

KEEPING HOME: HOME SCHOOLING AND THE PRACTICE OF
CONSERVATIVE PROTESTANT IDENTITY

By

Monica Smatlak Liao

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Approved:

Professor Beth Conklin

Professor Jay Geller

Professor Laura Carpenter

Professor Kathleen Flake

Professor Bonnie Miller-McLemore

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To Tim and Karen Smatlak
My teachers - first, best, and still

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Figure 1. Leggo crucifixion, by eight-year-old home schooler Jesse Olsen.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTIONS: THE SEVERAL SITUATIONS OF THIS STUDY

One Monday morning in early May, I knocked, with all the anxiety of a field work tenderfoot, on the front door of the Mason¹ family home and met the first of 13 conservative Christian home schooling mothers with whom it would be my privilege to work throughout the summer and autumn. Mrs. Helen Mason, a gracious and jovial woman with dark hair and eyes, welcomed me into their home and introduced me to her confident and clever twelve-year-old daughter and home school student, Virginia, and her mischievous and playful pre-school age daughter Elizabeth. In scenes that would repeat themselves throughout my field research, I spent the week as a decreasingly awkward participant in their home school as I learned from Helen, her husband Thomas, Virginia, and Elizabeth about their manner of Christian home schooling. I observed Helen teach Virginia about predicate nominatives (or, as Virginia called them, “predicate vomitatives”); I went with them on a field trip to the front yard where we dissected a flower from Helen’s garden to appreciate more fully the Creator’s intelligent design of nature; I sat on the couch nearby as Helen asked Virginia to discover how the story of Jesus’ first miracle at Cana, their Bible reading for the day, might have something to teach her and then prayed aloud for their family, their day, their friends from church, and my research project.

In my tutelage under a small group of conservative Protestant home schooling mothers and fathers, they taught me, a youngish single female and religious studies Ph.D.

¹ To protect the confidentiality of study participants, all names are pseudonyms.

student about to be married, some of what it means for them to be a wife, mother, husband, father, and teacher in the light of their conservative Christian faith. They taught me by discussing these topics directly with me, over our morning coffee and my tape recorder, and they also taught me by allowing me to see how they teach and parent and disciple their children in countless day-to-day family interactions. In the chapters that follow, I have sought to be a responsible student of theirs, as I render from field notes, tape recorded interviews, and photographs an interpretation of their domestic religious practices and identities.

After the mediations of intersubjectivity, the interpositions of theory, and the analytical kneading of the “data,” I have come now to tell my story of the situation of conservative Protestant² home schoolers in the context of early twenty-first century America. Though their lives have many dimensions, the story I will tell of them plays upon the theme of their creation of their subcultural identity as white conservative Protestants.³ For reasons of history, politics, and religion (to be reviewed later in this

² The topic of this study is white conservative Protestant home schoolers, and though I most often use the term “conservative Protestant,” I sometimes say “Christian” instead for the sake of variety in language. There are many kinds of Christianities, just as there are also several conservative Protestantisms, and the reader should bear in mind throughout that this study is strictly limited to evangelical, fundamentalist, and charismatic conservative Protestant home schoolers.

³ Though I do not specify it in every instance, this study is limited to a discussion of the religious identity of white conservative Protestants in particular. There are significant differences between the religious institutions, scholarly literatures, histories, and subcultural positions of white and black conservative Protestants, such that a study of conservative Protestant identity in general would have to account systematically and thoroughly for differences of race; such would be a study unto itself. (See, for instance, (Emerson & Smith, 2000.) Furthermore, all of the parents who volunteered to participate in my study were white (one mother was biracially white and Korean-American), as the vast majority of conservative Protestant home schoolers are white. Lastly, much of the scholarly literature on conservative Protestants is limited to the discussion of white conservative Protestants, though not always with overt recognition of the fact. Consider, for instance, the thesis, reiterated in the following works, of cultural empowerment-turned-disfranchisement; this does not make sense regarding black conservative Protestants (Ammerman, 1987; Carpenter, 1997; Hammond, 1992; Handy, 1984; Hankins, 2002; Harding, 2000; Hart, 2002; Hunter, 1983; Marsden, 1980; Smith, Emerson, Gallagher, Kennedy, & Sikkink, 1998). For reasons of scope, data, and previous literature, I limit my interpretations to the religious identity, overlaid as it is with racial, class, and gender identities, of white conservative Protestant home schoolers. The generalizations I make may very well be applicable to conservative Protestants of other races and ethnicities, but I ask the reader to bear in

chapter), white conservative Protestants – fundamentalists and evangelicals in particular⁴ – have crafted for themselves a religious subcultural identity that combines moments of cultural distinction with occasions for identification with the mainstream. While the long history of white Protestantism in America is one of cultural establishment and political power, conservative Protestants since the Fundamentalist-Modernist split of nearly a century ago have considered themselves to be displaced to the cultural margins of the “modern” world. Historian of early fundamentalism George Marsden identifies this same-but-different cultural position as a unique feature of fundamentalist identity.

My conclusion, which finds expression in a variety of specific ways, is that fundamentalists experienced profound ambivalence toward the surrounding culture. Perhaps the same might be said about almost any group. Yet the fundamentalist experience strikes me as unusual in at least one respect. These American Christians underwent a remarkable transformation in their relationship to the culture. Respectable “evangelicals” in the 1870s, by the 1920s they had become a laughingstock, ideological strangers in their own land (Marsden, 1980, p. vi).

The conservative Protestant tradition of cultural ambivalence thus begun in the 1920s has continued throughout the twentieth century to characterize conservative Protestants in America as both “inside” and “outside” the imagined center of cultural empowerment. For instance, though conservative Protestants in recent years have powerfully asserted their freedom of religious expression in public institutions, they have done so from their self-ascribed status as the currently marginalized representatives of a past cultural hegemony, a remembered “Christian America” (Handy, 1984; Harding, 2000; Hart, 2002). Though conservative Protestants have given institutional form to their

mind this qualification of race throughout the following chapters.

⁴ Later in this chapter I define evangelical, fundamentalist, charismatic, and Pentecostal in more detail. For now it is sufficient to define them as those Protestants who consider themselves to be, at the same time, both unquestionably American as well as religio-culturally marginalized for their orthodox Christian theology.

separateness through the establishment of their own churches, day schools, colleges, media outlets and publishing houses, they have also of late sought political influence on the basis of a claim to represent America's "Moral Majority" (Carpenter, 1997). Though evangelicals strive for a manner of personal morality that is set apart, "in but not of the world," they and therefore their norms also comprise an estimated twenty-five percent of the American adult population (Smith et al., 1998; Woodberry & Smith, 1998).

White conservative Protestants thus have constructed their religio-cultural identity as one of simultaneous cultural sameness and difference, a people of righteous ambivalence. Their potential sameness, or the ways in which conservative Protestants are yet typical of other Americans who do not share their subcultural religious identification, has been explored, though perhaps with a lesser degree of thoroughness than their cultural difference has received. For instance, Hunter has noted the evangelical penchant for organizational innovation in keeping with the times as well as the enthusiasm with which conservative Protestants have embraced the characteristically American "culture of the therapeutic" with its concern for the self-actualization of unique individuals (Hunter, 1983). Further, conservative Protestants have been found to be demographically indistinct – to have representatives scattered across the categories of socioeconomic class, region, gender, race, educational and income level, and marital status – though not always in the nationally average proportions (Ammerman, 1987; Smith et al., 1998).

The sociological characterization of conservative Protestant identity has come to rest, then, not on demography but on ideology, on the systems of ideas about the nature of reality that are taken to be unique to conservative Protestants. Other scholars have characterized the *content* of this conservative Protestant claim to ideological distinction,

the peculiar features of their thought life (and the religious behavior it inspires) that mark their difference. We have come to recognize conservative Protestants – to know them as *this* and not *that* sort of Christian or American or person – by virtue of their “traditional” gender ideology (Ammerman, 1987; Bartkowski, 2001; Bendroth, 1993; DeBerg, 1990; Gallagher, 2003); their supernatural epistemology and theodicy (Ammerman, 1987; Hunter, 1983, 1991; Marsden, 1980; Wacker, 2001); their personalistic piety (Hart, 2002; Smith et al., 1998; Wacker, 2001); their savvy and their passion for technologies of proselytizing (Carpenter, 1997; Hunter, 1983); their Biblicism (Ammerman, 1987; Harding, 2000; Marsden, 1980); their conservative politics (Ammerman, 1987; Emerson, 1996; Emerson, Smith, & Sikkink, 1999; Gallagher & Smith, 1999; Hammond, 1992; Hunter, 1991; Sherkat & Ellison, 1997); and their “orthodox” Protestant theology (Smith et al., 1998).

In this present work on conservative Protestant home schoolers, I wish to add to the scholarly characterization of white conservative Protestant cultural identity a consideration of the *process* by which some conservative Protestants construct their cultural position of difference and, by the same token and of necessity, of sameness. I trace out the means by which home schooling conservative Protestant parents build a religio-cultural identity of strategic differentiation from other possible American identities, which is to say a selective differentiation that co-exists with elements of no-less-strategic sameness. Rather than seeking evidence for their claim to distinction or adding to the list of their distinguishing features, I look for the ways by which home schooling conservative Protestants make the claim of subcultural difference and make it believable, for themselves and for others. In other words, I am dealing primarily with the

construction of identity, not with identity itself. My guiding questions are thus: by what strategies of distinction do white conservative Protestant home schooling parents construct their claims to difference, and, secondarily, in what ways does their specific differentiation perhaps mask other elements of either difference or sameness? By “strategies of distinction,” I mean to include characterizations of self, other, and the shifting relations between them that are often oppositional, but not always and only in specific dimensions. These characterizations occur not only in thought and in language but also, perhaps more so, in the pragmatic activities by which one accomplishes the mundane tasks of living as a person of a particular identification.

Guided by these questions, I argue in the coming chapters that conservative Protestant home schooling families pursue three general strategies of action by which they organize their home schooling activities in such a way that they also accomplish their religious subcultural identity. In chapter two, I define the strategy of *unification* as the tendency to incorporate into what they understand to be a coherent, Christian whole various elements of family life and education that they take to be otherwise estranged, such that their unification renders them more wholly Christian. I argue that their multiple practices of unification are held to mark their difference from the racial, ethnic, and religious multiplicity thought to characterize public education and perhaps the American public in general. In chapter three I explore the strategy of *privatization* by which conservative Protestant home schooling mothers in particular educate their children, form their own religious selfhood, and delimit their labor, all in the realms of domesticity and subjectivity. I argue that their privatizations of education, religion, and labor, understood as exercises in self-determination, perform their specifically white, middle-class

conservative Protestant identity. Lastly, I examine in chapter four the strategy of *gendering* by which home schooling parents construct dualistic gender identities of gender difference and hierarchy, especially through the privatization of the labor of home schooling mothers. I then suggest that the gender differentiation of conservative Protestant home schooling is also a means of religio-cultural differentiation, as it marks them off from a context of supposed gender equality. Their strategies of unification, privatization, and gendering construct a conservative Protestant identity that is also overlaid with the differentiations of gender, race, and class.

The construction of subcultural identities is both a timely and a perennial topic for social and cultural research, and white conservative Protestant subcultural identity is an apt *topos* for the exploration of it. The plural cultural landscape of twenty-first century America, as in centuries past, creates social and sociological imperatives regarding the figuration of cultural and subcultural identity. Syncretism, contact, immigration, resistance, domination, subordination, authenticity, assimilation, minority, majority, ethnicity – such are the concepts by which subgroups and supergroups in the United States map out what it means to be a hyphenated American or one whose hyphen has melted. The experiences, struggles, and tactics of racial, ethnic, and class “minorities”⁵ are certainly most relevant for research into the construction of sub-group identity, yet white conservative Protestant-Americans are also importantly instructive.⁶ After all, the formation of the social identifications of subordinated groups is only ever accomplished

⁵ I have put “minorities” in quotations because the rhetorical implications of labeling a group a minority – regardless of demographic statistics – are more than I wish to claim.

⁶ In chapter two I draw on some of the literature of the construction of whiteness to demonstrate this point (especially Frankenberg, 1993; Hartigan, 1997). There are many possible examples of studies dealing with the construction of “other” identities in the context of the United States; the following are the tip of the iceberg (Hein, 1994; McCulloch & Wilkins, 1995; Olzak, 1983; Omi & Winant, 1994).

in relation to the formation of dominant groups: the construction of color requires a concomitant construction of whiteness, the definition of femininity requires that of masculinity, and the formation of a working class is accomplished through that of a middle-class. A study of the subcultural identification of white conservative Protestants is an examination of the other side of the coin of social identity construction, the cultural formation of a segment of the “majority;” most of them are yet White, Anglo-Saxon Protestants, though of a particular brand.

As we have seen, those who have studied them, and oftentimes they themselves, locate their subcultural difference in a conscientiously constructed distinction of religious belief primarily,⁷ such that it must be continuously reconstructed and reaffirmed through various structures of religious community. Conservative Protestants are thought to be ever one change of mind away from being seemingly reincorporated into the indistinct masses of the white American mainstream.⁸ Though I, too, consider the distinctions of belief that mark white conservative Protestant cultural difference, I find that the subcultural identity of conservative Protestant home schooling families is also made of more structural and embodied features of social identity. I look for the means of the production of their subcultural difference in practices beyond those of religious believing, attending to the racial, class, and gendered dimensions to their lived articulation of what it is to be a white conservative Protestant. Again, I focus this study on the strategies of

⁷ For examples of studies that emphasize difference of religious belief as the cornerstone of conservative Protestant difference, see (Bartkowski & Ellison, 1995; Emerson, 1996; Emerson et al., 1999; Sherkat & Ellison, 1993, 1997)

⁸ Though the foundational studies of Ammerman, Hunter, and Smith are in many ways in direct disagreement with one another, they all seem to me to emphasize the conservative Protestant worldview and the social mechanisms by which it is maintained (Ammerman), strengthened (Smith), or by which it accommodates itself to a threatening cultural environment (Hunter). Though Smith in particular emphasizes the vitality of conservative Protestantism, in his model a change of belief would yet erase the cultural distinction of conservative Protestants. (Ammerman, 1987; Hunter, 1983; Smith et al., 1998)

action that seek to accomplish the sociologically special construction of white conservative Protestant subcultural identity.

Others who have studied conservative Protestants have addressed a similar set of questions before me, and so I must clarify the ways in which my readings of conservative Protestant home schooling variously build upon and diverge from theirs. In 1987 Nancy Ammerman published *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World*, an ethnography of a fundamentalist congregation with whom she spent a year in observation, participation, and interviews (Ammerman, 1987). A Baptist preacher's kid herself, Ammerman sought to understand the meaningfulness for fundamental Christians of their distinctive beliefs, organizations, and ways of life. Also a sociologist, Ammerman frames her understanding of fundamentalist culture according to Berger's model for the social construction of reality, by which the ideas taken for granted as commonsense descriptors of reality exist in dialectic relationship with the social structures of their context (Berger, 1969; Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Ammerman thus elaborates the worldview of fundamentalism in connection with the social structures that render that worldview plausible. For instance, she argues that the encompassment of their social, familial, and sometimes professional lives within the purview of their church fellowship enables fundamentalist conviction and ways of life by minimizing contact with the contrary cultural presuppositions of non-believers, just as the practice of proselytizing upholds the sociocultural border in the midst of its crossing in interaction. Ammerman thus addresses the sociological problem of the subculture with a sociology of knowledge approach. She investigates the social structures of church, family, and

community life that construct the fundamentalist reality, which is to say their system of unquestioned beliefs about the nature of the world, of God, and of themselves.

In Ammerman's argument, the difference between conservative Protestants and other Christians and other Americans is defined in terms of a difference of cognitive proclivities, and the question of interest then becomes the maintenance of the conservative Protestant worldview in the midst of an ideologically hostile cultural milieu. Following Berger and Ammerman, I call this approach the "worldview maintenance" model, and in addition to Ammerman, Hunter also employs it to account for, among other noteworthy observations, the popularity of conservative religion in late modernity (Hunter, 1983). This theoretical framing of the question no doubt has advanced our understanding of the cultural situation of conservative Protestants in the United States, and yet I find that a different set of analytical priorities, drawn from practice theory, is a needed next, critical turn in the conversation. Though I will elaborate the commitments of practice theory later in this chapter, I introduce them here by way of an initial critique of the worldview maintenance model that has so far structured much of our understanding of conservative Protestants.

The worldview maintenance model treats of conservative Protestant ideology as a relatively fixed system of ideas that has consisted throughout the twentieth century as the cornerstone of their identity, such that this maintenance of the idea system over time has been the topic of conversation. A practice theoretical orientation would shift the point of interest from the maintenance of a given set of ideas to their ongoing production and reproduction by way of the habituated schemes of action by which we accomplish our typical tasks (Sewell, 1992; Swidler, 1986). To buy with cash or credit the food grown in

distant soil as “produce” at a sanitized supermarket in the infertile city is to act and, ultimately, to think in keeping with the structures of a capitalist economy of private property, the market, commoditization, exchange value, and class structure. Furthermore, practical habits, as well as the conceptual life they support, produce and reproduce structures of power – including social stratification by race, class, and gender – in countless daily actions and thoughts (Bourdieu, 1977). To buy groceries at an upscale grocery as a woman during the work hours of the weekday is to practice the creation of a specific gender and class identity (West & Fenstermaker, 1995; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Rather than treating ideas as a *cause* of cultural difference, therefore, practice theory would understand worldview to be an *effect* of other social processes of subgroup differentiation, including the performance of practical activities in a manner that marks difference. In other words, conservative Protestants do not think differently and therefore are different; conservative Protestants create their difference by many strategic and situated means, one of which is their elaboration of a specific version of “orthodox” Protestant theology. There are reasons beyond theology or history for the construction of conservative Protestant identity around biblical inerrancy, gender dualism, and religious subjectivism, reasons that include present concerns of cultural power at least as much if not more so than a desire for intellectual continuity with the past. Instead of asking “What are the distinct ideas that anchor the conservative Protestant worldview?” I ask, “Why would certain worldview elements and not others – indeed the concern with worldview itself - be useful to conservative Protestants in their construction of subcultural identity at this historical moment?” I also look for strategies of difference in

the practices of conservative Protestant home schooling parents, the means and styles they use in their activities of teaching and parenting. I ask, “How do their habits of parenting and educating bring into being their identity as conservative Protestants, including a different worldview?” In short, I understand the distinct ideas of conservative Protestants to be not so much a given feature of their cultural character but a constructed part of the process of their identity formation – a process that is ongoing, contested, uncertain, and persistently practical.

In addition to the work of Ammerman and in more recent years, sociologist Christian Smith has re-framed the question of conservative Protestant subcultural identity.⁹ He and his co-authors have created and employed a theoretical offspring of social constructionism that they call “subcultural identity theory.” In *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*, Smith sets out to explain the vitality of evangelicalism in contemporary America, a situation that he takes to be problematic for social theories of modernization and secularization which hold that “traditional” religions must decline as the “modern” ascends (Smith et al., 1998). Drawing upon data from a nationally representative sample of church-going Protestants, Smith finds empirical support for the greater “strength” of evangelicalism as compared to fundamentalism, mainline and liberal Protestantism, with religious strength defined as: adherence to orthodox Christian theology;¹⁰ salience of religion; confidence in religious beliefs; church participation; commitment to the mission of the church; and the sustenance and

⁹ (Emerson et al., 1999; Emerson & Smith, 2000; Gallagher & Smith, 1999; Smith et al., 1998; Woodberry & Smith, 1998)

¹⁰ Unfortunately, Smith does not give a rationale for the beliefs that he chooses as representative of Christian orthodoxy, which include, for him, biblical literalism and inerrancy, certain beliefs about human nature, a Christocentric soteriology, a personal conversion experience and commitment, absolute morality, and communication with God. The correspondence between these beliefs and the theology of evangelicals could account for some of their greater “strength,” as measured by Smith.

recruitment of membership. He then argues that the cultural pluralism of modernity, rather than threatening the vitality of evangelicalism, actually fosters it by providing evangelicals with other, different social identities against which to define themselves. In Smith's formulation of "subcultural identity theory," social groups create their identities through the social construction of symbolic boundaries between themselves and "out-groups" or "negative reference groups," such that they define who they are by constructing specific others as those whom they are not. Furthermore, he theorizes that religious strength in modernity depends upon the ability of religious communities to succeed in this process of self-identification through differentiation and othering. In a situation of cultural pluralism, evangelicals have a variety of potential "out-groups" against which to define themselves, such that pluralism enhances the process of modern religious vitality. In addition to such maintenance of religio-cultural difference, religious strength in modernity requires also an "engagement" with prevailing social contexts, because separatism from "the world" hinders rather than helps the vitality of religion. The source of evangelical success in the religious marketplace is therefore their "engaged orthodoxy," or their simultaneous religio-cultural distinction from non-evangelicals and non-Christians and the efforts of evangelicals to influence society.

Since Smith's theoretical framing of the question of conservative Protestant subcultural identity formation is similar to my own, I must clarify the analytic pathways down which I follow him as well as those from which I deviate. I share with Smith his theoretical characterization of the process of social group identity construction. In his words, which I heartily second (Smith et al., 1998, p. 92, italics original):

Collective identity is always an ongoing *social achievement*, accomplished through processes of social interaction, in which identity-signifying symbols are

collectively generated, displayed, recognized, affirmed, and employed to mark differences between insiders and outsiders.

The differences between conservative Protestants and various others are fabricated out of processes of symbols, interactions, and highly interested characterizations of self and other. Beyond this common understanding, I see my work differing from Smith's in two respects. First, he treats of the self- and other-construction of evangelicals in terms of religion only and in isolation from other social differentiations, whereas I endeavor to explore processes of religio-cultural differentiation in conjunction with those of race, class, and gender. Second, Smith presumes the accomplishment of evangelical difference and proceeds to identify and measure their distinguishing features, whereas I engage the question of conservative Protestant identity at an earlier point, at the process of their differentiation rather than its outcome. Let me elaborate these two points of distinction.

Though Smith theorizes the conditions that make evangelical vitality possible in terms of the broad "cultural pluralism" of modernity, he elaborates the specific "othering" of evangelicals in reference not to a plurality of races, classes, or ethnicities but to a plurality of religious beliefs, specifically a plurality of Protestantisms. For instance, he argues that encounters with others of different religious beliefs may function to enforce rather than to destabilize one's original convictions if the others are constructed as a "negative reference group" (Smith et al., 1998, p. 104-6). In his words (Smith et al., 1998, p. 105):

...Sociocultural pluralism does not necessarily undermine most people's religious beliefs: people can simply construct their reference groups to include enough fellow believers so that their faith continues to be affirmed. And the views of other people not in their reference group can be, put bluntly, ignored. Indeed, people can put to use those whom secularization theory would presume to be threatening to belief – those who believe differently or do not believe at all – as faith-reinforcing negative reference groups.

The modern “sociocultural pluralism” made use of here is thus one of a variety of believers, of views, of faiths. Elsewhere, Smith elaborates the various senses in which evangelicals feel themselves to be different, and I find that these, too, are focused on religious sensibility: a sense of their difference from non-evangelical Christians and “non-Christians,” a sense of the distinction of their belief in an ultimate truth, a sense of their different morality and values, and a sense that their religious perspective is consistently denigrated in public forums. In the first two of these in particular, evangelicalism is constructed out of an opposition to liberal Protestantism. Further, the “engaged orthodoxy” with which Smith characterizes evangelicals – and with which evangelicals characterize themselves – was historically and is still articulated in distinction from fundamentalists on the one hand (who are orthodox but not engaged) and liberal Protestants on the other (who are engaged but not orthodox).

While there are solid analytical and theoretical reasons for Smith’s focus on the distinction of evangelical religious *beliefs* specifically, it yet seems to me that the differentiation of religious identities happens not only as a contest of belief but also in conjunction with other, less intellectual social differentiations.¹¹ In particular, I find that the reduction of the “cultural pluralism” of modern industrial America to a plurality of religious beliefs ignores the differences of race, class, ethnicity, and gender that were and are also operative in the formation of conservative Protestant difference. One is not simply conservative Protestant but is also a believer with a specific racial, class, ethnic,

¹¹ Some reasons for the focus on religious belief as a marker of difference no doubt include his empirical support for the contention that conservative Protestants are dispersed throughout all economic, racial, regional, educational, age, and marital status categories. This demographic non-distinction may suggest that cultural more so than structural factors are responsible for conservative Protestant difference. Still, in my view, the cultural and the structural are not clearly separated; regardless of demographic characteristics, the cultural production of racial, class, and gender identities occurs in tandem with religious identity. Though this muddies the analytical waters, such is the privilege if not the burden of ethnography.

and gender identity, and these multiple identifications resonate with one another. In the study that follows, I therefore attempt to explore the processes of religious differentiation within the context of other types of social difference. The construction of the religious difference of conservative Protestant home schoolers remains my focus, but I include differentiations of class, race, and gender within the composition because these processes overlap, intersect, complicate, reinforce, and contradict one another.

In addition to my inclusion of a multiplicity of social identity constructions, I diverge from Smith in the location of my analytic point of departure. Whereas Smith largely presumes an evangelical difference that he then elaborates, I examine the construction of conservative Protestant difference as a continual achievement. Smith explicitly presumes the existence of a distinct evangelical subculture near the beginning of his chapter on the construction of evangelical difference (Smith et al., 1998, p.120-1):

So as not to belabor what is already well known, we begin simply by acknowledging the fact – without spending words to document it – that evangelicalism has constructed for itself a distinctive religious subculture...Anyone familiar with evangelicalism is aware of these points.

As already discussed, Smith proceeds to detail a variety of ways in which evangelical Christians understand themselves to be different from non-evangelical Christians and non-Christians, including some of their beliefs, their personal morality, and their felt experience of cultural disfranchisement. Smith adds to these features of evangelical distinction some further “cultural tools”¹² with which evangelicals fashion their identity, including the “personal influence strategy” by which they seek to transform society and the “voluntaristic absolutism” by which they simultaneously require and refuse the

¹² Smith borrows the phrase and the concept of “cultural tools” from Ann Swidler, whose theoretical formulation of the influence of culture on action I include in my review of practice theory later in this chapter (Swidler, 1986).

enforced implementation of their religious morality throughout American social life. In other co-authored publications, Smith further adds to his inventory of the cultural toolkit of evangelicals “accountable freewill individualism,” “relationalism,” “anti-structuralism,” and “symbolic male headship” (Emerson et al., 1999; Gallagher & Smith, 1999).

While there may well be – while there at least seems to be – a distinctive subculture of evangelicalism characterized by these features, I am interested in the processes that bring such a presumable difference into being. Instead of asking “*What is different about conservative Protestant home schooling parents?*,” I ask, “*How do they act in ways that make them seem different as Christians, to others and to themselves?*” In the ensuing chapters I spend many words exploring the “how” that precedes the “what” of conservative Protestant subcultural difference. I also insist on the “seeming” nature of conservative Protestant identity, for this social identity – as all others – is a product of continuous processes of signification, of reading, of semblance.

