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ABSTRACT

This study explored differences between families with children educated at home and those with children in public schools, and examined the educational and socialization values and practices of different subgroups of homeschoolers. Subjects were 70 homeschooling parents and 20 nonhomeschooling parents who completed a questionnaire assessing parents' educational and child-rearing values and practices, and family members' social relationships outside the home. Homeschoolers were divided into groups according to reasons they gave for homeschooling: either academic reasons or reasons related to beliefs. Findings indicated that homeschooling parents had more hands-on involvement in their child's education. Home environments of academically motivated homeschoolers were more stimulating than those of homeschoolers motivated by beliefs or those of children in public schools. Academically motivated homeschooling parents expected earlier maturity and independence from children than did parents in the other groups. Homeschoolers restricted children's television viewing more than non-homeschoolers. Homeschoolers motivated by beliefs were more authoritarian and involved in church activities than parents in the other groups. (RH)

Family Environment and Attitudes of Homeschoolers and Non-Homeschoolers

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The present study was conducted by the first author in partial fulfillment of her master's thesis requirement while under supervision by the second author. Requests for reprints should be addressed to Dr. Richard C. Endsley, Dawson Hall, UGA, Athens, GA., 30602.

Running Head: Family Environment of Homeschoolers

Abstract

Seventy parents who homeschool their children and 20 parents who send their children to public schools completed a questionnaire designed to assess parents' educational, and child-rearing values and practices, and family members' social relationships outside of the home. As expected, homeschooling parents show more hands-on involvement in their child's education, and the home environments of academically-motivated homeschoolers (those who homeschool primarily for academic reasons) were more stimulating than the homes of either the beliefs-motivated homeschoolers or the public schoolers. Academically-motivated homeschooling parents also expected earlier maturity and independence from their children than the beliefs-motivated homeschoolers and the non-homeschoolers. Both types of homeschoolers restrict their children's television watching more than non-homeschoolers. Beliefs-motivated homeschoolers also were more authoritarian than either the academically-motivated homeschoolers or the public schoolers, and as expected, were more involved in church activities than the latter two groups. However, other than television watching, the groups did not differ with regards to imposing other rules and restrictions, enjoying their children, or the extent to which their children engage in social contact with relatives and peers outside of school hours.

Family Environment and Attitudes of Homeschoolers and Non-homeschoolers

While most parents educate their children through the public schools, some do so at home. The number of homeschooling families has increased in recent years (to perhaps 250,000 -- Konnert & Wendel, 1988), but scant research information is available on the homeschooling phenomenon itself. Popular books promoting homeschooling (Moore & Moore, 1981, 1982; Holt, 1981; Wade, 1986), the increase in homeschool support organizations on the local and statewide levels, the rise in media coverage of homeschooling families, and the increase in court cases involving the right to educate one's children at home, however, all point to the growing interest in home-based education.

It seems safe to assume that families who take on the responsibility of teaching their own children at home must differ in some respects from traditional families who send their children to public or private schools. The most likely differences would seem to be those of the parents' general attitudes toward education and the extent to which they are involved in their own child's schooling. But, it is also conceivable that the quality of intellectual stimulation offered to the child by his/her parents and home environment may differ, as well as the general parenting styles of homeschoolers and of non-homeschoolers. Finally, the nature and extent to which homeschoolers and non-homeschoolers are linked to friends, other family members and the wider community are expected to differ in ways that are potentially important in the socialization of young children. Therefore, the first purpose of the present study was to explore possible differences between homeschoolers and non-homeschoolers in the aforementioned domains.

A second purpose was to examine more carefully the educational and socialization values and practices of different subgroups of homeschoolers

themselves. It was anticipated that because homeschoolers choose this educational option for different reasons, these reasons may be manifested in different educational and socialization values and practices within the homeschooling subculture as well. For example, the homeschooling literature suggests that at least two major subgroups of homeschoolers exist. One subgroup, hereinafter referred to as Type A homeschoolers, are very critical of the quality of education offered in the public schools, and thus seem to be homeschooling for mainly academic reasons (Holt, 1981). A second subgroup, hereinafter referred to as Type B homeschoolers, are particularly concerned that values and beliefs contrary to their own are being promoted in the schools (Moore & Moore, 1984; McGraw, 1978). Type B homeschoolers, therefore, appear to choose homeschooling primarily to insure that their beliefs and values are adopted by their children.

Literature Review and Predictions

The literature pertinent to the two purposes is reviewed in the next three sections, and where appropriate, predictions are generated regarding expected differences between Type A and B homeschoolers, as well as between homeschoolers and non-homeschoolers. The areas reviewed include: (a) educational values and practices; (b) child-rearing values and practices; and (c) social relationships. A summary of predictions appear in the final section.

