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It has been a pleasure acquiring the Master of Science degree in Corporate and Professional Communication. I am profoundly grateful for the introduction the faculty at Radford University has given me into this discipline, which adroitly...
Abstract

This thesis investigates the commonly held assumption that public school education "socializes" students. The subjects were 33 demographically matched school-age children, 13 of whom attend public school, 20 of whom are educated primarily by their parents. The Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales were used to evaluate the communication skills, socialization, and daily living skills of the subjects. These scores, combined into the "adaptive behavior composite," reflected the general maturity of each subject. After these data were processed using the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS), they indicated that the home educated children in this sample were significantly better socialized and more mature than those in public school. The immediate implication is that home school families are providing adequately for socialization needs. The broadest implication is that we may need to reexamine the assumed basis of the socialization process.

Ch. I -- Introduction, Review, and Rationale

The Challenge of Home Schooling

One of the most frequently cited benefits of universal, free, compulsory, tax-supported education is the role of the schools in socializing children. The common experience of common schools is believed to supply social cement. Spending thirteen years studying and playing with children of diverse creeds, races, and classes is "schooling for democracy," preparation for the duties and privileges of adult citizenship. Growing up in this atmosphere is believed to foster social competence and maturity in the child.

Although concerns may be voiced about declining academic standards, the value of public education as a socializing agent is assumed. It is feared that those who are deprived of this experience will be lacking in social competence. The Greek philosophers called people who isolated themselves from the life of the community idiotoi -- the root of our words idiom, idiomatic, and idiot.

John Dewey, the "father of modern public education," stressed socialization as the primary goal of the educational process. In his Moral Principles in Education Dewey said:

A study is to be considered as a means of bringing the child to realize the social scene of action (p. 31). Information is genuine or educative only in so far as it presents definite images and conceptions of materials placed in a context of social life (p. 32). . . . History is vital or dead to the child according as it is, or is not, presented from the sociological standpoint (p. 36). What the normal child continuously needs is not so much isolated moral lessons . . . as the formation of habits of social imagination and conception (p. 40). Apart from participation in social life, the school has no moral end nor aim (emphasis added) (p. 11).

Summarized as a research hypothesis, Dewey's conviction would read: public education aims for, and will result in, greater social competence for children. This overall maturity level will be reflected in such areas as communication skills, socialization, and daily living skills. The benefits of public education can be scientifically quantified when an impartial test of social maturity, or adaptive behavior is used to compare the scores of children participating in public education to the scores of children whose parents isolate them from this experience.

If Dewey was right, then home schooling is an issue of growing concern. According to a 1990 survey sponsored by the Home School Legal Defense Foundation (HSLDA), more than 630,000 American children are currently...
This trend raises troubling questions among educational professionals. There are the issues of quality. Are the home-taught children receiving an adequate and well-rounded education? What should the standards be? There are the issues of control. Who is responsible for the educational welfare of American youth? How should standards be enforced, and who should enforce them? And, there are the questions of socialization. Even if home schooling produced geniuses, how will society benefit if they are socially incompetent?

The home-school family questions the value of public education. This means that a significant number of people have withdrawn their support, and their children, from the public educational system. They have taken matters into their own hands, having more confidence in themselves than in the teaching professionals. They view their own family as a more healthy environment than the public school classroom. They view their own values as more worthy of propagation than the values animating the public school curriculum.

Is this confidence justified? Is the home education trend a healthy one, a renaissance of optimistic self-reliance? Or, is it an expression of cultural breakdown and social fragmentation? Are these parents creating a strange, xenophobic, isolated subculture? Will the children be able to participate in the give-and-take of democratic living, and cope with people of various social backgrounds, races, creeds, and nationalities?

How well do home-educated children understand the outside world? How prepared are they to take their place in it? As Thomas Toch et al. asked, “Ultimately, the question is whether common schooling is necessary for the common good (p. 77).”

Although the concerns of the home educators must be given a compassionate hearing, the question remains: is not socialization essential to the educational experience? Since socialization is an integral part of the common schools’ mission, a scientific demonstration of their success in achieving this goal will do much to add light, rather than heat, to the discussion.

The question of academic success in home schools can be answered in part by standard measurement instruments. Many studies have examined the academic achievements of home school children, and found them to be generally adequate. The HSLDA survey found that the majority of the respondents’ children score in the top 20% on such tests as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT).

The issue that still needs examination is “socialization.” Do children raised apart from the public school system acquire adequate skills in dealing with people? Are they socially adequate?

It is at this point that the insights and tools of communication study become relevant. This paper borrows from the concepts of the “interactional” school of thought, which holds that communication is the means by which people create social reality. Seen from this perspective, socialization and communication are inseparable components of life experience. It is impossible to say where one ends and the other begins.

This paper presents a survey and an analysis of a representative colony of home educators. A standardized measuring instrument is used to evaluate the “adaptive behavior” level of the children. The results are then computed and tabulated using the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS). A discussion of the results will then suggest possible explanations for these differences, as well as possible avenues of future research.

**Demographic Survey of American Home Educators**

The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) has more than 16,000 member families in the United States. In exchange for the yearly dues of $100, these families receive a quarterly newsletter and legal help if questions of truancy and the like arise. Assistance starts with phone calls and letters from association attorneys to worried school officials, clarifying the relevant state statutes. HSLDA is also prepared to offer full-scale representation to members, and is currently litigating on behalf of home school families before several state supreme courts.

