

# The Slippery Slope of Homeschool Co-ops

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I suppose it is part of our depraved nature that we humans have the tendency, when we are given a great cause, to institutionalize it and so alter it and drain it of life that it no longer resembles, and may even contradict the goals of, the original cause.

Charity used to be simply helping the needy in one's community. Now charities are multi-million (or even billion) dollar corporations that spend much of what is donated to them on overhead and advertising and often make the recipients of their charity jump through hoops in order to qualify. Insurance was once amazingly similar to charity—a simple fund that one could contribute to and from which a member who suffered a loss could draw. Now, the great insurance institutions are in the business of raking in as much as possible from policy holders and, using complex policies that few can understand, paying out as little as possible. Consumers Union reports that even the nonprofits such as Blue Cross and Blue Shield have stockpiled hundreds of millions of dollars from their members' premiums ([http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/money/industries/insurance/2010-07-22-insurers\\_N.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/money/industries/insurance/2010-07-22-insurers_N.htm)).

It happened to Christianity. Jesus started a grassroots movement that spread through word of mouth by ordinary people who met in houses, proclaimed a message of freedom from sin, taught peace, was not part of this world, and had no worldly power. Before long, people had formalized and institutionalized it into the Church, and it met in "sanctified" buildings, was ritualized and preached by a special class of functionaries called clergy, and it wielded worldly power—including the sword.

Now something similar is happening with homeschooling. Homeschooling started as a grassroots movement. Parents became dissatisfied with the public (state-run) schools for various reasons, such as the anti-Christian worldview and secular humanism taught in the schools, the methodology of classroom pedagogy, the low academic standards, the distractions, the peer pressure, and so on. These parents simply took their children out of the schools and taught them at home. Underlying the movement was the thought that parents are responsible for their children's education and the home is the place to conduct it.

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homeschoolcoops.pdf

Those who opposed homeschooling often resorted to the argument that homeschooled children couldn't be properly socialized. The homeschoolers' response was that homeschooled children had the opportunity for a more well-rounded and less stressful socialization.

They pointed out that public-schooled children are locked away all day in an institutional setting having to cope with an unnatural environment. Like too many cattle fenced into too small a pasture, or inmates in a prison, children are herded together with hundreds or even thousands of their peers. Instead of stimulating healthy socialization, such an environment often results in an inability to casually interact with older people (teachers are seen merely as authority figures), peer pressure, bullying, feelings of inferiority, and anger.

Homeschooled children, on the other hand, are in the natural and nurturing environment of the home, they interact with people of all ages, they are not surrounded by great numbers of other children and are thus not subjected to the negative psychological stimuli of the school environment.

Naturally, many parents found the task of teaching their children daunting. It wasn't something they ever trained to do. So they sought the input and solace of like-minded parents. Thus began homeschool support groups for parents, and they had their benefits.

But soon, beginning to buy into the lie that children need large numbers of other children in order to be properly socialized, homeschool support groups began offering play groups so the children could play together. Of course, I'm not saying there's anything wrong with kids playing with other kids. But it should be only *part* of their well-rounded socialization, and it shouldn't eat into their lesson time. These groups quickly grew into more academic areas: Let's get together for field trips. Then, let's have a science fair, a history fair, a literary recital. Certainly, it's good for children to learn public speaking, but parents were on a slippery slope without pitons, rope, or even treads on their shoes.

Soon, homeschooling parents were spending a considerable part of their time with their children outside the home, and the children were being socialized in group settings with other children. But it didn't stop there.

Now, many, maybe even most, homeschool support groups have transformed into homeschool cooperatives or co-ops. In these co-ops, parents who in name are homeschooling their children are, in fact, bringing their children into classrooms where they are collectively taught as a class by other parents. And, as Melanie Hexter points out,

Most recently, co-ops have drifted toward "academy" arrangements in which a paid tutor (often a nonparent) teaches the students once or twice a week (or more). The students are often dropped off to attend without their parents, who have delegated class work to the academy's teachers and are not present to practice discipleship. Be wary of this slippery slope in which peer socialization can reign.

"Have No Fear of Socialization," *Home School Enrichment Magazine*, Issue 67 (January/February 2014) 62

So, contrary to the very reasons the movement began, homeschooling is fast becoming institutionalized schooling. Parents send their children out of the home where they are herded together into a classroom and taught by professionals. Like the Christians in Galatia who began to turn from grace to the law, many homeschoolers have made a u-turn and are now on a course that will lead them to establish institutional schools made in the image of the public schools and ironically named "homeschool academies." If homeschooling is going to survive as it was intended, and as the best way to educate our children, homeschoolers must abandon the road to institutionalization and return to their grassroots. That is, they must go home, "all the way home" as Mary Pride said, and busy themselves teaching their children.