Educational Values and Practices

Parental expectations. Parental expectations regarding years of schooling, occupation, and school performance for their children have been found to be related to academic achievement and intellectual development. Further, these findings have been replicated on a variety of age groups,

nationalities, and races (Seginer, 1983). At this time, however, it is not known whether homeschoolers have higher or lower expectations for achievement by their children than non-homeschoolers. However, it seems reasonable that Type A homeschoolers would have higher academic expectations that Type B homeschoolers, since the educational concerns of the former group are paramount to that of the latter. It also might be expected that Type A homeschoolers would have higher expectations than a matched sample of non-homeschoolers.

Parental involvement. The extent to which parents are involved in their child's education has been shown to have an influence on the child's academic achievement (Hess & Holloway, 1984; Leler, 1983). Of course, conclusions about the virtues of parental involvement all have been based on adding that component to an already existing school component. Evidence does not yet exist to indicate whether the children of homeschoolers are achieving at higher or lower level of academic development in comparison to those of non-homeschoolers matched on other relevant demographic characteristics (e.g., SES, race, family income, etc.). However, it is self evident that homeschooling parents would show a higher level of involvement in their child's education than would non-homeschooling parents.

Home environment. The home environment repeatedly has been shown to be an important determinant of children's school success. While numerous family demographic factors are implicated in a child's ability to learn (e.g., SES, education, family size--Walberg & Marjoribanks, 1976), direct stimulation in the home has been shown to be even more strongly related to intelligence, motivation, and achievement than have indirect demographic factors such as socioeconomic status (Iverson & Walberg, 1981).

The research evidence also suggests that the importance of the home learning environment in fostering the children's intellectual development is diverse and multifaceted for both preschool and school age children (e.g., Bloom, 1980; Bradley & Caldwell, 1984; Laosa & Sigel, 1982). Again, it is not known whether the home environment of homeschoolers is more or less intellectually stimulating for the child than that of non-homeschoolers. We speculate that among homeschoolers, Type A families, due to their concerns with their children's intellectual development, would provide a more stimulating home environment than Type B families. We also might expect homeschoolers in general to have more stimulating home environments than non-homeschoolers because of the extensive provisions the former parents apparently are making to teach their children at home.

Child-Rearing Values and Practices

Parents' child-rearing values are generally evident in their parenting styles. Baumrind (1967) identified three parenting styles and the child characteristics that usually result from them. The authoritative parent is controlling and demanding, but exhibits warm, positive encouragement of the child's independent strivings. The authoritarian parent also is controlling, but more detached and less warm than authoritative parents. Finally, the permissive parent is seen as noncontrolling, nondemanding, and relatively warm.

Since all homeschooling parents are controlling their children's educational environment by virtue of the fact that they are teaching their children at home, we speculate that this reflects a more authoritarian parenting style and correspondingly, a less permissive style in comparison to non-homeschooling parents. Further, following Baumrind's descriptions of

parent behaviors, we contend that Type B homeschoolers, who are primarily concerned with personal values and beliefs, would be more authoritarian than either Type A homeschoolers or non-homeschoolers. This prediction is based on Baumrind's view (1968, p. 261) that authoritarian parents attempt "to shape, control, and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of the child in accordance with a set standard of conduct, usually an absolute standard, theologically motivated (italics added) and formulated by a higher authority."

If Type A homeschoolers occupy an intermediate position between Type B homeschoolers and non-homeschoolers in terms of control, perhaps Type A parents more closely fit the authoritative parenting mode than the other two groups. If so, it would follow from Baumrind's theoretical analysis that Type A parents would have a warmer, more positive view of their children than Type B parents, one expressed in terms of more enjoyment of them. The authoritative parent also presses for earlier demands for independence and self-reliance (Shaefer, 1972). There are no little grounds for expecting Type A homeschoolers to view their children more positively (i.e., enjoy them more) than Type B homeschoolers. However, based on their greater academic expectations, Type A parents could be expected to demand earlier independence and self-reliance than Type B parents or than non-homeschoolers.

Social Relationships

Peer relations. Peer group socialization has long been assumed to be important for the development of social competence in children, providing a context in which children engage in give-and-take behavior pertinent to social functioning and role learning (Hartup, 1983). Some proponents of homeschooling, however, believe that negative results may occur if young children are exposed to peer influences too early (Moore & Moore, 1975).

These writers argue that because children are cognitively too egocentric to take another's point of view or to reason consistently, and have also not developed a strong sense of self-worth and self-confidence, they are especially vulnerable to the influence of other children (Moore, 1984).

