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Home Schooling and the Question of Socialization

Richard G. Medlin

“Why aren’t your kids in school? Do you have experience as a teacher? How do you know if you’re teaching the right things? Aren’t you worried that your kids won’t be able to get into college? Whatever made you decide to keep your children at home?”

Home schooling parents, if they have been at it very long at all, have been asked these questions countless times by the curious and the disapproving. But of the customary questions home schoolers face, “What about socialization?” is perhaps the most familiar and the most puzzling.

What makes this question so puzzling is that different people mean different things by the word *socialization*. Some people mean social activity: giving children the chance to play with friends and participate in traditional extracurricular activities like sports, school plays, and the senior prom. Others mean social influence: teaching children to conform to majority norms. And some mean social exposure: introducing children to the culture and values of different groups of people. All these things may be a part of socialization, but socialization can be more accurately defined as “the process whereby people acquire the rules of behavior and systems of

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beliefs and attitudes that equip a person to function effectively as a member of a particular society" (Durkin, 1995b, p. 614).

Ordinarily, this process occurs naturally as children take part in "daily routines which immerse them directly in the values of their community" (Durkin, 1995b, p. 618). For example, as parents hurry children along to avoid being late, organize children's activities around specific hours like "bedtime" or "dinnertime," and consult their watches and say "I don't have time" when children want them to play, they are teaching children to think in terms of minutes and hours and schedules and deadlines (Durkin, 1995b; Goodnow, 1990; Pitman & Smith, 1991). This kind of thinking, of course, helps people function more successfully in a culture like ours.

Naturally, these daily routines often involve parents. They also encompass other family members, peers, neighbors, friends of the family, books, television, movies, coaches, music teachers, camp counselors, religious leaders—in fact, any point of contact between children and other members of their community, whether direct or indirect (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Durkin, 1995b; Gecas, 1992; Harris, 1995). Furthermore, children themselves actively participate in the process as they interact with others in a reciprocal way and as they form their own unique understandings of the social world around them (Bandura, 1986; Durkin, 1995a, 1995b; Goodnow, 1990; Ruble, 1987). How important, then, is school as one agent of socialization among many?

The goals of American education always have been mixed (Shaffer, 1988), but, in the last 50 years or so, "school has been made responsible for an expanding range of socializing activities that previously were considered the proper roles of other social institutions, such as the family" (Nyberg & Egan, 1981, p. 3) and are not necessarily related to academics. Perhaps because of this, education and socialization have become closely linked in our cultural consciousness (Nyberg & Egan, 1981). Many people now assume that traditional schooling offers essential socialization experiences that home schooling cannot (Harris, 1995; Mayberry, Knowles, Ray, & Marlow, 1995). For example, the American Psychological Association, in an effort to bring professional psychology to bear on current issues, presented the opinions of educational psychologists about home schooling in the *APA Monitor* (Murray, 1996). These psychologists warned that home-schooled children may be unable to get along with others and may experience difficulty entering "mainstream life." Home-schooled children, they said, "only hear their parents' philosophies and have little chance to form their own views," whereas conventional schools teach "what society as a whole values." Home schooling shelters children from society, they suggested, but traditional schools ensure that children will grow up to be "complete people" by teaching key social skills such as cooperation, respect for others, and self-control.

The harshest critics charge that isolating children from larger society and inhibiting their social development are the principal goals home schooling parents have in mind. A survey of public school superintendents found that 92% believed home-schooled children do not receive adequate socialization experiences (Mayberry et al., 1995). When asked to explain their views, some of these superintendents commented that home schoolers "don't want any influence other than parents" in their children's lives, believe "communities at large are evil," and "want to ensure their children's ignorance" (pp. 92, 94). The parents "have real emotional problems themselves," one superintendent asserted, and do not realize "the serious harm they are doing to their children in the long run, educationally and socially" (p. 94).

Home schooling parents, not surprisingly, disagree on every point. They describe conventional schools as rigid and authoritarian institutions where passive conformity is rewarded, where peer interactions are too often hostile or derisive or manipulative, and where children must contend with a dispiriting ideological and moral climate. Home schooling parents argue that this kind of environment can stifle children's individuality and harm their self-esteem. They say it can make children dependent, insecure, or even antisocial. They believe it can undermine their efforts to teach their children positive values and appropriate behavior. Finally, they insist that it is unlikely to cultivate the kind of rewarding and supportive relationships that foster healthy personal and moral development (Allie-Carson, 1990; Gatto, 1992; Holt, 1981; Linden, 1983; Martin, 1997; Mayberry et al., 1995; Medlin, 1993b; Shirkey, 1987; Williams, Arnoldsen, & Reynolds, 1984). From this perspective, the "social environment of formal schools is actually a compelling argument for operating a home school" (Mayberry et al., 1995, p. 3).

