Homeschooling and the Question of Socialization Revisited

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This article reviews recent research on homeschooled children's socialization. The research indicates that homeschooling parents expect their children to respect and get along with people of diverse backgrounds, provide their children with a variety of social opportunities outside the family, and believe their children's social skills are at least as good as those of other children. What homeschooled children think about their own social skills is less clear. Compared to children attending conventional schools, however, research suggest that they have higher quality friendships and better relationships with their parents and other adults. They are happy, optimistic, and satisfied with their lives. Their moral reasoning is at least as advanced as that of other children, and they may be more likely to act unselfishly. As adolescents, they have a strong sense of social responsibility and exhibit less emotional turmoil and problem behaviors than their peers. Those who go on to college are socially involved and open to new experiences. Adults who were homeschooled as children are civically engaged and functioning competently in every way measured so far. An alarmist view of homeschooling, therefore, is not supported by empirical research. It is suggested that future studies focus not on outcomes of socialization but on the process itself.

Homeschooling, once considered a fringe movement, is now widely seen as "an acceptable alternative to conventional schooling" (Stevens, 2003, p. 90). This "normalization of homeschooling" (Stevens, 2003, p. 90) has prompted scholars to announce: "Homeschooling goes mainstream" (Gaither, 2009, p. 11) and "Homeschooling comes of age" (Lines, 2000, p. 74). It has become so "unremarkable" (Stevens, 2003, p. 90), that one author claims, perhaps a bit too confidently, "everybody knows somebody who is teaching a child at home" (Gaither, 2009, p. 11).

Despite this popular acceptance, homeschooling remains controversial. For example, it has been argued (most articulately by Reich, 2005) that homeschooling permits a kind of "parental despotism" (p. 113) so absolute that children may "fail to develop the capacity to think for themselves" (p. 114). They may grow up to be "unfree" (p. 114) and "civically disabled" (p. 111), and a pluralistic democracy such as ours depends upon citizens who are "self-governing and self-determining persons" (p. 113). According to this view, only governmental regulation that "requires exposure to and engagement with . . . social diversity" (p. 113) can ensure protection from "the civic perils of homeschooling" (Reich, 2002, p. 56).

Such an argument goes well beyond the customary charge that homeschooled children are socially inept. Nevertheless, the question so familiar to homeschooling parents—"What about socialization?"—remains at the heart of the controversy.

THE 2000 REVIEW

In 2000, the *Peabody Journal of Education* published a special double issue dedicated to the topic of homeschooling. Included in that issue was my review of research on the socialization of homeschooled children (Medlin, 2000). The research available at that time led to the following conclusions:

> Homeschooled 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. Homeschooling parents . . . actively encourage their children to take advantage of social opportunities outside the family. Homeschooled 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 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. (Medlin, 2000, p. 119)

Are these conclusions still valid? What more have we learned? The purpose of the present article is to review research on homeschooled children's socialization published after that featured in the 2000 review.

PARENTS' ATTITUDES

Review of the Research

Socialization may be defined as the process by which a child acquires "the skills, behavior patterns, values, and motivations needed for competent functioning in the culture in which the child is growing up" (Maccoby, 2007, p. 13). The importance of the parents' role in the socialization of children is (almost) universally acknowledged (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington, & Bornstein, 2000; Grusec & Davidov, 2007; Maccoby, 2007; but see also Harris, 2009). "Although socialization also occurs in other contexts," Grusec and Davidov (2010) noted, "there is a compelling argument that its primary context is the family" (p. 688). When analyzing the impact homeschooling has on a child's socialization, therefore, finding out what homeschooling parents think about their children's socialization seems to be a good place to start.

Miller (2000) did just that when he asked a small group of homeschooling parents

"to express their understanding of socialization as it related to home educated children" (p. 8). These parents listed five advantages of homeschooling:

> First, the deepened relationship with the child lets the parents be more aware of the child's needs and the influences of their environment. Second, this awareness allows the parent to be supportive of the child's social interactions, positive or negative. Third, having the children at home allows the parent to guide the child in understanding the moral implications of behavior. Fourth, because of the high degree of parental involvement, parents can highlight the child's strengths and protect them from negative labeling due to weaknesses. Fifth, homeschooling allows the parents to increase their influence through modeling good socialization. (p. 12)

Mitchell (2001) used both interviews and surveys with small groups of homeschooling parents and found that although they did not agree on a precise definition of socialization, they did agree that it is not a simple, one-way process. They emphasized that children make choices, assimilate and interpret their social experiences, and are active agents in their own socialization. These parents also agreed on the "essential characteristics of a socialized child" (p. 211), which included honesty, respect for authority and for others, responsibility, integrity, and kindness. It is perhaps worth noting that although all the parents in this study identified themselves as Christians, of the 17 characteristics they endorsed, only two—"believes in God" and "imitates God" (p. 178)—were explicitly religious. Mitchell concluded that the parents' overall "perception of their children's socialization was positive."