Further, a number of researchers and social critics are concerned with the negative qualities brought to peer interactions by other peers, especially in the absence of adult supervision. Holt describes peers as often being "mean-spirited, status-oriented, competitive, and snobbish" (1981, p. 49), and Bronfenbrenner (1970) has long called for more interaction between children and adults to decrease for peer group dependency in an age-segregated society.

Homeschoolers, by keeping their children at home for school, are obviously more controlling of their children's interaction with peers during the school day. If these parents are, in fact, attempting to limit their children's exposure to peers, it is hypothesized that their level of peer interaction outside of school would also be less than that of non-homeschooled children.

Family social network. The family's social network includes many people: relatives, friends, neighbors, workmates, and parents of the child's friends, to name a few. Hough and Stevens (1981) stress that connectedness to others seems to be associated with healthy family functioning, and that persons outside the nuclear family influence the child and the parent. Many families experience this "connectedness" through religious institutions which pass on values to the next generation, promote ethnic and theological identity, provide support services for families and children, and serve as a focal point for community activities (Bronfenbrenner, Moen, & Gargbarino, 1984, p. 307).

There is no reason to assume that the size of the homeschooling families' social networks is any different from that of non-homeschoolers. However, the pattern of the networks may differ between groups. It seems obvious that homeschoolers would have less interaction with public schools than non-homeschoolers (prediction 11). In addition, Type B homeschoolers would be expected (prediction 12) to be more involved with church or other religious groups than would Type A homeschoolers or non-homeschoolers. However, apart from schools and churches, we had no expectancies about whether homeschoolers or non-homeschoolers would be more or less actively involved with their community organizations.

Summary of Predictions

For the reader's convenience the several predictions appearing in the preceding sections are restated below:

Values and Practices

A. Educational Values and Practices

1. Type A homeschoolers would have higher academic expectations than Type B homeschoolers or non-schoolers.
2. Homeschoolers would show a higher level of involvement in their child's education than non-homeschoolers.
3. Type A homeschoolers would provide more stimulating home environments than Type B homeschoolers, who in turn, would provide more stimulating home environments than non-homeschoolers.

B. Child-Rearing Values and Practices

1. Type B homeschoolers would espouse more authoritarian parenting attitudes than Type A homeschoolers, who in turn, would espouse

more authoritarian parenting attitudes that Type B homeschoolers.

2. Conversely, non-homeschoolers would espouse more permissive attitudes than Type A homeschoolers, who in turn, would espouse more permissive parenting attitudes than Type B homeschoolers.
3. Type A homeschoolers would demand earlier independence and self-reliance from their than Type B parents or non-homeschoolers.

C. Social Relationships

1. The level of peer interaction outside of school would be less for the children of homeschoolers than for the children of non-homeschoolers.
2. Homeschooling parents would have less interaction with public schools than non-homeschooling parents.
3. Type B homeschoolers would be more involved with church and other religious groups than Type A homeschoolers or non-homeschoolers.

Method

Subjects

The initial group of potential subjects (161) was contacted by sending questionnaires to each family on a mailing list that received a state-wide newsletter for homeschoolers. Thirty-five additional subjects, both homeschoolers and non-homeschoolers, were also contacted through recommendations provided from the respondents in the initial group (See Materials and Procedures). Of a total of 196 questionnaires, 143 were sent to homeschoolers, and 53 were sent to non-homeschoolers. Of these, 112 were returned, representing a return rate of 57% (64% for homeschoolers, 40% for

non-homeschoolers). Of the 112 returned questionnaires, 90 provided complete data for all measures and met the criterion of having at least one child of primary school age (1st-6th grade) present in the home. The final set of 90 families included 70 who were currently homeschooling at least one child and 20 whose children had only attended public school.

Homeschoolers were divided into groups according to the reasons they gave for homeschooling -- "academic" or "beliefs/values." Reasons classified as "academic" were defined as those that emphasized the quality of learning experiences, teaching methods, learning environment, and/or special educational needs of children. Reasons classified as "beliefs" were defined as those mentioning Christian convictions, the Bible, God, values, religious training, character development, and/or concerns about the humanistic/ materialistic world view of public school. A third category of reasons included "social/emotional" concerns such as family unity, peer pressure, self esteem, independence, and socialization needs of the children. However, these reasons were virtually always found along with the academic and beliefs reasons, so were not considered as a separate basis for classification.

Using the "academic" and "beliefs" categories, three subgroups of homeschoolers were identified: Group A (n=24), who gave academic reasons only; Group B (n=20), who gave beliefs reasons only; and Group AB (n=26), who gave both academic and beliefs reasons. A fourth comparison group of families whose children attended public school, and hence labeled Group PS (n=20), was also identified. Three reviewers, independently evaluating the reasons, were in complete agreement over the group assignment for each respondent.