Nevertheless, when parents decide to home school, they are thinking more of the advantages of home schooling than the disadvantages of conventional schooling (Parker, 1992). Home schooling parents are strongly committed to providing positive socialization experiences for their children (Johnson, 1991; Mayberry et al., 1995; Montgomery, 1989), but they "believe that socialization is best achieved in an age-integrated setting under the auspices of the family" (Tillman, 1995, p. 5) rather than in an institution. They "seek to provide safe, secure, positive environments for their children to grow and learn" (Tillman, 1995, p. 5). Then, they say, "skills learned at home are put into practice in the greater world, ... the success which follows builds self-esteem and prepares the child for adulthood" (Tillman, 1995, p. 5). Parents choose to home school for many reasons, but often it is because they believe that home schooling is most likely to offer the kind of socialization experiences they want for their children (Gray, 1993; Gustafson, 1988;

Howell, 1989; Martin, 1997; Mayberry, 1989; Mayberry et al., 1995; Tillman, 1995; Van Galen, 1987; Van Galen & Pitman, 1991).

Of course, home schooling parents realize that extra effort may be required to give their children certain kinds of social experiences (Gustafson, 1988). For example, they report that home schooling can make it harder to find playmates for their children who share their children's interests, and that activities such as drama and band are less accessible (Gustafson, 1988; Montgomery, 1989). Nevertheless, they are not particularly worried about socialization and do not consider that extra effort stressful (Breshears, 1996; Martin, 1997; Medlin, 1995; Selke, 1996). They believe that their children are receiving positive socialization experiences through their relationships both inside and outside the family and that their children's social development is coming along quite nicely (Pitman & Smith, 1991; Reynolds, 1985; Tillman, 1995; Wartes, 1987).

Such a difference of opinion between professional educators and home schooling parents highlights the importance of research on the question of socialization. Could home-schooled children be growing up without the kind of social experiences that will prepare them to live capably in society? Or could home schooling allow children to have much better socialization experiences than those most children receive? Either way, "What about socialization?" is a critical question. But for this question to be answered properly, it must be recast into three more specific questions that are consistent with an accurate definition of socialization: Do home-schooled children participate in the daily routines of their communities? Are they acquiring the rules of behavior and systems of beliefs and attitudes they need? Can they function effectively as members of society?

Do Home-Schooled Children Participate in the Daily Routines of Their Communities?

Review of the Research

Research on home schooling appeared in the mid-1980s, and an early case study first hinted that home-schooled children were perhaps not so isolated as most people seemed to think. Schemmer (1985) observed four home schooling families and noted (with a trace of surprise?) that the children participated in activities outside the home and were "able to communicate with the researcher" (Ray & Wartes, 1991, p. 56). Since then, several surveys—some of them quite large—asked home schooling parents to report their children's activities. These surveys showed that almost all home-schooled children regularly took part in extracurricular activities

(Delahooke, 1986; Gustafson, 1988; Montgomery, 1989; Rakestraw, 1988; Ray, 1990, 1997; Rudner, 1999; Tillman, 1995; Wartes, 1988, 1990). In fact, Delahooke found that home-schooled children actually participated in more activities than did children attending a conventional school.

The activities parents reported in these surveys covered a wide range: organized sports, scouts and 4-H clubs, paid jobs, volunteer work, church activities, music and dance lessons, hobby groups, playing with friends, and more. Perhaps one of the reasons home-schooled children take part in so many different extracurricular activities is that they spend little time watching television. Rudner (1999), in a huge survey of home schooling families, found that fewer than 3% of home-schooled fourth graders watch more than 3 hr of television a day. The comparable figure for fourth graders nationwide is 38%.