In addition to these theoretical re-visions of the perspectives of Ammerman and Smith, my story of conservative Protestant home schooling parents adds to extant scholarly literature on conservative Protestant subcultural identity in two further respects. First, it is ethnographic in research method and in presentation. While there have been several excellent ethnographies of conservative Protestants, there have not been many, which may relate to some of the theoretical shortcomings mentioned above.¹³ Ethnography allows for some analytical purchase on the process of identity formation more so than its outcome, as well as an attention to practical activity in addition to the ideational life of participants. I was not limited by the printed matter of the archive to the

¹³ Two excellent ethnographies of conservative Protestants include (Ammerman, 1987; Harding, 2000).

interpretation of text and document, vehicles for the presentation of ideas more so than actions. Nor was I forced by the strictures of a survey instrument to dedicate myself to the statistically prevailing beliefs of conservative Protestant home schoolers but, instead, could appreciate also how their commitment to educational self-reliance, for instance, reverberated throughout their daily routines and their practices of faith and gender.

Ethnography also allows for my attention to representation rather than to the possible relations of representation to reality. I do not see it as my primary task to evaluate the facticity of the self-representation of the conservative Protestant home schoolers with whom I worked. I do not see it as my task in part because my sample of home schoolers would not bear such a claim for anyone besides those with whom I spoke, in part because such a claim would be dubious even in reference to those select few, and in part because the play of representations is sociologically important apart from its truth or falsehood. As W.I. Thomas famously said of the social relevance of meaning, ideas are real in their effects; the ideas that conservative Protestant home schoolers have of themselves have effects in their relationship not to reality but to other representations of other people. In the pages that follow I have frequent occasion to report aspects of these home schoolers' self-understanding and other-understanding that may seem egregiously false or partial; I do not claim that these self-representations are anything more, or less, than my view of their view of themselves in relation to their view of others. Though I do not counter the self-constructions of conservative Protestant home schooling parents with sustained arguments, I do acknowledge, now and throughout, that the stories they tell of themselves, to me and to themselves, could be read differently.

The last way in which the present work adds to the literature on conservative Protestants is the fact that it is about conservative Protestant home schoolers exclusively. Patricia Lines of the United States Department of Education defines home schooling as “instruction and learning, at least some of which is through planned activity, taking place *primarily* at home in a family setting with a parent acting as teacher or supervisor of the activity, and with one or more pupils who are members of the same family and who are doing grade K-12 work” (Lines, 1991, p. 10). This definition recognizes the diversity of educational practices within home schooling, a movement which includes parents who utilize a curriculum package complete with textbooks, workbooks, tests, accreditation and enrollment as well as families who follow an “unschooling” approach in which children direct their own learning free from the limits of grades, worksheets, teachers (including parents) and schedules. Lines’ terms “instruction,” “planned activity,” and “teacher” refer to the first type of family, more often conservative Protestant, just as she includes the practices of unschooling home schoolers with the terms “learning” as opposed to “instruction” and her labeling of the parent as “supervisor” (rather than “teacher”) of “at least some” but perhaps not mostly “planned activity.” Lines estimates that the number of school age children who are home educated has grown from 10,000-15,000 in the early 1970s to 1.3 million in 2001-2, which is between 1% and 2% of school age children and roughly 10% of the private school population (Lines, 1999, 2001). Lines further estimates a growth rate of 7% to 15% annually, and she specifies that between the 1990-1 and 1995-6 school years, the population of home schooled children grew by 20%-25% (Lines, 1999).

While the representativeness of study samples of home schooling parents is famously difficult to determine, a consistent and statistically defensible characterization of the typical home schooling family identifies them as white, Protestant, middle-class, having above-average levels of parental education, two-parent, heterosexual, Republican, and having 2-3 children (Bielick & Chandler, 2001; Lines, 1991; Rudner, 1999). According to Bielick and Chandler of the National Center for Education Statistics, 75.3% of home schooling children are non-Hispanic white (as opposed to 64.5% of non-home schooled students), while 94.0% of Rudner's national sample of home schooling children was white.¹⁴ Bielick and Chandler estimate that 80.4% of home schooling children live in two-parent households. In Rudner's sample, 88.4% of home schooling mothers were Protestant Christians, and the majority of these attended conservative Protestant churches.¹⁵ Rudner also found that 66.2% of home schooling fathers and 56.7% of home schooling mothers had bachelor's degrees or higher, as opposed to 24.1% of males and 20.6% of females nation-wide. Though such families may comprise the majority of home schoolers, there are home schooling families of many other types, including a sizable minority of "countercultural" home schooling parents who are of alternative spiritualities, pedagogies, community forms, and/or family practices (Stevens, 2001).

¹⁴ The whiter profile of Rudner's sample may be related to the fact that he gathered information from home schooling parents who utilized the testing services of Bob Jones University, a notably conservative Protestant school. Rudner's sampling frame and data suggest a greater percentage of white home schoolers within the subset of conservative Protestantism than without, such that my focus on the construction of explicitly white conservative Protestantism through home schooling may have some demographic justification.

¹⁵ Rudner included questions of denominational affiliation in his study of a national sample of home schooling families (Rudner, 1999). Counting as conservative Protestant the following denominations, I estimate that 67.4% of his sample are conservative Protestant: Independent Fundamental, Baptist, Independent Charismatic, Assembly of God, Reformed, and Pentecostal. This may be a conservative estimate, however, because there are undoubtedly conservative Protestants within the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Lutheran denominations, as well as in Rudner's categories "other protestant" and "other Christian." Bielick and Chandler do not identify the religious affiliation of their sample, and Stevens estimates a conservative Protestant majority to the home schooling population but does not quantify it (Bielick & Chandler, 2001; Stevens, 2001).

Though certainly not all conservative Protestants home school, most home schoolers are conservative Protestants.¹⁶ I examine the question of conservative Protestant cultural distinction in reference to this sub-group because home schooling accomplishes the inside-outsider cultural positioning of conservative Protestants in a special way. Conservative Protestant home schoolers render themselves religio-cultural outsiders in ways that are unusually intentional, observable, and thorough-going. Their choice to home school leads them to assume an unusual extent of authority over their family lives – for instance, in their religious, educational, domestic, recreational, and occupational aspects – such that they often find themselves exercising the power to make of their lives what they will.¹⁷ This assumption of the power of self-determination motivates their practice of their religious identity throughout many dimensions of family life, a scope of Christian performance that, while not exclusive to home schoolers, is yet made more likely by the conditions of home schooling. Conservative Protestant home schooling parents themselves answer with an array of their daily practices of teaching and parenting the question of the difference that their Christianity makes for their family lives. Though their answers may be different from other conservative Protestants, their practices still accomplish conservative Protestant cultural distinction. Further, their practices of Christian difference are perhaps more readily available for study because of their breadth across the domains of family life; their intentionality; and their more apparent distinction from the American mainstream.

¹⁷ I have phrased their power of self-determination in terms of an assumption, and I mean this to indicate that they think themselves to be self-consciously directing their familial lives in paths of rightness if not righteousness. Whether or not they are so largely self-determining, and whether or not their self-direction is greater than that of other families, remains for me an open question.

Scholarship on home schooling to date has been concerned with a variety of issues raised by the increasing popularity of home education. First, Lines and others have sought to determine the numbers of families involved in home schooling as well as their demographic characteristics (Bielick & Chandler, 2001; Lines, 1991, 1999; Mayberry, 1988; Mayberry, Knowles, Ray, & Marlow, 1995; Rudner, 1999). Interviews with home schooling parents have been conducted to learn about their reasons for home schooling, which can be varied indeed but most often begin with the parents' desires to provide their children with the best education possible (Mayberry et al., 1995; Stevens, 2001; Van Galen, 1991). In part for reasons of public policy, other studies have also examined the academic achievement of home schooled children; their cognitive, emotional, and social development; and the success of home schooled children in college and career (Farris & Woodruff, 2000; Medlin, 2000; Ray & Wartes, 1991; Rudner, 1999). Lastly, researchers have reviewed the legal questions surrounding home schooling and its regulation by the state (Cibulka, 1991; Richardson & Zirkel, 1991; Tyler & Carper, 2000). The legal status of home schooling was ambiguous at best and illegal at worst thirty years ago when it was unclear if and to what degree state laws regulating public and private education applied to home schooling families. For instance, home schooling parents were sometimes arrested for violation of compulsory attendance laws, and until 1993 all home schooling parents in Michigan were required to be state certified teachers (Cibulka, 1991). Throughout the 1980s, however, home schooling gained specified legal status in all states, and though its regulation by state authorities varies from state to state and school district to school district, home schooling groups have often succeeded in their efforts to reduce regulation (Mayberry et al., 1995). In the state in which lived all but one

of the home schooling families with whom I worked, home schooling parents are required to register with the state, and they can do so either through the local public school or through a “church related school” of their choice. They are further required to school their children for a minimum of four hours per day for 180 days.¹⁸ There are neither testing nor curricular requirements for home schooled students in this south-eastern state.

In addition to these researches, sociologist Mitchell Stevens’ book *Kingdom of Children: Culture and Controversy in the Home Schooling Movement* explores home schooling as a social movement in its different mobilizations, factions, organizations, tensions, successes, and failures (Stevens, 2001). Stevens spent the decade of the 1990s – the decade of the escalation of the “culture wars” - in participant observation with different home schooling organizations in Illinois and nationwide, and he chronicled the slow but sure division of the home schooling community into two distinct factions which he terms the “believers” and the “inclusives.” The dominant majority of home schoolers, the believers are conservative Protestants whose religio-cultural preference for doctrinal exclusivity and for organizational structures of centralized authority and hierarchy has fostered the growth of their organizations. By contrast, Stevens’ inclusives ascribe to a heterogeneous mix of political, religious, and pedagogical positions such that their common bond is their commitment to inclusivity, diversity, and democratic processes in the organization of their groups. Stevens compares and contrasts the inclusives and the believers in their beliefs about human nature, childhood, motherhood, authority, and the

¹⁸ These hours of schooling may seem minimal to those with experience in institutional schools, but home schooling parents and advocates emphasize the efficiency of the tutorial style of home-education. Further, most of the home schooling families with whom I worked exceeded these minimum hours, and many home schoolers do school year-round.

individual, and he traces the ways in which all of these strands of belief are woven into arguments that render the dissident choice to home school reasonable and attractive to such a broad spectrum of people. By the end of the 1990s and the end of his book, Stevens had served as witness to the story of the political success of believers, and especially their organization the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), in gaining the power to represent the increasingly powerful home school movement at large on the national stage.

Though *Kingdom of Children* sheds much-needed light on the diversity of the home schooling movement and its relationship to its cultural context, the present work asks different questions. Rather than focusing on the social movement dynamics of home schooling, I examine the domestic religious cultures of conservative Protestant home schooling families. Rather than attending meetings of home school organizations, I observed the teaching and parenting practices of home schooling mothers in their homes and interviewed home schooling fathers about their families. Rather than encompassing the entire home schooling movement in its diversity, I narrow my investigation to conservative Protestants (though these, too, are a diverse lot). In short, I am attending to the ways in which home schooling is a religious practice – more specifically, a practice of religious identity - for conservative Protestant home schooling parents. Though I draw upon much of Stevens’ work, and especially his discussion of the motherhood of believer home schoolers, I understand our two endeavors to be discrete.

In addition to the work of Stevens, historian Colleen McDannell has written briefly of home schooling in interpretive categories that are similar to my own. In a chapter entitled “Creating the Christian Home: Home Schooling in Contemporary

America,” McDannell draws upon her previous scholarship concerning the definition of the home as sacred space for Catholics and Protestants in Victorian America (McDannell, 1986, 1995). Based upon interviews with conservative Protestant home schooling parents, McDannell argues that these contemporary Christians inhabit their homes in ways that are in keeping with the idealization of the Christian home and Christian womanhood of over a century ago. McDannell particularly emphasizes the integration of faith and family life in home schooling as a reincarnation of the Victorian “cult of domesticity.” I agree that there are many suggestive historic parallels and precedents to contemporary conservative Protestant home schooling, and I make use of McDannell and others to explore the ways in which the Protestant “religion of culture” of the nineteenth century lives on in contemporary conservative Protestantism, if only as a lost paradise of cultural power. However, I am an ethnographer as McDannell is an historian, such that I situate my readings of conservative Protestant home schooling in present contexts more so than historical ones. As I discussed above, conservative Protestant home schooling parents are not simply continuing a tradition but are also creating it anew in relation to present concerns of subgroup identity.

In addition to these works, I draw upon select elements in the corpus of criticism produced by Michael Apple, a critical sociologist of education (Apple, 1996, 1996, 2000, 2006). Apple has traced the interrelationship of public education, its periodic reform, and the reproduction of relations of power in the American context. In *Educating the “Right” Way*, Apple reviews aspects of his arguments regarding what he terms the “conservative restoration” that has characterized public policy and education reform in recent years (Apple, 2006). He argues that public policies that divest from public

institutions such as schools and instead favor the choice of individuals in a free market – policies such as school vouchers – ultimately reinforce the stratification of American society by class and race. I draw upon Apple’s discussion of conservative Protestant home schooling as an advancement of the conservative restoration, one that epitomizes privatization and social stratification to the detriment of public institutions and the common welfare (Apple, 2000, 2006). I make use of Apple not because I agree with his arguments (I frequently do not) but because of his attention to the political aspects of the private lives of home schooling families. My concern is primarily to understand the meanings that home schooling holds for conservative Protestant families, and these families often do not recognize a political dimension to their ways of life. Still, the personal is always political, and I bring Apple’s critical perspective into my arguments in order to make this explicit.

THE THEORETICAL GROUND: PRACTICE AND PERFORMATIVITY

As I introduced at the beginning of this chapter, I make use of the concepts of practice and performativity in framing my understanding of the situation of conservative Protestant home schooling families. Through the use of these two theoretical concepts, I have sought to address the problem common to all social research: the forging of an analytical connection between the larger forces and systems of the social level with the smaller situations of the individual level of human existence. For my purposes, the term “structure” refers inexactly to the first of these dimensions, the macro-social elements that shape individual experience so that it reproduces systems of stratification and hierarchy. The task I faced as I tried to understand the ways by which conservative

Protestant sub-cultural identity came about through home schooling was to see the workings of structure (the formation of sub-cultural identity) in situations of individual action (teaching history to a twelve-year-old). The notions of practice and performativity are well-suited to this task because they have come into being in part as means for the analytical mediation of self and society, structure and agency, objectivism and subjectivism.¹⁹

Though practice theory is comprised of many diverse strains of thought, its several formulations hold in common the understanding that the practical activity of persons is made possible by the workings of social structure, even as structure is itself a product of practical activity. Giddens terms this the “duality of structure,” the understanding of structure as both cause and effect of the activity of individuals. The formulation of practice as both structured and structuring has come about as a result of critiques of structural determinism, or explanations that saw some structural element - the reproduction of class or gender relations, for instance – as the sole determining factor in the actions and thoughts of individuals, an operation of social structure that obviated human agency (Ortner, 1984; Sewell, 1992). Instead, practice theory considers that human agency is made possible by socially-given repertoires for the organization of action, generic procedures for activity that are roughly equivalent to Bourdieu’s *habitus*, Ortner’s and Swidler’s “strategies,” and Giddens’ “structures” (Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1979, 1984; Ortner, 1996; Swidler, 1986). These strategies of action “are the larger ways of trying to organize a life... within which particular choices make sense, and for which particular, culturally shaped skills and habits are useful” (Swidler, 1986, p. 276).

¹⁹ My understanding of practice and of performativity is based on the following sources: (Bell, 1992; Bourdieu, 1977; DiMaggio, 1979; Giddens, 1979, 1984; Ortner, 1996; Sahlins, 1985; Sewell, 1992; Swidler, 1986; West & Fenstermaker, 1995; West & Zimmerman, 1987)

Because individual action is thus formed by social processes, it also reproduces the structure by bringing it into existence again and again through its employment in the shaping of activity. Though individuals may intend to accomplish through their practices their specific, immediate ends, they also accomplish the reproduction of structure, including structures of social stratification and differences of power (Bourdieu, 1977). However, practice theory escapes a rephrased determinism insofar as the structured agency of individuals enables them also to act in counter-structural ways. The structured repertoires of action – particularly in the formulations of Giddens and Ortner – are generic, virtual, and capable of being employed to achieve a variety of indeterminate ends (Giddens, 1979, 1984; Ortner, 1996).

Such a concept of practice as both structured and structuring directed me to look at the practical activities of conservative Protestant home schooling parents as the processes that produce their religious subcultural position. Instead of simply interviewing conservative Protestant home schooling parents to learn what their Christianity means to them, I also examined how they do their conservative Protestant identity, how their conservative Protestant identity emerges as a product of their activities of everyday life. Such a concept of practice allowed me to recognize the ways in which these everyday activities of teaching and parenting also accomplished the construction of a social identity, one that is specially situated in the stratified structure of American society. It also allowed me to uncouple the intent of their activity from its results, particularly the results that reproduce the class, race, and gender dimensions of conservative Protestant identity.

In addition to this understanding of practice, I employ the concept of performativity to open my eyes to the social identity of conservative Protestantism that is brought into being by means of the situated actions and interactions of individuals. Borrowed from linguists and tweaked (Austin, 1962), the concept of performativity points to the accomplishment of live performance – of performance in real time, in history – in bringing about something that did not exist before, prior to the speaking or the acting. Anthropologist Marshall Sahlins contrasts the performative with the prescriptive in his understanding that the social order of ideal and material relations, rather than prescribing meaning ahead of time, only exists in its specific use in creating the meaning of a live situation; in other words, structure is made to exist in its performance (Sahlins, 1985). Performativity reverses the directional arrows in the theoretical relationship of identity to action, structure to situation; activity gives rise to identity, situation eventuates structure. In my case, rather than supposing that the conservative Protestant home schooling parents with whom I worked have, already formed somewhere, a religious identity that they then prescriptively enact in situations, I look for ways in which their home schooling actions bring about for them, act by act, piece by piece, their conservative Protestant identity.

I make particular use of the concept of performativity as elaborated by Candace West, Don Zimmerman, and Sarah Fenstermaker in their articles on “doing gender” and “doing difference.” In their now-classic reconceptualization of gender, West and Zimmerman defined gender as a continuous accomplishment by means of social interaction, rather than an innate characteristic of individual human beings (West & Zimmerman, 1987). In their ethnomethodological view, we continuously assign a sex

categorization to one another through the reading of our manners of self-presentation as either male or female, and we are held accountable to render our performances of gender in keeping with presumed sex characterizations. Our gender identities do not pre-exist the performative presentation of them to the evaluation of others; rather, they come into being, over and again, by means of interactive cues that are taken to signify innate gender difference. Performance brings about gender as practice brings about structure.

Eight years after West and Zimmerman's article "Doing Gender," West and Fenstermaker extended the concept of the performativity of gender difference to include the doing of the social structural differences of race and class (West & Fenstermaker, 1995). They argued that a similar process of the performative production of social identity links the interactive doings of individuals to social stratification along the dimensions of race, class, and gender. In other words, just as our self-presentations in action, speech, and dress are produced and read for their indications of gender, so are they produced and read for their indications of race and class. Just as the engendering aspects of self-performance are understood to be the natural differences in the ways that men and women do things, so, too, are the constructed differences of race and class performance held to be a result of differences in the natures of races and classes. In their words (West & Fenstermaker, 1995, p. 26):

The accomplishment of race consists in creating differences among members of different race categories – differences that are neither natural nor biological. Once created, these differences are used to maintain the 'essential' distinctiveness of 'racial identities' and the institutional arrangements that they support.

The doing of difference, therefore, is also the doing of structure and of power in ways that make it seem a given outcome of natural differences between persons.²⁰ Despite

²⁰ For specific explorations of the doing of the differences of race, class, and age, see (Frankenberg, 1993;

such naturalization of difference, West and Fenstermaker provide a way to see the differences of race, class and gender as a product of interactive performance by which we bring into being, for ourselves and for each other, an identity that is specifically situated in a social structure.

In the ensuing chapters I make use of the theoretical concepts of practice, strategies of action, and performativity to interpret the teaching and parenting practices of conservative Protestant home schooling parents as the production of their religio-cultural identity. Each chapter contains an argument structured as follows: 1) I examine specific teaching and parenting practices of conservative Protestant home schooling parents 2) to see how they employ a more general strategy of action 3) as a performative production of the religio-cultural difference of conservative Protestantism. For instance, in the next chapter I look at 1) the teaching of history as the continuing revelation of God's work 2) as one deployment of the general strategy of the unification of diverse aspects of their lives under the umbrella of Christian meaning. I argue that 3) their unification creates their conservative Protestant distinction, specifically in contrast to the several multiplicities of public education and the American public in general. Throughout, I read the practices of conservative Protestant home schooling parents as productions of their religio-cultural difference, articulated as it is in conjunction with differences of race, class, and gender.

In drawing these analytic connections between the operations of social structure and the specific practices and experiences of individuals, I have tried to preserve a balance between their own perspective (insofar as I can understand it) and the perspective of my analytical frame. As I mentioned above, the theoretical concept of practice is such

Laz, 1998; Omi & Winant, 1994; Pyke, 1996)

that it recognizes the reproduction of social structure through practices that can be intended to do something else entirely. The perspectives from which I write are not congruent with those of the conservative Protestant home schoolers with whom I worked, and rather than forging a resolution between them or supplanting their own understanding with mine, I have allowed the various intents, functions, and meanings of conservative Protestant home schooling families, to themselves and to me, to exist in tension with one another. In general, the first sections of each chapter are my attempt to portray the meanings for conservative Protestant identity that the practices of home schooling may hold for the home schoolers themselves.²¹ Though I have framed these portrayals according to my own concerns, I have drawn upon my observations and interviews in good faith, seeking to understand as nearly as possible their own perspective. In the last section of each chapter I diverge from their understanding and write from the more distanced standpoint of my sociocultural interpretations. I employ these two authorial perspectives, the near and the far, throughout the coming chapters, the tensions between them a testament to the multiple meanings available to any given situation.

EVOLUTION OF A METHOD, BY DESIGN AND BY CHANCE

In the early spring of 2005, I sought volunteers for a study of “Christian”²² home schooling families by way of the email distribution lists of several state-wide home school organizations. In the end, I worked with fifteen families total (thirteen

²¹ My attempts to grasp their own understanding were colored by the several similarities of my social location to their own: I, too, am a white, middle-class conservative Protestant. Though I do not write in this third potential authorial voice – that of insider – my interpretations were forged in the context of religious, racial, and class similarity. In the concluding chapter I explore the limitations such similarity inevitably brings.

²² I used the generic term “Christian” in my solicitation of study volunteers because this is the term by which conservative Protestants readily identify themselves, regardless of the fact that they are a particular sort of Christian.

conservative Protestant, one Roman Catholic, and one liberal Protestant)²³ who answered my request for home schooling research study volunteers. I interviewed each parent (30 total). I also observed the teaching and parenting practices of nine of these families (eight conservative Protestant and one liberal Protestant), spending the schooling hours of one school week (Monday through Friday) with each of them. I asked the six sets of parents with whom I did not spend a week in observation to complete a log of their home schooling activities. The interviews with all of the mothers lasted roughly one to one and a half hours, and the interviews with fathers lasted forty five minutes to an hour. I tape recorded the interviews with their permission, and all interviews save four took place in their homes.²⁴ I asked them to tell me about their views of parenting; about their home schooling experiences; about the difference home schooling makes for their parenting and their religious life; about how their Christian faith shapes, and is in turn shaped by, their parenting and home education; about the significance of gender in Christian parenting and home schooling. In addition to the interviews with parents, I spoke with two home schooling entrepreneurs, Greg Borden and Paulina Mullen, who each founded a home schooling tutorial with special characteristics relevant to my research interests. I transcribed all of the interviews in full and coded them along with my field notes for relevance to the thematic interests of my analysis, such as enactments of gender, domestic authority, and religious identity. (For the interview guides, for a chart of study

²³ I worked with one Roman Catholic and one liberal Protestant family in order to gain some albeit limited sense of how conservative Protestantism in particular, as opposed to other Christianities, impacts home schooling. The small number of non-conservative Protestant families made any sort of comparative argument impossible, but I did make use of the fieldwork with these two families, in conjunction with Stevens' comparisons of conservative Protestant to other sorts of home schooling, to appreciate what may be unique about conservative Protestant home schoolers. For the interpretations I offer in the following chapters, I draw only on the data with conservative Protestant families except when specified.

²⁴ I interviewed home schooling fathers David Simpson and Ralph Rosenberg over the phone because of scheduling difficulties, and I interviewed Greg Borden and Lyle Daugherty in their offices.

participants and their religious affiliation, education, occupation, and race, and for a brief introduction to all of the home schooling parents with whom I spoke, please see Appendices.)

In addition to these 32 interviews, I spent nearly 300 hours engaged in observation of the home schooling practices of nine families. I came to their homes fifteen minutes to a half hour prior to when they began their home schooling day, so that I could observe the transition from non-school to school time. I often ate breakfast with the families, as well as lunch at midday. I asked to be around whenever the families did “school work” at home during my week of visits, but I also went to several extra-curricular educational opportunities with some families, including a curriculum fair, a swim meet, a home schooling mother’s Bible study, art lessons, a trip to the zoo, strawberry picking, and several visits to the public library. The fourth family I visited, the Cartwrights, invited me to stay overnight in the mobile home that is parked behind their garage. I accepted this offer and spent an entire week, days and evenings, Monday through Friday with the Cartwright family.

One of the benefits of home schooling is the flexible scheduling, and the families with whom I worked took advantage of it. They all started at different times, from 7:30am at the earliest to 11:00am at the latest. As I stated earlier, state law requires four hours of schoolwork in order for a day to “count” toward the 180 required days of school, such that the families scrupulously met this minimum, and frequently exceeded it. The second family I observed, the Heaneys, began at 7:30am when Scott Heaney left for work, and they continued to school, stopping for lunch and breaks, until 4:30 or 5:00pm. Christine Bennett and her son Matt would generally begin school around 9:30am and

would work, stopping for a half-hour lunch break, until roughly 2:00pm. For many families, including the Heaneys and the Bennetts, the schedule of home schooling changes day by day to accommodate such factors as illness, a late night, extra-curricular lessons and activities, tutorial, and church events. The question of the hours of home schooling is also complicated by the fact that many home schooling families consider a broad range of experiences to be educational, such that a trip to the zoo may or may not “count” for them as school.

The parents who volunteered, as well as some who ultimately didn't and friends and colleagues with whom I discussed my project, often asked me, “But how will you know if they are acting ‘normally’ when you are there watching?” Of course, my presence created an abnormal situation for them, for which there was no established norm of behavior. Rather than hoping in vain that the families could imagine me a fly on their wall, I instead looked for ways in which I was probably making a difference in their usual operations. I also asked the mothers, midway through the week, if they thought the week was more or less typical so far. Several mothers told me that, the first day I was there, everyone – parents and children and, I confess, researcher - was on their best, most ideal behavior. But they also told me that, by mid-week, they were closer to being their typical selves. Often, by the third or fourth day, siblings were squabbling, mothers' nerves were fraying a little around the edges, the laundry and dishes had piled up, I wore jeans and grew occasionally bored with my note-taking and played with the toddler to give the mothers a little more time for teaching. In short, our collective efforts to put forward an ideal image were beginning to lessen under the normalizing influence of time. One mother, Maria Rosenberg, said to me through gritted teeth after a protracted battle of the

wills with her preteen son and reluctant math student, “Write a book about this.” She told me as I left later that this day, with its tensions and stubborn non-cooperation, was more typical for them. While I do not think that I ever saw home schooling exactly as it would have been without me – Maria probably would not have thought about writing a book about uncooperative children and frustrated parents had I not been there to hear the comment – I do feel confident that, by the end of week, we had all at least exceeded the constraints of our “best behavior.”