HSLDA commissioned the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI) to conduct a nation-wide survey of its members. NHERI used “linear systematic sampling . . . to select 2,163 families with the starting point on the list being randomly determined.” (p. 2) 1,499 responses were tabulated and analyzed. The demographic information was summarized as follows:

Initial conclusions revealed that the home education families surveyed involve parents with greater formal educational attainment than average. Family income is slightly higher than the average, and two-parent families seem to be the norm. They have more children than the average United States family, and the families are predominantly Christian in viewpoint with a wide variety of religious preferences indicated. . . . The average age of the children in the families studied was just over eight years, and it appeared that the majority of the children had never been in public or private schools (HSLDA, p. 2, 1990).
To a large extent, the theoretical literature of the home schooling movement is negative, attacking and debunking the "common school" philosophy in terms of the writers' ideologies and biases. Yet, objections to universal, compulsory, free public education are almost as old as the public education movement. The concerns are usually couched in terms of values. Some parents worry about losing control over their children, when family values are diluted by the values of the teachers and other students.

In the 1960's R. J. Rushdoony, a Calvinist scholar, wrote the definitive manifestoes of the Christian school movement. His book *The Messianic Character of American Education* (1963) analyzed the intellectual foundations of the "common school movement," as well as the writings of the pioneering thinkers in the field. Rushdoony attempted to show that the perspective and world-view propagated through this system was not compatible with the Christian faith held by the majority of the American public.

More recently Samuel Blumenfeld, who is on the staff of Rushdoony's "Chalcedon Foundation," wrote *The N.E.A.: Trojan Horse in American Education*. Using selective excerpts from N.E.A. publications, Blumenfeld criticized various points of this organization's perceived agenda.

Rushdoony's son-in-law Gary North published two books in the 1980's -- *Who Owns the Family* by Ray Sutton, and *The Children Trap* by Robert Thoburn -- to advance the concept that children are a parental, not social, responsibility.

When Blair Adams, Joel Stein and Howard Wheeler published their book *Who Owns the Children?* they placed the provocative photograph of American police officers taking children away from parents on the front cover. (This book is fifth in the series *Education as Religious War*).

Phyllis Shlafly published excerpts from official transcripts before the U. S. Department of Education under the title *Child Abuse in the Classroom* This book purported to show how parental values and authority are undermined by aspects of progressive curricula.

Fundamentalist home educators also cite support for their concerns by people outside their camp. In her collection of essays, *The New Left: The Anti-Industrial Revolution*, atheist and capitalist Ayn Rand accused John Dewey's philosophy of stressing irrational, collectivist behavior. Feminist writer Patricia Sexton described public education as an overwhelmingly effeminate environment. By rewarding feminine behavior, such as sitting still and passively listening, Sexton said in her book *The Feminized Male*, the existing structure of education produced "the impotent female" and "the feminized male" -- timid, passive, uncreative, unfearing.

John Holt, a humanist, also bemoaned the crippling artificiality of the school environment in his book *How Children Learn*.

Marxist Jesuit Ivan Illich claimed in his books *Deschooling Society* and *Tools for Conviviality* that "bureaucratic" educational delivery systems pervert the social order by disempowering the people. Learners are transformed into consumers, and their status depends upon how much "education" they "receive."

As this synopsis suggests, most home educators have passionately held beliefs motivating their decision. Yet, this assault on the philosophical underpinnings of public education was not sufficient in and of itself to catalyze the movement. The explosive growth of the movement can be largely attributed to the practical literature which set forth the positive counter-program embraced by most home educators.

**Survey of Movement Literature**

The Christian home-school movement mushroomed during the second half of the decade of the 80's. The "godfather" of the movement, Raymond S. Moore, PhD, published a series of books that became the "bible" of the movement. Dr. Moore, a reading specialist, has served in public and private education as teacher and administrator. His most influential book, *Home Grown Kids*, provides a blueprint for raising children, year by year, until age nine. This was followed by *Home Style Teaching* and other similar books combining theory and testimonials.

Mary Pride's *The Big Book of Home Learning* and its sequel *The Next Book of Home Learning* are the Sears catalogues of the movement, containing reviews and sources for an astonishing variety of learning materials. Several organizations market complete K-12 curricula for home school families. These include Bob Jones University, A Beka, and Christian Liberty Academy.

Many home school families use an eclectic approach, which may begin with McGuffey's readers, then vary according to the talents and interests of the children/students.

Since most people involved in this movement are ideologically motivated and literate, the internal literature has grown exponentially. Home-schooling families typically belong to local support groups, each of which generates a
Survey of Professional Literature

The body of professional literature on the home-school phenomena is scanty at present. The November, 1988 issue of *Education and Urban Society* reviewed the then-current research on the topic. One article by Brian D. Ray, “Home Schools: A Synthesis of Research on Characteristics and Learner Outcomes” summarized the findings of 60 articles and studies. After noting the anecdotal evidence, Ray summarized the results of the cognitive and affective domain research (pp. 21-24). Academically, the home school students scored consistently in the top third of their age groups, or higher. The affective domain research took only a little over one page to discuss. One survey on record, a doctoral dissertation by J. W. Taylor, used the “Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale.” Taylor assumed that this construct “is closely linked with values, social competence, and self-evaluation” (Ray, p. 24). This researcher noted the amply adequate scores of the home educated children and concluded “Insofar as self-concept is a reflector of socialization . . . the findings of this study would suggest that few home schooling children are socially deprived” (Ray, p. 25).