It is important to note in Table 1 that the four groups were demographically very similar in most respects. The only suggestive

Insert Table 1 About Here

differences were that more mothers in Group PS worked, and a higher percentage of Group B mothers were certified teachers; however, neither of these differences were significant (p's $>$ .05). In general, the sample of parents were in their late 30's, white, protestant, married, well educated, with three children, and living in small cities. About a third of the mothers were certified teachers, suggesting that as a sample, they felt competent in addressing their children's educational needs.

Materials and Procedure

Participants were mailed a packet containing the Survey of Family Environment and Attitudes and a response card. Participants mailed back the questionnaires in an enclosed, stamped envelope and then mailed the response card separately to verify that they had responded. Space was provided in the questionnaires to give the names of other families like themselves who homeschool their children, as well as the names of other families who sent their children to public schools. This procedure of generating additional subjects from the original (mostly homeschooling) families was instrumental in producing the matched sample of public schoolers for the study, since the families were in the homeschooling families' social network (see Subjects & Table 1).

The Survey of Family Environment and Attitudes is composed of a 10-page adaptation of the Purdue Questionnaire for Parents of Primary Grade Children (Cicerelli, 1972), a two-page demographic survey, and a two-page questionnaire for the homeschooling parents only. The instrument required about 45-60

minutes to complete. The Purdue instrument, developed in the early 1970's, was based on the developmental research current at that time, and has face validity in terms of measuring a variety of parenting attitudes and practices known to be related to children's social-emotional and intellectual development. The specific constructs assessed on the questionnaire and sample items tapping these constructs are described in the following three sections. Table 2 also contains a summary of the constructs, the number of items composing each measure, the range of possible scores, and the internal consistency of the items composing each measure for the present sample, expressed in terms of a Cronbach alpha coefficient.

Insert Table 2 About Here

Measures of Educational Values/Practices

Parents' educational expectations. This construct was indexed by asking parents questions such as what grades (range = C to A), How much schooling (Junior High to Graduate School), and what type of occupation (1 = unskilled workers; 7 = executives, major professionals) they expected their children to obtain. They also were asked how long they had held these expectations (1 = hadn't thought about it before; 6 = before my child was ever born).

Parents' concern/interest in education. This construct was subdivided into concern/interest expressed in direct involvement and that expressed through indirect involvement in order to reflect possible differences between the homeschooler and non-homeschooler samples. Questions tapping the former construct including asking the parents to name their children's textbooks (0-4 books), to indicate how often each spouse helped his/her child with their homework and how often they discussed the child's homework with their spouse

(0 = never; 4 = every day). Indirect involvement was assessed through questions about whether each parent was a member of any parent-teacher, school, or homeschool organization (yes, no), and if so, how often each parent participated (0 = never; 2 = nearly every meeting).

Educational stimulation at home. This construct was also further subdivided into stimulation from parents and stimulation from physical environment. Stimulation from parents was indexed by questions such as how often do the parents read to or with the child, and how often they play games such as cards, checkers, etc. 0 = never; 4 = every day). Stimulation of physical environment was indexed by questions such as the availability of books (0 = none; 4 = 250 or more) and games (0 = none; 4 = 10 or more), and the time each day spent by the child reading (0 = no time; 4 = hour or more).

Traditionalism in parent attitudes toward education. This construct measured the extent to which parents supported the traditional "three R's" approach to education, and included questions such as "sports and games take up too much time in school" and "teachers who are very friendly are not able to control the children" (1 = strongly disagree; 4 = strongly agree).

Child-rearing Values and Practices

Parent expectations for maturity and independence. This construct was measured by asking parents to indicate the age at which they expected their child to master various developmental tasks such as being able to undress and go to bed on his/her own, make friends among children his/her own age, and stay out alone evenings (1 = 2-3 years of age; 6 = 16-18 years of age).

Parental control over television viewing. This construct was measured by asking questions about the amount of time each day parents allow children to view television (0 = none; 5 = 4 hours) and the freedom given the children to

watch programs containing violence, horror, or sex (0 = never allowed to watch; 4 = no restrictions).

Parental enjoyment of child. This construct was measured by asking questions such as how well the parent got along with the child (1 = poorly; 5 = very well), how often the parent got angry with the child (1 = many times a day; 5 = seldom or never), and how the parent finds time to play with the child just for enjoyment (1 = never; 5 = very often).

Permissiveness. This construct was measured by the extent to which the parents agreed with statements (1 = agree extremely well; 5 = not agree at all) such as giving their child freedom to do what he/she likes, choose friends, and participate in making decisions.

Authoritarianism. This construct was measured by the extent to which the parents agreed with statements (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) such as a child should not talk back, be impudent after being punished, and should come immediately when called, respect authority etc.