In a similar study, Mecham (2004) interviewed a small group of homeschooling mothers. He reported that although "the family was seen as the primary socializing agent," parents intentionally included "other positive socializing agents" in their children's lives (p. iv). These mothers agreed that the goals of socialization should include teaching children to get along with people of "diverse backgrounds" (p. 66). They also agreed that socialization in public schools was often negative and "focused more on same-aged peer interaction rather than interacting with people of different ages" (p. 66). Mecham concluded, "Mothers of homeschooled children believed that their children were developing adequate socialization skills" (p. 56).

The National Foundation for Educational Research (United Kingdom) studied homeschooling families' need for and use of various kinds of support (Atkinson et al., 2007). The results showed that parents acknowledged "the importance of providing opportunities for their children to socialize" (p. x) and that they "accessed a wide variety of different sources of support" (p. viii) to meet this and other needs. Parents cited family and friends, local homeschooling groups,

religious and other community organizations, sports programs, and the Internet as sources of social contacts for their children.

Finally, as part of a study to be discussed in more detail later (Kingston & Medlin, 2006), homeschooling parents and the parents of children attending public schools reported their attitudes about religion and values in a brief questionnaire. Although homeschooling parents were more concerned with teaching their children their values and religious beliefs, and more convinced that their children's education reinforced this endeavor, the two groups of parents were equally likely to agree that, "I want my child to decide for him/herself what values to believe in" (p. 5).

Commentary

This research describes parents who believe that homeschooling allows them to tailor socialization experiences to their children's individual personalities and needs in ways that conventional schools cannot. They understand, however, that children are active, contributing participants in their own socialization and that how children develop is (and should be) partly self-determined. They want their children to learn to respect and get along with people of all ages and backgrounds. They use a wide variety of resources outside the family to give their children the opportunity to interact with others. And they believe that their children's social skills are developing appropriately.

As most of these studies had small numbers of participants and all of them used self-report measures, the results should not be generalized too freely. They almost certainly give the impression of more homogeneity among homeschooling parents than is accurate (Gaither, 2009; Ray, 2010a; Romanowski, 2006). Nevertheless, the results are consistent not only with current theories of socialization, which stress children's "agency" (Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007; Maccoby, 2007), but also with previous research on homeschooling parents' attitudes (Medlin, 2000).

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL SKILLS

Review of the Research

Because all the studies of homeschooled children's social skills reviewed here used the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS; Gresham & Elliott, 1990), a brief description of this test may prove helpful. The SSRS is designed to be "a broad, multi-rater assessment" of "socially acceptable learned behaviors that enable a person to interact effectively with others" (Gresham & Elliott, 1990, p. 1). On the Parent Form, parents rate their children's cooperation, assertion, responsibility, self-control, and problem behaviors. The self-report Student Form measures children's cooperation, assertion, empathy, and self-control. Each version also yields a total social skills score. Norms are based on a national sample of more

than 4,000 students attending conventional schools. Although reliability and validity are better for the total social skills scale than for the individual scales (Diperna & Volpe, 2005), an independent review of the test concluded that "overall, the psychometric properties of the *SSRS* are excellent" (Demaray et al., 1995, p. 653).

In perhaps the simplest of the studies analyzing homeschooled students' social skills, SSRS scores for homeschooled children in Grades 3 to 6 were compared to the test norms (Medlin, 2007). Total social skills scores for homeschooled girls in the fifth and sixth grades, and boys in sixth grade, were significantly higher than the norms. On the individual scales, sixth-grade boys' cooperation, assertion, and empathy scores were significantly higher than the norms, whereas fourth-grade girls scored higher on empathy, fifth-grade girls higher on all four skills, and sixth-grade girls higher on all but assertion. No group scored significantly lower than the norms on any of the scales.

In a similar study, Adkins (2004) tested homeschooled children in Grades 3 to 12. The children's parents completed the Parent Form. The results showed that for both elementary (Grades 3–6) and secondary (Grades 7–12) students, children's total social skills scores were significantly higher than the test norms. (Individual scale scores were not reported.) Parents' ratings of their children's social skills were also significantly higher than the norms, and ratings of problem behaviors lower.