While I was in their homes, I found that my continual note-taking helped me to be less obtrusive than if I were simply sitting and watching, without seeming to have something to occupy me while the mothers and children were working on school. It was as if my note-taking established my role as researcher (however ambiguously defined) and clarified that I was not, among other available social identities, a houseguest to be entertained. During my second day with Maria’s family, she mentioned that it would be helpful for mothers considering home schooling to be able to observe different families, as I have done. Then she added, “But it might not work, because if she brought her kids, they’d want to play with my kids, and it would disrupt our usual way of doing things. But we are being more or less ourselves because we’re just ignoring you.” These mothers were always doing at least two, sometimes three or more, tasks at once, as they moved back and forth between teaching children of different ages; making lunch; breast-feeding and changing diapers; incorporating their children’s special interests into the lessons; settling sibling disputes; writing a science test; setting out the construction paper and finger paint for a toddler; orally quizzing their child on phonics and math facts; doing a load of laundry; disciplining daydreamers and antagonists; and getting dinner started.

Their mental and physical over-occupation may have helped them to “ignore” me somewhat.

The mothers may have been able to forget my presence to a degree, but often the children indicated to me that they did not understand, nor particularly appreciate, my researching presence in their homes. As I discussed this with several mothers, I would suggest that she explain to her children that I was there to study the *mother's* parenting, teaching, and the religious dimensions to these identities and that the children are not the subjects of my study. But the ambiguities of the identity of a field researcher sometimes seemed too out-of-the-ordinary, too complex for the children to accept readily. Maria and Ralph Rosenberg's second-youngest son, a sensitive and energetic almost-7-year-old named Jeremiah, frequently watched me taking notes instead of paying full attention to his lessons, and he twice found ways to be furtively in the room as Maria talked with me about their family. At the end of my second day in their home, Jeremiah asked me directly, “Why are you here?” After I awoke myself from the eerie feeling of being asked a strangely existential question by a clear-eyed child, I told him, “I'm here to learn from your mother about what it's like to be a home schooling mom.” He seemed minimally satisfied, and I later told Maria that perhaps Jeremiah felt uncomfortable.

The eldest Heaney son, 13-year-old Frank, also showed me that my presence in their home school may have felt transgressive to him. During my third day with the Heaneys, I felt my powers of observation to be waning, so I switched from taking notes on Mary Heaney's teaching and attended instead to the vast library of school books that lined the wall directly behind me. I turned in my seat, pulled a book off the shelf, thumbed through it, wrote its citation, and returned the book to its place in the bookcase.

Later in the day, Mary asked Frank to find a particular historical fiction book in the same bookcase, the one in front of which I was still sitting. He scanned the shelves briefly, then turned and asked me, “Did you take my book?” I should have anticipated that to sit and watch a home school day may be perceived as a lesser intrusion than to touch the family’s objects without permission. I told Frank that I did not take the book, and I helped him to find it on the shelf. Being observed for research purposes is bound to



Figure 2. The Heaney home school room. I often sat in the right-hand desk; my lunch-bag is in the bottom right-hand corner.

induce anxiety, no matter the context, but the private nature of home schooling and domestic religious practices may have added strangeness to the mothers' and children's experience of my observation.

Jeremiah and Frank voiced concerns that many of the children - and many of the mothers - probably felt: uncertainty about my relationship to the mothers and children and confusion about how to behave around me. I, too, often felt the complexity of my identity in the field, what ethnographer Barrie Thorne refers to as "a jangling chorus of selves" that makes itself heard in over-determined relationships like that between researcher and researched. Thorne's description of her experience of learning from fourth and fifth grade students and their teachers in her study of childhood gender describes aspects of my own experiences with home schooling mothers and children (Thorne, 1993):

...I slowly came to realize that within the ethnographer, many selves were at play. Responding to our shared positions as adult women and as teachers, I easily identified with Miss Bailey and the other school staff...Occasionally I felt much like the fourth- and fifth-grader I used to be, and the force of this took me by surprise. This jangling chorus of selves...first one, then another of these different selves, or types of consciousness, helped shape what I discovered and how I put my ideas together.

My professional identity was that of Vanderbilt graduate student in religion, and it was this capacity that most explicitly framed all of my interactions with the parents and children. At the same time, however, I knew myself to be asking these particular questions of these particular women, not out of professional interest only, but also because the issues of gender, family, career and faith and their interactions each with the others had been personal preoccupations of mine for some time. I came to the fieldwork encounter as a twenty-something female; a religiously committed Christian Ph.D. student

of critical theories of religion; engaged to be married and later a newlywed; approaching graduation and an eventual professional identity; and perpetually puzzled over how my faith, my career, my marriage and my future family could all fit together in my imagined life-to-be. I did not expect conservative Protestant home schooling mothers to answer these questions for me, but I still carried these questions with me when I came into their homes, a sort of baggage that was as present as my lunch bag, purse, and satchel. The fullness of my subjectivity motivated my research interests, in the first place and throughout; helped me to sense when there was more to an issue than an easy answer would suggest; helped me to recognize a hummed bit of tune as a hymn; directed my inquiries down some paths and not others; lead me to appreciate the complexity of the lives these parents created for themselves.²⁵

While my own subjectivity opened my eyes to the relevance of faith and gender in conservative Protestant home schooling, it also blinded me for a time to the workings of race and class. I share the standpoint of the white middle-class with the home schooling parents with whom I worked, and only in the later stages of my interpretation and writing did I attend to the ground beneath our feet. Though I belatedly became convinced that such analytical attention should and must be paid to the interactions of these structural features of subcultural identity with conservative Protestant identity, I was unable retroactively to include systematic attention to race and class in my interviews and fieldwork observations. A later study must compensate for this lack.

At the same time, however, I think it instructive that the same practices of unification, privatization, and gendering that produce conservative Protestant identity can

²⁵ I again take up in the concluding chapter the question of my complex social location in relation both to the study participants and academic perspectives on religion. I address there the strategies that I used to gain a measure of critical distance, as well as the ways in which my partial “insider” status was a liability.

also be shown to inscribe it with features of racial and class identification. Race, class, gender and religion happen concurrently rather than in succession, such that the data that indicate one feature of structural location can be interpreted to indicate the others as well. Race and class do not become relevant only when they become apparent. They are always relevant, and the limits of my data forced me to recognize the continual relevance of race and class in non-obvious situations.²⁶

In addition to the interviews, observations, and logs of home schooled life, I took several photographs of each family's home. I digitally captured images of home schooling homes and of the material aspects of domestic religion, and some of these appear throughout the text. For reasons of confidentiality, no faces appear in the pictures. I include the images of conservative Protestant home schooling in order make visible some of the physical context of what occurs, often under suspicion, in home schooling homes. I intend the photographs included in this dissertation to function primarily as fertile ground for my interpretations, much as an excerpt from field notes or interviews. Like a field note jotting or interview quote, the photographs are not transparent, unmediated records of an objective reality. They are, instead, the result of my highly interested editorial decisions regarding what and what not to photograph – what to point at, when to click. To incorporate in the image my constructivist understanding of the photographs, I often included evidence of my presence in the composition – my glass of water, my travel mug, my notebook and tape recorder.

²⁶ In her reflection on the salience of race in qualitative fieldwork, Marjorie DeVault makes a case for attention to race as a mandate for all qualitative research, as opposed to the more common practice of allowing race to emerge as a significant variable for situations in which it proves itself relevant (DeVault, 1995).

These multiple relations of fieldwork were preceded in time by my procedure for sampling a group of study volunteers, and the specific details of my identification of fifteen home schooling families (thirteen conservative Protestant, one liberal Protestant, and one Roman Catholic) bears upon the interpretations I can make of their lives and words. To begin with, the label “conservative Protestant” is flawed in many respects, but I use it because it seems to be the most precise alternative among a series of bad terminological options. Within American Protestantism, there is a wide range of stances on theological questions such as the nature of Biblical authority, different modes of Biblical interpretation, different characterizations of the nature of the Godhead, and different understandings of Christian responsibility of human beings one to another. Those Protestants considered to be “conservative” on theological questions, at least by sociologists and historians, would affirm something like the following formulations of Christian belief, as determined by sociologists Roger Woodberry and Christian Smith (Woodberry & Smith, 1998): emphasis on a “personal relationship with Jesus Christ;” the importance of converting others to their faith; a strong view of biblical authority; and a conviction that salvation from sin is available only through Jesus Christ.

Such theological conservatism as this has a long history, one which I briefly review here because the past of conservative Protestantism sheds light on the present construction of their subcultural identity. Until the close of the 19th century, a loosely coherent pan-Protestant unity powerfully shaped American religious and public life. This largely white “Evangelical Protestantism” was the legacy of the first and second Great Awakenings in American religious life, and this very American brand of Christianity emphasized the Reformation theme of the authority of Biblical revelation; the Pietistic

theme of personal religious devotionism and personal morality; the revivalist theme of a personal and emotional conversion experience; and an emphasis on missionary, evangelistic effort (Handy, 1984; Hart, 2002). So strong was the cultural power of evangelicalism to shape public mores that it took what historian Robert Handy termed a “second disestablishment” in the first quarter of the 20th century to dislodge evangelical Protestantism from its cultural hegemony (Handy, 1984; Hart, 2002). In the wake of the social upheaval at this time caused by immigration, industrialization, urbanization, and a sustained questioning of gender norms – in other words, in the wake of the disruption of their cultural position of nativist white Protestant hegemony – Protestantism in America developed some fault lines that would fissure this pan-Protestant unity into what we may now loosely term “liberal” and “conservative” camps (Marsden, 1980; Marty, 1969).

The Fundamentalist-Modernist controversies within the Baptist and Presbyterian denominations in the 1920s provided the stage for a formalization of the differences between two distinct types of Protestantism. These denominational debates centered on questions of theological epistemology, as discussed via the issues of gender norms and Darwinist evolution (DeBerg, 1990; Marsden, 1980). “Fundamentalist” and “modernist” were self-chosen labels for contrasting Protestant theologies. Whereas modernist belief allowed for the existence of multiple and potentially incommensurate revelations of truth, fundamentalists argued for the singularity of truth. Whereas modernists argued for the liberalization of scripture interpretation so that Biblical revelation can accommodate different truths from other sources, fundamentalists emphasized the precise and narrow reading of scripture as an authoritative source of the single, coherent, revealed truth. Whereas modernists emphasized right action over right belief, fundamentalists argued for

the necessity of right doctrine. The fundamentalists also insisted on the veracity of the supernatural elements of the creed, whereas modernist accommodation to modern science and historical criticism of the bible tended toward naturalism or materialism in theological reasoning. While the social dynamics of industrialization, urbanization, immigration and changing gender norms motivated these debates, the fundamentalists and the modernists argued across a chasm of thought rather than social location, as both sides were comprised of northern, white, urban, middle-class, male intellectuals (DeBerg, 1990; Marsden, 1980).²⁷

While the battle lines between these two groups may have been clearly drawn during the Baptist and Presbyterian intra-denominational debates of the 1920s, fundamentalists and modernists were not wholly distinct from one another; neither were they wholly coherent within themselves. Then as now, significant differences of theology ran through rather than between Protestant denominations; there are frequently conservative, moderate, and liberal protestants within a variety of denominations (Wuthnow, 1988). Historian George Marsden calls the early fundamentalists a “loose, diverse, and changing federation of co-belligerents” (Marsden, 1980), more than a unified movement or school or subgroup, and indeed in the 1940s the conservative side of Protestantism itself split into two factions (Hart, 2002; Smith et al., 1998). Following the public embarrassment and (relative) cultural disfranchisement of conservative Protestantism epitomized in the Scopes trial and its famously damning press coverage by H. L. Mencken (1925), conservative Protestants largely retreated from their once-

²⁷ Though they discuss fundamentalists and evangelicals of a later generation, both Smith and Ammerman also argue strongly against the thesis that a social location of dispossession lies behind conservative Protestantism, as conservative Protestants are located across classes, races, regions, and educational levels (Ammerman, 1987; Smith et al., 1998).

established public influence and emphasized personal piety and the building of their own separated religious institutions such as bible colleges, publishing houses, radio stations, and para-church organizations (Carpenter, 1997; Harding, 2000). By the 1940s, conservative Protestantism was institutionally poised for resurgence, and a faction who called themselves “neo-evangelicals” called for conservative Christianity to soften its separationist stance toward American culture and instead seek to influence culture in the direction of Christian orthodoxy (Smith et al., 1998). Some conservative Christians did not agree with these “neo-evangelicals,” however, and maintained both the label “fundamentalist” as well as their traditionally separatist stance.

While some scholars use the reverberating word “fundamentalist” to refer to conservative Protestants in general, I prefer to reserve that term for the sub-group of conservative Protestants marked by cultural and institutional separationism from the 1920s to the 1960s, as well as the later self-described fundamentalists who have sought political influence from the 1960s until today. Some scholars and journalists, and indeed some conservative Protestants themselves, use “evangelical” rather than “fundamentalist” as the generic term for conservative Protestant Christians. When the neo-evangelicals of the 1940s and 50s used the term to differentiate themselves from the militantly separationist stance of the fundamentalists, they were drawing upon the legacy of cultural influence and power enjoyed by evangelical Protestants until the end of the 19th century. Since the 1940s, “evangelical” Christians have been characterized, by themselves and by others, as “in the world but not of the world,” a cultural position Smith has called “engaged orthodoxy” (Smith et al., 1998).

Pentecostal and charismatic conservative Protestants share an emphasis on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues, divine healing, and prophecy – an emphasis that they do not share with most evangelicals and fundamentalists (Woodberry & Smith, 1998). Beyond these commonalities between Pentecostal and charismatic Protestantism, the two movements differ in several respects. Pentecostalism emerged among socially marginal groups (including poor whites, blacks, and immigrants) near the turn of the twentieth century out of evangelical “holiness” teachings (Wacker, 2001). Though the Pentecostal movement was initially interracial and began within established denominations, later developments saw the formation of racially and denominationally separate institutions (Sernett, 1991). The charismatic movement, on the other hand, began in the 1960s among a more Northern and middle-class population and remained as a renewal movement within previously existing church structures (especially Roman Catholic, mainline protestant, and evangelical) (Wilson, 1984; Woodberry & Smith, 1998). Woodberry and Smith estimate that Pentecostals and charismatics together comprise 12% of the United States population and are especially influential among African American, Latin American, and Asian American Christianity (Woodberry & Smith, 1998). Though I include Pentecostal as well as charismatic Christians in my conceptual definition of conservative Protestants, only charismatic, evangelical, and fundamentalist parents participated in this study.

The world of conservative Protestantism, throughout the 20th century as now, is diverse within itself, even as it can be meaningfully understood as more-or-less unified in its opposition to elements of liberal Protestantism or American culture and politics. This complexity of group identification has led to no small confusion when journalists and

scholars of American Protestantism try to write about this particular type of Christian. For instance, one mother with whom I spoke called herself “a charismatic, evangelical, non-denominational Christian,” another called herself a “charismatic evangelical fundamentalist,” and yet another mother chose “all of the above” from my list of potential Christian labels: theologically liberal, mainline, charismatic, Pentecostal, evangelical, fundamentalist. Following the lead of Woodberry and Smith (Woodberry & Smith, 1998), I use the label “conservative Protestant” as a generic term that includes fundamentalist, evangelical, charismatic, and Pentecostal Christians. I do this despite the fact that these four sub-groups do not always relish their co-habitation within a common conceptual category. I also try, whenever sensible, to be precise and differentiating in my use of the terms for these particular types of conservative Protestants, especially “fundamentalist” and “evangelical,” yet the different labels sometimes suggest a greater degree of distinction than is, in fact, the case.²⁸

When I say that I interviewed 13 mothers and 12 fathers who are conservative Protestant, I mean to indicate that these parents have the theological beliefs and religious practices that mark them as conservative Protestant by scholarly definition. Conservative Protestants believe certain characteristic doctrines and have characteristic religious and cultural practices, such as frequent devotional prayer, individual Bible reading, frequent church attendance, and an emphasis on conversion and evangelism. They also may (or may not, given the confusion of terms just discussed) label themselves as evangelicals, fundamentalists, or just plain “Christians,” “bible-believing Christians,” “believers,” or

²⁸ For instance, some fundamentalist leaders and followers since the 1970s and 80s famously renounced separationism in favor of political and cultural engagement - and some fundamentalists have adopted the term “evangelical” for its more amiable connotations even as they may hold to separationist beliefs - such that the distinction between fundamentalists and evangelicals since the 1980s has become blurred.

“born again Christians.” I made use of all of these markers to identify conservative Protestant home schooling parents, though I used agreement with conservative statements of Christian belief as the primary indicator of conservative Protestant identity.

A full 100% of 25 conservative Protestant mothers and fathers agreed strongly with the following statements: “Jesus Christ is both fully human and fully divine;” “salvation from sin is available only through Jesus Christ;” “the Bible is the inspired word of God and is a trustworthy authority for all matters of faith and practice.” 90% of conservative Protestant parents in my sample strongly agreed that “the bible is the inerrant word of God, without error as a whole and in its parts” and that “it is important to have an ongoing, personal relationship with Jesus Christ.” 74% of conservative Protestant parents agreed strongly or agreed that “the bible should be read literally, word for word.” Further, 100% of conservative Protestant families with whom I spoke attended church at least once per week, and 100% of conservative Protestant mothers and fathers said that their faith is “very important” to them, the highest available option in my question. Lastly, all of the conservative Protestant mothers and nine of thirteen conservative Protestant fathers read their bibles at least four times per week.

In addition to asking about agreement with statements of conservative Christian belief and practice, I asked each Protestant parent to choose out of a list of terms for various types of Christianity the label that best fit them, and, given the uncertainty of terms, I allowed them to choose one, several or none. Their options were theologically liberal Protestant, mainline Protestant, Pentecostal, charismatic, evangelical, and fundamentalist. Out of 25 conservative Protestant parents, 12 considered themselves to be evangelical, 2 fundamentalist, 5 chose a combination of charismatic, evangelical,

and/or fundamentalist, and 6 refused any label but specified that they are on the conservative side of Christianity. In addition to these 25, I interviewed 2 liberal Protestant parents, 2 Catholic parents, and 1 Jewish parent, though the generalizations I make in the coming chapters are limited to the conservative Protestant parents except when specified. The families were spread across a variety of denominations, with 4 attending Baptist churches, 3 non-denominational evangelical churches, 2 Church of Christ, 1 Christian and Missionary Alliance, 1 Disciples of Christ, 1 Presbyterian Church of America, 1 conservative Episcopalian, 1 liberal Episcopalian, and 1 Roman Catholic.

Last Name	Parents	Children	Religious Affiliation	Mother's Education & Occupation	Father's Education & Occupation	Race	Research Method
Bennett	Henry and Christine	Matt (12)	fundamentalist, evangelical; Christian and Missionary Alliance	Bachelor's (music ed); currently part-time teaching and store management	Bachelor's; natural gas sales	White	Interviewed and observed
Cartwright	Faith and Gary	Terrence (19) David (18) Sarah (17) Susan (16) Shari (8) Sammie (7)	charismatic, evangelical, fundamentalist; Vineyard Fellowship	Bachelor's (education); currently part-time office assistant	Bachelor's; owns and operates manufacturing and distribution company	white: Faith, Gary, Susan, Terrence black: David biracially black and white: Sarah, Shari, Sammie	Interviewed and observed
Daugherty	Lyle and Jessica	Laura (10) Tara (8)	conservative Christian; Church of Christ	Bachelor's; formerly employed as a writer	Bachelor's; art editor for Christian publishing company	White	Interviewed
Flanigan	Vivian and Bill	Nora (adult) Amber (adult) Louisa (17)	evangelical, "Bible believing;" Southern Baptist	Bachelor's (education) and Master's (reading); formerly employed as a teacher	Bachelor's; owns and operates a construction supply company	White	Interviewed
Heaney	Scott and Mary	Frank (13) Esther (10) Scottie (7)	fundamentalist; Independent Baptist	Bachelor's (education) and Master's (education); formerly employed as a teacher	several credits short of a Bachelor's; owns and operates computer consulting firm	White	Interviewed and observed
Hughes	Jill and Adam	Jim (7) Beth (5) Kelly (1)	Liberal protestant; Episcopalian	Bachelor's; Formerly employed as a journalist	Bachelor's and Master's; journalist	White	Interviewed and observed
Keller	Chris and Caroline	Charles (adult) Louis (adult) Kyle (adult) Troy (17) Tricia (16)	Roman Catholic	Bachelor's; Formerly employed in medical information	Associate's (nursing); farmer, security guard	White	Interviewed
Mason	Helen and Thomas	Virginia (11) Justin (9) Brian (7) Elizabeth (3)	evangelical; conservative Episcopalian	Bachelor's (education); formerly employed as a teacher	Bachelor's and two Master's; management position in campus ministry organization	White	Interviewed and observed
Olsen	Jason and Erin	Jacob (14) Dustin (12) Timothy (10) Jesse (9) Sharon (4)	reformed evangelical; non-denominational reformed	Bachelor's (special education); no former occupation	Bachelor's; owns and operates computer consulting firm	white: Jason half Korean, half white: Erin 1/4 Korean, 3/4 white: all children	Interviewed and observed
Rosenberg	Maria and Ralph	Nathaniel (18) Benjamin (14) Simon (13) Jeremiah (6) Aaron (infant)	Jewish and charismatic, evangelical; non-denominational	Bachelor's; formerly employed in human relations	Bachelor's and Master's; independent computer consultant	White	Interviewed and observed
Rossini	Alan and Gina	Michelle (15) Mark (14) Johnny (10) Crystal (8) Melissa (3)	conservative Christian; Disciples of Christ	Bachelor's (secondary education-English); no former occupation	Bachelor's; independent computer consultant	White	Interviewed
Rutherford	Lisa and Rick	Max (14) Ryan (10) Carrie (2)	evangelical; Southern Baptist	Associate's (nursing); Formerly employed as a nurse	Bachelor's; sales	White	Interviewed and observed
Simpson	Dave and Gail	Kristen (10) Peter (6)	conservative protestant; Presbyterian Church of America	Bachelor's (education) and Master's (communication); formerly employed as a teacher	Bachelor's and Master's (business); owns and operates exercise equipment sales company	White	Interviewed and observed
Thompson	Nancy and Jimmy	MaryAnn (adult) Tracie (17) Eric (14)	evangelical "believer;" Church of Christ	Bachelor's (education); no former occupation	Bachelor's; fire inspector	White	Interviewed
West	Joe and Ruth	Billy (9) Amy (6) Danny (5)	evangelical; Southern Baptist	Bachelor's (education); no former occupation	Bachelor's and currently in seminary; editor at Christian publishing company	White	Interviewed

Figure 3. Study participants, in alphabetical order, including religious affiliation, education, occupation, race, and research method (ages of children in parentheses).

Quantitative research design requires attention to the procedures whereby a subset of a group of people is selected for a study, and these procedures of sampling have been formalized for good methodological reason. The sorts of questions asked by quantitative researchers and the ways they go about answering them require that they be reasonably certain that their sample does not contain a selection bias, that all members of the population being studied had an equal and equally random chance of being part of the sample. Qualitative researchers have different priorities, however, and Glaser and Strauss helpfully formulated for the softer side of sociology a different way to think about sampling, a concept they call “theoretical sampling” that makes much more sense for ethnographic studies (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Though I did not practice strict grounded theory in the mold of Glaser and Strauss, I did, as they suggest, sample with an eye toward my theory-driven questions, in that I aimed to fill out my sample with various types of home schooling families whose domestic religious practices might be importantly different.²⁹ For instance, I sought out home schooling mothers who also worked outside of the home for pay because this characteristic has a foreseeable impact on my questions of conservative Protestant gender identity and domestic religious practices. I also sought families with different numbers of children; children of different genders and ages; and households of various incomes and levels of parental education. (In these last two features, my sample was, in the end, regrettably homogenous.)

²⁹ Grounded theory requires analysis throughout the fieldwork so that theoretical and analytical categories emerge inductively. Further, the direction of fieldwork – the selection of additional participants, sites, and research questions – is to respond to this emergence of categories. I did analyze as I went, but my questions did not change substantially as a result and my sampling of participants and sites of research did not change, as it could have. For instance, I did not go on to study Christian schools and public schools despite the fact that the home schoolers’ characterizations of these forms of education became important in their own self-understanding.

At the same time, however, my sampling procedure was largely determined by the hospitality and spirit of adventure of study volunteers. I was asking permission of these mothers and fathers to observe family activities that were private to them; to ask parents who highly value the privacy of family life questions about their personal lives, familial and religious; to watch mothers teach whose teaching had heretofore only been witnessed by their families and perhaps friends. I was also asking to be in the close vicinity of their children for the schooling hours of one week. Further, home schooling was illegal in the state in which I worked only thirty years ago, recently enough that there were still some families around who had home schooled illegally. While home schooling is now legal in all states, it is still suspect for many people, and neighbors and relatives have been known to report home schooling families to state truancy officials and children's welfare services on suspicion of what happens behind the closed doors of the family home. I had asked Scott and Mary Heaney to consider if any of their home schooling acquaintances would be willing to participate in my study, and Scott told me that the home schooling father with whom he carools told him he did not want to take part because, "I don't trust the federal government." Though my study is in no way affiliated with government authorities nor funding, home schooling parents are frequently suspicious of the possibility of state supervision.³⁰

In addition, these mothers are very busy in their non-stop work teaching and keeping house for above-average numbers of children,³¹ and many of my volunteers reported to me that their home schooling friends felt they were too busy to talk with me

³⁰ Scott Heaney responded to his friend on my behalf, saying "She's not from the federal government. She's just a little girl trying to get her Ph.D." Perhaps my age and my gender, in addition to my religious identification, facilitated my entry into the field for some parents.

³¹ The participants in my studied averaged 3.6 children per family, compared to the national average of just under 2 children per woman (Rindfuss, Brewster, & Kavee, 1996).

and too busy to worry about cleaning the house for the week I would spend in observation and discussion. Indeed, the houses into which I was invited were notably clean, at least at the beginning of the week. Housekeeping can be a cause of stress, guilt, and shame for home schooling mothers, as I explore in chapter four; they “stay at home” and so feel they should be able to achieve their ideal of a clean house, and yet their home schooling work conspires against ideals of cleanliness by keeping them otherwise occupied and by creating piles of paper, books, math games, science projects, and the general stuff of education. As with employed mothers, housekeeping becomes a personal occasion for the construction of gender identities in the context of cultural and structural conflicts (Berk, 1985; Hochschild & Machung, 1989). The possibility of introducing an observer into their homes perhaps brought to the surface such feelings of conflict, providing another reason to refuse participation in my study.

