

Homeschooling: The Socialization of Homeschooled Children Compared to that of

Traditional Schooling

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ABSTRACT

Homeschooling is a growing trend in educating today's youth. In Canada, homeschooled children make up over 1% of the entire Canadian student population (Davies & Aurini, 2003). A common belief is that homeschooling produces social misfits who do not receive the appropriate social skills necessary to thrive in society (Romanowski, 2000). Although it is becoming very popular in Canada as well as around the world, there is little methodical research on this group. A number of reviews and case studies have been examined, concluding that with the appropriate techniques used by parents choosing to homeschool, and the chance to socialize in the community through extracurricular activities, there were no significant difference between the homeschooled and traditionally schooled children. In many cases, homeschooled children were found to be academically brighter, more mature, have a more positive self-concept, have more positive relationships with peers and a diverse group of individuals as well as having developed adequate social skills. This paper will focus on the socialization of homeschooled children, reasons for choosing to homeschool, as well criticism regarding homeschooling.

Keywords: *homeschool; traditional schooling; socialization; self-concept; motivators; criticism*

INTRODUCTION

Homeschooling had actually been the more traditional method of educating until recently. Children were educated at home before public schools became a common practice. Public schools came into existence in the mid-nineteenth century; however views about homeschooling have emerged from a quiet uprising within the past fifteen

years. (Berger, 1997). Homeschooling is an alternative to educating today's youth, but there have been uncertainties and disputes as well as support and encouragement for this educational approach (Romanowski, 2001). Although children who were homeschooled were once thought to be rare, today they are becoming more mainstream (Neal, 2006). In Canada, homeschooling is on the rise and redefining itself into a legitimate, well-respected means of educating our youth (Davies & Aurini, 2003). However, there is still a large portion of society that questions the possible negative effects this method creates, in particular regarding the socialization of children who are homeschooled compared to those who are enrolled in traditional systems. The concerns about socialization when it comes to homeschooling rest on the assumption that private or public schooling is the only effective means for socializing students (Shaw, 2000). However there is a lot of evidence stating that homeschooling is in fact beneficial in the socialization of children.

In Canada, self-governing approximations suggest that those children being homeschooled embody nearly 1% of the entire Canadian student population, whereas advocates of homeschooling suggest much higher figures (Davies & Aurini, 2003). This movement has been increasing over the past few years. Much of this has to do with the media and the positive depiction it offers of homeschooling. The media has exposed homeschooling through means of the national press, scholarly journals and articles, television and radio broadcasts, and by providing information for anyone interested through newspapers and magazines (Romanowski, 2006). To fully understand the effectiveness of homeschooling on the socialization of children, we must first identify what homeschooling is and what the term "socialization" means in this context.

According to Eugenia Hepworth Berger, Department Editor of the *Early Childhood Education Journal*, homeschooling can be defined as any form of planned learning or activity that is taught to a child by a parent, taking place for the most part within the home setting. The parent is there to act as the teacher, supervisor and mentor to the student (Berger, 1997). Socialization has many different definitions. Some define socialization in terms of social activity where children physically interact with each other. They may do this by playing sports, board games, attending support groups or participating in extracurricular activities with one another (Romanowski, 2006). Others define it as the means to learning cultural and medial beliefs and norms whereby children learn to function as a member of society in their every day lives (Romanowski, 2006). These combined are what make a child able to function properly in society. Many of those opposed to homeschooling say that homeschooling threatens this aspect in children and that without the use of private and public schools, children will not learn how to conform to these norms and how to interact with those who can. However, homeschooling can still provide children with effective socialization skills (Romanowski, 2001).

HISTORY OF HOMESCHOOLING

For a long time, homeschooling was the only means for schooling children of all ages. It was not until the introduction of formal education and compulsory public schooling that children stopped being taught at home by their parents or mentors. Parents

were forced to homeschool their children long before there were public schools available to them (Berger, 1997). Although education took place in different forms in the 1800's, children were taught in their homes by their parents in the same means as they still are today in homeschooling. It was not until the 1830's and 1840's that the common school movement was implemented. Attendance was mandatory and it was the responsibility of the state to educate the children (Berger, 1997). Homeschooling was placed on the backburner for nearly a century.