Cheryl Wright’s overview divided the body of research into three categories: surveys, case studies, and comparison groups. Surveys most often focus on the motivations and characteristics of the home school families. Case studies provide more insight into the day-to-day operation of the home education process. Comparison groups compare the outcomes of home education to national averages. Few of the surveys Wright examined used standard instruments of proven validity. Case studies provided insight into the human dimension of the process, but suffered from the Heisenburg effect; negative information tended to be filtered out, as the researcher grew to know and like the families studied. The comparison studies are impressive, because the home educated children are compared to the national average. (Wright, 1989) Since, as the HSLDA survey indicates, home schooling families tend to be above average in educational and income levels, this may not be a fair comparison.

Since this issue of the *Education and Urban Society* magazine was printed, several other research projects have been completed and published: “Home Education in Montana: Family Characteristics and Student Achievement,” and “Beliefs, Attitudes, and Intentions of Science Learners in Public, Private, and Home Schools” (NHERI, 1991).

Rationale

There has been little research conducted in this field from a communication perspective. Most of the surveys measure family motivation and academic achievement as the salient variables. Since the primary unanswered objection to home schooling is the matter of "socialization," the emphasis on academics is not sufficiently persuasive; it fails to deal with the caution most frequently voiced by education professionals, as well as by those outside the home school movement.

This thesis puts the "Dewey hypothesis" to the test, by actually measuring the social maturity of home schooled students, then comparing those scores to a demographically matched sample of public school students.

This paper takes the commonly voiced assertion that public school education "socializes" students as its null hypothesis.

Ch. II -- Methodology

Overview

To test against the null hypothesis (public education is needed to socialize children), it was necessary to operationalize the concept "socialize." The unit of measurement chosen was the "Adaptive Behavior Composite" acquired using the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales. This composite includes social skills, communication skills, and daily living skills, and is an indicator of the overall maturity of the subject.

This study required a variety of approaches. Although the central data gathering instrument was a survey form, it was far more detailed and revealing than a typical anonymous survey. To secure the cooperation of the subject families, the researcher assumed the role of a known and trusted "participant observer."

This study required a variety of approaches. Although the central data gathering instrument was a survey form, it was far more detailed and revealing than a typical anonymous survey. To secure the cooperation of the subject families, the researcher assumed the role of a known and trusted "participant observer."

The assembled data were collated and processed using the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Histograms of the data were graphed, and T-tests run to verify the differences between the aggregate scores of
the public school educated children and those who were home schooled.

**Subjects**

The populations studied for this thesis consisted of 33 children of white, middle class fundamentalist Christian families. These included 16 females and 17 males. The depth of the information desired required the restriction of the scope to people with whom a certain level of credibility and trust had been established.

This study drew its the larger sample (20 cases) from families belonging to the Greater Roanoke Home Educator’s Association (GRHEA). It should be noted that some cultures are more difficult to penetrate than others. Outsiders are rarely invited to dinner in an Amish home, for example. For several reasons, this reticence is especially true for the home educator community.

Virginia truancy law (Appendix A) provides four sanctioned alternatives to attendance at a public or private school:

- if either parent is a certified teacher, or
- if either parent has a Bachelor’s degree, or
- if an approved “distance learning” curricula is followed, or
- if an acceptable home-made curricula is submitted to the local school board.

Families electing to home-school under one of these options are required to have their children tested once a year for academic progress, and to submit those standardized test scores to the local school board. Should these scores fall below the top 40th percentile, permission to home school may be revoked.

Many home schoolers choose the fifth option, and take their stand on a "bona fide religious conviction" that opposes school attendance. Virginia law exempts these parties from the testing requirement.

Sometimes, these dissenters will as a courtesy send a letter informing the public school administrators of their decision. One family in Bedford county followed this procedure, then found themselves embroiled in litigation for most of a year. Although this family eventually won their case, word circulates rapidly in the GRHEA community, and few have been inclined since then to telegraph their moves. Many families simply keep a low profile, and ask permission of no one. For this reason, they have no wish to attract the attention of public school officials by broadcasting their family’s activities.

The "wall of reticence" is even more difficult to penetrate because of an incident that occurred in 1990. Someone who called himself "Ted" made a number of phone calls around the country. This mysterious gentleman claimed to be working on a graduate school research project, and was eager to talk to children about their home school experiences. Unsuspecting children would sometimes give out the names and phone numbers of other home school families. As the interview progressed, the questions became more bizarre, and revealed a fascination with the use of "the rod." This incident makes researching this subculture even more difficult for legitimate scholars.

The members of the GRHEA pay annual dues of $10, meet several times a year, receive a newsletter, and have their 111 families and phone numbers listed in the 1991-92 directory. Member families live in Roanoke, Bedford, Montgomery, and Botetourt counties. GRHEA has been in operation for more than eight years, and several home-educated students are now in college. One area home schooler, in fact, received an appointment to the U. S. Naval Academy.

Many enter the movement at the annual "get acquainted" picnic. Each fall, nearly half of the families at these gatherings are newcomers just beginning the home school process.

For a control group, this study tested children who attend the same kind of fundamentalist Christian churches as the home school students, but go to public school (see Figure 1). The most prominent denomination encountered was the Baptists, who supplied two home school subjects and ten public school subjects. These churches are affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, which has made headlines over the last few years with its hard-edged commitment to such fundamentalist doctrines as special creation, unquestioned allegiance to an inerrant scripture, etc.

The Christian and Missionary Alliance Church (C.M.A.) is a non-charismatic denomination founded around the turn of this century as a staging structure for foreign missions. Nine of the home school subjects attend here.