Because of these many barriers to the willingness of volunteers, the group of home schooling families in my study was determined by a combination of chance and design. I was fortunate to have volunteers whose characteristics lead me to believe they would represent a respectable variety of Christian home schoolers, though they were by no means randomly selected. A non-random sample with an “n” of 30 home schooling parents cannot aspire to statistical representativeness, but I can compare the demographic characteristics of my sample to those inferred of the population of home schoolers at large in order to gauge, in a non-scientific way, the representativeness of my sample (see table 1).³² While my group of home schoolers was similar to the majority of home

³² I chose to study only conservative Protestant home schooling families. There are many other families that home school for reasons and by means other than those typical of Christian home schoolers (Stevens, 2001). Unfortunately, I was unable to find demographic information on Christian home schoolers exclusively.

schoolers on the dimensions of race, marital status, and class, my sample is also more homogenous than the home schooling population at large on these variables. There is thus more variation among home schoolers in general than my sample was able to communicate to me. In two of the few nation-wide, statistically rigorous demographic studies of home schoolers, Stacey Bielick and Kathryn Chandler of the National Center for Education Statistics (Bielick & Chandler, 2001) and Lawrence Rudner of the University of Maryland (Rudner, 1999) sought to determine the demographic characteristics of home schooling parents. Though they differ slightly on percentages, both studies find that home schooling parents are more likely than non-home schooling parents of school age children to be non-Hispanic white, married, and highly educated. The two studies report divergent findings on the relative income of home schooling families, as Rudner reports a significantly higher median income for home schoolers and Bielick and Chandler find a less significant difference. Rudner reports that a full 98% of home school fathers are employed, whereas 76.9% of home schooling mothers do not work for pay (as opposed to 30% of married women nationwide with children under 18 who did not work for pay in 1996).

Table 1. Comparison of race, marital status, parental education, and household income between home schooling families and non-home schooling families, as well as between the sample of this study and the home schooling and non-home schooling populations at large.

	Bielick & Chandler		Rudner		Liao
	Homeschool	Non-Homeschool	Homeschool	Non-Homeschool	Homeschool
Race					
% White (non-Hispanic)	94.0%	67.2%	75.0%	65.0%	90.0%
Marital Status					
% Two Parent Household	80.0%	66.0%	97.2%	N/A	100.0%
Parent Education					
% with Bachelor's Degree	25.0%	16.0%	37.6% Fathers 47.2% Mothers	15.6% Fathers 14.8% Mothers	90.0%
Household Income					
Median Income			\$52,000	\$36,000	N/A
\$25,000 or less	30.9%	33.5%			
\$25,001 - \$50,000	32.7%	30.3%			
\$50,001 - \$75,000	19.1%	17.1%			
\$75,001 or more	17.4%	19.2%			

While my group of 30 home schooling parents (25 conservative Protestant, 2 Liberal Protestant, 2 Catholic, and 1 Jewish) is similar to the majority of home schoolers in race and marital status, my sample is also divergent from the norm. A full 90% of parents with whom I spoke had completed bachelor's degrees, and 26% have completed their master's degree, such that the parents in my sample were unusually highly educated. I did not collect income data for my sample, but given their higher education, the fact that all but two families were voluntarily single-income, my observations of their home life, and the professional employment of the majority of the fathers, I estimate that all of the families are middle to middle-lower class. Only two of the fifteen mothers (13.3%) worked outside of the home for pay while home schooling, which is less than the 23.1% reported by Rudner for his sample. Ten of fourteen mothers had bachelor's degrees in education (71.4%), a much higher percent than that in the home schooling population at large (19.7% according to Rudner). I conjecture that parents (especially mothers) with

college degrees (especially in education) would be more likely to volunteer for a research study involving participant-observation of their teaching practices.³³ I also conjecture that home schooling mothers who also work outside the home, as well as single-parent home schoolers, would be less likely to add my research study to their already overfull schedules.

In addition to these variables, I interviewed: families with different numbers of children (2 at the least to 6 at the most); families with differently aged children (18 months at the youngest to 18 years at the oldest); families in which all children at home were in school (9 families) and in which at least one child was pre-school age (6 families); one interfaith family in which the mother is conservative Protestant and the father is Jewish; three interracial families (two white and Asian-American families and one black and white family). Lastly, all of the families but one were living in the southeastern United States at the time of the study, a regional location with possible significant implications for questions of religious and gender identity. Rather than generalizing here the difference that these features may make, alone or in combination, for domestic conservative Protestant religious culture, I will allow the later chapters to explore in depth the forms of domestic religious life that emerge for families with these particular traits.

Nine of the fifteen families taught their children exclusively, but six families supplemented their in-home teaching with tutorials (supplemental schools for home schooled children in which the classes are taught by hired teachers) or cooperative groups

³³ In fact, several of the mothers and fathers indicated to me that they thought I was a graduate student in education rather than religion, despite the fact that all of my communication with them specified my location in the graduate department of religion. I suppose that home schooling mothers would be more unlikely to volunteer for a research study in education, as they may suspect such a study to be primarily evaluative and critical of home schooling as an educational option.

(like a tutorial, with the classes taught by the parents). However, the tutorial or cooperative classes were invariably understood as supplemental to the mothers' teaching, and the mothers felt responsible for their children's out-of-home learning as well. Teaching mothers would often go over tutorial or cooperative homework assignments, study for exams with their children, and teach additional lessons in the same subject area in order to aid their children in their classes. The mothers rather than the fathers did the overwhelming majority of the teaching in all of the families with whom I worked, as is typical of home schoolers in general.

The methodological details regarding my identification of conservative Protestants and the ways in which my sample is and is not "representative" are important because they determine the types of interpretations that I can reasonably hope to draw forth from my observations and interviews, the ways in which I can (and cannot) make my narrow ethnographic data speak to larger sociocultural issues. I cannot, for instance, say whether or not the features of domestic religion that I emphasize in my interpretations are representative of all Christian home schooling mothers and fathers. Neither can I compare the domestic religion of Christian home schooling families to that of other American Christians; my interpretations of their religious home life may or may not apply to non-home schooling and/or non-conservative Christians. My data simply will not bear such a comparative argument. However, I can make justifiable interpretations of my data regarding the domestic religion of the home schooling mothers and fathers with whom I worked, in the reasonable hope that those with whom I worked are more or less typical of the majority of conservative Protestant home schoolers at large. This is an ethnographic study, after all, and the limitations imposed by the idiosyncratic data are

counterbalanced by the value of face-to-face, nuanced field research, especially since no such studies have been done of home schooled domestic life and few of domestic conservative Protestantism.

CHAPTER II

QUORUM DEO: HOME SCHOOLING UNDER THE GAZE OF GOD

I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

John 17: 14-23, NIV

At least three of Erin and Jason Olsen's five children have inherited from their parents a love of rock music and movies - Jacob, Dustin, and Timothy are in a rock band with another home schooling friend - and it is their continual task as parents to teach their sons how to enjoy popular media without conforming their minds to its cultural presuppositions. When I asked Erin to explain to me how her faith impacts her parenting and teaching, she told me of the importance of their Christian world view for how she raises her children.³⁴

I think my faith is integral to how I move and learn and am. So I can't imagine that it hasn't influenced how I think about being a teacher or a mother. I don't require that every text or every media presentation that they see or every

³⁴ Throughout this work, I excerpt at length from the interview transcripts because I believe that a fuller contextualization of their responses to my questions accomplishes two goods: honest communication of their views to the reader, and the opportunity for the reader to contest my interpretations.

person involved in their lives be in agreement with what I believe. I do try to make sure my children understand the importance of their world view. One example is that my kids are way into music. I let them play Switchfoot and Nirvana, they listen to Greenday. I do try to modify what messages that the kids get. I don't let them listen to everything they want. And my husband, having been in the music industry, has a lot of music, but I don't always let them dig around in it. I don't like for them to dig around in it. When we come across a message that we feel is either in line with or contradictory to what we believe to be true, we address it.

If somebody mentions – this is more with Dustin, my second son who is 12, than my oldest son, and I think it has a lot to do with the fact that he is just now hitting the age where he moves from concrete to abstract thinking. When he hears somebody mention God in a song, or Jesus, any language that he's familiar with in Christianity, if he hears it in a song lyric, he says "Is that person a Christian?" And I've over and over and over again talked to the kids about the fact that there can be *some* truth – that there are many ways of looking at messages. There may be elements of truth in other people's messages. Just because they have a picture of, some glimpses of truth, or the songwriter at least did, doesn't mean that they embrace the same truth that we understand. I try to teach the kids to recognize elements of truth, and just because the musicians express that doesn't mean that they embrace all of it.

I don't know if you know this, you probably don't – when the whole Harry Potter thing started up, there was such an outcry against it. I read the books, I didn't have a problem with them. I actually find that the messages within those novels were consistent with a lot of Christian belief. The values that were encouraged were faithfulness, loyalty, kindness, forgiveness, those kind of values which are pretty much in line with scriptural truth.

I think it's interesting to see how, as things develop, I don't know mentally or psychologically, as they reach new levels that they have a better understanding of how you can agree with something that someone says without having to think that everything they say is truthful.

Erin is always teaching her children how to think through questions of the relationship of their own Christian convictions to the ideas they encounter in the broader world. When Dustin asks if a particular artist is a Christian, Erin recognizes that he is also asking if the ideas expressed in the song should be accepted as consistent with Christianity or should be contested for their contrariness to Christian belief. Erin tries to develop in her children a finely tuned ear for discerning truth and falsehood, wherever it may be found. Though she and Jason may approach American cultural media with a larger sense of exposure and

a more subtle sense of inclusion than many conservative Protestant home schoolers, their use of the notion of worldview as a tool for identifying consonance or dissonance is consistent with many of the parents with whom I spoke.

Conservative Protestants speak often of their “world view,” of their set of presuppositions about the nature of reality that defines “truth” for them (and given their orthodoxy,³⁵ I suppose they would add for all others as well). The articulation of their world view is a means of their self-identification as conservative Protestants, as well as their identification of “others” whose basic assumptions are contrary to their world view. It locates their difference from these others in their minds as a matter of thought. *Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*³⁶

Specifically, conservative Protestant references to world view differentiate those of like mind from those who think differently through an implied opposition not only of one world view to another, such as “secular humanism,” but also of conservative Protestant world view coherence as opposed to the fragmentation of other sets of presuppositions, of conservative Protestant singularity of belief as opposed to the potential for a multiplicity of world views.

Many white conservative Protestant home schooling mothers and fathers consider themselves to be religio-culturally distinct by virtue of the unity of their intellectual and moral convictions – the singularity and the coherence of their “Christian world view” and

³⁵ I am using the term “orthodoxy” here in Hunter’s sense: the style of moral reasoning that presupposes an objective basis to ethics (Hunter, 1991).

³⁶ Romans 12:2, KJV. Throughout the course of this work, I occasionally insert into the text biblical quotations, in italics and without contextualization. I do this to mirror in writing the way in which words from the bible inform the thought life of conservative Protestants. For a similar technique and an exploration of the textual practices and discourses of conservative Protestants, see (Harding, 2000).

the consistency of their actions in the world with their worldview. In this chapter I explore their pragmatic construction of their claim to intellectual and practical unity as a means of the production of white conservative Protestant distinction. Specifically, I trace out the ways in which conservative Protestant home schoolers practice unification as a generative “strategy of action” in their educational and familial ways of doing things, one that includes world view elaboration as but one, unusually articulate moment. For my purposes here, I intend unification to mean a generic procedure of the integration of parts into a coherent whole: *e pluribus unum*. When conservative Protestant home schoolers integrate curricula with Christianity, family with education, and schooling with child development, they are deploying in their domestic worlds the more general practice of unification by which conservative Protestants know themselves to be set apart, or made holy: the unification of their selves, habits, and world view under the umbrella of Christianity. *May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*³⁷

As conservative Protestant home schooling parents seek thus to fashion their family lives as the practice of the unification of parts into a coherent, Christian whole, they also distinguish themselves, by implication if not intent, from the multiplicity and disjunction that they critique in their characterization of public education and the American public more generally. Specifically, I suggest in the concluding section of this chapter that their practices of unification function as a means of their distinction through an understood and unstated opposition to several multiplicities of the American public: religious, political, racial, and ethnic. Through their practice of unification in its many dimensions, and through its implied opposition to a multiplex American cultural milieu,

³⁷ John 17:23, NIV

conservative Protestant home schooling parents manifest their creation of their subcultural difference.

ORGANIC EDUCATION: THE PRACTICES OF UNIFICATION

In this section I explore four operations of unification: the enlistment of world view; the integration of education with conservative Protestant orthodoxy; the intermingling of educational and familial life; and the harmonization of schooling with child development. In many ways, white conservative Protestant home schooling families practice a pragmatic unity of religion, family, and education, a unity that aspires to completeness despite its selectivity and partiality. In so doing, they establish themselves as Christians with a distinct way of life, one that is marked by its intention toward coherence.

Before discussing the utility of worldview, I must clarify the question of the scope of conservative Protestant home schooling unification. The Christian coherence achieved by organic integration is no doubt less complete than conservative Protestant home schooling parents hold it to be. There are many aspects of conservative Protestant home schooling that fall outside the Christian umbrella. In his study of evangelicals, Smith argued for a redefinition of Berger's concept of the "sacred canopy" into a "sacred umbrella," and I use a similar understanding here (Smith et al., 1998, p. 106-7). Whereas Berger conceives of a sacred canopy as a unity of worldview that must encompass all dimensions of social life in order to have cultural authority (Berger, 1969), a sacred umbrella is a set of religious presuppositions that functions on a much more local level. Smith, who is concerned to explain the strength of traditional evangelical religion in the

“modern” world, argues that the encounter with worldviews that would be opposed to those of evangelicals does not much challenge the strength of their presuppositions. In Smith’s subcultural identity theory, evangelicals treat the contrary beliefs they encounter as a foil against which to affirm their own, different presuppositions within their smaller, more local religious communities. Indeed, religious identity under a sacred umbrella depends upon the encounter with difference as a necessary moment in the construction of self identity vis-à-vis “others.” For my purposes, the relative unity of faith, family, and education practiced by conservative Protestant home schoolers is on the scale of the umbrella rather than the canopy – a local, limited unification that is none-the-less effective for religious identity formation despite the existence of counter-claims outside its purview.

Conservative Protestants themselves, as well as those who study them, have elaborated the conservative Protestant world view as the definitive structure of their thought life. In the 1960s, the neo-evangelical movement reinvigorated a conservative Protestant critique of western intellectual history as part of their effort to place conservative theology on more solid intellectual footing (Hart, 2002; Smith et al., 1998). One of the most influential neo-evangelical academicians, philosopher Francis Schaeffer formulated a critique of western intellectual history as a succession of “world views,” such that a more-or-less coherent set of intellectual presuppositions shapes a given historical period according to its values and biases.³⁸ Schaeffer reads western intellectual history as the story of the increasing cultural authority given to a world view of secular humanism, such that political philosophy, natural science, social science, the arts and the

³⁸ Though he articulated this argument in many works, one of his best-known is *How Shall We Then Live?* (Schaeffer, 1976).

humanities, even theology, as well as cultural values and political and economic order, are all now predicated upon the ideological divorce of sacred knowledge from the process of secular human reason. Schaeffer argues that, for the modern west, the sacred absolutes of Christianity as revealed in the Bible are considered necessary neither to rational intellectual pursuit nor to social norms at large. History for Schaeffer is thus a contest of world views, Christian vs. secular humanist, such that the clarification of the Christian world view is essential to the continuation of Christianity despite its cultural displacement.

Some conservative Protestants have employed a Schaefferian notion of world view in order to critique the secularization of public education. In arguments that have become familiar, conservative Protestant activists have argued for the inclusion of prayer, Bible reading, and creationist or intelligent design accounts of human origins in public education. They have done so on the grounds that the removal of these Christian elements is tantamount to a violation of both clauses of the First Amendment relationship of church and state: the establishment of a secular humanist world view and an unconstitutional limitation on the free exercise of a Christian one (Hankins, 2002; Nord, 1996). As the concept of world view encompasses both sacred knowledge and secular knowledge within the same conceptual category, “world view” transforms sacred and secular into functional equivalents rather than incommensurable opposites. The sacred and the secular are understood to compete with one another for the same intellectual territory, rather than having their own distinct spheres of authority. The concept of world view is thus mobilized to characterize points of tension for conservative Protestants in public education as a clash of world views, a Schaefferian incongruity of idea systems in

which Christian presuppositions, though equal in nature to secular ones, are being unfairly denied.³⁹

While some conservative Protestants seek inclusion of their Christian worldview in public education, some conservative Protestant home schoolers choose to teach their children at home so that their Christian worldview can be educationally upheld. Lisa and Rick Rutherford home school their two school age children, Max and Ryan, and will some day home school toddler Carrie. Lisa and Rick each experienced a re-commitment to evangelical Christianity as adults, and so it became important to them to give their children the consistently Christian upbringing that they found to be lacking for themselves. When I asked Lisa about some of their reasons for home schooling, she emphasized her desire to teach their children in keeping with their Christian perspective:

... We have a faith-based outlook, and if I wasn't going to consider Christian school, then I definitely wanted to have something that I could incorporate faith-based ideology into whatever we wanted to do. I didn't expect that I was going to get faith-based algebra, but I knew that I was going to want to come from – I am anti-evolution, I wanted to be able to present evolution as a theory and not as a doctrine. I wanted to be able to sit and discuss ethics with them, and I wanted to do it from an early age.

I have never been protective. I have friends that will not discuss mythology because it's pagan. I've never been that – I do want them to see what's out there, but I want them to be able to compare and contrast it with what our belief system was. And I also wanted to make sure that they had the opportunity, especially as they got older, to decide for themselves, not necessarily what faith they wanted to be, but why they believe what they believe. I didn't really get to do that until I was in my mid twenties...

... And I want to be able to – I believed in evolution, nobody ever told me anything different. It's so funny, I will never forget the first time it came up, I was *old!* I mean, I went clear through high school, I just assumed that you could line

³⁹ There are, of course, counter-arguments to the supposition of the establishment of a “secular humanist” worldview and the inclusion of conservative Protestant religiosity in public education, including the recognition of the de facto establishment of Protestantism in public schools until recently; the fiction of something so coherent as “secular humanism;” the criticism of “secular humanism” as a euphemism for religious and cultural differences of many less mentionable kinds; and all of the liberal democratic arguments for pluralism in public institutions. (For a thorough discussion of many sides of the debate regarding religion in public education, see Nord, 1996.)

up the two, that creation and evolution went hand in hand, that they were the same thing.

Throughout our interview, Lisa emphasized the importance of teaching her children “why they believe what they believe,” of teaching them, when they encounter a different point of view, to “compare and contrast it with what our belief system was.” Lisa and Rick feel specifically convicted that Max, Ryan and Carrie should one day be able to identify the presuppositions of evolutionary biology that render it a “theory” rather than a proven fact, that they be able to recognize a conflict in belief systems and have reasons at the ready for asserting the plausibility of the Christian world view.

In these convictions, the Rutherfords refer to their Christian belief system as a solid structure of intellectual commitments, coherent and definite, against which they can test the ideas they encounter “out there,” out in a society whose intellectual orientation they see as having gone the way of the secular humanist. They and other home schoolers like them enlist their Christian world view as a means of defining their Christian identity, especially in situations in which they perceive a denial of their presupposed truths.

I interpret such articulations of world view as a strategy for the construction of their religio-cultural difference. On my reading, then, world view is not only a cognitive structure or content but also a recurring moment in the on-going process of conservative Protestant self-construction. In other words, I understand the use of a notion of world view by conservative Protestant home schooling parents to be an artifact of their religious world, rather than my tool for the analysis of it.⁴⁰ When conservative Protestant home

⁴⁰ Other sociologists who have studied conservative Protestants have employed worldview as their own explanatory concept, by which conservative Protestants behave and think differently because of their characteristic religious worldview. I find this approach problematic, because I understand worldview to be the end product of a prior process of cultural differentiation, not the source of the difference. For examples of the approach from which I intend to diverge, see (Bartkowski & Ellison, 1995; Emerson, 1996; Sherkat

schooling parents teach their children to affirm beyond question the foundation stones of their world view – such as the inerrancy of the Bible, the authority of the father, the divinity of Jesus, the fallenness of humankind – they are making explicit what they understand to be the source of their religio-cultural difference from others. When they, as the Olsens and the Rutherfords did, employ their Christian world view as a fixed reference point for answering questions of inclusion or exclusion, acceptance or rejection of media, curricula, scientific findings, churches, schools, or political candidates, they are also recreating their cognitive difference over and again. Their creation and use of their “Christian world view” gives a defined shape to their claim to be “set apart.”

More than that, their enlistment of a concept of world view is one possible deployment of the more general strategy of unification by which conservative Protestant families construct their lives according to a scheme of organic integration. In their understanding, the parts of the Christian world view fit together as one, just as the life ways of conservative Protestants are in keeping with their world view presuppositions. In my interview with home schooling mother Gail Simpson, she explained to me the importance of consistency of belief, and of belief with practice, for their family. Gail, her husband Dave, ten-year-old Kristen and six-year-old Peter live in a comfortable brick home in a middle-class suburban housing development. I parked in their driveway one Tuesday morning in October just as Dave was heading out to work at the company that he founded and continues to run. Gail ushered me in and we chatted as the kids swallowed the last of their eggs and toast, taking advantage of the distraction I caused as an opportunity to “forget” to take their vitamins and finish their milk.

& Ellison, 1993, 1997).

As I talked throughout the week with Gail, as well as later with Dave in a phone interview, they explained to me their well-considered view of Christian education. For them, a truly Christian education requires that acknowledgement of God be woven throughout the course of the curriculum, as well as throughout the behavioral expectations of children and the communication habits of their teachers and authority figures. Gail was educated in a Catholic parochial school in Louisiana and later taught in a Protestant Christian school, and she believes that limiting Christian education to chapel and Bible class is insufficient and ultimately hurtful to the process of Christian parenting.

I have another good friend who sends her children to school, it is not a public school, and actually it's one of the few schools where if someone said, "You have to send your child to school," we'd consider sending them there. I believe they integrate the gospel very well into what they do. They require it on the playground. And I don't mean it like, "Be nice," but in the speech, in the way they think about stuff, they help the children process through, "Is that consistent? Is what you just said about our science project consistent? Is what you just said about your parents consistent with what we believe?" Not so much "Is it nice." That's what I mean when I say I don't always distinguish between a Christian school and a public school, because they might have devotions, or that type of thing, but I don't know that there's a real integration with science and math and language and literature. And like I said, that doesn't necessarily mean that in the school where I would send them, that all the word problems have Christian characters.

For Gail and Dave, their Christian faith needs to be consistently applied to all elements of life and learning, explicitly and implicitly, for themselves and for their children, in order for their children's education to reflect their convictions. "Is what you just said...consistent with what we believe" is the refrain of their parenting and teaching: the practice of the unification of religious belief with what is done and what is learned.

Gail and Dave do send Kristen to a tutorial three times a week to supplement the education they give her at home. I was able to interview the founder and director of the tutorial, Greg Borden, about his philosophy of education. His integration of Christianity

with education indicates a second possible practice of unification for conservative Protestant home schooling families: the organic unity of education and orthodoxy. Greg founded Aslan Academy – named after the Christ-figure lion in C.S. Lewis’s *Chronicles of Narnia* – to further his vision of the Christian education of the post-modern child. Whereas modern Christian education was focused on logical defenses against atheism, Greg argues that the challenge faced by postmodern Christian educators and parents is to work against the cynicism, the suspicion of authority, and the assumption of the arbitrariness of the universe that characterize the thought processes of children of the postmodern era. In Greg’s curriculum and teaching, the overriding emphasis is on the reasonableness of nature and language and the trustworthiness of God-given premises for the understanding of our world. Taking math as an example, Greg explained to me how, at his school,

The primary truth is that God is central to absolutely everything. And if he’s central to absolutely everything, it is through God’s providence and his design that things exist like this. So, if that is so, then that bears not just upon faith claims, and a lot of Christians want to leave it at that. But it actually bears upon the laws of mathematics. For instance, the law of, you cannot add fractions of different denominators, is not just an arbitrary rule. You can’t, because they’re of different families. We would argue that that’s derived from the fact that God, if you look at the Pentateuch, the Bible says, do not weave fabrics that are of different fabrics, “because I am the Lord your God.” The answer is always, “Because I am the Lord your God.” Do not try to cross-breed animals of different kinds, “because I am the Lord your God.” And the argument is always, “because that’s the way I created it,” or, “because not everything is alike to me.” And so the whole idea, we would argue, is that, okay, you cannot add fractions of different denominators, because they are of different kinds. Okay? So what needs to happen, there needs to be a conversion of some sort. One half and one fourth can have a four in common. That’s the whole idea. So we would teach that. We just don’t teach the rule of prime numbers and composite numbers. We go, “No, no, no - where is this *first* seen in the character of God?” So what you eventually have is that God is central, and what God reveals about Himself is central.

Dave and Gail send Kristen to Greg's school because they approve of the way in which Greg centers his educational process in the revealed nature of the Godhead. Christianity is not simply super-added onto an otherwise secular body of knowledge but is understood as the foundation upon which all correct knowledge of the world and of ourselves must rest. Though this degree of aspired-to unification between orthodoxy and education is unusual in my experience, all of the parents with whom I spoke valued the integration of their Christianity with the knowledge they and their children acquire through home schooling. Indeed, lessons that would disconfirm conservative Protestant orthodoxy would be considered false teaching, the learning of error, and so would be taught as a target for critique or would not be taught at all.

Of course, conservative Protestant educators, home schooling parents and tutorial directors alike, actively create the linkages between academic material and conservative Protestant orthodoxy, and they do so in a selective manner. Greg Borden finds parallels between the laws of mathematics and the laws of the Hebrew bible, but the biblical passages could just as well be taken to mean something else (such as the separation of Christian from non-Christian, or black from white) – or nothing at all – for Christian education. There are many strategies of interpretation that conservative Protestant parents use in creating linkages between conservative Protestant orthodoxy and education, such as the parallelism and the rhetorical weight of biblical reference that Borden used above. Indeed, the strategy of unification operates here as well, as these educators build interpretations that recognize continuity but do not acknowledge possible discontinuities between, for instance, the Biblical text and the meaning it is said to have. Their interpretations emphasize unity and dismiss disjunction. As I explore below,

conservative Protestant home schooling parents manage in this way to bring much of their children's education into their sacred umbrellas, and though their reasoning behind inclusion and exclusion is less than water-tight, it is sufficient in their eyes for the creation of a Christian education.

As the Simpsons and Greg Borden explained to me, Christian home schooling can sometimes be done under the perspective that, since God is the creator of all nature, the Unmoved Mover behind all history, and the source of all truth, then all learning about God's world is ultimately learning about God. Some families are more explicit than others in the ways in which they acknowledge the sovereignty of God over their curriculum, and some subjects and topics are more amenable to coherence with Christian doctrine. The home schooling mothers with whom I worked particularly sought the integration of Christian faith with the study of history and of natural science.