Historians believe that the revival of homeschooling first began in the 1960's (Neal, 2006). At this time the movement was seen as civil disobedience since it was initiated by social reformers and activists who were unimpressed with the conventional school method. This movement was short-lived as society and the law remained unconcerned and unaffected by this attempt (Neal, 2006). It wasn't until the early 1980's that homeschooling began to emerge as a well-thought out alternative way to educate children. John Holt was one of the first advocates of homeschooling and the most influential educator of this movement. In 1981 he wrote *Teach Your Own*, a book that stressed the benefits of teaching children at home (Berger, 1997). It was his thoughts and ideas that led to one of the two divergent groups that pioneered the inspiration of homeschooling.

Homeschooling is most commonly recognized for being established by two very dissimilar groups; the Protestant fundamentalists and those known as 'unschoolers' who were motivated by John Holt (Davies & Aurini, 2003). The Protestant fundamentalists

opposed mainstream education. They believed that by mainstreaming their children they would not learn the necessary religious values that could only be instilled in their children at home. They also feared that public and private schools would create anti-Christian children (Davies & Aurini, 2003). The fundamentalists saw homeschooling as the effective way to teach their children, and ensure they would receive adequate religious information needed.

Educator John Holt was the proponent for the unschoolers. He encouraged his followers to teach their own children as opposed to allowing children to be lost within the public education system (Berger, 1997). Holt convinced his followers that homeschooling allowed for parents and children to reject structured mainstream education. He encouraged parents to foster a new intellect into their children, one that gave parents the chance to teach using their own methods (Davies & Aurini, 2003). These unschoolers rely on the child's curiosity and excitement for life to guide their activities. Something that John Holt and his followers believed to be an essential part of learning in children of all ages. In 1983, Michael Farris founded the Home School Legal Defense Association in Virginia (Lyman, 1998). It is an organization designed to defend those parent's rights who have chosen to homeschool. When it was first implemented, the association had only one hundred members. As of 1998, that small number had grown substantially to 55,000 (Lyman, 1998). That is just one example of how quickly homeschooling was becoming popular.

Many wonder why families would choose this method of education. There are several motivators that lead parents to choose this alternative to mainstream education. Religious and conventional families are most commonly the first to adopt homeschooling. Many parents are profoundly religious and believe that mainstream education does not teach their children strong Christian values (Aiex, 1994). They argue that public schools fail to take religion seriously and that it has not been successfully implemented into the curriculum. This has become a problem because for these families, their religious beliefs and their child's education go hand in hand (Romanowski, 2001).

While evangelical Christians are the largest group in the homeschooling movement, they are not the only ones (Neal, 2006). Romanowski states that one of the distinctive features of homeschooling is that it applies to a diverse group of individuals which consists of practically all races, religions, ethnic backgrounds, and political stand points regardless of your socioeconomic status (2006). Parents homeschool for a wide variety of reasons. Others families homeschool because they live in secluded areas where public or private schools are inaccessible (Aiex, 1994). Many rural areas are miles away from civilization. Rather than using modes of transportation that could be very costly, families opt to homeschool. Some families will homeschool because they enjoy the company of their child and want to grow and maintain a strong healthy relationship (Romanowski, 2001). In addition, homeschool parents believe that they can give their children a better education than possible by others means. In 1996, the Florida Department of Education conducted a survey on parental perceptions of the public school

system. They surveyed 2,245 homeschoolers and received a 31% response rate (Lyman, 1998). 42% of homeschoolers were displeased with the environment that the public school system presented (Lyman, 1998). Parents believed that there was too much violence, peer pressure, victimization and drug-use in public schools, and that was a strong motivation in choosing homeschooling.

