents say they seek out and value as they make their decision about this school option?

The respondents to this survey reported that they would seek out and value information regarding a hybrid homeschool’s curriculum, class size, accreditation status, religious nature, and success in sending graduates on to college. These pieces of information are very similar to those reported as most important by the private school parents surveyed by Kelly and Scafidi. However, the parents in this survey seem to be more definite in what they felt was the “most important” piece of evidence. These parents rated accreditation, curriculum, and religion as their top priority more consistently than did the parents in Kelly and Scafidi. Some possible reasons for these differences may be that 1. the schools in this survey are all explicitly religious, though not all in the Kelly and Scafidi survey were; and 2. Georgia’s HOPE Scholarship program provides college tuition and book funding for students graduating from accredited programs. To the extent that students were coming to these hybrid schools from a full-time homeschooling environment, their parents may have been more sensitive to this requirement (Kelly and Scafidi’s respondents would have all come from public schools, per the regulations of Georgia’s K12 tuition tax credit program, and may have assumed their new schools were accredited). Both sets of parents seem confident that they could acquire enough information to make an informed decision about their school options.

Conclusion

More work would be useful in drilling down into hybrid homeschool parents’ responses to surveys like this in order to gain a fuller picture of their values and motivations. Interviewing hybrid homeschool parents (especially a group of parents who arrived at their school choices from a variety of other schooling options) would be a logical and likely fruitful next step in learning about such parents’ motivations. Other research paths would likely yield additional useful information. First, for example, because of the explicitly religious nature of the schools in this survey, one might expect a higher percentage of respondents to list that as a choice motivator. It would be useful to know more about this aspect of parental choice (and if, for

example, there is a gap between school founders/leaders, and the rest of the parent population at such schools). Second, several families indicated that they would prefer a full-time private education, but could not afford it. Given the large commitment even part-time homeschooling entails in terms of work, forgone income, etc., knowing more about how this set of families experience their hybrid homeschools would be edifying. These families likely differ qualitatively from those who would choose full-time homeschooling absent their hybrid schools. This suggests a third avenue: looking at the differences among the families who choose hybrid homeschools. Hybrid homeschools seem to attract families from a wide range of schooling experiences; parental motivations may differ along these lines depending on whether a family is choosing between a hybrid school vs. full-time homeschooling, or a hybrid school vs. a full-time private or public school, for example. Finally, issues such as curriculum, finances, and the push/pull of the motivations suggested by Murphy (2012) would add to the discussion around these schools.

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