After examining the nature of home-schooled children's activities, Montgomery (1989) concluded that home schooling parents were purposefully giving their children opportunities to develop leadership abilities. And Johnson (1991) found that home schooling parents were actively fostering their children's development in seven key areas: personal identity, morality, career goals, independence, social relationships, social skills, and sexuality. The strategies these parents used went beyond arranging for children to take part in extracurricular activities to include such things as giving children regular responsibilities around the house, letting children direct their own studies, and holding high expectations for children's behavior (Groover & Endsley, 1988).

In a closer look at social contacts, Chatham-Carpenter (1994) asked home-schooled children and children attending public schools to keep a record of all their interactions with others for 1 month. The children, aged 12 to 18, wrote down to whom they talked and what they talked about for every interaction lasting more than 2 min. They also rated how accepting and understanding each person on their list was and how close their relationship with each person was.

Chatham-Carpenter (1994) found that home schoolers had contact with 49 different people in a month's time, and public school students met with 56 individuals—a difference that was not statistically significant. Although most of the people on the public school children's lists were peers, home-schooled children often met with younger children and adults as well as peers. Nevertheless, home-schooled children rated the people on their lists as just as accepting and understanding as the public school children did. Public school students, however, had more frequent contact with others and rated their relationships with others as closer—that is, public school students were more willing overall to share their inner feelings with their contacts and to go to them for advice.

In a similar study, Medlin (1998) asked home schooling parents to report how often their children associated with specific groups of people during a typical month and to describe how close their children's relationships were to individuals from each group. The point of this study was to measure how diverse home-schooled children's social contacts were. The results showed that home-schooled children regularly associated with adults outside their own family; the elderly; people from a different socioeconomic, religious, or ethnic background than their own; and children attending conventional schools. Parents reported that their children had close relationships with adults outside the family, the elderly, and children attending conventional schools. Children's relationships with people from different socioeconomic, religious, or ethnic backgrounds were described as moderately close.

Whether home-schooled children are unhappy with the frequency and intimacy of their social contacts is unclear. Shirkey (1987) asked home-schooled children (who, apparently, previously had attended traditional schools) aged 6 to 13 to list the advantages and disadvantages of the two types of schools. As disadvantages of home schooling, the older children said they missed their friends who were still attending conventional schools, felt left out of school dances and parties, and were not sure they knew "what's in style" anymore. Shirkey concluded that home-schooled children "feel they have few friends and are socially isolated" (p. 120).

In contrast, Mullins (1992), who interviewed home-schooled children of middle-school age, reported that "the majority of the students viewed socialization in the home school in a positive manner" (p. 1), especially if they were involved in the family's decision to home school. Home-schooled teenagers in a study by Montgomery (1989) overwhelmingly preferred to be home schooled rather than to attend a conventional school, and only 2 of 87 mentioned "having few friends" as a disadvantage of home schooling. (Some, by the way, said not worrying about what's in style was one of the reasons they liked home schooling so well.) And Natale (1995) found that even while at home, many home-schooled children kept in touch with their friends via E-mail.

Commentary

Despite the widespread belief that home schooling is socially isolating (Gray, 1993), the research documents quite clearly that home-schooled children are very much engaged in the social routines of their communities. They are involved in many different kinds of activities with many different kinds of people. In fact, the flexible schedule and more efficient use of time home schooling affords may allow home-schooled children to participate in

more extracurricular activities than children attending conventional schools (Delahooke, 1986; Montgomery, 1989). As Montgomery concluded, "The perception of homeschooled students as being isolated, uninvolved, and protected from peer contact is simply not supported by the data" (p. 9).

Nevertheless, home-schooled children's social contacts may be somewhat different than those of children attending traditional schools. Shirkey's (1987) study probably said more about children's adjustment as they make the transition from conventional schooling to home schooling than anything else. And Chatham-Carpenter's (1994) finding that home-schooled children's relationships were not as close as those of public school students was most likely an artifact of the difference in the makeup of their social networks. Who, after all, goes to younger children for advice, or to share their inner feelings? Her research does suggest, however, that home-schooled children have less frequent contact with peers.

Friends are important to children. When asked which of seven things they liked best about school, students attending conventional high schools ranked friends first (Benham, Giesen, & Oates, 1980). Friends "foster self-esteem and a sense of well-being ... and support one another in coping with developmental transitions and life stress" (Hartup & Stevens, 1999, p. 76). But all peers, of course, are not friends. Chatham-Carpenter's (1994) public school students had more contact with peers than did home-schooled children, but children that age typically have only three to five close friends (Hartup & Stevens, 1999). Therefore, Chatham-Carpenter's (1994) results should not be taken to mean that home-schooled children have few friends or do not spend enough time with them. Shirkey's (1987) study aside, home-schooled children do not seem to feel socially deprived.