The charismatic category includes six subjects from Grace Reformed Church, one from the Fountain of Life church, and two from the Assemblies of God denomination.

The mainline category included two members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and one from the Presbyterian Church in America.

Since the majority of the GRHEA members are white, conservative Protestant, and middle class, and since ecclesiastical traditions tend to be socially and economically homogenous, control and test groups were nearly identical in everything except the key variable. This provided a fairer basis of comparison than the hypothetical
“nationwide mean.” Differences in social maturity were more easily assigned to the education option chosen. This research therefore provided evidence of the socialization of home school children as compared to those who are most nearly their peers.

Most of these forms were filled out at gatherings of the subject populations. A few others were filled out by friends of friends. Each test was given out with a separate demographic “cover sheet”, and identified only by an arbitrary number.

To encourage participation, a tear-off coupon on the demographic/cover sheet offered a small incentive (personalized stationary) to participants (see Appendix B). Since each form requires approximately 20 minutes to fill out, this seemed an appropriate gesture of appreciation.

Measurement Apparatus

The Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales was selected as the best instrument for measuring the desired variable of “socialization” after consultation with Mark Smedley, MS, chief psychologist for the Anchorage, AK school district. Mr. Smedley spends a great deal of his time administering standardized tests to non-standard populations, including remote Inuit villages.

This has been in use since 1935, and is frequently used in studies of juvenile and special-education populations. Originally created as the Vineland Social Maturity Scale by Edgar A. Doll, the current version was copyrighted in 1984 by Sara S. Sparrow, David A. Balla, and Domenic V. Cicchetti.

Since the Vineland is a robust and well-tested diagnostic tool, it proved more than adequate for gathering the desired information. In hundreds of studies, this test has established its reliability and validity in measuring the communication domain, the daily living skills domain, and the socialization domain. These are combined into an “adaptive behavior composite,” which is the primary unit of measurement in this study. These scores compare the competence and maturity of the subjects to the nationwide means for their ages.

The Vineland questionnaire divides each page into several columns. Numbered sentences occupy the largest part of the page. To the left of the sentences are the appropriate age ranges for the behavior being discussed. To the right of the sentences are three colored columns, with boxes for the numeric answers. The boxes are filled in with a 2 when the behavior has been mastered “Yes, usually.” 1 applies when the behavior happens “Sometimes or partially.” 0 applies when the behavior happens “No, never.” N stands for “No opportunity,” and DK for “Don't know.” N is sometimes scorable, if explicitly described as such in the question.

A final column receives comments from the interviewer.

Each of the components of maturity is divided into three sub-components. In the Communication Domain, scores are secured for Receptive, Expressive, and Written communication. When an eight year old is developmentally on target, he or she “Attends to school or public lecture more than 15 minutes” to display adequate Receptive communication skills. A nine year old who is able to “Give complex directions to others” is adequate in the area of expressive communication skills. This same child's written skills should enable him or her to read on the fourth grade level. (Vineland, p. 3)

The Daily Living Skills domain is comprised of Personal, Domestic, and Community skills. This means that a developmentally adequate six year old should be able to (a) tie his shoes, (b) make his own bed when asked, and (c) state current day of the week when asked. (Vineland, p. 5)

In the Socialization Domain, this variable is ferreted out by measuring performance in the subcategories of Interpersonal Relationships, Play & Leisure Time, and Coping Skills. Sample skills on the six year old level include: (a) “Has best friend of the same sex”, (b) “Plays more than one board or card game requiring skill and decision making”, and (c) “Does not talk with food in mouth.” (Vineland, p. 7)

The Vineland test includes two sections more applicable to special needs students -- one on motor skills for children up to age six, and another “Maladaptive Behavior Domain” for problem children. These sections can be omitted when dealing with normal populations of children, without affecting the validity of the test.

The last page of the questionnaire allows the person with access to the Vineland scoring manual to sum the subdomain scores, and compare the domain raw score totals to age-normed charts to arrive at the standard score. The standard scores for the Communication Domain, the Daily Living Skills Domain, and the Socialization Domain are then summed, and compared to a standardized chart to arrive at the Adaptive Behavior Composite. This last score quantifies the observable maturity of the subject. A Score Profile can be filled in to graphically compare the subject to the national mean.

Since this paper employs the “Interactional” perspective, socialization and communication are held to be inseparable components of life experience. It is impossible to say where one ends and the other begins. People communicate to create and maintain social order. Questions of cause and effect, chicken and egg, are held to be
moot, since neither exists without the other.

This paper assumes that "socialization" refers to the richness of the communication environment, and the student's skill in navigating it. A well "socialized" child, for the purposes of this study, is poised, articulate, and fluent in a number of contexts. For operational purposes, this trait is made synonymous with what the creators of the Vineland scales called "adaptive behavior."

**Procedure**

When the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale is used as a diagnostic tool to assess the competence and/or "mental age" of a subject, a rigid procedure must be followed. The interviewer asks a parent or responsible adult about the child, and fills in the information sheet without showing it to the parent/guardian. After the test is completed, the scores are added up in the various columns, then compared to charts of age-normed scores.

For reasons already cited, the parents in the test group are not willing to blindly answer questions; they have some justifiable suspicions of intrusive questioning. To gain the information desired, it was necessary to explain why I needed the data, and to allow them to fill out the forms themselves. Most parents I asked were cooperative, when assured of anonymity and told of the nature of the project Â "to measure the socialization and communication skills of Christian children, so as part of my MS degree requirements."