Restrictiveness. This construct was measured by asking a series of questions concerning different household rules regarding matters such as bedtime (e.g., 1 = strict bedtime hour every night; 3 = stay up as late as wants to), playing on furniture (e.g., 1 = never; 3 = anytime), and meals (e.g., 1 = many rules, strict about table manners; 3 = no rules, child behaves as wishes).

Social Relationships

Parent activities. This construct was measured by determining the number of organizations and groups outside of the family to which each parent belonged (0 = none; 4 = 6 or more), and how often each parent attended functions held by these groups (0 = never; 4 = more than once a week).

Child's peer relations. This construct was measured by determining the number of groups outside of the family to which the child belonged (e.g., YMCA), how often he/she attended functions held by these groups, how many friends the child had (1 = 0-2; 3 = 6-10), and how often the child got together with friends (1 = 1-2 times per month; 5 = everyday).

Child's involvement with relative. This construct was indexed by a single item: "How often does your child spend time with relatives such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, or cousins?" (1 = once a year or less; 6 = more than once a week).

Family involvement with church. This construct was indexed by two items: "How important is religion in your family life?" (1 = not important; 5 = extremely important), and "How often do you and your family attend church-related functions?" (0 = never or almost never; 5 = more than once a week).

Results

The data for each construct were analyzed by analysis of variance, and follow-up tests were performed using the Tukey-HSD procedure. The means, standard deviations, significance levels and F values are presented in Tables 3-5.

Insert Tables 3-5 About Here

Educational Values and Practices

No significant differences were noted among the four groups regarding educational expectations parents have for their children. In all groups, parents held fairly high expectations, hoping their children would receive grades of mostly As and Bs and get at least some college experience, if not a college or graduate degree. Thus, no support was found for predictions A-1,

which stated that Group A would have higher expectations than Group B and Group PS.

In the area of parental concern and interest in education, however, all homeschooling groups (A, B, AB) reported more direct (hands-on) involvement in their children's education than public school families (Group PS). That is, homeschooling parents were able to name in detail more textbooks or other books their children were using in school and reported that they discussed their children's schoolwork every day. Group PS discussed schoolwork less frequently, once or twice a week on the average. As expected these results confirmed prediction A-3 that homeschoolers have a higher level of direct involvement in the child's education than do non-homeschoolers.

Public school parents, on the other hand, showed more indirect involvement in education than did Groups A, B, and AB. Specifically, Group PS reported more involvement and more frequent attendance in PTA groups or other school organizations than did homeschoolers. These results, thereby, give support to prediction C-2 that homeschoolers have less contact with public schools than non-homeschoolers.

Differences were also noted regarding the home learning environment. Group A reported more parental stimulation in learning activities than did Group B. That is, Group A reported that they read to or with their children and played games and visited places together "often" or "regularly," while Group B reported engaging in these activities "sometimes" or "often." These results lend support to prediction A-3, which states that Type A Homeschoolers provide a more stimulating home environment than Type B homeschoolers in terms of learning activities.

The amount of books and educational materials present in the homes of Groups A and AB was also significantly greater than that of Group PS. Nearly all the families in Groups A and AB reported having over 250 books at home, while half of Group PS reported having fewer than 250 books. Most families of all three groups had dictionaries and encyclopedias, but homeschoolers also had world atlases more frequently than did public schoolers. These results also lend partial support to prediction A-3, in that homeschooling groups A and AB (though not B) provide more stimulating physical environments than non-homeschoolers (Group PS), at least in the area of amount of books and educational materials provided in the home.

Finally, though not specifically predicted, parents in all homeschooling groups exhibited more traditional attitudes toward education than did public school parents. Groups A, B, and AB all agreed more strongly with conservative statements such as "Not enough time is spent learning reading, writing, and arithmetic (in public schools)" and "Most teachers do not want to be bothered by parents coming in to see them," than did Group PS.

Child-Rearing Values and Practices

As predicted (B-1), the strongest authoritarian attitudes were found in families who gave beliefs as a reason for homeschooling. Groups B and AB agreed more strongly with statements such as "A child should not talk back," "Children must respect authority," and "A child should honor his parents," than did Groups A and PS.

That authoritarianism is neither the same as being restrictive nor the opposite of permissiveness is indicated by the fact that the four groups did not differ on either of these latter two measures. Thus, predictions B-2, that homeschoolers are also less permissive than non-homeschoolers were not

supported. The means also indicate (see Table 4) that none of the groups were either extremely permissive or highly restrictive. On the permissiveness scale, for instance, a mid score of 3 answered for each item would have generated a total score of 21. All group means fell between 22.9 and 25.0, indicating a slight bias toward the permissive end of the scale. Similarly, eight of the nine items on the restrictiveness scale had three-point alternatives (the ninth had a 4-point alternative). Thus, picking the middle alternative on every item would have yielded a score of 18.5, only slightly below the means found for each subgroup.