Another aspect that many believe puts homeschooling in a superior position to public schooling is the fact that it is highly flexible and dynamic (Wichers, 2001). Unlike traditional curriculum, the homeschooling system allows changes and diversity in lessons. Today many schools do not offer subjects such as music, physical education and other classes. When a child is home schooled many parents feel that they can provide new blood and new ideas (Wichers, 2001). For instance, to enhance a child's vocabulary comprehension, a parent may choose to teach their child a different language, such as Latin or Spanish. Children who are educated at home have the opportunity to learn about subjects that are neglected in traditional curriculum, which is another reason for parents choosing to homeschool.

Christa L. Green and Kathleen V. Hoover-Dempsey conducted a questionnaire on important decisions in choosing to homeschool (2007). In particular, they examined psychological motivators, such as role production of parents, effectiveness for helping the child learn, and the beliefs associated with the child's schooling. They also observed the "personal life context variables", which are such things as time, energy, knowledge and skills that will make homeschooling possible (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007). 136

homeschool parents of elementary children from a southeastern state in the United States were given a 6-point Likert scale questionnaire. A section for comments and/or concerns was also available at the bottom of every questionnaire. After the assessment of the homeschooling parents, Green and Hoover-Dempsey compared this group with a sample of 358 formerly reported mainstream education parents' reports in these areas (1997).

The results from this study suggest that the homeschool parents as a whole perceive themselves as being more active in their child's education, are effective in educating their children and have the appropriate resources and support needed to teach their children (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007). This group of parents also had negative perceptions regarding the ability to properly educate children in public schools, particularly with the inability to effectively teach in the area of value beliefs (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007). Independent-sample *t* tests and effect sizes showed significant variations between the homeschool and public school parent groups on all levels of the study (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007). The large effect sizes reinforce the idea that homeschool parents hold strong parental participation values even when measured up to those mainstream education parents.

Furthermore, when examining the parental role structure for involvement in the child's education, Green and Hoover-Dempsey distinguished three groups of parental involvement: "parent focused" which were the attitudes indicating that the parent is first and foremost responsible for providing the child with the appropriate education, "school focused" which stated that the school was primarily accountable for the child's education, and "partnership focused" which stated that both the parent and the school system were

equally responsible for the child's instructive outcome (2007). It was found that a large number of parents recorded having a strong "parent focused" responsibility. As expected, more homeschool parents, "68.4%", approved of the "parent focused role construction" than a "partnership focused role construction", "11.8%". These parents also felt that they have the necessary assets, such as time and energy, knowledge and skills and efficacy required to successfully homeschool their children (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007). Overall, those parents with a "parent focused" role had stronger views of these aspects. Thus, it is apparent that homeschool parents partake actively in their child's education and believe they have the resources to do so successfully.

CURRENT ATTITUDES and PERCEPTIONS

Homeschool students are flourishing across the country. What was once seen as a secondary method of education is now becoming more commonly practiced and supported. Whether is be a National Spelling Bee, a member of the 4-H club or a community track meet, there is a likely chance that homeschool kids have taken part, and in many cases excelled and won (Neal, 2006). In many cases, homeschool children are stereotyped as introverted, awkward and quiet (Zysk, 1999). However Manfred B. Zysk, a father who has been homeschooling for five years, finds that homeschool children are the exact opposite. Zysk finds that most of the homeschool children he has encountered are very sociable, well-mannered, respectable and mature (1999). Professional educators

believe that mainstream education is the only effective place a child can learn to socialize (Shaw, 2000). This is not the case however. Homeschool children go on fieldtrips with fellow homeschool children in the area, they often travel, they take dance, language arts, fine arts and music, to simply name a few. Homeschool children receive ample time to socialize, in many different areas that may not be available if they were attending public school.