Since the two populations being studied were informed, not "blind," it could be argued that the data thus derived is tainted by the "Lake Woebegone" (see Note 2) effect. In response it must be pointed out that both groups are likely to be equally biased, since love of children is a key component of the fundamentalist ethos. Honesty is another highly regarded virtue among all of these parents.

In most cases, the data was acquired at child-centered activities where parents who cared enough to bring their children had the time to fill out the form. These included recreational gatherings of GRHEA, and AWANA youth group meetings at a Baptist church.

In brief, although the non-clinical setting of this test's administration ruled out its application as a diagnostic tool for individual children, the instrument itself is hardy and robust enough to give valid information about the two aggregate populations studied.

**Ch. III -- Results**

Thirty three forms were adequately completed by parents under field conditions. Twenty of the cases were home school students, and thirteen students in public school. Sixteen were female, seventeen male.

The compiled scores look like the chart in Table 1, when sorted first by mode of education, then by adaptive behavior composite.

The meaning of the labels is as follows:

- **H**
  
is for "home school?" A Y in this field means yes, this subject is home educated.

- **i.d.n**
  
is for identification number, a completely arbitrary number used to keep the forms and the cover sheets together.

- **commun**
  
refers to the score in the area of communication skills.

- **daily**
  
refers to the score in the area of daily living skills.

- **social**
  
refers to the score in the area of socialization.

- **a-b-c**
  
is the Vineland "Adaptive Behavior Composite," which is computed on the basis of the three previous scores.
age

is in decimal years. Since the Vineland test comes with detailed age-normed grading scales, this is probably superfluous information.

group

deals with the number of hours spent per week in group activities.

G is for gender, and

B is for birth order.

Table 2 shows this information sorted first by gender:

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<th>n commun</th>
<th>daily</th>
<th>social a-b-c age group G B</th>
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Table 1. Data sorted by mode of education, then by ABC score

Table 2 shows this information sorted first by gender:

Sorted first by gender, then by scores

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<th>daily</th>
<th>social a-b-c age group G B</th>
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<td>n 1,150 105 84 99 94 12.25 2.00 m 2</td>
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Table 2. Sorted first by gender, then by ABC score

A histogram of all the scores is displayed in Figure 2:

The arithmetic mean score of 106.7 points for the whole tested population is slightly above the national norm of 100. The "twin peaks" of this chart look suspicious. Are we indeed dealing with multiple populations?

The next two illustrations, Figure 3 and Figure 4, break out the population into the test and control groups. In the case of the home schooled students, nearly "all the children are above average."

If, however, we break the numbers down by gender, the pattern disappears. Figure 6 and Figure 7 are histograms for all the males tested, and then the females.

The adaptive behavior composite scores of the home educated children appear to be significantly higher than those of the public school students. This variable -- mode of education -- appears far more significant than the variable of gender.

To verify the perception suggested by these graphs, the same information was processed through the SPSS program to test for independent means. The output confirmed the hypothesis to the .0005 level of significance for three of the variables. (see Note 3) The 2-tailed probability that the pooled variances and the separate variances were the product of random distribution is .000. According to SPSS, then, there is a 99.95% probability that, despite their demographic homogeneity, home educated children and public school children are two distinct populations. The exception, the socialization skills, is only 99.9% certain at the .001 level of significance.

Another SPSS run keyed on gender as the distinguishing independent variable. The results compared to those suggested by the histogram:

(contact me for hard copy research data)

In this case, when the populations are segregated by gender, the two tail probability that means of the two groups were not independent ranged from .473 to .899. Since the highest number is also for the Adaptive Behavior Composite score, this result would seem to indicate that there is an 89.9% probability that the differences are not attributable to the gender of the subjects.

The table below compares the means for the home school and the public school samples in all four areas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locale</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Daily living</th>
<th>Socialization</th>
<th>Maturity</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Home</td>
<td>113.45</td>
<td>112.10</td>
<td>109.50</td>
<td>115.55</td>
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<td>Public</td>
<td>98.08</td>
<td>90.77</td>
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<td>Difference</td>
<td>15.37</td>
<td>21.33</td>
<td>14.42</td>
<td>22.55</td>
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The mean Adaptive Behavior Composite score of 115.55 for the home schooled children is in the 84th percentile; compared
to the nationwide norm, they score in the top 16%. The control group score placed them in the 32nd percentile, among the top 77% of the nation. In terms of the socialization subcategory score, the home school students rank in the top 27%. The public school students ranked with the top 75%.

Ch. IV -- Discussion of Results

Many of the public school students in this study attend a nearby elementary school. A walk through those corridors will reveal bright colors, neatly decorated bulletin boards, and happy faces. The subjective impression is of a place where children are loved, and where the staff is dedicated. The PTA newsletter is filled with a variety of activities, including fund raising for various worthy causes. How could such a place not be the best possible growing environment for impressionable young children?

Yet in this study the findings indicate that children kept home are more mature, and better socialized, than those who are sent to school. How can this be explained? Are these results an aberration? Do they have significance beyond this corner of Southwest Virginia? Can these findings be replicated elsewhere, and if so, what are the implications?

Science is based on the conviction that the microcosm, the experiment, reflects the macrocosm. The same force tugs on the apple and the moon. In this study, the GRHEA population matches the demographics of the national survey fairly closely in terms of observed racial, professional, and religious characteristics. The public school students studies are not attending violent inner-city "blackboard jungles," but well-funded and well-staffed middle class schools. The public school students even share the religious values of the home school children. Yet, that difference is there.