Francis and Keith (2004) administered the Parent Form to homeschooling parents and to parents of children attending conventional schools. To create the comparison group, the researchers asked homeschooling parents to recruit the parents of one of their child's friends who attended a public or private school. Homeschooling parents rated their children's total social skills significantly higher than did the other parents, but there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups on the individual scales.

Mecham (2004) tested homeschooled children and children attending public schools and reported that there were no differences between the two groups for boys. Homeschooled girls, however, scored significantly lower than girls attending public schools on assertion, empathy, self-control, and total social skills. Unexpectedly, he found no statistically significant differences between homeschooled girls and homeschooled boys. Homeschooled children's mothers completed the Parent Form, enabling Mecham to directly compare parent and child scores. Mothers rated their children significantly higher than children rated themselves on assertion and self-control, whereas children rated themselves higher on cooperation.

Valdez (2005) administered the SSRS to homeschooled children and to children

attending conventional schools, who, as in the Francis and Keith (2004) study, were friends of the home-schooled children. She also tested the children's parents. The results showed that children's total social skills scores did not differ between the two groups. (Individual scale scores were not reported.) Homeschooling parents, however, rated their children's social skills significantly higher than did the other parents. There was no difference between the two groups in parents' ratings of problem behaviors.

McKinley, Asaro, Bergin, D'Auria, and Gagnon (2007) tested children and their parents in homeschool, public school, and private school groups. Children attending a private school rated themselves significantly higher on cooperation, assertion, self-control, and total social skills than the other children did. However, there were no statistically significant differences between homeschooled children and children attending public schools. There were also no differences between any of the groups in parents' ratings of children's social skills or problem behaviors. A very similar study that used a newer, revised version of the SSRS (the Social Skills Improvement System) found that public school students, but not private school students, had higher total social skills scores than homeschooled children, but again there were no significant differences in parents' ratings (Wharfe, 2012).

Commentary

Taken together, these studies suggest that homeschooling parents believe their children's social skills are at least as good as those of other children, and perhaps better. What homeschooled children think about their own social skills is less clear. They tend to rate their social skills higher than SSRS norms, but not higher—and in some instances lower—than groups of students attending conventional schools. The SSRS standardization sample, of course, was far larger and more representative of American schoolchildren than the samples used in these studies. Nevertheless, with such inconsistent results, perhaps the safest conclusion until further research becomes available is that homeschooled children believe their social skills are much like those of other children.

Mecham's (2004) finding that there was no difference between homeschooled girls' and boys' scores is an unusual result. Girls typically score significantly higher than boys at the same grade level (Gresham & Elliot, 1990). It is risky to interpret what may be nothing more than one anomalous (and negative) result, but other research hints that gender differences in social behavior may be less pronounced among homeschooled students than among other children (Sharick & Medlin, 2012; Sheffer, 1997). One possible explanation of this result is that the homeschool environment is less likely than that of conventional schools to bring about or support gender differences in social behavior. This possibility would seem to be well worth further investigation, particularly because some have

assumed just the opposite (e.g., Yuracko, 2008).

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS, PROBLEM BEHAVIORS, AND LIFE SATISFACTION

Review of the Research

Emotional intelligence can be defined as "a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies . . . that determine how well we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands, challenges and pressures" (Bar-On, 2007a, para. 1). Adkins (2004) measured emotional intelligence in homeschooled children in Grades 3 to 12 with the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory (Bar-On, 2007b). She then compared their scores to the test norms, which are based on more than 9,000 children attending conventional schools. The results showed that elementary students scored significantly higher than the norms on the general mood scale, which measures happiness and optimism. Secondary students' interpersonal, adaptability, and total scores were significantly higher than the norms. The interpersonal scale measures the quality of interpersonal relationships, social responsibility, and empathy, whereas the adaptability scale measures problem solving, reality testing, and flexibility. On no scale did homeschooled children score significantly lower than the norms.

To examine children's attitudes about their social relationships, McKinley et al. (2007) administered three tests—the Peer Network and Dyadic Loneliness Scale (Hoza, Bukowski, & Beery, 2000), the Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction Questionnaire (Cassidy & Asher, 1992), and the Friendship Qualities Scale (Bukowski, Hoza, & Boivin, 1994)—to children in homeschool, public school, and private school groups. There were no significant group differences on the Peer Network and Dyadic Loneliness Scale. However, private school students had significantly lower scores on the Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction Questionnaire than the other two groups. On the Friendship Qualities Scale, homeschooled children scored signifiantly lower than the other groups on conflict and signifcantly higher than public school children on feelings of closeness to best friends.