Yet, it is important to note that not every parent can homeschool. Whether a child succeeds or not is directly linked to the quality of care and education that he or she receives (Berger, 1997). If the quality of education excels within the home, then the child will excel in return. If the quality at home is poor and inadequate then the child will suffer from this and not receive the type of education he or she deserves. John Holt summarizes in his book *Teach Your Own* the traits needed for parents to teach their children at home. He begins by saying that parents must like their children and enjoy their company. They must take into consideration their passion for certain areas, as well as recognize that they may be foolish at times. Lastly, the parent or mentor must respect their child's curiosity and foster the questions they will ask. In return they must likewise want to answer those questions asked (Berger, 1997). Homeschooling is a very tentative, time-consuming job that must be taken very seriously in order for the child to fully benefit.

There is evidence revealing that homeschooling is a growing trend not just in the United States, but also in Canada and worldwide (de Waal & Theron, 2003). Such

overseas countries as New Zealand, Norway, and Australia are examples of areas where homeschooling is becoming quite popular (de Waal & Theron, 2003). Esther de Waal and Tinie Theron conducted a thorough literature study examining the effects of homeschooling in South Africa. They surveyed 4000 homeschool parents within the country. The questionnaire was aimed at determining the profile of homeschool parents, methods used to homeschool and motivators for choosing homeschooling over recognized education (2003). It was found that most homeschool parents were white mothers over the age of 30 whom had no formal training in teaching before. They also found that the majority of them did not belong to a conventional religious group (de Waal & Theron, 2003). Those who choose to homeschool their children were very dedicated and prepared to spend the time and attention needed to prepare their children. Furthermore, the main reason for choosing to educate their child at home was educational motives, followed by religious sincerity (de Waal & Theron, 2003). That is different from the primary reason in the United States and Canada, which most often is a religious point of view. From this research one can say that it is apparent that homeschooling is a fast growing method of education in South Africa that will continue to thrive in the future.

However, there are some places that are not in favor of homeschooling. In the Netherlands homeschooling is nearly non-existent (Blok, 2004). Henk Blok conducted a literature study on how homeschooled children compare to children who are formally educated (2004). In the Netherlands, homeschooling is seen as hazardous to the progress

of the child, and it is Dutch educational laws that state that the schools must teach children (Blok, 2004). A literature review was conducted since that was the only means available in the Netherlands. Blok found eight studies linking the development of children to homeschooling, all published after 1985 (2004). Seven of these articles were conducted in the United States, while one was from Canada. All of which compared those educated in the school system with those being homeschooled (Blok, 2004).

Throughout this review, Blok found that the majority of studies established that homeschooled students scored higher academically than did the formally educated students. The average homeschooled 14-year old was found to be at the same or higher scholastic level as the average of an 18-year old high school student (2004). Blok found that homeschooling is fortunate for many children, and that to say that homeschooling is a superior method would be an exaggeration, but more accurate would be to say that homeschooling can present a thriving environment for the child (2004). When social skills were compared, no significant differences were found between the two groups. Another finding homeschooled kids to have a significantly more optimistic self-concept compared to the other group. These children are better at taking control of a situation and defending their opinions or themselves better within this situation (Blok, 2004). From this literature review, there is no evidence supporting the Dutch claim that homeschooling hinders the development of children.

SOCIALIZATION of HOMESCHOOLED CHILDREN

The main argument against homeschooling is a belief that it inhibits socialization. Many critics argue that children who are not exposed to public schools will not develop the appropriate social skills that one in the formal education stream would (Romanowski, 2001). Manfred Zysk states that in all his years of homeschooling he has heard of many reason and motivators for parents choosing to homeschool. However, never before has he heard that parents believe that homeschooling will isolate their children and turn them into social misfits (1999). It has been said that homeschooled children are as socially accustomed as formally educated children (Blok, 2004). They learn their social skills through interacting with other homeschooled children, adults, peers of all ages and through extracurricular activities. Blok reported that homeschooled children take part in a wide range of social activities: church, extracurricular sports, and numerous amounts of cultural activities (2004). It is the responsibility of the parent or mentor to ensure that these children are given the opportunity to partake in such social activities. Of course, families must reach out to the community, and the community must in turn provide the opportunity for children to involve themselves in social and educational instances (Berger, 1997).

