



The Impacts of Homeschooling on the Social and Academic Life of College Students

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Research Question

How does homeschooling in high school affect student's social integration into college, and how can we minimize any negative effects or maximize any positive effects?



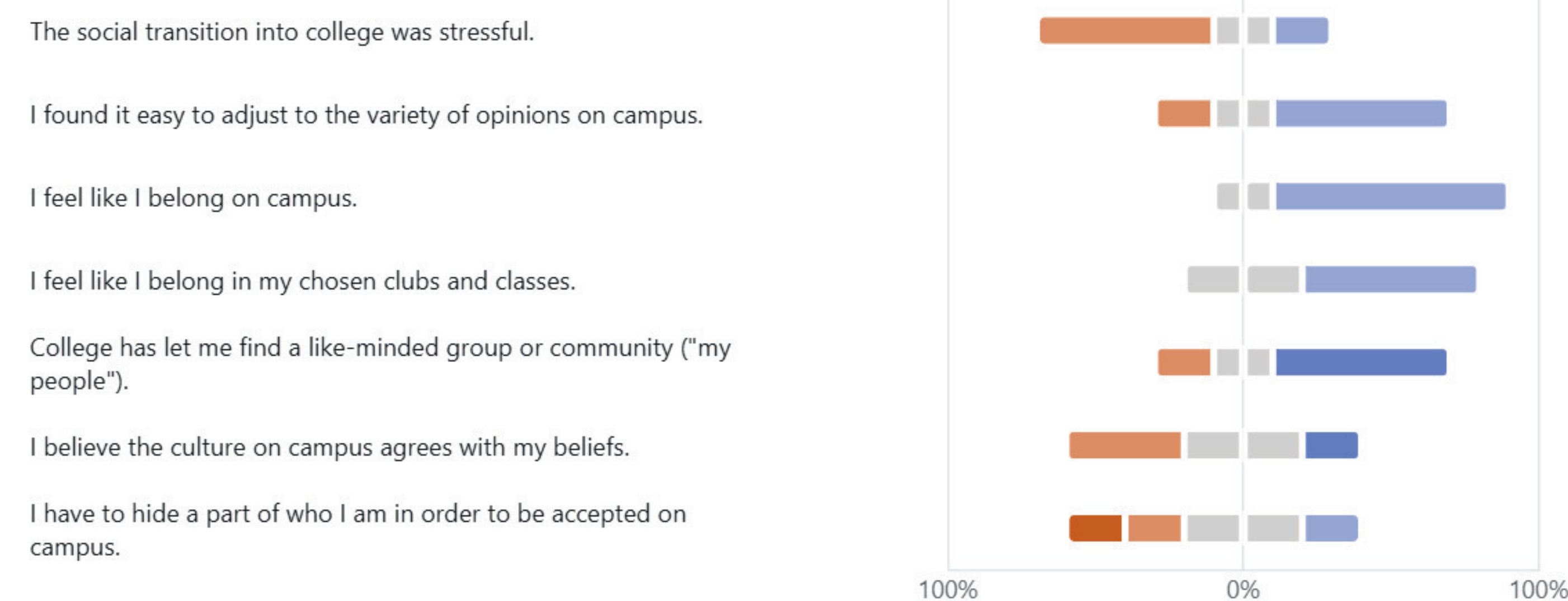
Abstract

Though there are test scores and quantitative data to demonstrate the positive effects of homeschooling on college academics, there are few studies that solely focus on the qualitative social effects of homeschooling. This study aimed to identify the effects of homeschooling on college freshmen and sophomores' social integration into university education and social circles, whether it was positive, negative, or null (no effect) through a combination of Likert-scale surveys and personal interviews.

Methods

My research can be divided into two parts; determining the common social issues faced by homeschoolers in their first year of attending public college and, secondly, creating a solution designed to preclude these issues early on. Firstly, I created a survey and spread it via snowball sampling to qualifying students - over the age of 18 and having attended the first year of higher education in a public college. In the survey, participants were asked both qualitative and quantitative questions concerning their homeschool experience and their experiences as a college freshman. Some questions were free response, some were Likert Scale (ranking), and some were quantitative multiple choice. I also gathered demographic information such as gender, race, and religion. All answers were anonymous, and no personal information such as name, address, or phone number will be asked for. After the survey was distributed, I interviewed a homeschool advocate and parent, Mary Beth Morris to gain insight on the effects, both positive and negative, of homeschool. I studied the survey results for correlations between the type of homeschool experience and the social issues reported by participants. I hypothesized that those who were involved in more extracurriculars or were involved in outside organizations had an easier time transitioning to college than those who were less involved.