The theological dimensions of these two disciplines in particular were recognized by the fundamentalists of the turn of the century as they argued against modernist reasoning in historical criticism of the Bible and in evolutionary theories of biology. Their philosophical premises of Baconian induction and Scottish Common Sense Realism, as historian George Marsden explains, undergirded their belief that the direct and unmediated observation of the natural world – God's creation – would of necessity end up confirming the Biblical view of the nature of the Creator (Marsden, 1980). Further, they read historical events through a theology of dispensational premillennialism, in which human history is categorized into epochs depending upon the nature of God's revelation (or, roughly, dispensation) at that time. God works in and through history for fundamentalists, and they read the times for signs of His movement

and appearing. In short, early fundamentalists argued for a theology of epistemological coherence in which observation of the natural world, the study of human history and human experience, and the Bible would all testify to one coherent truth: God's Truth. When home schooling mothers today teach science and history to their students as part of their Christian education, they are continuing the legacy of fundamentalist Christianity, in which Christian orthodoxy forms the cognitive "sacred canopy" underneath of which all other forms of knowledge are encompassed.

Of course, the degree of integration of faith with scholastic endeavor is different for different families at different times in the course of their children's education. I asked Lisa Rutherford how she tries to integrate their faith throughout the education of her two sons, Max and Ryan, and her preschool daughter Carrie:

You know it's funny, because maybe in the beginning, I think in the beginning when we first started, I got the Weaver curriculum⁴¹ for Max, which was a total Christian-based unit study. And it was overkill. The cool part was that it got me into that feeling. I mean, they truly were, "2 plus 2 is 4, and God created 4." And, you know, it was like *everything*, they were *always* looking, and it got to the point where at the end of the day I'd go, "Oh! I can't do this!" And so I'm not quite – I mean, I have friends who, somehow they're going to find some mathematical thing in the King James version only Bible, and "I can't teach algebra because it's not in the King James." But at least it got me exposed to the idea.

The whole thing was on, one whole semester was on Exodus, and that's why I was joking earlier with Max and Ryan about the sheep, because then it was about Moses and the sheep, and then it was about the sheep later, and David and the sheep... So we just got into the feeling of, when we do a unit study, it becomes second nature. I don't always throw it back to a faith-based system, however they do know what we believe...

I think we can always bring our faith into it because we really don't shut school off. I got to thinking last night, we were doing something last night, and Max asked me a question, and we went way off on a tangent that sounded like a school tangent. It's become so second nature... And it's not just the academic version of school. I mean, I can't go to the Smoky Mountains without discussing how God created the mountains, there's no way. It's almost a part of everything

⁴¹ The Weaver curriculum is a Mennonite publication.

that we do. And I don't know if that shows up or not. But it used to be mechanical, and now it's not so mechanical.

When Lisa was first learning to home school, she followed the “unit study” approach, in which lessons from all disciplines are drawn together around a single theme, in their case, sheep. Bible, biology, literature, history, art, and other subjects can all be studied in relation to theme of sheep, or goats, or water, or whatever. The integration can be made explicit and “mechanical,” such as connecting algebra to the Bible, or it can be implicit, such as understanding that appreciation of the creation is appreciation of the Creator. All lessons are potentially an opportunity to “throw it back to a faith-based system,” though this potential is not always actualized.

Several of the families with whom I spent time included Bible study within their history curriculum. For them, the narrative portions of the Bible are a reliable witness to the culture and happenings of the ancient near east and are studied as such. The Cartwright family – father Gary, mother Faith, and children Terrence, David, Sarah, Susan, Shari, and Sammie – have much experience in the integration of their Christianity with their curriculum. On the left-hand wall going up the stairs to the second story of the Cartwright house is a timeline of history that begins with the creation and Abraham and continues to today. The understanding of Bible as history is what seventeen of the twenty seven conservative Protestant parents meant when they either agreed or agreed strongly with the statement, “The Bible should be read literally, word for word.” When I asked Mary Heaney if she agreed that the Bible should be read literally, she answered, “See, that's one of those. I'm going to say yes, I know this issue, I know what's being asked. There's poetry, and there are things that've got to be interpreted. But they're focusing on the miracles and the creation and all those stories – yes, I interpret it literally, I take it for

what it says.” When the Bible purports to be reporting on events that happened in the past – which is not the case with poetry or figurative language – then it should be read as an historically accurate text.



Figure 4. The Bible timeline in the Cartwright stairwell.

While many families read the Bible as history, they also read history in the same way that they read the Bible. That is, just as they read the Bible as a practice in hearing God’s living Word for them in their own situation, so do they study the record of human experience for its testimony to God’s active presence in the course of human history.

God acts in small personal histories as well as in the larger story of time, and conservative Protestants read the Bible *and* events as a testament to divine presence and power. Indeed, a literalist reading of Biblical narrative enjoins the understanding that the Christian God is one who acts in history, influencing the course of individual lives and the human race in general. Biblical hermeneutics and historical hermeneutics merge as their common goal of discerning God's active presence informs the study of text and event.

Furthermore, as conservative Protestants interpret the Bible and history, God's actions toward humankind are always directed toward the global spread of Christian salvation. The historical events of the Old Testament foreshadow those of the Gospel, and this current era between the ascension of Christ and his second coming is to allow for the spread of the Christian message across the globe. As Jesus rose into heaven following his resurrection, he gave his disciples the charge that has come to be called "The Great Commission:" *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."*⁴² All of human history, from Abraham to George W. Bush, is a long testimony to God's pursuance of human salvation. God works in all times and places toward this end, *until the end of the world*. The understanding of human history, as well as the understanding of personal history, is shaped according to the theme of God's saving work.

Often times, lessons on the lives of people in other times and places are framed as the search for the ways in which they were near to or far from God's purpose of salvation

⁴² Matthew 28:19-20, KJV.

for humankind. Lisa Rutherford told me about an impromptu conversation that she had with her son Max that would illustrate to me how their Christian perspective comes to bear upon their studies.

As we were doing Rome, we're talking about pagan gods, and we're talking about mythology, and it's so sad to see some of the ideas that these poor people had in trying to please gods that were un-pleasable, that were so mercurial in their mood swings themselves, and they never seemed to be thinking about what was best for man. And so we were talking about that last night, and I can parallel that to our God, which is so different. And yet we've also studied faiths where they've stolen our stories from the Bible. You'll realize that they've taken our stories and woven them into their own faith. And so Max said this morning, "You have to understand that these pagans were getting these stories from animism," and I said, "I know!" We were talking about that before, and he knows the origins, and how as beings we are constantly seeking a creator, and if we don't know who that is, then we're going to make it up. So anyway we were chatting about that. But I do like how this curriculum is going to tie it into Francis Schaeffer and "How Shall We Then Live," which gives us an equivalent so that we can see the two perspectives and why we choose our perspective.

Lisa and Max's study of Roman culture included a look at Roman religious beliefs, and Lisa encouraged Max to think about how Roman gods are different from the Christian God. In Lisa's teaching, the study of another religious culture shades into a reflection on the suffering of those who live in ignorance of Christian truth about God. Their tragic embrace of falsehood over truth describes the human condition without Christ.

Conservative Protestants frequently understand the course of western history as a perpetual choice either for or against belief in Christian truth (Schaeffer, 1976).

World cultures, geography, and history are overcast with missiology, as in one lesson I observed of the Heaney family. Mary Heaney home schools her three children – 13 year old Frank, 10 year old Esther, and 7 year old Scottie – in a sunny den off of the kitchen that is stacked on one wall, floor to ceiling, with books. After a morning of violin practice for Frank, a science test for Esther, and some reading aloud for Scottie, Mary had

all three kids work on their Bible lesson. As Esther and Frank worked silently on reading and journaling about their assigned proverbs, Mary asked Scottie to read aloud to her a paraphrase of the story of Paul, Silas, and the Phillippian jailer, from Acts 16: 16-40. This is an especially dramatic episode in the larger story of Paul's missionary journeys in which Paul and Silas are arrested for healing a girl of spirit possession. When they are in jail, Paul and Silas sing hymns to God, and "*suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose.*" The jailer is so impressed by God's show of power and by the fact that Paul and Silas do not flee that "*immediately he and all his family were baptized.*" As Scottie read, Mary helped him with tough words like "furious," which Scottie kept mispronouncing "fierce." Scottie is a bright and playful boy, and he soon tired of reading even such an exciting story as this, so he told his mother, "I can show you where Philippians is on the globe!" He brought her the beach-ball-cum-globe and pointed to the Philippines archipelago. Mary explained how the Philippines are not the same place as Philippi in the Bible, and that Philippi "doesn't exist in the same way anymore."

She added, "The Bosak's are in the Philippines working as missionaries."

"I don't remember them."

"We knew them when we first started going to our church. We also know missionaries in Sri Lanka," and she showed him Sri Lanka on the beach ball globe.

Scottie asked, "Are Africa and Asia attached?"

"Yes, see here, this little piece of land by Israel?"

"Then why don't we call Africa part of Asia, since they're connected?"

“Maybe because the cultures are so different.”

“Where is Persia?” Mary showed him Iran, and explained how Iran is today where Persia used to be. She then gave other examples of how certain pieces of land have changed their names. Scottie looked at the globe some more, and asked, “Is Australia one of our best allies?”

“Australia is one of our allies, but it’s not a big country, because it’s mostly arid desert so not a lot of people can live there.”

Esther jumped in, “People *can* live in the desert, but they need to find a water source.”

Scottie thought some more about Australia, perhaps picturing the desert and the animals that can live there where humans cannot, and then he asked, “Is there a chance that the crocodile hunter might be a Christian?”

In this discussion, Bible reading becomes geography becomes history, which seems to flow naturally for Mary and Scottie into and out of thinking about missions work and whether or not people in other places, be it Philippi, the Philippines, or Australia, are Christian. Scottie assumes that biblical geography would still hold true today, and far away places hold meaning for them as sites of missionary endeavor.

The Heaneys were my only unabashedly self-described fundamentalists, and their concern for world missions accords with the historical legacy of fundamentalism in the early twentieth century. When liberal Protestant churches in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries focused their energies on Social Gospel domestic missions to ameliorate the negative social consequences of rapid industrialization and urbanization, conservative Protestant groups mobilized an impressive world-wide missionary effort at

saving souls, in part as a critique of liberal Protestantism (Carpenter, 1997; Marsden, 1980). They undertook the study of other cultures and places for the sake of “preaching the gospel” to them in their own language. The study of history and of world cultures for the Rutherfords, Heaneys and others is, at least in part, the study of God’s gradual salvation of humankind through the gospel.

Though I elaborate this argument at the end of this chapter, we can begin to see now in the integration of missiology with the study of other cultures how the unification practiced by conservative Protestant home schoolers can function as a means of distinction. First, the practice of understanding history as revelation and of doing missions as evangelization marks the difference of conservative Protestants from their nearest neighbors, liberal Protestants. More broadly, and more significantly for my purposes, the study of history and world cultures as Christian missiology seeks to transform the multiplicity of cultures, races, and religions into a unity of Christian belief. It so confronts multiplicity with unity not only directly through the mechanism of religious conversion – which converts many beliefs into one – but also indirectly through the incorporation of difference into the fabric of conservative Protestant theology as a necessary aspect of the progress of Christian history. Through missiology and eschatology, encounters with strange ‘others’ are made familiar through the common script of the gospel. Further, the array of specific differences between white American conservative Protestants and those of other “cultures” throughout space and time are subsumed into one difference – the difference between Christian and not-Christian. The various constructions of unity – of one Christian belief, of one relationship with ‘others,’

and of one ‘other’ – in the context of multiplicity – of races, religions, and cultures – are a means of the making of conservative Protestant distinction.

The theological dimensions of history are matched only by those of the study of natural science. Since the Scopes trial of 1925, conservative Protestants have recognized the importance of coherence between their religious doctrines and natural science (Harding, 2000; Marsden, 1980). Now as then, the doctrine of divine creation of the universe is the cornerstone of conservative Protestant integration of faith and science. The majority of Christian home schoolers with whom I worked made use of the A Beka science curriculum, published by Pensacola Christian College in Pensacola, Florida. Hazel Mason allowed me a closer look at her fifth grade A Beka Science book, “Investigating God’s World.” In the introduction at the front of the book, the publishers explain their vision for the purpose of the science textbook (capitalization original):

Textbooks with a positive Christian view of science and the origin of all things are greatly needed. The author of INVESTIGATING GOD’S WORLD has attempted to meet this need.

Students need to be shown the handiwork of God as it manifests itself in the physical world around them. How else can they gain an appreciation of the providence of God?

Students need to be shown the handiwork of God as it manifests itself in their own wonderful bodies. How else can they know their own worth as individuals?

Teachers need textbooks which can be used confidently and without apology. INVESTIGATING GOD’S WORLD is an honest, sincere attempt to help fill these needs.

The titles for all of the books in A Beka’s kindergarten through twelfth grade science series are: God’s World; Discovering God’s World; Enjoying God’s World; Exploring God’s World; Understanding God’s World; Investigating God’s World; Observing God’s World; Science: Order and Reality; Matter and Motion in God’s Universe; Science of the Physical Creation; Biology: God’s Living Creation; Chemistry: Precision and Design;

and, Physics: The Foundational Science. Creationism – the study of “God’s World” – is clearly an overriding concern in the conservative Protestant study of natural science.

Many of the parents I talked with explicitly mentioned the importance to them of studying science with their children from a Christian perspective. I asked Nancy Thompson, who home schools her three children and whose eldest daughter majored in missions at a Christian college, if being a Christian makes a difference in her home schooling.

Sure, because I base my curriculum choices on that. In the early years I used a lot of A Beka, because of its Christian content. For science in high school I used *Apologia for the Christian worldview*. It talks about the awesomeness that every liquid known to man contracts when it gets cold except for water. It expands, and that’s why wildlife doesn’t freeze and suffocate. Those kinds of things to get my children to defend their Christianity in the midst of an atheist...I’ve got friends, that, if you’d just open your eyes – so yes, it makes a big difference.

For Nancy, facts about the natural world are meaningful not only for their scientific value but also for their validation of God’s intelligent design of creation (as well as for their utility in evangelization). When I asked home schooling father Ralph Rosenberg about how he and his wife Maria make decisions about what not to teach their five sons, their choice not to teach evolution as a fact was his first example. As we have seen, Lisa and Rick Rutherford feel strongly that their children should know that evolution is a theory, and perhaps not a good one at that.⁴³ Rick pointed to their teaching on creation and evolution as a primary way in which Christianity impacts their children’s education.

Our faith comes through in the way we present a Biblical worldview even in their studies. One good example that comes to mind – and through home schooling I

⁴³ The arguments of conservative Protestants for creationism and against evolution, including the derision of the latter as a theory which cannot be proven, are, of course, highly selective, ideological, and polemical. For instance, when they oppose theory and fact as a way to render evolution provisional and hence questionable, they are thinking within a scientific paradigm that has not been applicable for some time, if it ever was. All scientific findings are thought to be provisional, and none are considered “fact” (Kuhn, 1996). I do not thoroughly explore the available counter-points in favor of evolutionary theory because it is the construction of conservative Protestant identity with which I am concerned.

think I became more passionate about it – is the controversy between the theory of evolution and creation. And there was a point in time where Max started understanding that. And it occurred to me that, in the secular school system, I was taught one as fact and the other was not considered...And what's fun, and what I think is fun from a home school father standpoint, is Max will watch television, and he will laugh almost and say, "They believe in evolution, dad! Can you believe it?!" And that's something that, we went through a tape series one time, and the creationist will say, when you confront evolution sometime, you just simply say, "Were you there? Did you see it?" And nobody was. So they've created fact out of very little or no evidence. And that's kind of fun. Those are the little times where I go, you know, I don't know if it would've been that way if we weren't home schooling.

For the Thompsons, Rosenbergs, Rutherfords and many other families, the ability to teach their children about nature as God's creation is a prime benefit of home schooling, if not a reason to home school. It stands out to them as one of the clearest ways in which their Christian faith impacts their children's education.

The significance of divine creation for conservative Protestant education and cultural identity has many layers. During the Scopes trial, the teaching of evolution in the public school became the site for the defining battle between fundamentalists and modernists for cultural authority, and a commitment to "creationism" seems to live on as a powerful marker of conservative Protestant cultural difference (Harding, 2000; Marsden, 1980). Conservative Protestants, then as now, recognize the far-reaching import that evolutionary theory has not only for their manner of Biblical hermeneutics but also for their theology of the preeminent place of humankind among God's creation. *And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*⁴⁴ Just as Copernicus moved the earth from the center of the universe and challenged the scientific

⁴⁴ Genesis 1:26, KJV.

truth of Biblical astronomy, so did Darwin remove humanity from the throne of earthly life and question the Bible's claims about human origins. If evolution is true, then not only does the Bible seem to be false in one of its parts, but doctrines of the *imago dei* and human worth are called into question, and thence the Christian ethical system loses its foundation in the created order. As the introduction to the A Beka science book says, "Students need to be shown the handiwork of God as it manifests itself in their own wonderful bodies. How else can they know their own worth as individuals?"

This conservative Protestant perspective on the question of the origins of the natural world has been worked out in opposition to the arguments in favor of the teaching of evolutionary biology in public school science curricula. Whereas conservative Protestants deride evolution as a "theory," others may argue that all science is provisional (this being no demerit) and that the theory of evolution has been established over and over again by standard procedures of evidence – the only test of "truth" available to the scientific process. Further, the conservative Protestant perspective does not so much engage with the evidence for or against evolution as it changes the terms of the debate from those of scientific method to other ways of knowing, such as Rick Rutherford's reference to eye-witness observation. At stake for my purposes are not the relative merits of the arguments for or against evolution or creationism or intelligent design but rather the ways – admittedly partial – in which conservative Protestant home schooling parents – parents who are not challenging public school curricula – incorporate their conservative Protestantism into their teaching of science.

In this vein, I argue that the home schoolers' strong commitment to creationism allows them to educate their children in contemporary natural science without seeming to

give up their religio-cultural distinction. In other words, it allows for the production of their difference such that certain features of contemporary American culture – including the tremendous cultural authority given to “science” and its technical rationality – can be maintained. Theologically and culturally, they have much at stake in agreeing with statements like the following from A Beka publishers, which combines a faith in contemporary scientific scholarship with a faith in biblical creation (Horton, n.d.):

Our skilled researchers and writers do not paraphrase progressive education textbooks and add Biblical principles; they do primary research in every subject and look at the subject from God’s point of view. Of course, the most original source is always the Word of God, the only foundation for true scholarship in any area of human endeavor. Thus our publications are built upon the firm foundation of Scriptural truth and are written by dedicated and talented Christian scholars...

The Bible must be upheld as the source of all truth for them to educate in consonance with their theological convictions. Yet the Bible cannot be read as science to the degree that it can be read as history, not least because there are very few passages in which the Bible offers scientific information. The Bible provides an historical hermeneutic, but not a scientific one beyond the account of divine creation. Further, the cultural authority of contemporary natural science in the United States is such that resistance to it would be tantamount to separatism; for instance, it would require the refusal of most medical treatment and the abstinence from most technology. Absent their repetitive commitment to divine creation, conservative Protestant home schooling parents do not challenge contemporary science; indeed, they uphold it. Their children learn “primary research” from “skilled researchers” in biology to chemistry to physics – in other words, they learn the science of the generally recognized scientific establishment – with the understanding that scientific findings only reveal more elements of God’s intelligent design. Their study of natural science proceeds largely according to the secular manner of public

school curricula, while an overt commitment to divine creation marks their resistance to anti-Biblical contemporary science.

Through their integration of their Christianity with the study of history and science, Christian home schooling parents feel that they distinguish their children's education and their family lives by virtue of their intended internal coherence. They weave their Christian perspective throughout the study of language arts, fine arts, and – to the extent they are able – throughout mathematics. For instance, many conservative Protestant home schooled children learn to write by writing out Bible verses and learn to read by reading Bible stories. At the Aslan Academy tutorial, Greg Borden has worked out a philosophy and pedagogy of spelling which utilizes Greek and Latin roots, suffixes, and prefixes as an indication of the Logos of Christ in the logos of language.

Conservative Protestant home education is conscientiously and creatively kept in concert with their theology, especially in relation to those areas of study that were identified nearly a century ago as points of conflict between world views, such as the historicity of the Bible and Biblical creation. In their emphasis on the sanctification of their education, conservative Protestant home schooling parents put into practice the unification of belief and of belief with practice that they believe sets them apart.

While their Christian unity in education distinguishes them from families who send their children to public school, it also may create a perception of difference between home schooling and Christian schooling conservative Protestants. As I spoke with Mary Heaney in our interview, she told me of some conflicts in their church between home schooling parents and those who send their children to the church's Christian school. When I asked her about the reasons for the tension, she wondered aloud:

I don't know, but I'll just speculate about what I think. I think the home schoolers in some ways have been – now, my husband and I have talked about this, okay, and several of my home schooling friends and I have talked about this – what, really, is the problem. We don't completely understand what the problem is. Somebody else may be able to express it better than I do. But my husband and I were talking, and we were wondering if the level of Christ-likeness that we've chosen to try to obtain somehow offends them because, I don't know, do they feel like maybe we're right, but they're not willing to do that? Kind of like when I was asked to wear only skirts. I didn't really have a problem with it, I understood their perspective but I didn't *want* to do it. I'm not quite sure what it is, so probably I shouldn't say too much about it.

Mary does now wear skirts exclusively, just as she home schools, and she does so out of the conviction that such is the most biblical, most Christ-like manner of being a mother to her children. Her heavy qualification of her speculation may indicate some discomfort with her explanation of the offense they seem to cause,⁴⁵ yet she, her husband, and other home schooling parents of their acquaintance feel that their family lives are recognizably more consistent with conservative Protestant ideals of righteousness. The pervasiveness of their Christianity – their “level of Christ-likeness” – distinguishes them not only from non-Christian neighbors but also sometimes from other Christians.

In addition to the organic integration of education with Christianity, conservative Protestant home schooling families pursue a third means of unification: the intermingling of educational and familial life. Conservative Protestant home schoolers, and probably home schoolers in general, believe that parents can offer to their own children an education that is superior to that which they would receive in an institutional school. The merger of the mother-child relationship with that of the student-teacher relationship benefits the educational process, they argue, because home schooling mothers teach in

⁴⁵ There may be other reasons for the resentment perceived by the Heaneys, including the likelihoods that many teachers at the school are church members and that the school may depend upon enrollment of church members' children for its financial survival. For whatever reason, home schooling may bring to the surface disjunctions within conservative Protestant church communities and not just between themselves and non-Christians.

accordance with their knowledge of their children's unique personalities, abilities, experiences, and habits. Vivian and Bill Flanigan sent their first two daughters to a Christian school for several years before deciding to home school their three girls. I asked Vivian to compare her experiences as a mother whose children go away to school with her time as a home schooling mother.

As a home school mom, I know everything. I know all of their friends. I mean, I know more about their friends' lives than their mothers know. And my kids – they have lots of friends from church who are not home schooled, as well as friends who are, and I'm around these kids. And they come into my home and they tell me, "I wish I had the relationship with my mom that you all have," or "I wish that my mom and dad would do things with me that you all do." We go to the beach, we take everybody with us. Everybody gets a friend. But I think we're more tuned in to what's going on in their minds and their hearts and what they're wanting to do, the kinds of activities they like. We know everything about our kids, and they know everything about us, and we like that.

And I don't think, as much as parents in the secular world love their kids, or in a Christian home, as much as they feel like they're tuned in to their kids' lives, they can't possibly be. I used to, when I would go to pick up Nora and Amber, at the preschool and kindergarten and first grade, when I would go pick them up, I could get in that line – you know, where you wait with the cars – I could get in that line, and I could see from a distance what kind of day they had, just by the expressions on their faces. But I didn't know what happened. And you try to get it out of them, but it doesn't come. You might get little bits and pieces later on through the day, they did this and that, but it just didn't come. And at home, if they had a rotten day, I knew why. Her sister wouldn't share her toys. I'd know. And I think that's real important. And they could sit down and talk with me later, "Why did she act like that? I don't ever want her to come into my room again." We could sit down and talk, and I could say, "Well, maybe we could do this next time." So it just gave more opportunities for more insight into my kids.

Vivian articulated a common conviction among home schoolers: that a child's education, as well as her relationships with her family, are better when she stays home and learns with her mother and siblings rather than being taken out of the home everyday to go to school. Home schoolers can list many ways in which institutional schooling gets in the way, not only of the process of education, but also of family life in "the secular world:"

mass-market curricula, intergenerational and sibling conflict, academic competition, incommensurate authority structures between home and school, and the simple fact of so many hours spent and so many experiences gained away from home, away from parents, away from siblings. When home schooling parents keep their children home, for whatever reason, they resist the introduction of a dichotomy between public (as in extra-domestic) schooling and private home life into their children's experience. In other words, they do not permit an institution outside of the family to take part with the family in the formation of their children's character, intellect, and relationships.

The home schooling parents with whom I worked supplemented their overt resistance to public (as in outside of the home) education with resistance to the more subtle, symbolic segregation of education and family life that underlies the spatiotemporal, institutional distinction between school and home. Many of them described home schooling as holistic, as a life style, as a general openness toward learning wherever and whenever it may be found. Lyle Daugherty described his and Jessica's view of home schooling in this way:

Lyle: Jessica has a lot of field days, and we feel like home schooling is not like an 8-4 activity, it's like a lifestyle. It doesn't turn off at a certain time, and it doesn't start up at a certain time. It's just the way we live. So as we go to the store and buy something, we want our kids to understand how money works, and how money is not just some foreign thing that you don't understand until you get grown up and you realize. Like in Jessica's case, she feels like her mother did too much of those kinds of financial activities, so she and her brothers lack a skill of understanding and functioning in money. So going to stores and purchasing things, or going camping and understanding nature, whatever you're doing, it's just an ongoing thing. So that, once I understood all that, I was happy with the overall experience of home schooling. It's not totally perfect, but I feel that it is certainly, by far, better than alternatives.

Monica: Would it be fair to say that there is never a time when you are not teaching your kids?

Lyle: Well, I don't know that I could say it that way. Our teaching is ongoing, but you'll have to qualify what you mean by that. For instance, there are times when they do go on the computer and do math games, or are given their fun time to go outside and do what they want. So, you're not teaching them then, but what we've taught them continues on, hopefully, so I don't know how you want to qualify that. But our teaching is just a lifestyle that happens all day, everything we do. Whether Jessica is teaching them how to cook, and it may be not for the purpose of learning how to cook, as much as for the purpose of learning how to have responsibility and being proud of something you're doing, starting something and finishing something and cleaning up from something. So I just feel like that is missed so much.

For the Daugherty's as well as for other home schooling families, moments of potential learning are scattered throughout the day, and education is not limited to the time that the mothers and children spend working with their school books. As a speaker at the curriculum fair I attended said, "There's nothing sacred about the hours between 7:30 and 3:00."