The core discipline of this thesis offers a few proposed solutions to this conundrum. Communication is the act of creating and maintaining social reality. Good communicators are at home in, and productive members of, their social milieu. The deranged crank on a soap box in Hyde Park may enjoy his own rhetoric. He is not necessarily communicating. Obsessive one-way communication, with the feedback loop severed, characterizes the ravings of lunatics.

The question we come back to then, is, what is the best mechanism for socializing children? Was John Dewey right? Is public school a miniature true community? Or, an artificial one? Is it reasonable to ask the public school system to socialize children? Or are other institutions better equipped for the task? If good socialization is synonymous with communication excellence, is the classroom an enriched, or impoverished communication environment? One anonymous educational computer salesman said:

In the past teachers were respected since they were the gatekeepers of knowledge, if you didn't do what you were told when you were told to do it and made it look good in ink in lock step with the rest of the kids you didn't pass through the gate and thus these "educators" held considerable power. With hyper-Media interactive HDTV systems the only "gate keeper" will be the cost of the hardware and the availability of software, the very idea of any one person having power over your learning process will be recognized and laughed at for what it is, a silly inefficient game of follow-the-leader, unfortunately it is by being good at this very game that most "educators" make their living (St. Chuck).

The classroom is mostly one-way communication, along stereotyped and rote channels. Information flows at the pace dictated by the teacher. Given the constraint of many children wanting their moment in the sun, few meaningful interchanges are possible on a given day between teacher and individual student.

This contrasts to the home education communication environment. Ten children is small for a class, but large for a family. Each child at home has immediate access to the attention of a significant adult. Home educators stress the initiative and responsibility of the individual student, and build community through voluntary cooperation rooted in a common faith, a common perception of duties.

Public education, a product of the industrial age, operates in the "factory" mode of production. David Elkind describes "batches" of uniform product running on the conveyor belt in lockstep motion towards the standardized diploma (Elkind, 47-49).

Ivan Illich continues the factory metaphor:

It does not matter what the teacher teaches so long as the pupil has to attend hundreds of hours of age-specific assemblies to engage in a routine decreed by the curriculum and is graded according to his ability to submit it. People learn that they acquire more value in the market if they spend more hours in class. They learn to value progressive consumption of curricula. They learn that whatever a major institution produces has value, even invisible things such as education or health. They learn to value grade advancement, passive submission, and even the standard misbehavior that teachers like to interpret as a sign of creativity. They learn disciplined competition for the favor of the bureaucrat who presides over their daily lessons, who is called their teacher as long as they are in class and their boss when they go to work. (Illich, Tools, p. 66)

Alvin Toffler concurs with this description of public education:
Built on the factory model, mass education taught basic reading, writing, and arithmetic, a bit of history and other subjects. This was the "overt curriculum." But beneath it lay an invisible or "covert curriculum" that was far more basic. It consisted -- and still does in most industrial nations -- of three courses: one in punctuality, one in obedience, and one in rote, repetitive work. Factory labor demanded workers who showed up on time, especially assembly-line hands. It demanded workers who would take orders from a management hierarchy without questioning. And it demanded men and women prepared to slave away at machines or in offices, performing brutally repetitious operations. (Toffler, 29)

This approach to education may place a specified quantity of data before each student. Given the structured and impersonal nature of the communication environment, however, it can not logically be claimed to "socialize" the students. Perhaps this explains the stress educational institutions place on non-educational activities (college football, e.g.).

One of the most unnatural aspects of the public school environment is the age segregation. Learning to groove with peers on such weighty matters as the color of shoe laces does not necessarily prepare the student for interactions with older and younger people in real life.

In the home school family, on the other hand, people of various ages and generations mix easily together in a variety that more accurately mirrors the outside society. There is an emphasis on service and responsibility that turns differences into opportunities for compassion. Raymond Moore, PhD, has said many times in various interviews, "the older help the younger, and the stronger help the weaker."

Younger siblings are best friends, not embarrassments. When 100+ home school kids roller skate together, the crowd is noteworthy for its orderliness and pleasantness.

Perhaps the most significant socializing factor is the home school parent's attention. According to one elementary school teacher, each child in her class can receive an average of 20 seconds per day of positive attention. (see Note 4)

In contrast, home educators like their children, and want to have them around. Larger families are the norm -- the nationwide average is 3.21 children per family. Families with six or more children are not uncommon.

Most frequently home educators are one career families of the 1950's "Ward and June Cleaver" variety. According to the NHERI survey, the mothers do 88.32% of the teaching, while the men earn 96.37% of the family income. This parental availability means that, during the course of an average day, home school adults and children have hundreds of interactions.

As movement guru Raymond Moore points out,

> In school, socialization is usually thought of in connection with a given age-grade group. The truth is that sociability is either positive or negative; it is never neutral. Positive sociability is the sum of mutual trust, cooperation, kindness, social responsibility, and altruism -- best express by the Golden Rule's concern for others. Negative sociability involves ridicule, rivalry, antagonism, alienation, and narcissism -- the "me first" attitude so prevalent today in homes, schools, business and sports." (Teaching, p. 155)

The process of moving the public school student from grade to grade, classroom to classroom, and school to school further disrupts the continuity of the maturing process, and the development of communication skills. Very few adults still have best friendships dating back to first grade. Most adults still have continuing relationships with their families. Long term relationships allow the best opportunity for the leisurely flowering of empathy and understanding, the cultivation of deep rather than superficial connections.

In the public school system, children are socialized horizontally, and temporarily, into conformity to their immediate peers.