The real issue raised by Chatham-Carpenter's (1994) research is whether the kind of social network that children attending conventional schools have, which consists mostly of peers, provides more effective socialization experiences than the kind of social network that home-schooled children have, which consists of people of all ages. The next question addresses this issue by focusing more directly on the process of socialization.

Are Home-Schooled Children Acquiring the Rules of Behavior and Systems of Beliefs and Attitudes They Need?

Review of the Research

The earliest studies of home-schooled children's social behavior used somewhat dubious measures, but they invariably suggested that nothing was seriously amiss. Reynolds (1985) rated a small number of home-schooled chil-

dren on eight positive traits such as "friendly," "helpful," and "trustworthy" and gave the children above-average scores. In a large survey, Wartes (1987) asked home schooling parents to rate their children's sense of responsibility, ability to interact constructively with others, and leadership skills. Only 6% rated their children below average. Delahooke (1986) compared home-schooled children to children attending a private conventional school using the Roberts Apperception Test for Children (McArthur & Roberts, 1982). Both groups scored in the "well-adjusted" range overall. The only differences between the groups were that the private school group was "more influenced by or concerned with peers" (p. 85) and perhaps better at resolving conflicts with peers.

Stough (1992) and Smedley (1992) both tested home-schooled children and children attending traditional schools with a more widely used measure of social development, the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales (Sparrow, Balla, & Cicchetti, 1984). Whereas Stough found no significant differences between the groups, Smedley reported that home-schooled children scored higher on the communication, daily living skills, socialization, and social maturity subscales of the test. The mean score overall for the home school group fell at the 84th percentile and for the conventional school group at the 23rd percentile. Smedley concluded that "children kept home are more mature and better socialized than those who are sent to school" (p. 12).

In a similar study, Lee (1994) found that home-schooled children scored higher than traditionally schooled children on the family and community subscales of the Adaptive Behavior Inventory for Children (Mercer & Lewis, 1977) and had higher total scores as well. Lee wrote that the "socialization of children in home schools is effective without exposure to large groups of children. ... Home school parents are imparting positive family socialization, which is not inferior to the public school culture" (p. 1).

Shyers (1992a, 1992b), in the most thorough study of home-schooled children's social behavior to date, tested 70 children who had been entirely home-schooled and 70 children who had always attended traditional schools. The two groups were matched in age (all were 8–10 years old), race, gender, family size, socioeconomic status, and number and frequency of extracurricular activities. Shyers measured self-concept and assertiveness and found no significant differences between the two groups. The most intriguing part of the study, however, involved observing the children as they played and worked together. Small groups of children who all had the same school background were videotaped while playing in a large room equipped with toys such as puzzles, puppets, and dolls. The children were then videotaped again in a structured activity: working in teams putting puzzles together for prizes.

Each child's behavior was rated by two observers who did not know whether the children they were rating were home-schooled or traditionally schooled. The observers used the Direct Observation Form of the Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983), a checklist of 97 problem behaviors such as argues, brags or boasts, doesn't pay attention long, cries, disturbs other children, isolates self from others, shy or timid, and shows off. The results were striking—the mean problem behavior score for children attending conventional schools was more than eight times higher than that of the home-schooled group. Shyers (1992a) described the traditionally schooled children as "aggressive, loud, and competitive" (p. 6). In contrast, the home-schooled children acted in friendly, positive ways:

During the brief period allowed for children to become acquainted, home school children introduced themselves and sought common interests for conversation. ... Home schooled children from each age group tended to play well together, cooperated in the group interaction activity, and were quiet. In several settings, children would invite others within their group to join them in group play. During games they cooperated by taking turns. When they "lost" in the games they would often smile or otherwise indicate that it was "okay" and continue to play. ... As the activities ended, several of the home schooled children exchanged addresses or telephone numbers for future contact. (Shyers, 1992b, p. 194)

Shyers (1992a) concluded, "The results of this study, therefore, draw into question the conclusions made by many educators and courts that traditionally educated children are more socially well-adjusted than are those who are home schooled" (p. 6). In fact, Shyers proposed, the study suggests that just the opposite may be true.