As Lucinda H. Kennaley from *The American Homeschool Association* states, parents who choose to homeschool may find that their children are overly sociable (1998). These children do their school work during the day, as those who are in the school systems would; however at night when otherwise-schooled children are stuck indoors doing their homework from the previous afternoon, homeschooled children are

taking part in numerous activities. These activities range from co-op courses, baseball and other sport recreational teams, field trips, study groups and other clubs (Kennaley, 1998). Romanowski found that on average, homeschooled children partake in 5.2 extracurricular activities outside of school and the home (2006). Blok discovered in his literature review that homeschooled children take part in 5 or more activities on a regular basis outside the home (2004). With such large numbers and such extensive opportunities, it is evident that homeschooled children are not missing out on the activities aspect of socialization.

Nola Aiex, editor of *ERIC digest*, found two studies that particularly supported the socialization of homeschooled children. In one study done by Lee Stough in 1992, he compared 30, 7-14 year old, homeschooled children with 32, 7-14 year old, formally educated children (Stough, 1992 as cited in Aiex, 1994). Stough concluded that children who were homeschooled developed socially and mentally just as well as those who were formally schooled. He found no difference in the self-concept of the two groups, concluding that if self-concept is linked to socialization, which he believes it is, then it is clear that few homeschooled children are socially underprivileged (Stough, 1992 as cited in Aiex, 1997). The second study that Aiex found in her review was conducted by John Wesley Taylor in 1987. Taylor randomly sampled 45,000 homeschooled children using a modern highly respected self-concept scale (Taylor, 1987 as cited in Aiex, 1994). Taylor found that 22,500 of those children scored in or beyond the 91st percentile. This was 47% higher than those educated in the school system (Taylor, 1987 as cited in Aiex, 1994).

Taylor concluded that since self-concept is a contributor to proper socialization, critics are wrong in stating that homeschooled children lack the appropriate socialization skills (Taylor, 1987 as cited in Aiex, 1994). The studies done by fellow researchers reinforce the point that simply because a child is not educated within the school system itself, does not mean that he or she cannot develop the appropriate social skills that their peers who are formally educated are claimed to build.

A further concern for opponents of homeschooling is the impact that this so called lack of socialization will have on friendships and peer victimization. Those who criticize homeschooling worry that children have inadequate opportunities to develop positive social skills, including the level of interaction with peers. However, those advocates of homeschooling feel those public schools may provide a negative atmosphere for children, exposing them to such risks as peer victimization and bullying (CABL, 2005). *The Brown University Child and Adolescent Behavior Letter* (CABL) publishes monthly reports on the problems that children and adolescents encounter from day to day. In 2005 they issued a study evaluating the effect of homeschooling on children, in particular exposure to peer discrimination and the impact homeschooling has on friendships. 16 homeschooled and 48 formally educated children, aged 9-13 years old, were given theoretical situations where they were asked how often they witnessed this discrimination and how they felt about it. They were asked of the quality and number of friendships as well as their familiarity with peer discrimination (CABL, 2005). Brown University found that when it came to the quality and quantity of friendships, both homeschooled children and traditionally education children ranked rather comparable (CABL, 2005). A

difference between the two groups occurred when it came to the anxiety levels of having poor friendships. Those who were homeschooled that had unfortunate features in friendships reported having higher levels of anxiety and feelings of insufficiency than did homeschooled children who had high quality friendships. This is not to say that homeschooled children are less emotionally developed, it simply means that the lack of high quality friendships psychologically effected homeschooled children in a more susceptible way (CABL, 2005). It was also surprising to see that homeschooled children are familiar with peer victimization. However it was found that homeschooled children were less affected by this discrimination (CABL, 2005). This could be because homeschooled children do not have to worry about being victimized repeatedly in front of all their peers at school. Both groups admitting to being victimized, as well as being the victimizer, and both showed signs of being negatively affected by this peer discrimination (CABL, 2005).