Home educators seek to socialize their children vertically, towards responsibility, service, and adulthood, with an eye on eternity.

**Prospects**

Is the trend towards home schooling a hopeful sign for the future? People in the movement think that it is. The vertical dimension of religious faith adds to their lives an adventurous sense of destiny, purpose, and accountability. The cultivating influence of concerned and involved parents enhances the confidence and self-esteem of the students. The stress on self-disciplined, self-directed learning is creating a generation of people who can adapt quickly to new challenges, new opportunities.

Public school educators view education as a "right" conferred by the state upon the citizen. Home school educators view education as a personal responsibility, a duty. The public school perspective regards the child as a passive recipient of a pre-defined portion. "Equity" means that every student must have the same government dole. The home school perspective regards the child as a responsible agent under God, who has a unique calling to discover and pursue.

Many home schooled children are already computer literate, and do not need to compete with twenty other students for access to the classroom Commodore computer. This opens even more opportunities for self education. A world of free software and free discussion is available to anyone with a modem. MS-DOS CD-ROM technology can already place the raw
materials for a complete K-12 education on the desk for less than $2,000. This compares to the annual cost of approximately $5,000 (give or take a thousand) in Virginia for each public school student.

The electronic cottage is already here. A Canadian educational computer salesman posted a diatribe on this subject entitled "The Prophecy of St. Chuck" to a computer bulletin board. In part this anonymous sage said

...any person or persons who claims that this will impair the social development of kids since they won't be around others their own age to socialize with and in doing so conveniently forgets what happens to kids who try to socialize in a classroom. Mention something about the extra free time these kids would have to socialize with since they would learn so much faster than their grammar school counterparts. The fact that with minimal organization once a week mandatory baseball leagues (or whatever interests the kid) could be organized to get kids to meet other kids their own age after that they'd probably exchange phone numbers and do the rest themselves. Mention that in today's world there are far too many people who depended on school to do the socializing for them and can't go out and do it themselves. Don't slap on this question because it's almost an intelligent one, just take advantage of a wonderful opportunity to answer smug in a patronizing tone.

We can anticipate a sociological as well as technological revolution in the field of the education in the near future. As Ivan Illich pointed out,

Some fortuitous coincidence will render publicly obvious the structural contradictions between stated purposes and effective results in our major institutions. People will suddenly find obvious what is now evident to only a few... Like other widely shared insights, this one will have the potential of turning public imagination inside out. Large institutions can quite suddenly lose their respectability, their legitimacy, and their reputation for serving the public good. It happened to the Roman Church in the Reformation, to royalty in the Revolution. The unthinkable became obvious overnight: that people could and would behead their rulers. (Illich's "Tools", p. 111)

Home educators may be in the minority. Yet, progress depends upon minorities who can see beyond the status quo. John Naisbitt holds in his book *Megatrends* that society is moving:

- from an industrial to an information base.
- from centralization to decentralization.
- from institutional help to self help.

To the extent that this is true, home educators are on the cutting edge of societal evolution.

In this study and others, home schools turn out students who are statistically ahead of public school students in academic achievement and in social skills. When Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander was transforming Tennessee schools by top-down remote control, the statistics generated by the parallel system of unrestricted and unregulated home schools made comparisons humiliating. Michael Farris reports:

After a few years of suffering public embarrassment from press reports of home schoolers outperforming public school students, officials started giving home school students different tests so that a direct comparison was no longer possible. (p. 23)

Some elements of the home educator's success could be profitably re-integrated into the public school sector:

- Freedom from bureaucratic overhead.
- Smaller classes.
- Mixed age classes.
- Informal "homey" environment.
- Emphasis on service.
- Emphasis on phonics and reading.
- Hands-on daily living skills.
- Encouragement of individual initiative.
- Curricula customized to the individual learner.
- Local (neighborhood) schools.

However, the central dynamic that propels the achievement of the home school child is legally excluded from the public school environment. Public school educators have no substitute for the sense of supernatural purpose Christian parent-educators impart to their children. To quote C. S. Lewis's jeremiad on modern education,

(W)e continue to clamor for those very qualities we are rendering impossible... In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful. (Abolition, p. 35)

**Suggestions for Further Study**

Several of the variables collected in the course of developing this paper could profitably be followed up by other researchers.
Any area not covered in this study is the impact of "mixed mode" education. What happens to a home school child when he is placed in the public school? To the public school student who is pulled out and home schooled? An interesting study would test the outcomes for students who had been in one mode for at least two years, after at least two years in the other mode.

An intriguing detail of this study was the fact that Christian children in public schools scored below the national norm on the Vineland. What (if anything) does this mean? A scholar with connections to public education and to a fundamentalist church could pursue this quirk. Is this evidence of an internal struggle on the part of the students? Since an estimated 70% of fundamentalist children leave the church after leaving home, the question is a pressing one for parents.

There are other ways to apply the Vineland to the student population. For example: although secular home schoolers exist, they are harder to find. An energetic scholar might profitably compare all four quadrants -- secular and Christian, home and public school students. If socialization is enhanced by home schooling despite the ideology of the family, such information would recommend the process to legally secular institutions. Home schooling could then be seen as a practical tool in the arsenal of the professional educator, instead of just a fundamentalist hobby horse.

The one approach completely overlooked by this study was the religious day school. Again, these are reputed to be academically superior institutions. Parental involvement is high, because of the cost of tuition. Since these schools can be more selective in their enrollment than public schools, it would not be fair to compare them to the whole public sector. The approach pioneered in this paper could be applied to the problem, by comparing students from the same churches who attend religious schools to those who are educated at home. Since the ideology is the same in both environments, this would be another way to isolate technique from rationale in the analysis of results.