Research on home-schooled children's systems of beliefs and attitudes has so far focused on self-concept. Studies directly comparing home-schooled children to children attending conventional schools have found either no difference between the two (Hedin, 1991; Lee, 1994; Shyers, 1992a, 1992b; Stough, 1992) or a slight difference favoring home-schooled children (Kitchen, 1991). For example, Kitchen reported that although home-schooled children scored higher than traditionally schooled children on the personal security, academic competence, and family acceptance subscales of the Self-Esteem Index (Pro-Ed, 1991), the difference was statistically significant only for the academic competence subscale.

In several studies, only home-schooled children were tested, and their scores were compared to published norms based on public-school sam-

ples. These studies consistently have found that home-schooled children score better than average (Kelley, 1991; Medlin, 1993a, 1994; Taylor, 1986; Tillman, 1995). In the largest of these (Taylor, 1986), more than 220 home-schooled children completed the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (Piers & Harris, 1969). Their mean scores were significantly higher than test norms for the physical appearance and attributes, anxiety (which is reverse-scored), intellectual and school status, behavior, happiness, and satisfaction subscales of the test.

Commentary

The research confirms that home-schooled children are learning rules for appropriate social behavior and forming healthy attitudes toward themselves. Their social behavior and self-esteem are certainly no worse than those of children attending conventional schools and are probably better (Meighan, 1995; Ray & Wartes, 1991). In fact, their social behavior may be much better if Shyers's (1992a, 1992b) results prove to be typical. Social behavior is, however, very complex, and these few studies have too little to tell. Although it would appear that home-schooled children's socialization experiences are more effective than those of traditionally schooled children, the next question, which focuses on the end result of socialization, must be considered also.

Can Home-Schooled Children Function Effectively as Members of Society?

Review of the Research

There is little research on the long-term consequences of home schooling. The modern home schooling movement is, after all, very young, and research on home schooling is younger still. However, a few studies have analyzed the college and workplace experiences of students who have "graduated" from home school.

Ray (1997) surveyed more than 230 graduates of home education and found that 69% had gone on to some kind of postsecondary education, and 31% had become employed. These figures, he reported, were almost identical to those of high school graduates in general. Webb (1990) interviewed adults in England who had been home schooled as children and found that they were successful in obtaining both higher education and employment and were perhaps "much better prepared socially than some of their

schooled peers" (p. 121). In a similar study in the United States, Knowles and Muchmore (1995) reported that adults who had been home schooled as children were satisfied with both their education and their employment.

Galloway (Galloway, 1998; Galloway & Sutton, 1997) identified 60 students at a small private college who had been exclusively home schooled throughout high school. She then composed two matched comparison groups from the other students at the college: one of students who had attended private high schools and another of students who had attended public high schools. Galloway evaluated the three groups on 63 indicators of college performance, grouped into five categories: academic, cognitive, social, spiritual, and psychomotor. Academic indicators included standard measures such as grade point average and class rank. The cognitive category involved more subtle indicators of academic success, such as the difficulty of the student's major and membership in honorary organizations. Extracurricular activities such as dance, music, and drama made up the social category, and spiritual indicators included such things as records of personal conduct and religious activities. Finally, psychomotor indicators involved activities like sports and cheerleading.

For each of these 63 indicators, Galloway (1998) computed averages for the three groups of students and compared the averages to see which group had the highest score. For 42 of the 63 measures, home-schooled students came in first. In fact, they led by a large margin in every category except psychomotor skills. Because many indicators for which home-schooled students took first place involved positions of leadership, Galloway concluded that home-schooled students were readily recognized for their leadership abilities. She stated flatly, "They are the leaders on campus."

Commentary

Because it is so meager, little can be concluded from this research except, as Knowles and Muchmore (1995) reported, "grown-up homeschooled kids" are apparently "doing just fine" (p. 35). There is a suggestion from Galloway's (Galloway, 1998; Galloway & Sutton, 1997) study that adults who were home schooled as children may have exceptional social and leadership skills. But Galloway's results, as impressive as they are, should not be generalized too freely. The particular college environment she studied was probably especially suited to home-schooled students, given that so many chose to enroll there. That does not mean, however, that her results are irrelevant. They show quite clearly that the home-schooled college students she observed were functioning effectively in "a particular society" (Durkin, 1995b, p. 614).