In one specific respect, however, the homeschoolers were far more restrictive than non-homeschoolers. The former three groups all imposed significantly more restrictions on the children's television watching than did the PS group. Extrapolating from the mean scores to the questionnaire items indicated that the PS children were being allowed to watch approximately 11-12 hours per week versus only 3-5 hours per week for the homeschooling group. The extent to which there were dramatic differences in this area are also indexed by the fact that 29% of the homeschoolers (including 42% of Type B families) did not even own a television set, while all of the public schoolers did so.

As indicated in Table 4, supporting prediction B-3, Groups A and AB expected more maturity and independence from their children at younger ages than did Groups B and PS. For example, Groups A and AB expected their children to try things out for themselves without asking for help at ages 4-5 years, while Groups B and PS expected them to accomplish this task at age 7 years. Generally, Group A and AB parents' expectations for the maturity/independence items come 2-3 years lower per item than the

expectations of Group B and PS parents.

Finally, there were no significant differences in parents' enjoyment and acceptance of their children. Inspection of Table 4 reveals that, in a range of possible scores from 9 to 45, all groups showed high levels of enjoyment. In general, parents from all groups reported that their children give them "considerable" to "very much" satisfaction, that they get along "well" or "very well" with their child, and that they spank their child "seldom" or "never."

Social Relationships

As indicated in Table 5, among the social relationships measures, only one, involvement with church, revealed any significant differences among the four groups. Specifically, no differences among groups were found in the amount of the child's peer/social interactions involving community organizations or relatives. In general, regardless of schooling type children had between 6-10 friends outside the home and got together with them once or twice a week, belonged to roughly three or four groups outside the family and attended activities outside the home about once a week or more. Thus, there was no evidence to support prediction C-1 that homeschooled children would interact less with peers outside the school than non-homeschooled children.

The data did support prediction C-3 that Type B homeschoolers would have more involvement with church and other religious groups than Type A homeschoolers or non-homeschoolers, though only the difference between Groups A and B was statistically significant. Generally, while virtually all of Group B families said that religion was "extremely important" in their lives (5) and attended church "more than once a week (5), even the lowest scoring

group (Group A) generally rated religion as "very important" (4). Therefore, the total sample of families could be regarded as having a fairly strong religious orientation.

The findings also suggest that parents in each group were equally actively involved in their communities. The mean scores indicated that parents in all groups belonged to roughly three to four community groups and attended the activities of these groups two to four times a month.

Finally, the amount of time children spent with relatives was roughly the same for each group. In general, across schooling types, children averaged almost one contact per month with other relatives outside the immediate family.

Discussion

The results revealed more similarities than differences between homeschoolers and non-homeschoolers; at the same time, there were important differences between homeschoolers who did so for academic reasons versus reasons of belief/value. When comparing homeschoolers to non-homeschoolers, the values and practices that distinguish the two groups center primarily on the fact that homeschoolers have more traditional attitudes about educational goals and practices, are critical of school's practices, and believe that they can do a better job of educating their own children. Therefore, they become involved with their child's education at home, and correspondingly, less involved with the schools. Their concern for their children's socialization and education also extends to placing more severe limits on their children's exposure to television. But, in most other respects, homeschoolers are as different among themselves as they are different from non-homeschoolers.

In fact, the academically-motivated homeschoolers and beliefs-motivated

homeschoolers were more different between themselves than from the non-homeschoolers on two child-rearing measures--independence/maturity and authoritarianism. The academically-motivated homeschoolers expected independence and maturity at an earlier age than all other parent groups, while the beliefs-motivated homeschoolers held more authoritarian attitudes than the other groups. Finally, on the remaining measures of educational and child-rearing values and practices, as well as on the social relationship measures, all groups were quite similar. Specifically, all groups held high educational expectations for their children, and enjoyed their children while being moderately permissive and nonrestrictive of them regarding most household matters (except TV watching). Further, the parents appeared equally involved in their contacts outside of school, and had similar amount of contact with relatives.