Reavis and Zakrinski (2005) compared the social networks and psychological adjustment of homeschooled children and children attending conventional schools. They found that "both groups had the same number of close friends" and that their friendships "were of similar quality" (p. 4). Homeschooled children, however, had "more positive attitudes toward teachers/coaches, more positive relationships with their parents, higher self-esteem, and more positive interpersonal relationships" in general than the other children (p. 5). Psychological adjustment was more strongly related to friendship quality for homeschooled children than for children attending

conventional schools, prompting the researchers to suggest that homeschooled children might be "more dependent . . . on the success of their best friendships" (p. 5).

Haugen (2004) used the Parent Rating Scales, the Self-Report of Personality, and the Teacher Rating Scales components of the Behavior Assessment System for Children (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992) to obtain multiple perspectives on the social behavior of homeschooled adolescents and adolescents attending conventional schools. Although these scales primarily measure problem behaviors, they also assess social skills. Each scale includes a validity measure to control for socially desirable responding. Parents also completed a brief questionnaire that assessed their children's social skills, social responsibility, and exposure to media and other cultural influences. Compared to homeschooling parents, parents of students attending conventional schools reported that their children showed significantly more problem behaviors—particularly depression and attention problems—on the Parent Rating Scales. They also gave their children lower ratings for social skills, social responsibility, and social exposure than did homeschooling parents. On the Self-Report of Personality measure, students attending conventional schools described themselves as having significantly more problem behaviors than did homeschooled youth. They also expressed a more negative attitude toward school, and their composite "school maladjustment" score was significantly higher.Regular classroom teachers completed the Teacher Rating Scales for students attending conventional schools, whereas for homeschooled youth, teachers of a variety of classes taken outside the home completed them. The differences between the two groups were dramatic. Homeschooled youth were rated significantly higher in social skills, whereas students attending conventional schools were rated significantly higher in hyperactivity, aggression, conduct problems, depression, attention problems, learning problems, and atypical behavior.

McEntire (2005) surveyed adolescents who were either homeschooled or attending conventional schools but who were members of the same churches. He found that homeschooled youth were significantly less likely to say that they were too busy, stressed out, always tired, confused, or angry with life. There was no difference between the two groups in the percentage of those who said they were lonely. And in a survey of more than 2,400 homeschooled children in Canada, Van Pelt (2003) found that homeschooled students' scores on the Student's Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner, 1991) were well above average.

Commentary

This research paints a very favorable picture of homeschooled children. Compared to children attending conventional schools, they apparently have higher quality

relationships both with close friends and with parents and other adults. They are happy, optimistic, satisfied with their lives, and have a positive attitude about themselves and about being homeschooled. As adolescents, they show a strong sense of social responsibility. They experience less stress and emotional turmoil and exhibit fewer problem behaviors than their peers.

The Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction Questionnaire that McKinley et al. (2007) used was designed to measure peer relations in school. Although the researchers removed all references to "school" for the homeschooled children, most of the items included the word "kids"—for example, "Do you have other kids to talk to?" It is possible, therefore, that relationships with people other than peers were overlooked. Such relationships are more common among homeschooled children (Chatham-Carpenter, 1994) and are particularly encouraged by their parents (Mecham, 2004). Nevertheless, homeschooled children did no worse on the test than public school children, and McKinley et al.'s other measure of loneliness yielded no group differences.

It is intriguing that the most striking differences between homeschooled adolescents and those attending conventional schools in Haugen's (2004) study were reported by teachers, not by the students themselves or their parents. This result is reminiscent of Shyers' (1992) now-classic study (reviewed in Medlin, 2000) in which problem behavior scores for children attending conventional schools were more than 8 times higher than those of homeschooled children, based on evaluations by impartial observers.

MORAL AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Review of the Research

Moral development is typically analyzed in terms of both moral thinking and moral behavior. Only a few studies have examined moral thinking in homeschooled children. Manuel (2000) used the well-known Defining Issues Test (Rest, Thoma, Davison, Robbins, & Swanson, 1987) and found no difference in the maturity of moral reasoning between homeschooled children and children attending public schools. Ohman (2001), however, found that college freshmen who had been homeschooled in high school scored higher on a test of business ethics than other students. And in a creative and unusual study, Knafle and Wescott (2000) allowed children to choose between two endings to the *Cinderella* story. In the "forgiveness" ending, Cinderella finds handsome lords for the wicked stepsisters to marry so they can live in the castle with her and the prince (happily ever after, of course). In the "retribution" ending, birds peck out the stepsisters' eyes on Cinderella's wedding day. Homeschooled children preferred the forgiveness ending significantly more often than did children attending conventional schools.