Conclusions

Studies of home schooling and socialization have the customary faults of research in a very young field: no guiding theory, inadequate experimental design, poorly defined research questions, untried and weak measures, unorthodox treatment and presentation of data, and conclusions based on subjective judgments. Even a cursory look at the research reveals that many studies are qualitative descriptions of so few participants that the results cannot be generalized. Many are surveys that rely exclusively on parental reports but offer no idea of how reliable those reports may be. Many test only home-schooled children without comparing them to children attending conventional schools, making it very difficult to know what the results might mean. Furthermore, as Ray and Wartes (1991) pointed out, all home school research is correlational (because researchers have no way to control the type of schooling children experience), samples are usually self-selected (because researchers cannot require home schooling families to participate), and, however carefully researchers try to match their home-schooled and traditionally schooled groups, there are probably still important differences between the two.

Fortunately, against a background of questionable research, a few solid studies stand out—Rudner's (1999) survey of more than 20,000 home-schooled children and their families, Chatham-Carpenter's (1994) analysis of home-schooled children's social networks, and Shyers's (1992a, 1992b) research on social behavior. Shyers's study, especially, offers features worth emulating. He composed his two groups of children who had always been either home schooled or traditionally schooled. He matched the participants in each group on several relevant variables. He used widely known and reliable tests. He tested for both positive and negative social behaviors. Information was collected from both the children themselves and impartial observers. The behavioral observation took place in two different situations and was videotaped for later analysis. Every child's behavior was rated by two independent observers. Observers were trained carefully and were unaware of children's group status. Statistical procedures were orthodox and appropriate. Conclusions were objective, not subjective.

But these few examples are clearly not enough. More than anything else, they simply underscore that more—and better—research is needed (Aiex, 1994). And the questions addressed by that research need to cut a little deeper. What does socialization within the home schooling family look like? Are parents meeting their own goals for their children's social development (Ray & Wartes, 1991)? What are home-schooled children's closest friendships like? Are home-schooled children more independent,

open-minded, or self-controlled than other children? Are they better able to get along with people of all ages? Is their moral development more advanced? How does their home schooling experience affect the kind of adult lives they lead?

Although there are still far too many unanswered questions about home schooling and socialization, some preliminary conclusions can be stated. Home-schooled children are taking part in the daily routines of their communities. They are certainly not isolated; in fact, they associate with—and feel close to—all sorts of people. Home schooling parents can take much of the credit for this. For, with their children's long-term social development in mind, they actively encourage their children to take advantage of social opportunities outside the family. Home-schooled children are acquiring the rules of behavior and systems of beliefs and attitudes they need. They have good self-esteem and are likely to display fewer behavior problems than do other children. They may be more socially mature and have better leadership skills than other children as well. And they appear to be functioning effectively as members of adult society.

Perhaps the most intriguing unanswered question is, "Why?" Why should home-schooled children seem, in the words of Smedley (1992), to be "better socialized" (p. 12) than children attending conventional schools? Smedley speculated that the family "more accurately mirrors the outside society" (p. 13) than does the traditional school environment, with its "unnatural" age segregation. Galloway (Galloway, 1998; Galloway & Sutton, 1997) agreed, stating that because they are not peer-grouped in school, home-schooled children learn to get along with a variety of people, making them socially mature and able to adjust to new and challenging situations. She added two further explanations: She argued that the highly individualized academic program afforded by home schooling creates an ideal learning environment, giving children an excellent chance to do well both in college and in a career. She also said that because home-schooled children learn and grow in the nurturing environment of secure family relationships, they develop a confidence and resiliency that helps them to succeed as adults.

If Galloway proves to be right about the importance of family relationships, then much of the answer to the question "Why?" may have been found. Many parents choose to home school not for academic reasons at all but to surround their children with the kind of nurturing atmosphere that will support their development as individuals (Gustafson, 1988; Howell, 1989; Mayberry & Knowles, 1989; Van Galen, 1987). They believe this can be accomplished far better by situating their children's education within the family rather than within an impersonal institution. As one home schooling mother said about her children, "It is my responsibility to see

that they grow up to be conscientious, responsible and intelligent people. This is too important a job to be given to someone I don't even know" (Mayberry et al., 1995, p. 39). Research on the question of socialization suggests that children are thriving in the home school environment and that much can be learned from looking more closely at what home schooling families are doing.

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