The large number of similarities across all groups, coupled with the interesting differences within the homeschooling sample, should contribute to reducing the stereotypes currently held in some quarters about homeschoolers. Contrary to some popular accounts, not all homeschoolers are driven by religious concerns, nor are they cultural drop-outs striving to isolate their children from the "evils" of the greater society. Rather, the evidence suggests that there are a variety of reasons that parents homeschool, and they are, as a group, conscientious parents. Their conscientiousness was not only evident in their high return rate of questionnaires (see Methods), but by the many thoughtful comments added voluntarily to the questionnaires. The academically-motivated parents, in particular, discussed many educational/family circumstances to which most early childhood specialists would be sympathetic. First, nearly all of the academically-motivated parents and

several of the beliefs-motivated parents had sent their children to school, but it had proved to be very unsatisfying. Some parents cited the change in their child's personality -- from happy and eager to learn to being depressed and resistent to learning, or developing a poor self image, having daily headaches, becoming hyperactive, or simply being bored. One parent objected to the idea of having to medicate her child with Ritalin in order for him to attend school, another complained about the "teaching to tests" methods used by the teachers, and one to the fact that the teacher seemed to be excluding her rather than including her in trying to solve her son's behavior problem. Overall, many parents complained about the "busy work" and the lack of individualized instruction, and for every parent who claimed his/her child was not being challenged by the curriculum, there was one who said their child was being overwhelmed by it.

Yet, there are commonalities among homeschooling parents that, in total, combine to set them apart from typical American parents today. First, they do firmly adhere to certain ideologies, religious, humanistic, or otherwise. Second, they are deeply concerned that they retain the primary influence over their children rather than surrendering that role to other agencies and agents (schools, television, peers). Third, they have both sufficient financial and personal resources to act on their convictions that they remain the primary sources of influence.

Implications

Research. Except, perhaps, for mother's job status, the present study incorporated a reasonably well-matched control group of non-homeschoolers. The resulting differences, therefore, are likely to be based primarily on the motivational circumstances leading certain parents to homeschool, rather than

being based on a confounded set of potential moderators of homeschooling such as parent education, father's job status, family composition, the quality of public schools found in different communities, etc. Future study, however, should also incorporate more normative samples as well in order to highlight how these and other demographic factors may encourage some parents to keep their children in school or to homeschool.

A more in-depth analysis should be undertaken regarding the nature of peer contacts and influences. Even granting that the present sample of homeschoolers and non-homeschoolers had a similar range of peer contacts outside of school, the fact remains that school provides a major context in which peer relationships evolve. That concerns for peer influences is a major factor prompting parents to homeschool is indicated by the fact that 34% of the parents in our present sample specifically mentioned problems of peer pressure or peer dependency as one of their reasons for homeschooling. It would seem useful to examine more deeply the nature of the relationships that homeschooled children have with peers to learn if the quality of peer relations and their importance in helping to shape the children's social competencies and values differ from children who attend more conventional schools.

Finally, some more careful "proof-in-the-pudding" studies need to be conducted to learn if there are important positive or negative developmental consequences for children who remain home for a significant portion of their formal education. These studies will need to carefully match families of homeschoolers and non-homeschoolers, because the above average scores of homeschooled children on national normed tests of educational achievement can just as easily be explained by preexisting family variables found among

homeschoolers (e.g., high levels of parent education) that are also predictors of children's achievement.

Third, it would be interesting to conduct more detailed studies of the homeschooled children's educational environments at home. Such analyses could be guided by he newly emerging standards of developmentally appropriate practices that early childhood educators now endorse (Bredekamp, 1987) to determine the extent to which these practices characterize what homeschooling parents do with their young children.

Practice. If homeschooled children do, in fact, achieve as well as or better than non-homeschooled children, it needn't be concluded that most or all children should be homeschooled. Nevertheless, further research on the presumed virtues and limitations of homeschooling can offer more firm grounds to justify existing or new educational efforts to better meet children's developmental needs. To the extent that "homelike" variables (e.g., small adult/child ratios, adults having a personal interest in the children, individualized instruction, functional curriculum) prove to be salient predictors of children's educational achievement and a sense of self-worth, increased efforts could be made to optimize those conditions in existing schools. A similar line of reasoning could be employed when considering the management of peer influences and relations. That is, if there are any particular strategies homeschooling parents use to manage peer influences that yield specific developmental outcomes, this information may be useful to teachers and other significant adults to structure more desirable peer influences in non-home settings. Ultimately, the point is that rather than regarding the study of homeschoolers as irrelevant for educational practice, early childhood educators and other educational specialists might consider

this movement as another social indicator of the health of our schools, and the practices of homeschooling parents and the outcomes for their children as providing clues for ways to make necessary educational reform.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Homeschooler and Non-Homeschooler Families

Demographic Characteristic	Schooling Type[a]			
	A	B	AB	PS
age of mother (years)	36.2	37.3	36.1	36.5
age of father (years)	37.0	38.6	37.6	38.9
age of children (years)	9.4	9.2	9.2	9.4
race (% white)	100%	100%	100%	90%
% protestant	83%	100%	80%	80%
% married	100%	100%	100%	100%
community size[b]	2.8	2.8	3.1	2.8
number of children	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
% of mothers employed	0	0	0	35%
education (mother)[c]	5.1	5.2	5.1	4.8
education (father)[c]	5.7	5.1	5.2	5.4
% mothers certified teachers	33%	45%	31%	25%

[a]A = homeschoolers for academic reasons; B = homeschoolers for beliefs/values reasons; AB = homeschoolers for both academic and beliefs reasons; PS = public schoolers.