Hazel and Thomas Mason were unique among the families I studied in that they choose to send their three school age children – Virginia, Justin, and Brian – to public school, but have decided to home school each child for their fifth grade year. As I talked with Hazel, who formerly worked as a fifth grade public school teacher, about some of the challenges of home schooling Virginia, she articulated some of their expectations for the relationship of home life to school life. When I asked what some drawbacks of home schooling are, Hazel said that,

Virginia would say that one drawback is that, at dinner, if we're talking about our plants for school, I'll say, "Virginia, why don't you tell everybody what we learned in school today," or about something interesting we learned. "Virginia, why don't you explain to them why the broccoli's green?" She always smiles and says, "That's the drawback of living with your teacher."

Later in the conversation, Hazel told me that, "I find myself consciously stopping myself from teaching something. 'That was a teaching moment, but we're going to just let it

pass.” Virginia, as an erstwhile public school student, resists her mother’s attempts to bring her education to bear upon situations outside of those designated for learning. Science lessons are not appropriate at the dinner table for Virginia. Hazel, though she tries to connect “what we learned *in school*” (my italics) with the rest of their lives, also sees this interconnectivity as a potential drawback of home schooling, and so she sometimes voluntarily limits her schooling to school time. Their expectations for the relationship of education and family life were formed in the context of public education, and I read them as an exception in my data that proves the rule. Whereas other home schooling mothers and children sought after and enjoyed the interconnections between their learning and their family lives, Virginia and, to a lesser extent, Hazel accepted a practical and symbolic distinction between school and home, learning and living.

When I had originally conceived this project, I was curious to learn about the home schoolers’ use of their home space, as I expected that they may seek to clarify role expectations within the family using spatial strategies of differentiation. When they are in the school room, mother is teacher; when in the kitchen, she is mother. This turned out not to be the case. Not only did the mothers embrace the role integration and ambiguity of being mother-teacher, but they also reflected the intermixing of home and school within their uses of the home. Erin Olsen told me that “We don’t do school at home,” and she elaborated: “I don’t have learning centers. I don’t have a bulletin board. I don’t use a chalk board... There aren’t desks – they sit where they sit, they’ve got clipboards. Because a classroom isn’t what’s required for learning.” Lisa Rutherford told me that, “I tried the whole approach, we got the little cute desks with the chair attached, and every

time Max would color – he was a kindergartener – the crayon would roll down. So I sold those. Got them in a yard sale, sold them in a yard sale.”

I asked Ruth West to describe to me their typical home schooling operations, and she told me how she and her three elementary age children do “school” at different places in the house, depending on the time of year:

Ruth: Generally we start out here in the kitchen, for August-September, but then it starts to get chilly. Our kitchen just doesn’t stay warm. And so we move back to our bedroom. We’re not the traditional, you know, sit at a desk kind of people. We just sit on the floor. I do have a desk back there. I sit at the desk, and they either flop on my bed or on the floor.

Monica: So you’re all in there together?

Ruth: Yes. And we usually close the door, because like I said, our house stays kind of chilly all winter.

Monica: I have talked with another family that had to relocate for the winter, too.

Ruth: This is great, the temperature like it is now, and it’s warm through September, but after that the kids get cold. Plus, when I’m back there, I can also jump up and fold some laundry or something while they’re working on stuff. Of course, if I’m in here, I can get started with something for dinner, too, so...

When I would ask other mothers about where they would work in their homes, they would explain with an amused expression that many people think, as I did, that they have a little school room set up in the house, complete with chalkboard and rows of desks. As I was writing this chapter, I happened to watch an episode of a dramatic home make-over show in which a new home was being built for a home schooling family. The construction and design team built them a separate school building adjacent to the house – literally a “little red schoolhouse” – with rows of standard school desks, a large teacher’s desk at the front of the room, chalkboards, and an American flag. It was my turn to smile knowingly, as I now knew that this arrangement would be atypical. While

the home schooling materials and activity were often headquartered in a particular room for the sake of organization, the children would frequently take their work to their bedrooms or would relocate to the kitchen table or living room couch to work. A variety of domestic spaces were considered appropriate for school work, such that the home schooling philosophy of integrating education and family life was given expression through their uses of their home space.

In addition to spatial practices, home schools employ the temporal integration of familial and educational activity. Home schoolers critique the manner, as they characterize it, in which institutional schools set an authoritative schedule to which parents and children must conform their actions; instead, home schoolers try to allow their time schedule to emerge organically out of their daily and yearly rhythms and needs of the moment.⁴⁶ Ruth West explained to me the general schedule of their home school, and I believe it nicely captures the way in which home schooling mothers feel that they order their time organically rather than artificially:

Monica: Can you just walk me through... a typical day for you, what that would look like?

Ruth: We generally get up and have breakfast. And probably by 8:00 – we try to get started by 8:00.

Monica: Is there a particular reason for that time?

Ruth: It's because if we get started by 8:00 then we'd generally be done by noon, 1:00 anyway. I have found that it's different with each child. I've found that if I let my oldest son sleep a little bit longer then he's not as grumpy and he does better. Generally, at least with the two younger ones, we get started by 8:00, and

⁴⁶ In the pages that follow, I reiterate several common critiques of institutional schools made by home schooling parents and advocates. In voicing them, I do not mean to communicate that their characterization of schools is accurate. Indeed, I am showing how the parents with whom I spoke drew deliberate oppositions between their educational practices and those attributed to schools as a means of their construction of religio-cultural difference. In other words, I argue for the decidedly interested nature of their critique of institutional education, rather than its accuracy or fairness.

we'll just work – I'll work with one of them for a few minutes and get them started on something and then they'll be working on something else while I'm working with the other one on their math. I can't say that we do math for an hour and English for an hour – we go in a different order every day, it depends on what they want to do...Or, if I feel like, okay, we didn't do this much English from yesterday, so we'll just do some catch up time and try to make sure we get through with that day. It works both ways, you know, I also sometimes choose that they're each going to get an extra lesson done this week.

Monica: Do you sort of have goals for the year, or for the day..?

Ruth: No, not really. The curriculum I use has lessons, and so we just try to get through a lesson a day. In most things. You know, generally English, math we try to get through a lesson a day. But we generally only do history and science two or three times a week, we don't do it all five days. Unless I feel like maybe the week before maybe we only got a couple lessons done and maybe we would do it five days the next week. I try to have half of the printed lessons done by December, then we quit for Christmas, and we pick up from there.

Monica: So when do you usually start in the year?

Ruth: We usually start in the middle of August, and then we're done usually by the end of April. We do not – we do break for Christmas, but we don't do spring break. We'll occasionally take a day off, for their birthdays or something. A lot of times days off will become an educational field trip, so it will still count toward the 180. We do have to count to 180.

Monica: Is that coincidence that it ended up being similar to a typical school year? Or was that more convenient somehow?

Ruth: I guess I just kind of try to stick to the traditional school year, just because that's when everybody else is in school. And, like I said, we just enjoy our summers off. We get to take our vacations. A lot of home schoolers do do school through the summer. But we generally, since we don't have family here, we travel a lot through the summer...it's nice not to have to do school.

For home schoolers, one difference between home school and institutional school uses of time appears at the very beginning of the day. Whereas institutional school must begin at the same time for everybody, everyday, the start time for home school is free to fluctuate slightly, to accommodate circumstances like a late night the night before, a longer breakfast, or a sleepy child. Jessica Daugherty told me that she and her daughters try not to work past 2:00 in the afternoon because “We just sort-of get fried. We all sort-of start

feeling bad and not doing well and not concentrating well, and I lose my patience, and it's too much." The timing of education unfolds in relation to the fluctuations of family life – feeding, clothing, sleeping, vacations, waning attention spans, and fathers' work schedules.

Many of the home schoolers with whom I worked valued the fact that their school schedule could adjust to accommodate unusual family circumstances, both positive and negative, such as an illness, a move, an off-peak season vacation, birthdays, the birth of a new baby. Nancy Thompson told me how,

My grandfather on my father's side had an aneurism several years ago now, and I went up to see him for two weeks. He was at St. Joseph's Hospital. And we were able to drop everything. A lot of that time that we spent at the hospital I was still able to count as school time. One day they did school at other people's houses. But they learned a lot about critical care, about death, about waiting for someone to die, that we really tried to expound, instead of just letting life pass us.

In general, the flexible time schedule of home schooling reflects the integration of education with family life. Education happens not at a set time but whenever a "teachable moment" – a favorite phrase of home schoolers – arises. The timing of education does not follow their characterization of the institutional school pattern of largely inflexible schedules; instead, the "schedule" of home schooling families emerges as their educational activities are interwoven with their other family obligations and priorities.

In addition to their spatial and temporal integration of home and "school," conservative Protestant home schooling parents argue that home schooling enables their children's education to proceed in concert with the unique developmental pace of each individual child. Home schoolers of many different stripes critique the institutional school practice of age grading, by which some schools make use of age differences to

segment children into manageable groups and to structure a course of curriculum. Further, home schooling advocates argue against the pacing of education in parallel with physical growth, such that one progresses through grades one through twelve at the same unvarying rate that one ages from six years to eighteen years old (barring “failure”) (Holt, 1981). Home schoolers oppose to this practice of age grading their own belief that educational progress and a child’s age do not necessarily coincide with one another in the same way for every child. Home school advocates Raymond and Dorothy Moore have written in *Better Late Than Early* that the standard institutional school timing of educational benchmarks does not match with the natural learning tendencies of some students, particularly boys, and to force them to conform to that learning schedule is potentially harmful (Moore & Moore, 1975).

I listened in one day as Faith Cartwright exhibited this integration of education with child development, encouraging her eight year old daughter Shari that she would grow to be a good reader some day despite her current struggles. Faith taught Shari that, just like her older adoptive sister Susan, she is not a visual learner, and so her reading skills initially develop at a slower pace than those of her younger, also adoptive sister Sammie, who seemed to learn how to read overnight. Shari asked tentatively, “Are you sure?” “I’m positive. All of the Cartwrights are good readers.”

Gina Rossini explained to me that one of the benefits of home schooling for their oldest daughter is that she has been able to move through the math and reading curricula at a variable pace, depending on how challenging she found the material.

My daughter is reading on a college level, and she’s just barely starting ninth grade. But she excels in reading. And when she’s needed some help on the math side, we took two years to get through that math book in third grade. We didn’t finish it in third grade. “But we’re going to take our time, and we’re going

to finish it, and you're going to know it when we finish it." The first time they took a spelling test and they did poorly – the first time they did poorly on a spelling test, I should say – I think it was my daughter, it was one of the two – she was upset over it and ready to put it away. And I said, "That's not the way we do home school. See, in home school, I don't really care what grade you get. I want to know that you can spell all the words. We're going to do this test again until you can spell all the words." And so it's funny, it was like, all of a sudden, "Wait a minute. I'm done with that, I did the test."

...We did this with multiplication. My daughter had a really hard time with multiplication. She just could not memorize her tables. And she actually would cry, "I just can't memorize!" I said, "Honey, what's your name. What's your address. What's your phone number." I could keep going, and she could tell me a thousand and one different things. She could tell me characters of the books she read, and authors of the books she read, and on and on and on. And I said, "You have no problem with your memory. Your memory works. Don't make this an obstacle. We will get through this." And we found every game on multiplication that existed. And her younger brother got it really quickly, so the two of them would just drill each other, and eventually she did memorize her multiplication tables. And it took a long time. And I said, "We can't move on until you get this. If we don't get this, there is no higher math. We're stumped here in third grade." We had to be patient. When she is ready to get this, she'll get it. And she does. Now she's quite proficient. She's doing grade-level math. Which is wonderful! You think, wow, she's doing ninth grade math! She's doing *algebra* this year. Where I think if she were in any school system, I don't think we'd be able to say that. They would've had to say, "Well, that's good enough, let's move on. Let's move on. You can't get it, let's move on."

For Faith, Gina, and many other home schooling mothers, age grading fundamentally does not make sense, because the pace of learning differs from child to child, as well as from subject to subject and age to age for particular children.

In several ways, conservative Protestant home schooling families directly oppose their educational practices to those that they consider to be prevalent in institutional schools. They find institutional schools to be characterized by differentiation and hierarchy; from their perspective, schools divide space, time, groups of students, and knowledge into segments that are then ordered in a hierarchical scheme that correlates classrooms, time periods, academic subjects, and age-specific groups of children into a rigidly maintained structure. As opposed to this manner of differentiation, home schools

consider that they proceed with an organic integration of education with the other aspects of their children's lives. The timing of their learning (both in their daily routine as well as in their long-term progression through the course of study), as well as their relative spatial freedom, emerges organically from the spectrum of their needs, interests, and abilities as children within a domestic environment. Their practices of the unification of education with family life and with child development thus create home schooling in their eyes as a different, perhaps opposite, form of schooling from institutional school education. The organic unity of education with the lives of families and children sets home schooling apart, in their minds, from the institutional separation of family from school and the multiple and hierarchical differentiations within schools.

In sum, conservative Protestant home schooling parents practice unification in many ways: the integration of curricula with their Christian world view, the integration of familial and educational life, and the integration of education with child development. Their actions of teaching and parenting are organized according to the strategy of the organic unity of parts into a whole. They seek to practice a holistic way of life in which family, education, and faith are densely coherent with one another.⁴⁷ From their perspective, this Christian unity sets them apart from other families, including other Christian families, for whom school, home, and church are institutionally and experientially discrete.

⁴⁷ This reading of home schooling as a practice of the integration of church, home, and school is similar to McDannell's interpretation of contemporary home schooling as a reiteration of the cult of domesticity of the nineteenth century American middle class. (McDannell, 1995)

PRACTICING SACRED UNITY

While the integrations of conservative Protestant home schooling parents thus are thought to distinguish them by their coherence, their strategic habit of unification also provides for their specifically religious distinction as conservative Protestants. The strategy of unification by which they order their home schooling is also employed in their lives of faith as a means of sanctification. Specifically, they understand that their lives are made sacred through the unification of their selves – their wills, their minds, their hearts, their actions, and their circumstances – with the will, mind, heart, and activity of God as revealed in their Christianity. Though I believe home schooling fathers to seek a similar sanctification, I observed and discussed only the ways in which home schooling mothers practice their sanctification through unification. I came to understand that, in praying and in reading their Bibles, they interpret the passage of their lives according to the terms by which conservative Protestants impart sacred import: narratives of self and of the Bible. The sacred meaning they give to their lives emerges from their interpretive union of self and situation with revelation, in prayer and Bible reading. Their sanctification is accomplished through the unification of Christian meanings with their selves and situations. Thus made holy, conservative Protestant home schooling mothers know themselves to be set apart as Christians.

When I asked each parent how often they pray, my question seemed to call to mind for many the Bible verse where the writer, presumably Paul, encourages Christian believers to “*pray without ceasing.*”⁴⁸ Eleven of the fifteen mothers with whom I spoke said that they pray always, continually, throughout the day, in addition to near-daily formally set aside times of prayer. Though all of the families reported praying for one

⁴⁸ I Thessalonians 5:17, KJV.

another and sometimes with one another, I was fortunate to be part of family prayer time for the Mason and Heaney families, the first two families with whom I worked. As I ate lunch or supper with nearly all of the families, I also took part in meal-time prayer.

I had come to know somewhat Thomas and Hazel Mason and their four kids through the campus ministry group with which I was involved as a graduate student, as Thomas was the former director. When they decided to home school their eldest daughter Virginia for her fifth grade year, and when they found out that I was doing a study of Christian home schoolers for my dissertation, they offered to be my first volunteers. On my second morning with them, I arrived as Hazel was busy getting their toddler Elizabeth ready to go to rehearsal for a ballet performance that afternoon. Hazel reminded Elizabeth about her morning chore – putting away the clean silverware from the dishwasher – as she packed her lunch and helped her get into her ballet clothes. Hazel called Virginia to come downstairs to join her and Elizabeth in the living room that she had just tidied up.

As we settled down into our chairs, Elizabeth snug in Hazel's lap, the telephone rang and the answering machine turned on. Hazel paused to listen as the message was being recorded. A friend was calling to ask Hazel and Thomas to pray for her husband's Ph.D. qualifying exams, which were taking place that week. As Thomas came downstairs, Hazel told him about the tests. Thomas asked, "Did you stop to pray already?" "No, but we need to pray for the day also." Thomas, Hazel, Virginia, Elizabeth and I bowed our heads, closed our eyes, and clasped our hands. Thomas asked God to help their friend with his exams, and as their friend was also my friend and colleague and as I knew first-hand of the need for courage during exam time, I silently

thought my own “amen” along with Thomas. Hazel followed Thomas with her prayers for the day ahead, as she asked God to help her and Virginia to have a good day of learning, to help them be focused on their work and patient with one another. Hazel also prayed for my research project and my upcoming wedding, that these would go smoothly and be times of joy rather than stress. Elizabeth whispered to Hazel, and Hazel added a prayer for the ballet that afternoon. Elizabeth then evidently decided that she wanted to voice her own prayer, and so she began to, but she very quickly started giggling. Thomas, gently but decisively, took over the prayer time and ended it. “We ask all of these things in the name of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.”

Many other Christian home schooling families begin their school day with a similar practice of prayer, often a simple request for God’s help in the learning and teaching to come. What do they understand this ritualized practice to accomplish, in subsequent events and in themselves? In their practice of opening the home schooling day with prayer, Christian home schooling mothers seem to initiate their daily lives into sacred purpose. The effects of prayer extend beyond the time of praying, providing the day to come with orientation, direction, purpose, goal, theme. It is as though by praying at the start they place their day, however it unfolds, under the heading “dedicated to God.” Jason Olsen, a home schooling father of five and avid reader of reformed theology, explained to me the concept of *quorum deo*, and I think this concept nicely captures the effect of opening prayer for home schooling mothers who so pray.

The concept of *quorum deo* is “under the gaze of God.” So to live life *quorum deo* means to live your life as though all aspects of your life are under the gaze of God. It’s kind of a holistic kind of thing so you don’t bifurcate worship while you’re singing with worship while you’re working. All is worship.

In beginning their work with prayer, Christian home schooling mothers create the understanding, in themselves and their children, that the day to come, even in its seemingly non-sacred moments, will receive the attention of God. Their time of prayer and their time of school work are not bifurcated; all of their work is undertaken in an attitude of prayer. Home schooling mothers can report praying continuously, teaching continuously, and parenting continuously because they understand their lives in all aspects to be *quorum deo*. The practice of opening prayer is only the most visible indicator of their awareness of God's unceasing gaze.

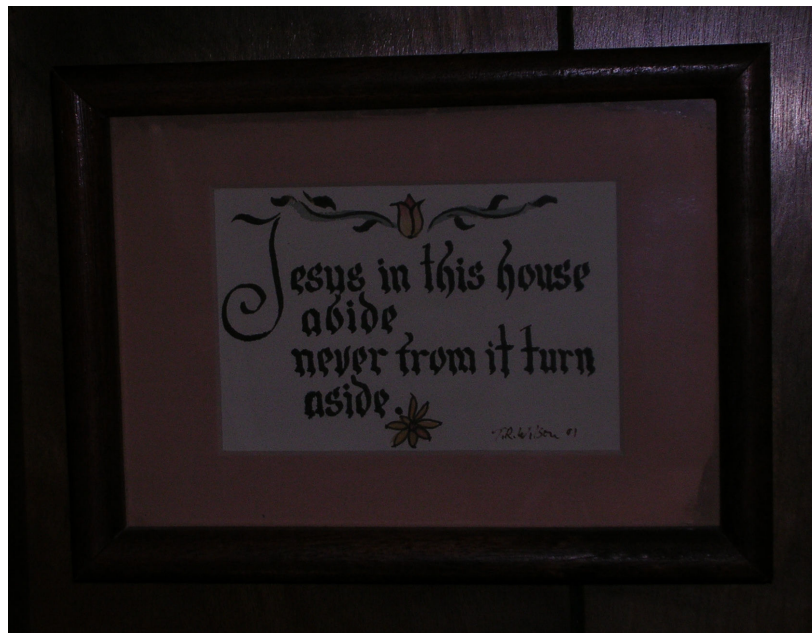


Figure 5. "Jesus in this house abide." A framed calligraphy on a wall in the Cartwright living room.

Prayer as conservative Protestants practice it is more than an acknowledgement of God as a distant observer, however. In her study of the Aglow Fellowship of evangelical women, Marie Griffith describes the ways in which the narrative pattern of the women's

testimonies and prayers provides a framework for the telling of their stories of themselves and, therefore, for the shaping of their identities (Griffith, 1997). Spiritual and gender identity emerges for these praying women as they fit their own stories to the flexible narrative patterns of their community of faith, patterns that Griffith calls “mutable scripts” (Griffith, 1997, p. 17 and elsewhere). For instance, as the women Aglow prayed for healing and transformation, they would tell their story of personal suffering in the terms of the mutable script of the gospel story of Christ’s redemptive suffering and glorious resurrection. The narration of their prayers transformed their pain into a gift of a benevolent Father for the sake of their rebirth as a new creature in Christ.⁴⁹ *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”*⁵⁰

The prayers of Christian home schooling mothers also shape their own self-understanding, through the narrative forms they use as well as the ritualized features of their prayer practice. Instead of stories of redemption and healing, though, the prayers of these women tell the story of the active presence of God in situations and persons, so that the agentic selfhood of the mothers is mixed with God’s divine agency. *“Christ liveth in me.”* The narrative content of the prayers was simple and direct, often nothing more than, “Help us to have a good day today.” In many cases it was, “help me to be...” or “help me to do...” whatever was needed or desired at the moment for the growth and well-being of child-student and mother-teacher.

⁴⁹ (Griffith, 1997) ch. 3, after p. 85

⁵⁰ Galatians 2:20, KJV.

While I did not record the words of mothers' prayers, I did ask them about the role of God in their home school. Jessica Daugherty explained it in this way:

Jessica: Well, for example, you always ask yourself, am I home schooling because God wants me to, or is this my idea? Is this really the thing that is best for my family, or am I just doing this for my own little reasons? And so I have to always confront that question every year throughout my home schooling year, and so I ask God, do you want me home schooling or not? And of course, then I get a letter from God that spells it out completely, in the mail. (*Jessica and I laugh.*) No, then, I try to pay attention to all the different ways that God gives you an answer to prayer. I just try to listen. So far I have felt that God wanted me home schooling.

And so then you ask God, what can I do about this particular problem we're having a problem with, or how can I do better, or what books do you want me to buy for next year. Those kinds of questions, I really just pray, and really try hard to find the answers. And so God has been the leader and the one who helps me answer those questions.

And God is the example to me. I went on a retreat at the end of this school year, and I was just praying about what can I do better, how can I teach them better. And one of the things that I felt like I got, in my reading, I was studying a certain book, and the woman started talking – have you ever read Evelyn Underhill?

Monica: Someone has recommended her to me. I've just read excerpts.

Jessica: So great. So anyway, she was talking about Jesus as a teacher, and how he taught through parables, and how he taught in a way that was very simple and earthy, and how anyone could grab hold of some truth in the parables he was teaching. Even if you were way advanced you could still see a new lesson in that. And so I think God was helping me to figure out that I need to teach more like Jesus. So that's something I'm meditating on this summer. How can I teach more like Jesus, and let things be more applicable to life. And so in that, I guess my answer is that I'm trying to follow the example, how did he teach. Jesus taught in parables, God is teaching me, day by day, how can I teach better. I'm just going to look at him and figure out, what can I do.

And God is the reason that I can do anything. God is my strength and my salvation. And the reason I don't fear. Because there are a lot of fears in mothering. And there's a triple fear in mothering and home schooling. I'm not going to be afraid because God is my refuge and his Spirit is with me, and gives me peace, so a lot of times my attitude needs adjusting, and that's what God does for me. Many, many, many times.

We wade into deep waters when we consider the workings of prayer in the believer's soul. The limited interpretation I would like to draw out of Jessica's testimony is the way

in which the prayers of home schooling mothers mingle their own active will with that of God. Jessica spoke for many of the mothers when she emphasized the diverse personal and specific ways that God helps her through her prayers. From the decision to home school in the first place, to the curriculum packages to order, to her teaching style, Jessica seeks and finds God's active direction and guidance. God is her teacher as she is her children's teacher; God teaches her and, through her, her children. More than yielding up practical answers to home schooling questions, though, these mothers consider that their prayers transform their selfhood on the inside as they are given strength, courage, peace, and a changed attitude. In praying for their home schooling, these Christian mother-teachers pray themselves into an attitude of the will that blends their own action in teaching and parenting with God's action in and through them.

In sum, when these mothers begin the home schooling day with a prayer for God to help them in the day ahead, they indicate their belief that their home schooling actions are infused with God's own active presence. Through prayer, they practice the unification of specific aspects of self with specific aspects of Christianity: of self-narration with Christian narratives, of personal with divine agency, of their home schooling activity with God's purpose and presence. The unifications of self accomplished through prayer thus set the activity of home schooling mothers apart from mere quotidian teaching: in a word, their interpretive unification sanctifies.

In addition to opening the day with prayer, ten of the sixteen families with whom I worked began their home school day with Bible study. Some families used a Bible study curriculum, and others read through different portions of the Bible as they chose. At the beginning of my first day with the Olsen family, for instance, Erin asked her four

sons to find their Bibles while she chatted with me about their usual schedule and showed her preschool age daughter Sharon how to wipe the pancake crumbs and sticky syrup off the table after breakfast: “scoop and scrub.” While the boys were still gathering their Bibles and themselves, Erin told me about her husband Jason’s love of reformed theology and how one of their goals in home schooling their children is to impart a firm theology to them. “Not that it changes your standing before God, but it helps to know what Christians through the ages have thought. Because people say things today about God that sound nice, but aren’t true.” The boys – fourteen year old Jacob, twelve year old Dustin, ten year old Timothy, and eight year old Jesse – joined us at the freshly scrubbed kitchen table for the “Proverb of the day.” Erin asked them to turn to Proverbs chapter 31, and she read aloud, “the sayings of King Lemuel, an oracle his *mother* taught him. I think that’s noteworthy.” She continued reading, “ ‘O son of my womb’ – that would refer to you guys,” and Dustin joked, “Okay, this is a little messed up.” Erin continued reading verses 1-9:

“O my son, o son of my womb, o son of my vows,
Do not spend your strength on women,
your vigor on those who ruin kings.
It is not for kings, o Lemuel –
not for kings to drink wine,
not for rulers to crave beer,
Lest they drink and forget what the law decrees,
and deprive all the oppressed of their rights.
Give beer to those who are perishing,
give wine to those who are in anguish;
Let them drink and forget their poverty
and remember their misery no more.
Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,
for the rights of all who are destitute.
Speak up and judge fairly;
defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

As the boys wrote and doodled on their pieces of paper, Erin told them that not wasting their strength on women could mean, for them, a lesson about how they should act around girls. “Don’t put a lot of energy into trying to impress girls, because in the end, you want them to like you for who you are.” She told the boys how she and Jason were friends for a long while before they started dating, and how their dad liked her because she spoke her mind honestly and didn’t just tell him what he wanted to hear. “We became friends because we disagreed about something.”

Then she asked them, “Basically, what is it saying about alcohol?” They sat silently staring at their papers, so she answered, “Not to crave it, not to want it more than anything else, not to put it above your duties.” She added, “It affects your brain chemistry, so that the more you drink, the stupider you get. You start to lose your inhibitions.”

Dustin asked, “What are inhibitions?”