Home educators view themselves as surfers, riding the wave of the future. Should this indeed be true, this movement will present many new opportunities for future scholars to explore the dynamics of communication and community.

For example: as Melinda Wagner pointed out, there is osmosis between the Christian school and the public school professionals. Christian educators frequently employ vocabulary and techniques from the secular professional literature. Will this osmosis work both ways? Will public schools begin to use techniques field-tested in the thousands of successful home schools? As the movement matures, and the home school literature becomes more sophisticated, will home school concepts become the core of public school workshops?

A hands-on education major could find it profitable to catalogue, and analyze the best techniques used by successful home educators, then reformat them for public school use. This could be a source of income and prestige for that scholar, since such research would allow him or her to connect an untapped source of ideas to the needs of the education market.

A number of intriguing questions are raised by the intersection of ideology and action in home school families. For example, the internal literature sounds notes of both elitism, and retreatism. On the one hand, home educators believe that they are raising leaders, performers, and champions. On the other hand, the majority of home schoolers, like the majority of other fundamentalists, are "pre-millennial" in orientation. They anticipate that society will move progressively downhill, ending in the chaos of a totalitarian one-world state. Coding the prevalence of these two contradictory impulses in the movement literature would yield an intriguing thesis for a communication scholar.

Other scholars of the history of ideas may want to investigate the impact of "Christian Reconstructionism" on the home school movement. At what points do previously controversial ideas begin to gain acceptance, appear in the literature, and become assimilated in the behavior of the populations studied? Where is the "break point" to be found, that defining moment in the history of the movement when postmillennialism becomes the accepted norm?

Home schooling is not an easy movement to penetrate from the outside. Yet as more and more home educated students enter college years, the movement may produce its own scholars. These may find it profitable to conduct follow-up surveys on other students, from families they know. Such a scholar could, in 1996, call up the families listed in a 1991 GRHEA directory and tabulate the outcome for the various students.

Historians and sociologists will investigate the impact of this desertion on the public school system. What moves will the public school educators make to reclaim the hearts and bodies of the missing students? How many "magnet schools" will the citizens willingly fund? At what point is the limit of taxpayer tolerance reached? The scholar pursuing that question will need to be competent in calculus.

Will a voucher system promote a counter-culture of independent neighborhood schools? If so, will non-sectarian neighborhood schools be acceptable to the ideology-driven home schoolers?
What will happen when home educated children face the brutal aspects of twentieth century life? Psychology majors will write many a thesis on this topic. Will these sheltered children be overwhelmed? Or will they cheerfully overcome?

How will home educated children "mesh" with the culture around them upon attaining adulthood? Anthropologists will be able to glean a great deal of new information about how a subculture grows within the mainstream, then eventually enters it.

Finally, communication scholars will find the social network built by home educators to be a source of fruitful insight. The rhythms of the medieval year were shaped by the liturgical calendar, and those of the secular year by the school calendar. What "liturgical year" will the home educators develop to celebrate their way of life? What rituals will this community evolve to commemorate landmarks in life? Will there be some equivalent of the senior prom? What new vocabulary will this community contribute to the larger society?

How will the common social reality be impacted by the unique perspective of the home school families? That big question remains to be answered.

**Attachment A -- the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales**

**Attachment B -- Demographic sheet for Vineland form**

**Bibliography**


Note 1: I would admonish such a scholar with the Afrikaans proverb, "Kommandeer jou eie hond en blaf self." Take your own dog and bark.

Note 2: Named for humorist Garrison Keillor's mythical hometown, where "all the women are strong, all the men are good looking, and all of the children are above average."

Note 3: I would like to thank Radford University assistant professor William Kennan, PhD, for setting this program up for me.

Note 4: The topic came up during a conversation in 1984. She and another teacher had actually worked it out, mathematically, after subtracting time for instruction, direction, and traffic control.
The Socialization of Children: Home Schooling Over Public Schooling. Every parent who makes a decision to home school can be assured that they are going to hear the dreaded "S" word. What about socialization? Often that's the extent of the question without any major elaboration. It seems to me that there are 3 basic implications in the question: Socialization is necessary. Socialization is good. And finally, to be properly socialized, children must spend large amounts of time with their peers. Socialization of Home School Children - A Communication Approach. Available at: http://members.aol.com/tomsmedley/smedleys.htm#abs. Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1995). Consumer Socialization of Children: A Retrospective Look at Twenty-Five Years of Research. Deborah roedder john*. Children approach these situations with an egocentric perspective, unable to take into account the other person's perspective in modifying the strategy used to influence or negotiate for desired items. Although they may be aware that parents or friends have other views, children at this age have difficulty thinking about their own perspective and that of another person simultaneously. As a result, children are more flexible in the approach they bring to making decisions, allowing them to be more adaptive and responsive. These tendencies also emerge in the way children try to influence and negotiate for desired items. In the same year that Larry Shyers completed his doctoral degree thesis research on home schooling socialization, Thomas Smedley completed research for a master's degree at Radford University in Virginia with a similar experiment ("Socialization of Home School Children - A Communication Approach. http://www.members.aol.com/toMsmedley/smedleys.htm). Socialization is the big opposing factor when people are considering home school. Word Count: 1388. Approx Pages: 6. Grade Level: High School. Online School - It Really Works! Looking back in history, the current method of schooling h