[b]1 = rural (< 2,500); 2 = town (2,500-9,999); 3 = city (10,000-49,999); 4 = metropolitan area (>50,000).

[c]1 = < 9 years; 2 = 9-12 years; 3 = high school graduate; 4 = some college/vocational school; 5 = college graduate; 6 = some graduate work; 7 = graduate degree

Table 2

Number of Items, Scoring Range, and Alpha Coefficients

for Questionnaire Items Measuring Each Construct

Construct	# Items	Range of Scores	Alpha
Educational Values/Practices			
Educational Expectations	7	6-32	.44
Involvement in Education			
Direct Involvement	4	0-16	.59
Indirect Involvement	4	0-6	.91
Stimulation at Home			
Parents	4	0-22	.32
Physical Environment	3	0-12	.57
Traditional Attitude	5	5-25	.49
Child-Rearing Values/Practices			
Maturity/Independence	6	6-36	.65
TV Viewing Restrictions	6	0-27	.75
Enjoyment of Child	7	9-45	.71
Permissiveness	7	7-35	.47
Authoritarianism	9	9-45	.80
Restrictiveness	9	9-28	.50
Social Relationships			
Parent Activities	4	0-16	.56
Child's Peer Relations	5	3-21	.50
Involvement with Relatives	1	1-6	--
Involvement with Church	2	1-10	.71

Table 3

Educational Values and Practices

Construct		Schooling Type A	B	AB	PS	F[a] value
Educational Expectations						
	M	25.4	26.1	25.5	24.8	
	SD	3.9	3.5	3.9	3.9	
Parental Involvement in Education						
Direct Involvement						
	M	14.6	14.4	14.0	10.5	
	SD	1.3	1.3	1.8	3.1	19.9***,b
Indirect Involvement						
	M	2.9	2.7	2.0	4.1	
	SD	2.4	2.8	2.5	1.7	2.8*,c
Home Learning Environment						
Parent Stimulation						
	M	13.3	11.0	12.3	11.7	
	SD	2.9	2.5	2.5	3.4	2.7*,d
Physical Environment						
	M	22.5	21.8	22.3	20.2	
	SD	2.0	1.8	2.3	2.3	6.0**,e
Traditional Attitude toward Education						
	M	13.6	13.6	13.1	10.8	
	SD	2.3	2.0	3.0	1.7	7.0***,b

[a]df = 3/86
* = $p < .05$
** = $p < .01$
*** = $p < .001$

[b]A, B, AB > PS

[c]A, B, AB < PS

[d]A > B

[e]A, AB > PS

Table 4

Child Rearing Values and Practices

Construct		Schooling Type A	B	AB	PS	F[a] value
Expectation for Maturity/Independence						
	M	28.1	23.0	26.3	22.6	
	SD	2.7	3.7	3.2	4.1	14.7***,b
Television Viewing						
	M	5.7	4.2	4.5	8.8	
	SD	4.8	4.3	4.0	1.4	6.1***,c
Parental Enjoyment/Acceptance of Child						
	M	38.3	37.0	37.7	37.8	
	SD	4.7	3.4	6.8	3.0	
Permissiveness						
	M	25.0	22.9	23.5	24.1	
	SD	3.1	2.1	2.0	3.2	
Restrictiveness						
	M	19.8	20.8	20.7	20.7	
	SD	2.1	1.9	2.2	1.5	
Authoritarian Attitude						
	M	33.2	38.7	37.5	33.8	
	SD	5.7	3.8	4.5	4.6	7.3***,d

[a]df = 3/86
*** = $p < .001$

[b]A, AB > B, PS

[c]PS > A, B, AB

[d]B, AB > A, PS

Table 5

Social Relationships

Construct		Schooling Type A	B	AB	PS	F[a] value
Peer/Social Interaction						
	M	14.9	14.2	13.8	14.3	
	SD	2.7	2.5	3.0	3.1	
Family Involvement with Church						
	M	8.3	9.9	9.4	8.6	
	SD	2.4	0.4	1.4	1.9	3.8*,b
Parent Community Involvement						
	M	10.0	10.8	10.7	10.2	
	SD	2.3	2.2	2.8	2.0	
Child Involvement with Relatives						
	M	3.4	3.6	3.1	3.4	
	SD	1.4	1.5	1.7	1.8	

[a]df = 3/86
* = $p < .05$

[b]B > A

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