“Something that stops you from following your instincts.”

“Like your conscience?”

“Inhibitions are neither good nor evil. Some can be good, some can be bad. For example, an inhibition that keeps you from saying hi to a girl might not be good, because in the long run it won’t help you because she’ll never know who you are.”

Erin then asked quiet and thoughtful Jesse what his favorite verse was of the ones that she read. He chose verse eight, “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.” Dustin, the inquisitive one this morning, asked, “How do you know what they want, for you to speak up for them?” Erin reminded Dustin about how he was worrying about Terri Schiavo, the woman in a

persistent vegetative state whose husband ultimately decided to remove her feeding tube. “You were worried about how other people were trying to speak up for her rights, but how we couldn’t know what her own wishes were.”

Dustin asked, “Did she die?”

“Yes.”

“Did they kill her?”

“Technically, no, but they removed her life support, and if you do that to anyone, they’ll die.”

As a former special education instructor for children with severe disabilities, Erin explained to the children how she used to have some students who were born with only a brain stem, “just enough for basic functions. But they could also experience love, and respond to kind touches. They knew their mothers.” She continued, “People in a vegetative state are still human. You can’t say that a person’s ability to function determines their humanity. For instance, with an older person, would you say they’re not a person because they have to wear a diaper and can’t talk? Your generation will have to deal with these issues, will have to pray about the right thing to do.” Erin then related the Schiavo case and the biblical instruction to “speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves” to Hitler’s genocide. “Hitler began, little by little, to convince people that other people are not fully human, especially Jewish people, the mentally ill, and the physically handicapped. I gave you guys *Animal Farm* to read, it’s perfect for this. We still have troubles giving equal treatment to people who look different.” Dustin responded as only a twelve year old can, “That kind of sucks.” “Millions of people were killed while the church in Germany just stood there. Some people said something, but not

many. Where would it stop? Hitler wanted only blond haired and blue eyed people. You guys would be okay, but me and mom would not be so good.” Erin’s mother is Korean and has a physical handicap, her father is Caucasian, and so is Jason. The children all look like Jason, with fair hair and blue eyes.

As she does most days, Erin Olsen chose a portion of the biblical text, in this case nine somewhat obscure verses from the book of Proverbs – “the sayings of Lemuel” – and used them to teach her sons about present concerns, such as dating, alcohol, human rights, history, genocide, and a contemporary event that challenged the ethical reasoning of her sons and the American public. The strategies of interpretation she uses allow her to select some verses and ignore others; neither she nor her sons discuss the biblical recommendation to “Give beer to those who are perishing, give wine to those who are in anguish; Let them drink and forget their poverty and remember their misery no more.” Their Bible study that morning, as with the other Bible studies I observed, was a practice in building a bridge of interpretation by which the contemporary priorities of the reader drive the interpretation of the text (less so the other way around). As with the connections conservative Protestant home schooling parents draw between math, history, science and the bible, their manner of biblical interpretation looks for continuity rather than discontinuity between what the mothers teach and their Christianity. In other words, their practices of bible reading are the production of unity between biblical passage and contemporary situation, a production that does not include the recognition of disunity.



Figure 6. The children's bibles on the Mason's coffee table.



Figure 7. Several Bibles on a bookshelf in the Simpson's sunroom.

For conservative Protestants, the devotional practice of Bible reading is a primary way in which God is revealed as an active presence in the course of current events, large and small. As I was preparing my thoughts on this chapter, my Presbyterian minister with strong evangelical tendencies delivered a sermon in which he taught, “Remember that question I invite you to ask every time you open up the Bible: ‘Why is this passage coming to me at this time in my life?’ There is a delightful Mystery about reading the Word of God; you’ll find it if you just ask, and reflect on that question.”⁵¹ Months later, as I was still writing this chapter, I was reading a book called *The Pursuit of God* by A. W. Tozer, a fundamentalist-evangelical minister and theologian who wrote this particular book in 1949. In a chapter called “The Speaking Voice,” he wrote:

I believe that much of our religious unbelief is due to a wrong conception of and a wrong feeling for the Scriptures of Truth. A silent God suddenly began to speak in a book and when the book was finished lapsed back into silence again forever...The facts are that God is not silent, has never been silent. It is the nature of God to speak. The second Person of the Holy Trinity is called the Word. The Bible is the inevitable outcome of God’s continuous speech...it is not only a book which was once spoken, but a book which is *now speaking*. The prophets habitually said, “Thus *saith* the Lord.” They meant their hearers to understand that God’s speaking is in the continuous present. We may use the past tense properly to indicate that at a certain time a certain word of God was spoken, but a word of God once spoken continues to be spoken, as a child once born continues to be alive, or a world once created continues to exist (Tozer, 1993).

This understanding of the continual revelation of God through his now-speaking Word is a cornerstone of conservative Protestant belief and practice. The home schooling moms practiced it well, and as a result they brought biblical interpretation to the everyday events and concerns of themselves and their children.

Just as the practice of opening prayer sanctifies the day that comes after it, so can Bible reading invoke God’s presence in the apparently non-sacred moments of home

⁵¹ Rev. David Handley, “When We are Afraid,” First Presbyterian Church of Evanston, Nov. 6, 2005.

schooling life. Much as the women prayer warriors of Aglow Fellowship narrated their lives through the use of mutable prayer scripts, so do Christian mother-teachers make use of the Biblical text to shape available moments and Biblical meanings in conjunction with each other. Mothers like Erin teach their children how to read the Bible as a living book, a book through which God continually speaks to them, today. As she drew connections between the Biblical text and her sons' pressing interests – girls, alcohol, the Schiavo case, a book she made them read – Erin taught the boys how to merge their daily Bible reading with their current situation.

Anthropologist Susan Friend Harding studied the textual practices of fundamentalist Christians in Rev. Jerry Falwell's church in Lynchburg, Virginia (Harding, 2000). She shows how the Biblical hermeneutic of these believers involves the recognition of parallels between Biblical stories and the life story of the believer, of figural connections between Biblical "type-scenes" and personal events. In Harding's words, "The context in which biblical stories are meaningful and the context of one's personal life collapse into each other, and the fusion evokes a sense of great insight, of miracle. All of these stories are speaking to you. These stories are God speaking to you" (Harding, 2000, p. 56). In daily devotional Bible reading, Christian home schooling mothers practice, for themselves and their children, this interpretive process of reading current situations of personal life according to the continuous revelation of God's living Word. God has something to say to the mothers and the children about many aspects of their lives, and devotional Bible reading enables them to hear his Word.

In sum, conservative Protestant home schooling mothers give meaning to self and situation by means of their practices of prayer and Bible reading; specifically, they

practice the interpretive unification of aspects of self and situation with aspects of Christian revelation, biblical and prayerful. To borrow Harding's phrase, the contexts of their personal lives, their prayers, and the biblical narratives "collapse into each other" as they are united through interpretation, a collapse that emphasizes elements of conjunction rather than disjunction. I understand this interpretive union as a further elaboration of the more general scheme of unification by which conservative Protestant home schoolers perform their cultural distinction. Just as, in their own estimation, their integration of Christianity, education and family life sets them apart from the norms of the broader American public, so too does the Christian meaning they impart to self and situation set apart their days from a common to a sacred use. In short, their practices of unification can be re-read as practices of sanctification, in two senses: the infusion of Christian meaning, and the setting apart of themselves from the non-Christian world. In their Christian curriculum, their familial education, and their devotional practices, conservative Protestant home schooling parents do not only unify various aspects of their familial and individual lives within the umbrella of their Christianity. In so doing, they create the sanctification that marks their difference from non-Christian others.

While I do believe that the practice of organic unity is deeply and broadly meaningful in Christian home schooled domesticity, I do not mean to imply that they practice unification without contradiction. If the necessity of common denominators is required by God's character for the addition of fractions, why is it not also required for their multiplication or division? Furthermore, some aspects of curricula, self and situation are more hermeneutically available for the attribution of Christian meaning than others; one can look to Jesus as a model of teaching through parables, but how does one make

Christian the memorization of math facts such as the number of feet in a mile? In short, not *all* is made to be distinctly Christian in the domestic life of conservative Protestant home schooling families, nor is all made to be different from what it might otherwise be without Christianity or without home schooling. The particular omissions from the sacred umbrella – that which is left out of the process of unification – would no doubt be instructive, for they would indicate the boundaries of conservative Protestant subcultural identity, the line in the sand between sacred and secular, Christian and not. Indeed, the selectivity with which Christian unification is executed enables the creation of a conservative Protestant identity that is sometimes different from and sometimes the same as other American identities, “in but not of the world.” Though the specification and explanation of such selectivity is needed – what it is about units of measurement that is not Christian, and about teaching that can be – it is more than I can do in the present work.

E PLURIBUS UNUM: UNITY AND MULTIPLICITY

In this chapter I have traced out several ways in which conservative Protestant home schooling parents accomplish their tasks of parenting and education according to a general intention toward unification. Their organic educational practices seek to integrate Christianity with curriculum, familial with educational life, and education with child development, and their devotional practices of prayer and bible reading accomplish the interpretive integration of self and situation with revealed Christian meanings. I have argued that these practices of unification can be understood as a pragmatic means of

subcultural distinction, as they understand that their unification of many aspects of life within Christianity sanctifies them and separates them from “the world.”

Conservative Protestant home schooling parents understand their unity of teaching, parenting, and faith as evidence of their Christian difference, but why should unification in particular be an effective means of differentiation for them? In some concluding paragraphs meant to be more suggestive than conclusive, I explore the implied opposition between a practiced Christian unity and a worldly multiplicity. The insistent coherence of home schooling domesticity may be a subcultural desideratum because of its relation to the conservative Protestant critique of the political and social requirements of democratic pluralism as currently constituted: the notion of the religious neutrality of public institutions. For instance, some conservative Protestants have argued against what they see as a pseudo-religion of “secular humanism” in the curricula of public schools and argued for the inclusion in public education of Christian or more broadly religious instruction or practice (Hankins, 2002). At the heart of such church-state issues for conservative Protestants is their interpretation of the institutions of the American public, and especially the schools, as perpetrating the establishment of a quasi-religious secularity and the prohibition of the free exercise of Christian religion (Nord, 1996).

I suggest that we can re-read this line of critique as an argument against the establishment, not of secularity only, but also of multiplicity. The points of educational reform most troubling to some conservative Protestants – racial integration, multiculturalism, inclusion, “moral relativism,” and the “secular humanism” that they identify as the de-facto ethical system of the American public - are part of the response

of public institutions of education to the political challenges (and opportunities) of a plural public. What has been established, in theory though certainly not always in practice, is the right to representation in public education of a multiplicity of races, classes, ethnicities, abilities, and religious or ethical orientations. Through a progressive politics of representation and identity, the “official knowledge” of the educational establishment has been made to account, however reluctantly and inadequately, for the variety of histories, economic situations, religious perspectives, political empowerments and disempowerments, and narratives that comprise a diverse and conflictual American history and culture.

In several of his books, critical sociologist of education Michael Apple critiques the many strands of what he calls the “conservative restoration” in American politics and educational reform in the 1990s and 2000s (Apple, 1996, 2006). He identifies one of their platforms, advocated especially by former secretary of education William Bennett and the “neoconservatives,” to be a “return” to the teaching of a “common” American culture and history, shared “traditional” values, and “the Western tradition.” Not surprisingly, Apple critiques such a reconfiguration of education for the way it reconstructs a fictitious unity and harmony in place of the contradictions and conflicts in American history, culture, and politics (Apple, 1996, p.34):

The very idea of a common culture upon which a national curriculum – as defined by neoconservatives – is to be built is itself a form of cultural politics. In the immense linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity that makes up the constant creativity and flux in which we live, it is the cultural policy of the Right to ‘override’ such diversity. Thinking it is reinstating a common culture, instead it is *inventing* one...

Neoconservative school reforms advocate the assertion of commonality over diversity in American history and culture, following a tendency to include the “same” and exclude

the “different,” to construct centers and margins, to assert as common that which is partial. In short, such reforms seek to create a semblance of unity where there is a reality of multiplicity.

That such multiplicity in a truly public education is often a theorized ideal rather than an actuality in the class- and race-segregated public school system is due, at least in part, to the counter-response of conservative Protestants: privatization of education. As Catholic Americans did nearly a century before them, conservative Protestants have founded alternative educational institutions, such as “Christian schools” and home schools, explicitly to contest the public establishment of a “religion” not their own. However, just as the establishment of Catholic schools was not only about religious difference but also about ethnicity and class difference in an industrializing, urbanizing nation, so, too, is the establishment of Christian schools a matter of more than religious distinction. The timing of the increased foundation of Christian schools in the actively desegregating years of the 1960s and 1970s may not be a coincidence, as recognized by their appellation and prosecution as “white academies.”⁵² Further, as I elaborate in the next chapter, the privatization of education, whether for religious reasons or otherwise, is both an outcome of class stratification and a means for its reproduction (Rose, 1988). Indeed, Apple critiques all manner of educational privatization as a misrecognized means of social stratification by class and race, a flight from the class and race multiplicities of the public school and square. A consequence of the privatization of conservative Protestant education – whether intended or not is beyond the scope of my study to determine – is the relative racial and class homogeneity of Christian schools. According

⁵² Though I do not vouch for its accuracy, for a presentation of the critique of Christian schools as a resistance to desegregation, see (Nevin & Bills, 1976). See also (Rose, 1988).

to the National Center for Education Statistics, 76.5% of students in conservative Christian schools are white (non-Hispanic), as opposed to 63% of public school students nation-wide.⁵³ Further, in the 1999-2000 school year, 24.0% of “other religious” schools (non-Catholic religious private schools, including Protestant Christian schools) had 0% minority students, as opposed to 4.7% of Catholic schools, 3.8% of non-sectarian private schools, and 3.9% of public schools (Alt & Peter, 2002, p. 10, table 5). While 6.3% of students nationally in non-Catholic religious schools are eligible for free or reduced-price school lunches, 42.5% of their public school counterparts are so eligible (Alt & Peter, 2002, p. 12, table 6).⁵⁴

In the early 1980s, professor of education Alan Peshkin spent eighteen months in participant observation of a fundamentalist Christian school in Illinois which he called Bethany Baptist Academy (BBA) (Peshkin, 1986). After learning of the socialization practices of the school, Peshkin characterized BBA as a total institution in Goffman’s sense, because the absolute doctrines of the church and school regarding belief and behavior were enjoined upon the students systematically and entirely, informing the students’ subjectivity outside of school as well (Goffman, 1961). If the truth of the school’s teachings and behavior codes, based as they are upon scripture and fundamentalist doctrine, is absolute, it must apply in all situations and for all individuals. As Peshkin describes of BBA (Peshkin, 1986, p. 55):

Regarding essentials, unity prevails. Headmaster McGraw considers BBA’s unity of purpose the characteristic which most distinguishes it from the public school. Whereas a diversity of religious and non-religious views characterize teachers in

⁵³ The first statistic is from Broughman and Swaim for the 2003-4 school year, and the second is from Alt and Peter for the 1999-2000 school year (Alt & Peter, 2002, p. 9, figure 3; Broughman & Swaim, 2006, p. 19, table 13).

⁵⁴ Alt and Peter use school lunch program eligibility as an indicator of socioeconomic status, as no direct measurement was available.

even the most homogeneous public school, Christian educators are of one mind on the central elements of belief. As true believers, they collectively endeavor to make true believers of their students... True believers do not conceive of competing, alternative truths. Truth is singular...

The unity of fundamentalist Christian truth and the unity of believers in that truth stands opposed to the multiplicity of belief that characterizes public schools. Further, the plurality of the public school is not only of belief but also of class and race, and a private Christian school may function as a relative removal from these other forms of heterogeneity. (In addition to an official language of racial equality, Peshkin found that the most clearly heard message of Bethany regarding race was a prohibition of interracial dating.)

The fundamentalist Christian school can thus be understood as a haven from the multiple and contesting pluralities of the broader American public.⁵⁵ Despite his non-fundamentalism, non-Christianity, and his ultimate concerns regarding the implications of total fundamentalist socialization for pluralism and freedom of religion, Peshkin understands the appeal of such a communal unity of mind (Peshkin, 1986, p. 283):⁵⁶

From the inside, where I tried to experience Bethany's world to the extent that my conscience and convictions allowed me, I could see a marvelous order, an enveloping sense of peace, an abundance of the meaning and sense of community that so often accompany a collective religious experience. When I left Bethany each Friday night to go to my own community, I felt I had left order for disorder, harmony for dissonance, and absolutism for relativism.

The total world of fundamentalist church, family, and school thus stands in the American cultural context as a carefully constructed island of coherence, commonality, and

⁵⁵ In her ethnography of fundamentalist Christian schools, Wagner contested Peshkin's thesis of the total separation of these schools, as she found ways in which fundamentalist Christian school selectively incorporate elements of popular culture into their educational and social worlds. Despite such occasional "accommodation" of popular culture, as she terms it, the fundamentalist Christian schools she studied are still largely separated from the political culture of the multiple pluralisms of public schools. (Wagner, 1990)

⁵⁶ Peshkin self-identifies as a Jew, to the reader of his book as well as to the fundamentalist Christians with whom he worked.

certainty – in short, of unity - in a sea of plurality.⁵⁷ The homogeneity of religious belief in the fundamentalist Christian school, and perhaps in the fundamentalist social world in general, creates their distinction through its opposition to the religious multiplicity outside its walls and networks. Indeed, I felt similarly to Peshkin when I left the homes of my study participants and returned to my professional home in scholarship, for the near-perfect coherence of faith with learning practiced in their educational worlds was a stark contrast to the tensions I have learned to appreciate as a religious student of the academic study of religion. The singularity of mind that I found in home schooling homes thus distinguished them, for me, from the contest of ideas that characterizes the scholarly community of academia.

Though I do not wish to presume a false commonality between conservative Protestants at large, Christian schools, conservative Protestant home schoolers, and neoconservative school reformers – these groups are certainly not all alike, and in many ways conflict⁵⁸ – I do wish to suggest a highly general, relatively common element in their perspectives and practices: their conspicuously constructed unity, be it of creed, of culture, or of history. Unification – the creation of one-ness out of many-ness – is a theme that reaches across their constructions of American and white conservative Protestant identity. White Protestantism has long thought itself the rightful center of cultural power in a “Christian” America, the keepers of a “common” American cultural heritage, the generic middle beside which a variety of others are made special and

⁵⁷ Ammerman makes a similar analysis of fundamentalist socialization in (Ammerman, 1987)

⁵⁸ There are important differences, for instance, between a fundamentalist Christian school and a conservative Protestant home school, not least of which are the differences between a family and an institution with formalized beliefs and codes of behavior, the different symbolic relations of families and schools to the public sphere, and therefore the different political implications of Christian schools and home schools.

marginal (Handy, 1984; Hart, 2002). Historically, this position of cultural power was lost near the turn of the last century in the wake of immigration, urbanization, and industrialization, all three of which can be read and were experienced as harbingers of class, racial, and religious multiplicity. Such multiplicity, long-existent in American culture, has long presented challenges to the constitution of white Protestant identity as the unquestioned center of cultural authority. Such a story of a lost past of cultural homogeneity and power also resonates with neoconservative school reform efforts. The strategy of unification is brought to bear in these constructions of white conservative Protestant identity and narratives of a “common” American culture, as the assertions of a “Christian heritage” and shared traditional values create the appearance of unity in a context of plurality.

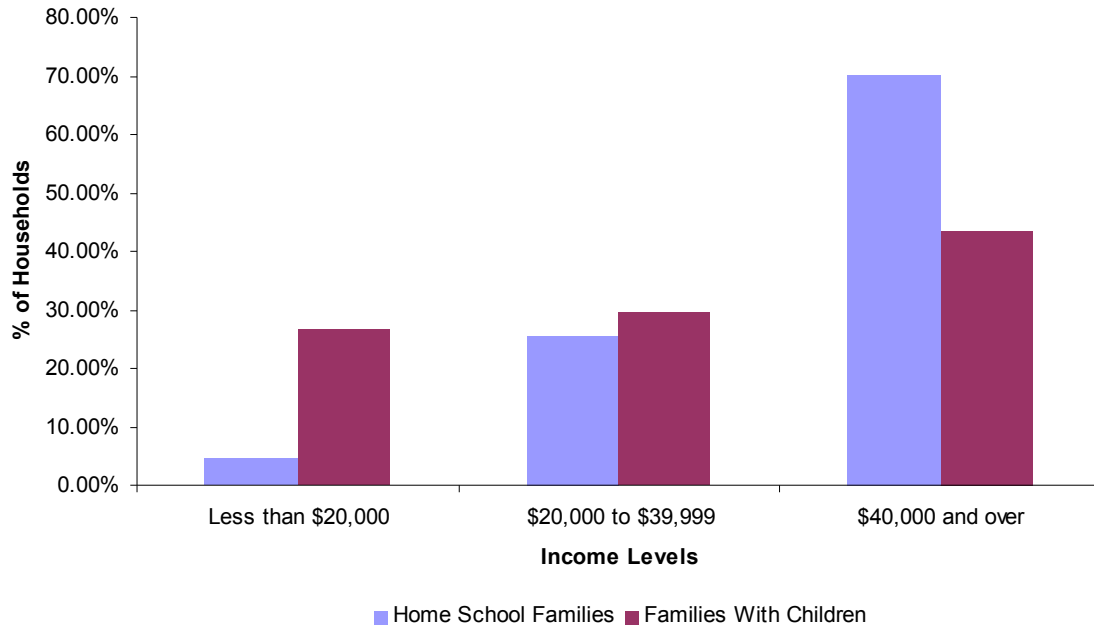
I read the practiced unification of white conservative Protestant home schooling families as part of what may be a more general conservative Protestant resistance to the multiplicity of the American public and her institutions. Though conservative Protestant home schooling parents themselves may not recognize their unity of school, home, and church as a simultaneous resistance to pluralism, the effect of their home schooling practices may yet be homogenization – specifically of race, class, and creed – in their children’s socialization. With the possible exception of interracial families, home schooled children are educated in domestic worlds that are homogenous along many dimensions. In Rudner’s national sample of home-schooling families, 94% were white and 93.8% were Christian (Rudner, 1999).⁵⁹ Though his sample was less homogenous in

⁵⁹ Rudner’s data comes from a sample of home-schooling parents who used the testing services of Bob Jones University. His figures indicate a degree of racial and religious homogeneity that is greater than that found in other studies with other sampling frames (Bielick & Chandler, 2001; Lines, 1991, 1999). I make use of his data because it seems to me more likely to be representative of conservative Protestant home-

socioeconomic status, home-schooling families are less evenly distributed across income levels than is the population of all families with children (see Table 2, below). Further, despite class variation between families, home-schooled children receive the majority of their education within their own similarly situated family environments. Indeed, when I asked parents how, if at all, they incorporated into their children's education elements of difference from themselves, they told me of scenarios in which differences were minimal and apolitical, such as a home schooling father who participated with his sons in Boy Scouts despite his dislike of the outdoors and a home schooling mother who struggled to teach her children what to think about neighbors who watched television frequently. The differences that do explicitly matter to them – those of religious belief or worldview – are carefully handled in ways I discussed earlier, particularly in reference to evolution and “world cultures:” teaching children to recognize religious difference as difference and to uphold the beliefs of their family.

schooling, rather than the national home-schooling movement.

Table 2. Distribution of home school and non-home school families with children, by income level, in percents⁶⁰



The unification of family, education, and Christianity in conservative Protestant home schooling constructs their identity as one of coherence and sameness, not only in relation to their Christianity but also in terms of the racial, ethnic, and class homogeneity of most home schools vs. the multiplicity of the American public. Within this broader cultural context, the unifications practiced by conservative Protestant home schooling families function as a means of conservative Protestant identity construction through an implied resistance to multiple others.

⁶⁰ Data for this table is taken from Rudner's table 2.9, who in turn made use of census data for 1995 for calculating the income levels of all families with children (Rudner, 1999).

CHAPTER III

BORN-AGAIN, SELF-TAUGHT, AND HOME-MADE: PRIVATIZATION IN CONSERVATIVE PROTESTANT HOME SCHOOLING

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

Matthew 7:24-27, NIV

When I first arrived at the Cartwright house to spend the week with them, home schooling mother Faith and I had a long chat on the back porch. Faith Cartwright is a 42-year-old mother of six who wears glasses over her small blue eyes, plaits her long, light brown hair into a single braid, is thoughtful and quiet in her speech, and seems to be ever about to smile. As we sat beside each other that morning on the porch swing, each of us petting the cat that lay down between us, she told me about her family, about how she and her husband Gary have one birth child, Susan, and five adopted children, and about how one of their adopted sons is black and three of their adopted daughters are biracially black and white. Faith and Gary are both white. She also told me about their eldest, also white adopted son, Terrence, and about how she and Gary discovered several years ago that he was sexually molesting the youngest two girls, both under two years old at the time. She told me these things calmly, composedly, and without rancor, and I tried to

respond in the same way. While Terrence no longer lived with the family – he had turned eighteen and moved out of the house to live on his own – Faith told me about how they had decided that Terrence was still a member of the Cartwright family, and they were all working to understand and to forgive. Later in the week, I asked Gary, who is spare with his words, how being a Christian shapes how he is as a father. He told me without elaboration, “I have had to learn to forgive unforgivable things.” In the week I stayed with them, sleeping in the motor home parked behind their garage, Terrence and his girlfriend came over for dinner twice.

In the week I spent with Faith, Gary, 18-year-old David, 17-year-old Sarah, 16-year-old Susan, 8-year-old Shari, and 6-year-old Samantha, I learned about their loose daily “routine” of summer home schooling. After saying goodbye to Gary when he leaves for work, the children begin the day with their morning chores as assigned according to the chore chart that Faith has typed, printed, and posted on the right side of the refrigerator. After chores, the older children (David, Sarah, and Susan) work independently on their school work, often retreating to their bedrooms with their books and notebooks, while Faith reads a devotional story with Shari and Sammie in the den/school room, a time that they call “bible and literature.” On my first day with them, Faith read a story whose lesson was taken from some bible verses in the gospel of John about loving people by “giving a blessing,” or doing something nice for someone without expecting anything in return. Faith asked the girls to think of a time they gave someone a blessing, and Shari remembered when she washed the dishes one night after dinner, even though it was not her turn to do so. (Mischievous Sammie couldn’t think of a time when she had so given a blessing.) After devotions, Faith regularly reads aloud to the younger

girls a chapter of *Little House on the Prairie*, and they then watch an episode from the DVD collection of the television series based on the books by Laura Ingalls Wilder. (Sometimes Sarah and Susan join them for this part of “bible and literature.”) Faith had purchased the DVDs at the curriculum fair that she had helped to organize, as she is a leader in her state’s Christian home schooling organization.