Other studies have focused on moral behavior. McEntire (2005) found that homeschooled youth were less likely than their peers to use illicit drugs, gamble, lie to an adult, abuse alcohol, or attempt suicide. Romanowski (2002) reported that homeschooled adolescents who enrolled in public schools were disturbed by the dishonesty, profanity, and materialism they found there. Adults who were homeschooled as children were found to be less likely than the general population to be convicted of a crime (Ray, 2004a).

One study examined both moral thinking and moral behavior, from both parents' and children's perspectives (Kingston & Medlin, 2006). Homeschooled children and children attending public schools completed measures of moral reasoning, altruistic intent, empathy, and socially desirable responding. Parents rated the frequency of their children's positive behaviors such as sharing, helping others, and cooperating. For most measures, there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups. However, homeschooled children described themselves as more altruistic than public school children did, even though public school children were significantly more likely to show socially desirable responding.

Uecker (2008) measured religious attitudes and behavior in adolescents who were home-schooled, attending public schools, or attending private religious schools. The type of schooling made no statistical difference, but parents had a "strong influence on their adolescents' religiosity" for all three groups (p. 581). Similarly, Smiley (2010) reported that college students who had been homeschooled "described a strengthening of the values" learned at home as they grew older. Indeed, most adults who were homeschooled as children hold religious beliefs much like those of their parents (Ray, 2004a).

Commentary

Although meager, this research suggests that homeschooled children's moral reasoning is at least as advanced as that of other children. Homeschooled children may be more likely to act unselfishly than children attending conventional schools. As adolescents and adults, homeschooled children prove less likely than others to engage in illegal and antisocial behavior. Their religious beliefs are strongly influenced by their parents, but this is not unique to homeschooled students. Most people in the United States (more than 70%) remain within the faith tradition of their parents (The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2010).

SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT IN COLLEGE AND ADULTHOOD

Review of the Research

Studies of homeschooled students who have gone on to college have shown that

they were "successfully integrated into the college culture" (Holder, 2001, p. vi), as indicated both by the students' own report (Jones, 2010) and by objective measures such as the number of extracurricular activities in which they were involved (Sutton & Galloway, 2000). One study found that in the first few weeks of college, previously homeschooled students were judged by their professors to be less socially confident than others, though the students themselves did not agree (Alvord, 2003). Other research, however, has reported that they were less anxious than other students (White et al., 2007) and had healthy self-esteem (Holder, 2001). Homeschooled students scored higher on a test of openness to experience than students who attended conventional schools, and those who were homeschooled exclusively had higher scores than those who were homeschooled for only part of their academic career (White, Moore, & Squires, 2009).

Research on adults who were homeschooled as children has yielded remarkably consistent results. Kurtz (2003) interviewed home-educated adults and concluded that they "demonstrated positive engagement in a diverse society" (p. iv). Van Pelt (2003) found that adults in Canada had "a healthy and contributing life after home education" (p. 9) and were highly satisfied with their lives. Rates of voting and volunteerism were both high. In the largest study of its kind, Ray (2004a) surveyed more than 7,300 adults who were homeschooled as children. He summarized his results as follows:

> In essence, the home-educated were very positive about their homeschool experiences, actively involved in their local communities, keeping abreast of current affairs, highly civically engaged, going on to college at a higher rate than the national average, tolerant of others' expressing their viewpoints, religiously active, but wide-ranging in their worldview beliefs, holding worldview beliefs similar to those of their parents, and largely home-educating their own children. (Ray, 2004b, p. 9)

Commentary

These (too) few studies suggest that homeschooled students adjust well to college and are at least as socially involved as others, though they may be less self-confident at first. Compared to college students who attended conventional schools, they are more open to new experiences, a trait characterized by "intellectual curiosity" and a "readiness to re-examine one's own values and those of authority figures" (Costa & McCrae, n.d., para. 4). Adults who were homeschooled as children appear to be "doing well in the 'real world'" (Ray, 2004b, p. 10) in every way measured so far.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