In addition to these finding, Brown also found that homeschooled children reported having stronger relationships with family, friends, coaches and having an overall higher self-esteem than those traditionally educated children (CABL, 2005). Although the sample size used in this study was significantly small compared to others, it was possible to get a feel for the type of friendships that can arise from homeschooling. Simply because a child does not take part in the traditional classroom routine does not mean that he or she can not make and maintain strong peer relations. Through interacting with peers and fellow homeschoolers around the area and partaking in extracurricular

activities and events in the community, homeschool children are not being cast away as socially inadequate.

Disapproval of home schooling is immense and there are many critics who would rather see homeschooling omitted from today's education. Many opponents believe that a child who is educated at home often loses experiences concerning diversity (Romanowski, 2001). Critics claim that these children have lost the opportunity to work with peers of different cultures and social statuses in an academic setting. In turn this can be damaging to a child's socialization, which is a crucial aspect of a professional life in the future (Medlin, 2000). However, in public schools, children are separated into classrooms based primarily by their age. These children have little contact with children of different ages, and even less contact with adults. Zysk states that this type of setting simply distances children from those other than children their own age (1999). This could then be seen as the real issue of socialization. Homeschool parents argue that homeschooling creates greater interaction with the family. Parents of children who are homeschooled stress the important role that homeschooling played in helping them find time to develop greater connection between family members (Cai, Reeve & Robinson, 2002). Families are able to spend more quality time together often leading to a stronger and more open relationship. This can often create stability during difficult times such as illness or a death in the family (Cai, Reeve & Robinson, 2002).

Since homeschooled children spend the majority of their time in one on one situations with adults, as opposed to a classroom with 30 students of the same age,

homeschooled children are able to socially connect in multiage conditions with confidence and assurance that traditional school children may not (Romanowski, 2001). No longer are children limited to playing with children the same age, these children have learned the right social skills necessary to interact with people of all ages. In Henk Blok's literature review, Smedley conducted a study comparing the social skills of homeschooled children to that of traditionally schooled children. He found that those children who were homeschooled were both more mature, with adults and with peers, as well as better socially developed (Smedley, 1992 as cited in Blok, 2004). Homeschooled children have continually been depicted as socially incompetent, however with more research becoming available, it is evident that this is not the case.

It is also known that many colleges and universities expect homeschooled students to be more socially adjusted than those who were taught in the school system. In Blok's literature review, he reported that many of the studies found that homeschool students adjusted fine in higher levels of education. One particular study done by Lattibeaudiere in 2000 studied the success rate of adaptation in formally homeschooled students. In that he found that those children who were homeschooled were better socially adjusted, as well as emotionally, than those other students (Lattibeaudiere, 2000 as cited in Blok, 2004). Aside from their social development, Gary Mason, director of admissions at Patrick Henry College (VA), found that homeschooled students scored above average on their SAT and ACT scores, scoring on average a 1210 (2004). They also surpassed traditionally educated students when it came to their grade point average. Homeschooled students having on average a 3.47, while those enrolled in the school

system had an average of 2.91 (Mason, 2004). It is clear that former homeschooled students are very well prepared, both socially and mentally to attend post-secondary education.

In the fall of 2004, Jones and Gloeckner carried out a study regarding the perceptions and attitudes of administrative staff toward those previously homeschooled students who wish to attend either university or college. An electronic survey was administered to administrative staff from 159 colleges and universities that embodied the entire western regions in the United States. Of those 159 colleges and universities, Jones and Gloeckner received a 35% response rate. The data were analyzed using a One-way ANOVA and a *t* test. It was found that almost 75% of the colleges and universities tested had a specific policy administering homeschooled students (Jones & Gloeckner, 2004). In addition, 55% of the administrative staff surveyed felt that previously homeschooled students would perform the same, both academically and socially, as those graduates enrolled in the school system (Jones & Gloeckner, 2004). The overall attitude and perception of these admission officers was positive. Jones and colleagues predicted a successful outcome for previously homeschooled students and were in favour of in encouraging them to attend post-secondary education (2004).

