Social Misfits?

The Truth About Home Education and Socialization

When one considers questions of socialization, it needs to be understood that socialization is either positive or negative. Having your children mimic all the questionable words and suggestive moves to the top hip hop song that their peers sing may not be the kind of socialization that you desire for them.



Popular opinion assumes that children need long periods of interaction with a large group of peers to acquire social skills. Some child-rearing authorities, however, believe extensive peer contact at an early age causes peer dependency and low self-image. Critics of home education often point out that home schooled children are likely to lack basic social skills. Actual research is proving just the opposite to be true.

LACK OF NORMAL SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT?

Several years ago, the University of Michigan released the results of their study into the socialization of home schooled children. J. Gary Knowles, University of Michigan assistant professor of education, said the results refute claims that home schooling deprives children of contacts with others their own age needed for normal social development.

The study goes on to challenge the concern that children taught at home will be unable to become productive members of a diverse society. Knowles surveyed adults who were taught at home and found:

- Two-thirds were married, the norm for adults their age.
- None were unemployed or on welfare.
- More than three-quarters felt that being taught at home had actually helped them to interact with people from different levels of society.
- More than 40 percent attended college, and 15 percent of those had completed a graduate degree.
- Two-thirds were self-employed.

Socially deprived? What did Knowles' survey show about home educated adults attitude about their school experience? Some 96 percent said they would want to be taught at home again.[1]

MODELING BEHAVIORS: ADULTS OR CHILDREN?

Youngsters taught at home by parents don't lag in social development when compared with those of the same age who attend conventional schools, a University of Florida study has found.

Larry Shyers, Chairman of the Florida Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage and Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling, conducted the study. Shyers findings suggest that home-schooled children behave better because they tend to imitate their parents, while traditionally schooled children model themselves after other children in the classroom.

"**The results seem to show that a child's social development depends more on adult contact and less on contact with other children than previously thought**," Shyers said.

Home-schooled children score as high or higher on standardized achievement tests than children in conventional schools, said Shyers, a psychotherapist.

Shyers also compared behaviors and social development test scores of two groups of 70 children, ages 8 to 10. One group was educated exclusively at home and the other at public or private schools in Lake, Orange and Seminole counties.

The study found no significant difference between the two groups of children in self-concept or assertiveness, which were measured by social development tests. However, video showed that youngsters who were taught at home had consistently fewer behavioral problems.[2]

WHAT OF THEIR SELF ESTEEM?

Another study conducted by Paul Kitchen of Andrews University's School of Education points out that contrary to popular opinion home schooled children have a more positive self-concept than do their conventionally schooled peers.

Kitchen discovered that home schooled students outscored their peers in every category but peer popularity. Home schooled children ranked higher in personal security, academic competence and familial acceptance, thus a higher overall rating in self esteem.[3]

SOURCES: 1 - The Grand Haven Tribune, March 9, 1993; 2 - Associated Press; 3 - Home School Researcher