"What about socialization?" is a very important but also a very ambiguous question. To be answered properly, it must be recast into a more specific question that is consistent with an accurate definition of socialization, such as this: Are homeschooled children acquiring the "skills, behavior patterns, values, and motivations" they need to function competently as members of society (Maccoby, 2007, p. 13)? And the answer to that question, based on three decades of research on homeschooling, is clearly yes. Recent research, like that reviewed earlier (Medlin, 2000), gives every indication that the socialization experiences homeschooled children receive are more than adequate. In fact, some indicators—quality of friendships during childhood, infrequency of behavior problems during adolescence, openness to new experiences in college, civic involvement in adulthood—suggest that the kind of socialization experiences homeschooled children receive may be more advantageous than those of children who attend conventional schools.

There are many reasons why homeschooled children's socialization experiences may prove quite effective. Compared to other agents of socialization in children's lives—peers, teachers, media, cultural institutions—parents have several advantages. They are very likely to have an enduring and reciprocal relationship with their children, an intimate knowledge of their children's individual needs, and a strong interest in their children's welfare. Parents, therefore, often have both the motivation and the means to teach their children "to deal with the demands of social life" successfully (Grusec & Davidov, 2007, p. 285). Perhaps more important, socialization is most effective when it occurs within the context of a supportive, responsive relationship (Kochanska et al., 2010). Situating children's education in the home may ensure that more of their socialization experiences are an intrinsic part of such a relationship.

What then of the claim that homeschooling creates children who are unable to "think for themselves" (Reich, 2005, p. 114) and grow up to be "civically disabled adults" (Reich, 2005, p. 111)? This argument is made from a political and philosophical standpoint rather than a scientific one, and more thorough discussions of the issues involved can be found elsewhere (e.g., Burkard & O'Keeffe, 2005; Cox, 2003; Glanzer, 2008; Hardenbergh, 2005; Kunzman, 2012; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Merry & Karsten, 2010; Ray, 2009, 2010b). It is perhaps appropriate to note here, however, that an alarmist view of homeschooling is not supported by empirical research. And one study, at least, suggests that socialization in conventional schools may not be as empowering as many suppose. Brint, Contreras, and Matthews (2001) observed 64 public elementary school classrooms and "coded every socializing message the teachers communicated to the students" (p. 159). They found that 84% of these messages "reflected the teachers' efforts to quiet the students, keep them from asking questions without recognition, or to redirect their straying attention to the task at hand" so that they

would "work faster" and "finish on time" (p. 161). In many classrooms, the *only* messages recorded were of this kind. Communications about positive social behavior were rare: cooperation (2%), self-control (1%), responsibility (1%), and respect for group differences (0.3%).

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Many of the studies reviewed here had methodological limitations of one kind or another: non-random samples, small sample sizes, preexisting differences between groups besides children's school background, no controls for socially desirable responding, relying too much on parents' and children's reports instead of more objective measures, and so forth. Obviously correcting such weaknesses would improve future research. But I would like to argue that simply doing the same kind of research we have been doing, only a little better, is not enough.

Socialization is a dynamic and interactive process that encompasses behavior, cognitions, and emotions. It happens naturally and continually as children take part in "daily routines which immerse them directly in the values of their community" (Durkin, 1995, p. 618). To be properly understood, socialization must be examined in the everyday settings that make up children's lives. But the strategies such research requires, such as longitudinal designs, naturalistic observation, and interactional analysis, are largely absent from the homeschooling literature. There is no question that such research is hard to do. The design of almost all of the studies reviewed here—cross-sectional, descriptive, nonexperimental (Johnson, 2001)—and the methods they used—interviews, surveys, paper-and-pencil tests—are much simpler and easier, but risk missing the complex nature of socialization.

Rapaport (2007) provided an example of a step in the right direction. For at least 1 hr a day for 5 consecutive days, she observed families who homeschooled children diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. She recorded each instance in which a parent taught any one of more than 60 specific social skills and how the parent did so. She found that most social skills were taught in unplanned moments, as a response to the child's ongoing behavior. Although her results might not apply to other families, Rapaport's approach, when refined, could serve as a useful starting point for future research.

Homeschooling offers researchers a unique opportunity. Parents are typically the first and most important agents of socialization in a child's life (Grusec & Davidov, 2007). With institutional schooling removed from the picture, socialization within the family can be viewed against a simpler, clearer background. We might learn much, therefore, by shifting the focus of homeschooling research from the outcomes of socialization to the process itself, from how well homeschooled children are doing to how parents help their children

become a part of the social world around them.

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