

Dissertations

Resisting Schools, Reproducing Families: Gender and the Politics of Homeschooling

[Download](#)

[SHARE](#)

[Brian Paul Kapitulik, University of Massachusetts - Amherst](#)

[Follow](#)

Date of Award
9-2011

Document Type
Open Access Dissertation

Degree Name
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Degree Program
Sociology

First Advisor
Naomi Gerstel

Second Advisor
Robert Zussman

Third Advisor
Dan Clawson

Keywords
Education, Family, Gender, Homeschooling, Parenting, Social Movements

Subject Categories
Sociology

Abstract
The contemporary homeschooling movement sits at the intersection of several important social trends: widespread concern about the effectiveness and safety of public schools, feminist challenges to the patriarchal family structure, anxiety about the state of the family as an institution, and challenging economic conditions. The central concern of this dissertation is to make sense of homeschooling within this broader context. Data were gathered through interviews with forty-five homeschooling parents, approximately half of whom are religious and half of whom are secular. The interviews were organized around three central questions: 1) What are the frames that parents use to justify homeschooling? 2) What are their particular tactics or methods for homeschooling? 3) What are the components of homeschoolers' collective identity? I argue that homeschooling bears the imprint of broader changes regarding the gender system and contemporary family life, as well as other economic and cultural changes. Both religious and secular parents come to homeschooling out of shared concerns about schools

Enter search terms:

[Advanced Search](#)

[Notify me via email or RSS](#)

[Browse](#)

[Collections](#)

[Disciplines](#)

[Authors](#)

[Author Corner](#)

[Author FAQ](#)

being ineffective and incapable of catering to their children's individual needs. They also share concerns about the state of the family and the general moral decline of society. Religious and secular parents differ in their actual practice of homeschooling, depending on their particular conceptions of childhood, but they are alike in the fact that it is women who do most of the homeschooling work. These parents are also different in their collective identities. Religious parents regard homeschooling as just something they do. However, secular parents characterize homeschooling as part of who they are as moral people and this compels them to employ various strategies of identity work. In the end, I argue that this movement is unlikely to contribute to meaningful social change. I base this conclusion on the fact that the homeschooling movement contains two major contradictions: 1) This movement is simultaneously resisting one alleged failing institution - schools - while reproducing another highly criticized institution - the patriarchal nuclear family. 2) This movement offers individual solutions to social problems. While the participants have many concerns about social institutions, their answer is to withdraw their participation and retreat into their own families.

Recommended Citation

Kapitulik, Brian Paul, "Resisting Schools, Reproducing Families: Gender and the Politics of Homeschooling" (2011). *Dissertations*. Paper 469.
http://scholarworks.umass.edu/open_access_dissertations/469

This page is sponsored by the [University Libraries](#).

© 2009 [University of Massachusetts Amherst](#) • [Site Policies](#)