LIMITATIONS

Despite research evidence there remains a large portion of society that questions and criticizes the possible negative effects this method creates, in particular the

socialization of children who are homeschooled compared to those who are enrolled in public systems. Critics claim there are numerous reasons as to why it could be damaging to the development of a child. For one thing, the classroom at home and the classroom in a school are completely different environments. In public schools there is routine and class structure. In the home there is more likely to be an unstructured schedule (Collom, 2005). Today society is geared toward teamwork, routine and societal organization. Children who are not accustomed to this layout may frequently find it difficult to handle (Shaw, 2000).

Most professional occupations require a daily routine necessary for the proper function of a company. Public schools help to prepare youth for many complex aspects of adult life (Romanowski, 2001). Allowing a child to learn at home lets them produce their own schedule. By establishing a personal agenda, as adults these children may find it difficult to maintain things, such as appointments or scheduled events (Lubienski, 2003). On the other hand, because of the flexible structure of home schooling programs, the lessons can be fitted to the child's pace, capability and learning style. There is no pressure placed on the child to keep up with scheduled lessons and they are typically able to start and complete assignments on their own time through out the day (Cai, Reeve & Robinson, 2002). Children in public schools that lack the academic skills to keep up with the majority of their peers may fall behind in their work. Slower students are not always able to receive the proper attention because of the structured routine in the classroom (Cai, Reeve & Robinson, 2002). Because home schooling does not have such a

structured routine this can allow more freedom in terms of learning activities. These activities may include trips to places such as museums, which can be beneficial to the child's creative side (Cai, Reeve & Robinson, 2002).

Another criticism is that public school children are typically placed in a different teacher's classroom annually. This allows the child to experience a wide variety of teachers with different strengths and weaknesses (Wichers, 2001). When children are taught at home they are typically only taught by one individual, who in most cases is the mother. This does not allow various learning and teaching techniques and could severely restrict a child (Wichers, 2001). Parents can only teach areas in which they are skilled, consequently leading to a possible bias in their child's capabilities (Collom, 2005). Public school teachers have been trained in specific focus areas. They also have been educated in how to both motivate and manage a classroom (Cai, Reeve & Robinson, 2002). Many parents lack this training, which is why many critics believe that the child may fall below public school standards.

To evaluate these criticisms, Allison Kennedy and Deborah Gust conducted a study surveying ten thousand households from around the United States. Receiving a 59% response rate, a Chi-square test was administered to determine statistical differences among those who homeschooled and those who sent their children to either public or private schools (Kennedy & Gust, 2005). It was found that 2% of the population sampled homeschooled and 11% attended private schools (Kennedy & Gust, 2005). Homeschool parents were found to score the same as private school parents when it came to their level

of education. 82% of private school parents claimed they had achieved a degree beyond high school, with homeschooling parents reportedly obtaining the same level of education (Kennedy & Gust, 2005). The US Department of Educational statistics also agreed with this finding, stating that homeschool parents have above-average educational backgrounds (Kennedy & Gust, 2005). Thus, to say that parents who homeschool may not provide the appropriate education to their children is an overstatement.

Nonetheless, in addition to limited knowledge, it may be difficult for the parent to balance the job of teaching and other personal responsibilities (Cai, Reeve & Robinson, 2002). If both parents work then it is unlikely that the child will receive the time and attention required in attaining a proper education. Parents of homeschooled children must factor in how much time they are willing to devote to their children's education. A parent must have a healthy relationship with the child and have an excellent understanding of the information that they are teaching (Lubienski, 2003). Educating a child is a time consuming job that requires a parents full interest and exertion. Teaching requires both commitment and willpower. Compared to public school teachers, parents who are teaching their own children will most likely be biased in giving criticism (Collom, 2005). Consequently, the child may perhaps be graded too simply or too hard. This can be critical to the child's future endeavors. Often parents surrender too easily to the protests of their children and will alter things to meet the requests of the child (Collom, 2005). Although this may seem to be beneficial at the time, as children grow older they will have trouble fitting into societal norms.