● Strongly Disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral ● Agree ● Strongly Agree



Conclusion

The only criteria for participation in this study's survey was to have homeschooled prior to entering college. This makes the study's demographic data very intriguing; 100% of participants had a 3.7 college GPA or above, 100% took more than 6 official classes in homeschool, 100% were Christian, 100% spent 6 or more years homeschooling, and 100% were Caucasian. This supports other studies in the field that found ex-homeschoolers have very high test scores and GPAs in both high schoolers and college, that 70% of homeschooled students are Caucasian, and close to 85% identify as Christian. **It can concluded from the data that religious involvement at the college is a key factor in forming relationships at a college, and that taking official classes prior to college better prepares students academically.** The sample size of this study was 7 people due to difficulty in finding individuals who fit my criteria. This creates a severe limitation in the reliability of this study; the experiences of these 7 people may not be accurate representations of the hundreds of thousands of homeschooled students in public colleges. Other limitations exist within this study: in order to homeschool, one parent must stay at home or only work part-time. This means that all families that homeschool must be financially stable and/or have both parents, both of which are closely correlated with academic and social success of the child, regardless of whether the family homeschools or not. Thus, the positive findings of this study may be a result of multiple variables at play, not just the merit of homeschool itself. Based on the findings of this study, **homeschooling parents should enroll their student in official classes, sports teams, and religious activities whenever possible to provide the best preparation for their children.**

Background

Homeschooling - the practice of educating a child at home rather than a public or private school - has become an increasingly popular education choice in the last 10 years, soaring by over 2 million new students since 2016. Homeschool does not have a national curriculum or defined methods; instead, it gives parents the ability to specialize their child's education, giving children the opportunity to advance to higher academic levels when they are ready, rather than being made to stay on grade level to conform to state expectations (Elliot, 2019). Additionally, homeschool gives many parents the room to create an individualized plan for children with special needs that may not be sufficiently met at a public school (Green, Hoover-Dempsey, 2007). However, this freedom of education has led non-homeschoolers and lawmakers to question the academic and social outcomes of these practices (SanClemente, 2016). Research in the area, particularly evidenced through superior test scores and advanced grade levels, indicate that homeschoolers actually have an advantage in academics when compared to their public-schooled peers (Elliot, 2019). Still, there exists a stigma against homeschoolers as being socially underdeveloped and sheltered, and research on the topic is limited at best. In this study, I aimed to gather data on the social outcomes of homeschooling in high school to either prove or disprove such a notion.

Results

Interestingly, 100% of participants had certain traits in common, including: all had spent more than 6 years homeschooling prior to college, had a 3.7+ GPA, were Christian, were Caucasian, and took more than 6 official classes while homeschooling. All participants felt like they belonged in their college, chosen clubs and classes, but 80% feel that the dominant culture on campus does not align with their beliefs. All participants felt like they belong in their friends group, felt included within the friend group, and that others outside of their friend group would make good friends. On the other hand, 60% believed that their friendships in college to be unequal to their friendships prior to college. Participants mentioned that in college, everyone was open to meeting new people and while 20% struggled to adjust to the variety of beliefs on campus, 75% cited it as a way to find friends with similar beliefs. 50% noted that they lacked some experiences and knowledge their friends had (specifically, pop-culture and high-school sports), but the other 50% felt they were equal or knew more than their peers. Participants mentioned several reasons that their transition to college was smooth/not smooth: classes taken prior to college helped prepare them for assignments and tests, difficulty learning how to live with roommates, Covid-19 and social distancing making new friendships hard, and campus ministry forging connections between like-minded people.

Acknowledgements and Next Steps

I would like to give a sincere thank-you to Mary Beth Morris, a homeschool legal activist, teacher, parent, and counselor at Georgia Tech for her valuable insights into homeschool parenting, legalities, and methods, and for acting as a key link in the spread of my survey. You have truly helped elevate this study to greater levels. Finally, if I were to continue my research, I would attempt to gather more responses so that the data could be more reliable and have a more diverse sample. I would conduct personal, one-on-one interviews with participants to understand the specific struggles they face that cannot be quantitatively represented.

References

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