Even so, one of the major benefits of educating a child in the comfort of the home is constant one-on-one attention from the teacher (Collom, 2005). In a public school classroom there is often overcrowding, in which case it is difficult for the teacher to give the individual attention that some of these children require (Collom, 2005). One-on-one tutoring is increasing in our school systems (Blok, 2004), but some public schools are unable to offer this opportunity. With homeschooling, this type of interaction is seen everyday. This one-on-one environment seems to assist the child in their ability to learn and grow. This can also permit time for the child to pursue their own interests (Lubienski, 2003). In addition, the child may have special needs, and by having one-on-one attention, the teacher is able to concentrate on giving the children exactly what they need in their own time frame (Collom, 2005).

Parents staying at home with their children often find it time consuming and in many cases parents will even leave their work to become a full time teacher for their child. For parents who both have careers, sacrificing one source of income can be difficult for the entire family (Cai, Reeve & Robinson, 2002). Because of this possible lack of funds, parents may not be able to afford resources that are offered at public schools (Cai, Reeve & Robinson, 2002). These may include computers, science equipment, shop tools and many other resources. It has been found that homeschool parents have a lower income level than do private school parents (Kennedy & Gust, 2005). This lack of means can be damaging to the education of the child. Conversely, if the family is financially secure they may be able to provide resources that are not offered

in the public school system (Cai, Reeve & Robinson, 2002). This could include costly resources, such as computers, field trips and other luxuries that public schools are unable to afford.

Although many of the concerns of these critics of homeschooling are important, it appears that with the appropriate tools and parental attitudes, it has been proven that a child who is homeschooled can succeed both socially and academically. As the number of homeschooling families has been reported to be increasing dramatically in the past decade all over the world, it is clear that the movement toward homeschooling is not disappearing (Mason, 2004). With the help of the community and the continued help and support from organization and advocates of homeschooling, hopefully soon there will be less criticism on the topic and more encouragement.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Although it is evident that there are a growing number of parents choosing to homeschool around the world, there is limited research on this. The small sample size of homeschoolers found in various studies has lead to a shortage of statistical evidence to distinguish a difference between homeschoolers and traditionally educated children (Kennedy & Gust, 2005). Thus, the ability to generalize from this small percentage of individuals to the greater population is difficult. A further problem is many reviews focused a lot of the literature and studies primarily on homeschoolers from the United States, and lack international perspective (Blok, 2004). For example, there is little

research done that deals with Canadian homeschoolers and even less concerning the views and concerns of other countries. As the numbers continue to grow for those who support and/or take part in homeschooling, there needs to be more research done on the issue. This includes better research designs and methods, and an internationally based studies (Blok, 2004). In addition, many parents are afraid to give their opinions on the topic because they fear that they will give homeschoolers a bad name (Romanowski, 2001).

CONCLUSION

Socialization is one of the main concerns when discussing homeschooling and its affects on the youth of today. Many believe that if children are not educated in the formal school system, they will lack the social skills necessary to succeed in life. However, research indicates that given available resources, and appropriate attitudes, such as time, patience and willingness, homeschooling can produce socially adequate children, whatever the parents' motivation for choosing this option. It is a growing trend in the United States, Canada and internationally. Homeschooling has been found usually to be beneficial to children and is something that more and more families have been choosing as a means to education. What was once thought to be a rare has now emerged as a legitimate choice. Homeschooling is on the rise and with more empirical evidence and internationally based research supporting its efficacy, it will continue to flourish.

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