After making their lunches themselves at their own chosen time, the older kids continue with their independent learning, occasionally coming to Faith with questions, while the younger girls and Faith work on craft projects, play math games, do more household chores, read or write stories, and do what Faith calls “science- and history-light.” During the week of my visit, Faith, Sammie, Shari and I spent an afternoon picking strawberries, reading the story *Strawberry Girl* on the back porch, and learning to turn the fresh berries into preserves, which we enjoyed eating that evening at supper on homemade rolls that Faith had baked using flour that she had ground herself. Faith and other home schooling mothers in the area grind their own flour because they have learned that the nutrients in freshly-ground flour start to oxidize soon after milling, and the nutrients are helpful for the development of children’s minds. *Give us this day our daily bread.* Indeed, at the curriculum fair I attended several weeks before my visit to the Cartwrights, I had stood intrigued beside a booth at which they were selling whole grains, recipe books, baking pans, and home milling appliances.

While most families with whom I worked were white, the Cartwright family is interracial by adoption, and I had occasion one evening after supper to talk with them as a family about their understanding of race. They sought to find a way to think about blackness, whiteness, and black-whiteness that recognized difference but also

emphasized sameness between races. Elder son David joked, as the only solely black person in the family, that his biracial adoptive sisters were “only half-baked” and, to the rest of us, “I used to think you white people were scary.” Younger daughter Shari reminded her mother that Faith used to use the phrase “black hair” when talking about her past mistakes in cutting Shari’s hair herself. (Shari accidentally ended up with an “afro,” and by all accounts it was cute.) Shari does not like Faith to say “black hair” anymore, “because hair is just hair;” still, the girls get their hair cut and styled at a salon now. (While I was playing a game of make-believe hair salon with Shari during the week, she pretended to spray my limp, light-brown, “white” hair with relaxer before brushing it out.) Faith then spoke of how they were learning, as a family, that race has no biological meaning, as well as no founding in the biblical account of human creation; God created human beings, not races. Still, Faith utilizes the resources of an Afro-centric home schooling organization to find instructional materials that reflect racial diversity, and she and Gary have decided in the past to change churches so that “our church family will look like our family,” that is, multiracial. Along with nods and laughs from the kids, Faith told us that she still gets surprised sometimes when she and the children will be checking out at the grocery store and the clerk has to ask if they’re together. “I think, ‘of course we’re together,’ but then I remember that we don’t look like it to some people.”

Though the Cartwright family is unique in some respects (as all families are, or as Tolstoy would have it, all unhappy families), their manner of home schooling family life illustrates the several ways in which conservative Protestant home schooling families practice what I call privatization. First, Faith practices the privatization of education through home schooling; as a home schooling mother, she – not a school authority of

either the public or the parochial variety – chooses the books her children will read, the curricula they will follow, the criteria by which their education will be judged, the people who will be authorities in their lives, the pace of their learning, and the sites for their field trips. Second, the religious privatization characteristic of conservative Protestants comes through in the devotional lessons that Faith teaches daily to Shari and Sammie, in which she shows the girls how to relate bible passages to their own personal thoughts and actions, how to foster an individual Christian identity that includes an emphasis on personal piety. Third, through her and her children’s labors on behalf of the home economy in their chores, cooking, flour milling, gardening, and canning, the Cartwrights practice what I have come to conceptualize as a partially privatized domestic economy. They prefer to produce for themselves what other families may purchase. Though less directly related to privatization, the Cartwrights also introduce us to the variously constructed significances of race, the multiple meanings of whiteness and color for self-identity and for racial identification by others.

In addition to the strategy of unification as explored in the last chapter, I argue in this chapter that conservative Protestant home schooling families perform their subcultural distinction as Christians through a generalized strategy of privatization. “Private” has many senses in its semantic field, and I draw upon several of them in my explorations of home schooling privatization: of or relating to the personal, the self, the non-public, the familial, the domestic. I first explore the educational privatization of conservative Protestant home schooling in two dimensions: the relocation of education into the domestic sphere, and the individualization of education to match the needs of unique persons. I then consider the economic privatization of female labor practiced by

home schooling mothers as they pursue a manner of household provisioning that favors domestic productivity over market exchange or wage labor. Whereas others may earn a paycheck to purchase needed goods, most conservative Protestant home schooling mothers – and, I will argue, perhaps especially those with degrees in education – forego employment and instead practice domestic educational work along with the domestic arts of home production. Lastly, I explore the religious privatization of conservative Protestantism at large, defined as a past and present emphasis on the development of the individual selfhood of believers within non-state institutions. I then emphasize the operations of religious privatization in home schooling, including the mothers’ experiences of home schooling as a means of Christian discipleship. Because the dynamic of privatization is thus characteristic of conservative Protestant religiosity, I argue that the various privatizations practiced by home schooling mothers bring into being their conservative Protestant identity within their domestic worlds.

After establishing the educational, economic, and religious privatizations of conservative Protestant home schooling families, I move beyond my field work to analyze privatization as a means of subcultural differentiation. Whereas home schooling families themselves may understand their practices of privatization as a mode of their own creative self-determination, of building their houses on the rock of Christianity, I consider the ways in which privatization may also function within a larger system of social forces. In particular I interpret home schooling privatization as a possible means of the formation of the religious, racial, and class identification of middle-class, white conservative Protestantism. I thus close the chapter with a discussion of the tension

between the workings of self-determination and social identification for conservative Protestant home schooling families.

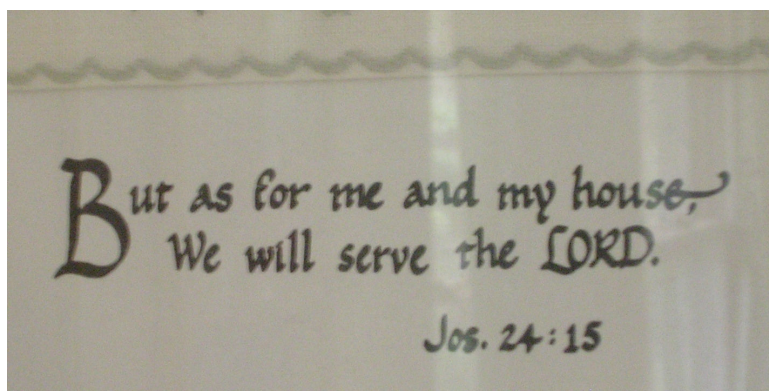
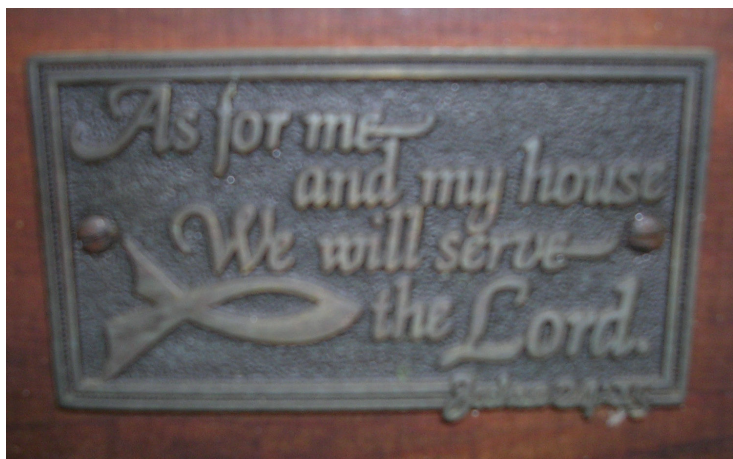


Figure 8. "As for me and my house." From top to bottom, decorative plaques hung outside the front doors of the Flanigan and Simpson homes and a framed calligraphy in the Rosenberg family room.

***TEACHING MOTHERS AND INDEPENDENT LEARNERS:
THE PRIVATE EDUCATION OF HOME SCHOOL***

I believe it is fair to say that Christian home schooling parents are convinced that parents are at least as well if not better equipped to pursue the complete education of their children than are school teachers. Jessica Daugherty put words to what many home schoolers indicate through their choice to home school: that the total education of children is not likely to happen as well through schooling as it could through home schooling.

Jessica: ...When I had my first child and she got to be a little older and she was about the age to send her off, I was *very* convicted that she was too young to go away every day for several hours. That would not be good for her. I just thought how much more beneficial it would be if she was here, and we would learn things together, and I was able to talk to her and teach her things and let her be with me and be shown what grown ups do. And if anything educational came up we would discuss it. And I don't just mean reading and writing and history and stuff, I mean – I believe in the whole person. So I really got to teach her a lot of good habits that I couldn't have otherwise. I could see all that when she was five, a kindergarten age child.

Monica: So you felt that, in sending her off to school, she wouldn't have learned...

Jessica: I felt like it would be a great deal better and easier for her to learn it if she was home. And I also just saw that it was just a good thing for a child her age to be home...If you are home, and when something comes up, and maybe – in other words, you were playing with the toys and you get mad at your toys because the toys don't remain stacked up in a tower, or for whatever reason you're mad. And that point, if you are with your mother you might be told that it doesn't help to get mad at your toys. And if that happens repeatedly, I *see* it happen repeatedly, and I see that this is a thing that she struggles with, and I can help her with it. And so she learns good habits. And at that age, good habits are more important to learn, and harder to learn – well, I won't say it's harder to learn than reading, but more important to learn than letters at that age, and it's easier to learn at home than it would be at kindergarten. Because I care, and I discern my child's inner, I discern her thoughts because I love her, and I'm interpreting her all the time. So it's much easier to teach her character traits and habits if I'm with her. If I'm busy, if I'm taking her driving twice a day, and then I get involved in other things because she's not my primary concern during the day, then that also interferes with the learning process because I've got so much else on my mind.

So it's just a much easier way to learn if you're, if that's the way your family works...

It just makes sense to me, and I would hate for them to be in a classroom setting where nobody was really aware of, paying attention to, or able to spend time on the other things, the other needs they have besides needing to learn geography or whatever. And I would hate to think that because all of their time is devoted to being at school and then doing their homework, I was not able to communicate with them about the lasting things that are also important for them to learn. And I know people who do. I have a little group of children at church that I've been with for 8 years. They're called my sheep. I'm their shepherd. None of them is home schooled. And so it's real informative to me. And there's one in particular. And she, she goes to a private school, but it's a school that other girls in the group go to, but she's just distinctively well behaved, well adjusted. It's parenting. So you can do it, but this is the way I do it.

Monica: Is there something about the other way – going to public or private school...and then Sunday school - something about that that does not make sense to you?

Jessica: That if you relied on that, and I think my parents did, then yeah, that seems wrong to me, if you think, "Okay, she's going to Sunday school today, so she's learned something today about the Bible, so we won't really have to teach her anything about the Bible, she's getting it at church." That isn't true. I mean, yeah, you can learn about the bible that way, but it's not the best way. And it puts an obstacle in your path, if that's the way your parents teach you. It did in my case. If your parents think, "The teacher is doing a great job, she's a good teacher, I'm so glad that my child is going to learn all the things that she needs to learn," then that doesn't make sense to me, because there are definitely things that the child really needs to learn a different way. She is not going to have the opportunity to learn them a different way, because the teacher can only do it the way she is doing it for the group. If you're not paying attention because you're relying on someone else, you've parceled that out, the education is taken care of, if you're not paying attention to it, aside from the fact that you lose out yourself, your child is not going to learn and mature in the best way.

For home schoolers like Jessica, the parceling out of children's education to authorities outside of the home, to teachers instead of parents, is not in the best interest of children nor families. For them, the private family is responsible for the upbringing of children, which includes their education, and this responsibility can be better met through home schooling, the utmost privatization of education. Whereas Christian schools render a

private education in the sense of a non-public institution, Christian home schools accomplish education in the private sphere of domestic life.



Figure 9. School zone. School-related traffic patterns and signage to generate community support for public education in my own neighborhood indicate the presumption of public sharing in schooling. (The blue and white signs were printed by the school board of the local district.) Home schoolers would likely agree that education is “the most important thing our community does,” but they educate as a private family rather than a public community.

Jessica’s words also indicate the privatization of home school education, not in the institutional sense of non-public, but in the sense of the individualized education of

unique persons. Home schooled children can receive an education that is tailor-made for them, a personal as opposed to a commonly shared education. Indeed, sociologist Mitchell Stevens found in his study of home schooling organizations that the arguments used to mobilize the home schooling movement draw heavily upon the American cultural presupposition of individualism. As Jessica said, as the mother as well as the teacher, she is always attentive to the unique needs and wants of her two daughters, “because I care, and I discern my child’s inner, I discern her thoughts because I love her, and I’m interpreting her all the time.” Jason and Erin Olsen separately described to me their desire for their sons to benefit from a specialized education, each of them comparing home education with the “individualized education plans” that Erin learned of as a certified special education instructor. When I asked Erin about her experiences when she was first home schooling, she told me that:

All I saw was that it was an opportunity for me to educate the kids special-ed style, with a curriculum designed for them. We were broke when we first started, and being a special ed teacher, I learned to make my materials, and I did that for my kids. I never bought a huge curriculum, I never bought something out of a box. I would just say, okay, this child needs to learn phonics, or this child needs to spell. Take cereal boxes and cut them up – whatever it takes, I learned to make do.

Erin continues to forge the educations of her five children with an eye toward their individual proclivities: 14-year-old Jacob takes computer classes at a local community college to further his interests in computer graphics, whereas 12-year-old Dustin is encouraged to foster his musical talent by learning about the guitar, song writing, singing, and playing in a band.



Figure 10. Number places. Like Erin Olsen, Jill Hughes made her own math tools and taped them to the window.

Many home schooling parents with whom I spoke disdained the idea of a curriculum “out of a box,” as Erin said, or of “cookie-cutter children” (a common phrase), or of teaching to the generic average child rather than to specific children. Instead, they prized their ability to pursue a tutor-style education, to maintain a “low student-teacher ratio,” to accommodate their teaching to the different learning styles of each child. For instance, Lisa Rutherford decided to home school her eldest son Max in part because he “had a very unique learning style that I did not think was going to benefit from anybody other than somebody who didn’t mind sitting and working with that learning style.” Lisa is already thinking through how best to teach her preschool age daughter Carrie, “because she learns - and Monica, this is going to be so hard, because she learns so differently than I do! She’s going to be a challenge. So I’m going to have to – I already have websites with what to do with the kinesthetic child! I’m going to have to learn all of this.” I read such individualization of education as a form of privatization,

in the sense that it is an education concerned with the development of the unique selfhood of the individual.

DOING THEIR HOME WORK: THE DOMESTIC PRODUCTIVITY OF HOME SCHOOLS

Conservative Protestant home schooling families practice educational privatization through the relocation of education into domesticity and through the individualization of education. In this section I examine a second operation of the general strategy of privatization: the selective economic privatization of the labor of home schooling mothers, through domestic “employment” and productivity.⁶¹

The American cultural associations of the domestic, private sphere with unpaid housework and consumption – as opposed to the public sphere of paid labor and production - emerged out of the social structure of an industrialized Victorian America. In her book *The Social Origins of Private Life*, critical social historian Stephanie Coontz traces the changes in American family structure that occurred as America transitioned from a pre-industrial to a capitalist industrial economy through the course of the nineteenth century (Coontz, 1988). She contends – in arguments more nuanced than I will recapitulate – that the symbolic and social structures of capitalism were written into the ideology of the middle class family, defining the roles and expectations of family life in such a way that the requirements (and contradictions) of capitalist social reproduction (including class stratification) were met. In the pre-industrial American social order, the

⁶¹ The privatizations of economic activity that I here discuss are a limited sort of privatization indeed. I am not, therefore, arguing that conservative Protestant home schoolers accomplish something like a counter-capitalist family economy; they are as fully embedded in the relations of capitalism as we all are. In fact, in a later section in this chapter, I argue that their particular strategies of privatization may accomplish, instead, their middle-class along with their Christian identity, which is to say the misrecognized reproduction of capitalist class stratification.

household was a center of economic production in which men and women, servants and masters, adults and children all toiled, and different households and classes of society were related to one another through networks of mutual obligation. Further, as the integrating economic and political unit of society, patriarchal households were under the authority of the elders of town and church, who regularly pronounced upon matters of household operations. Coontz concludes that “the economic, social, and political interdependence of colonial societies prevented the emergence of sharp boundaries between economic transactions and personal relations, public institutions and familial ones” (Coontz, 1988, p. 78). Because different classes and different genders labored together for the sake of household production; because different households interchanged their products and labor with one another; because the household was part of the political and economic systems, the family was understood to be intimately interwoven with other aspects of social life.

With the transition from agriculture and artisan trades to wage labor and market exchange, many of the social forms of the pre-industrial social order – including the family in its relation to society – were radically altered. Coontz points to two tensions (among many others) experienced by middle class families in this transition that eventually lead to the formation of the gender ideology of the private and public spheres. First, the newly-forming middle class – primarily the artisans who sought to become clerks or shopkeepers – were always close to becoming instead members of the newly-forming lower class as laborers, such that they sought out strategies for success in the competitive and unstable capitalist economy. Second, middle class men felt the dissonance between their former obligations to the common good of various social

classes and the competition and exclusivist defense of individual welfare that seemed necessary for capitalistic success. *For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows*⁶².

Coontz argues that middle class women, particularly the evangelical Protestants among them, articulated a new ideology of family and social life that would encourage the capitalistic success of their husbands and sons while also safeguarding the general morality of the social order. They worked out a sexual division of labor by which women strove in the domestic sphere for “morality and continuity” with former cultural traditions of social obligation, and men worked in the public sphere for profitable “exchange and mobility” within the new economic order. “Evangelical doctrines of domesticity absolved men of their responsibility for fostering competition and ambition in society by teaching that these traits could be controlled by women’s ability to instill virtue and restraint in the young” (Coontz, 1988, p. 184). The middle class home became a sphere of existence separated from the public world of economic striving and “*the root of all evil,*” a sanctified haven in which women maintained the traditions of Christian moral obligation, assuaged the guilt and encouraged the success of their husbands, and educated their sons into attitudes that would enable them to achieve economic success with a clarified conscience (DeBerg, 1990).

The implications of this “cult of domesticity” for gender, class, and the social order are far-reaching, well-known, and often self-contradictory. I would like to highlight three reiterations of this ideological separation of public from private: the labor-leisure and production-consumption distinctions and professionalization. The symbolic

⁶² I Timothy 6:10, KJV

and pragmatic opposition of work and home is elaborated through the opposition of productive labor for which one is paid and consumptive leisure in “free time” for which one frequently has to pay, if only through the opportunity cost of not working. Whereas the pre-industrial household was filled with the productive and economically profitable activity of its diverse members, the idealized middle-class home is, ideologically at least, conspicuously absent of productive, paid labor. (Of course, one of the contradictions of the “cult of domesticity” is the way in which it reinforces class distinctions through the paid employment of lower class women as domestics within the supposed non-work, non-economic homes of the middle class.) Husbands pursue their economic gain elsewhere, and wives’ laboring activity at home is unpaid. Production of necessary household goods is undertaken elsewhere, to be purchased by families of consumers with their wages. In the capitalist symbolic and social order, labor and production take place in the public, and leisure and consumption occur in the privacy of the home.

In addition to the separation of private consumption from public production, the uneven development of the capitalist economy in America gave rise in the early twentieth century to the professionalization of specific domains of labor, most conspicuously medicine, law, business, and education. While it further cemented the class structure, the development of the professions also perpetuated gender dualism, in that some work that may formerly have been done by mothers, daughters, wives, and midwives was now specifically located in the male domain of professional employment, with the attendant gate-keeping requirements of schooling and certification.

The full flowering of capitalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries thus accomplished the ideological privatization of middle-class women’s labor,

the idealization of the non-employed, non-paid middle-class housewife and mother whose home was her domain. However, this idealization was numerically dominant for only two short, historically aberrant periods of time, near the turn of the twentieth century and briefly following World War II. Since then, women's labor force participation has steadily increased to the current situation in which nearly 60 % of American women are employed outside of the home, including a nearly equivalent percentage of married women of child-bearing years (Rindfuss et al., 1996). The changing economic conditions of a post-industrial economy, along with the ideological changes fostered by the feminist movement, have facilitated this employment of women in positions of white-, pink-, and blue-collars. By far the majority of contemporary American women, regardless of marital and parental status, pursue "public," paid labor outside of their homes.

Conservative Protestant home schooling mothers as a group are a minority in the sense that they most often forego employment outside of the home, at least while their children are school-age.⁶³ As opposed to the nearly 60% of American mothers who are employed, Rudner estimates that 76.9% of home schooling mothers do *not* work outside the home (Rudner, 1999). In choosing to teach their own children exclusively, home schooling mothers pursue what would otherwise be a professional occupation under conditions in which the labor of teaching is re-written as domestic, unpaid, non-professional – in a word, private – work, the work of a mother. Home schooling mothers who do not work outside of the home thus privatize their female labor in a manner reminiscent of the cults of domesticity and true womanhood. Their energies are spent

⁶³ While I discuss the labors of home schooling here in terms of privatization, the next chapter is devoted to the reformulations of gender that are accomplished through these women's work of conservative Protestant home schooling.

within their private homes, for the sake of their own families, without remuneration, and without professional status.

I asked all of the home schooling mothers if they consider home schooling to be their career, and their answers to my questions often involved some musing on what it is to have a career. The mothers who were not currently employed outside of the home (all but one of whom had worked for pay, though, at other times in their lives) discussed their home schooling work as a sort of functional equivalent of a career, a long-term endeavor that orients their activity and accounts for their time.

Erin Olsen: Well, it pretty much is my full-time occupation. It's definitely an occupation – I don't know if I'd consider it a career. I don't know what qualifies as a career. I know that it is, for me, start to finish – let's see I started educating them, if you want to be technical, when they started school age I started in 94-95, and I'm going to be doing it for another at least 12 years. So that's 22 years – how many people stay in a job that long?...I mean, it requires, out of the office hours work, I have to put together their stuff, I have to evaluate it, I try to stay in touch with other “professionals,” my peers and people who have had more experience. I also try to help train other people, to encourage them. So in some ways you could consider it a career, at least an occupation.

And I do it at – let's see, not the extent – the time and energy I invest in that I don't invest in other ventures. I don't keep my house perfect. I try, but I also try to pay somebody else to do that. I don't iron. I take that to the dry cleaners. I do try to prepare healthy meals, but we also eat a fair amount of fast food and take out. Fortunately, it kind of balances out. I outsource, I network, I get big vacations.

Jessica Daugherty: Well, it *is* a career. Whether I consider it that way – I mean, I didn't think of it that way until the last year or so, I started realizing that I have to spend a lot of time doing this, it's what I think about the most, it's what I put more time into than probably anything else. Although, I have to emphasize that I see it as a holistic thing. I see that child as having a lot of needs, and I'm trying to educate them all, not just this grammar and math and history. I sacrifice everything, I set aside my time for these things. It is not for pay, but if I were not doing it, then somebody else would do it for pay, so I'm doing a professional job. I guess that's a career.

Erin and Jessica, as did several of the other mothers, each could characterize their home schooling work *as* a career, even if they would not immediately choose that label as the

most appropriate. Career is paid as opposed to unpaid labor: “Somebody else would do it for pay, so I’m doing a professional job.” Career can be opposed to the work required for home and family: “The time and energy I invest in that I don’t put in other ventures,” specifically cleaning, laundry, and cooking. Career is the expenditure of significant time, time that is then lost to other endeavors: “I have to spend a lot of time doing this, it’s what I think about the most, it’s what I put more time into than probably anything else.” Career is one’s life work: Erin will home school for 22 years, Caroline Keller will have home schooled for 31 years by the time she finishes home schooling her fifth child, and when Lisa and Rick Rutherford decided to adopt Carrie, Lisa figured out that she would be fifty years old – nearing “retirement” age – by the time she finished home schooling Carrie.

In short, conservative Protestant home schooling mothers frequently consider that their labor of home education is a career, is a profession. An important exception to this generalization are home schooling mothers who continue their extra-domestic employment while home schooling. For them, the work of home schooling may reasonably remain the work of home, whereas paid employment is the work of career. I spoke with one such employed home schooling mother, Christine Bennett, who home schools 12-year-old Matt, works part-time at her parents’ convenience store, and teaches music at the local Christian school. For Christine, home schooling is less a career equivalent than a means of raising her son in the best possible way; other home schooling mothers, employed or not, communicated to me the same understanding. An additional qualification to my reading of the professionalization of private labor of home schooling is perhaps necessary. Because nine of the thirteen conservative Protestant home

schooling mothers with whom I spoke had earned degrees or certifications in education and had previously been employed as teachers, their privatization of erstwhile professional work was especially apparent, for themselves and for me. For these mothers in particular, their home schooling work was the continuation of their professional career in the domestic realm.

Most conservative Protestant home schooling mothers thus practice the privatization of female labor in several senses. First, their limitation of their work to the domestic realm and their renouncement of paid employment seem to reincarnate the Victorian ideals of true womanhood and domesticity, in which the voluntary work of middle-class women was symbolically and pragmatically consigned to the private sphere. Second, conservative Protestant home schooling mothers privatize not only the “traditional” work of middle-class women, but also the professional work of certified teachers. Rather than doing the work of teaching in a context of employment and remuneration, they teach at home, and they teach only their own children. There are, no doubt, as many reasons for their privatization of their professional work as there are mothers who home school, including reasons of conservative Protestant theology and gender ideology as well as the structural limitations on women’s “hard choices” regarding career and family aspirations.⁶⁴ These mothers may teach at home because it seems to them the most Christian response to their own and their family’s needs; because they feel it to be their “calling” by their God; because their teaching career soured on them; because they were impelled by social forces to choose between career and family, and they chose through home schooling to meld their teaching career with their family

⁶⁴ For an excellent discussion of the interaction between socialization and structural factors in women’s work and family decisions, see Kathleen Gerson’s *Hard Choices* (Gerson, 1985).

obligations. Whatever their reasons – personal, cultural, or structural – home schooling mothers renounce paid, public employment for unpaid, private work.

In addition to their privatization of educational labor, many conservative Protestant home schooling mothers practice economic privatization in a second sense: their domestic productivity. Instead of provisioning their household through the public market exchange of money for goods and services, many home schooling mothers produce for themselves what they can with the resources of their domestic art and industry. Though they may pursue strategies of domestic production primarily as a matter of making ends meet – most home schooling families are single-income with above-average numbers of children – I read their domestic productivity as an additional practice of privatization: the preference for private production over consumption through market exchange.⁶⁵

Some conservative Protestant home schooling mothers with whom I worked have embraced the scripture passage of Proverbs 31:10-31 as a biblical model for productive domestic labor.

*Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies.
The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of
spoil.
She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.
She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.
She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar.
She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household,
And a portion to her maidens.
She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a
vineyard.*

⁶⁵ Conservative Protestant home schooling families are certainly not unique in their domestic production of goods whenever possible, nor in their employment of children's labor through chores (as I discuss several paragraphs further). I describe these practices of theirs not because of their uniqueness but because of their place in the more general pattern of privatization – educational, religious, and economic. As I elaborate later in the chapter, it is the complex of their practices of privatization that functions to set them apart, not any one practice in particular.

*She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.
She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night.
She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.
She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the
needy.
She is not afraid of snow for her household: for all her household are clothed
with scarlet.
She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.
Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.
She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.
Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.
She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.
She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of
idleness.
Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth
her.
Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.
Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she
shall be praised.
Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.*

Mary Heaney assigned this chapter to her ten-year-old daughter Esther to memorize; when I was there, Esther had written on her heart the first two verses. This passage portrays a virtuous woman as a woman of industry above all else, a working woman with whom Christian home schooling mothers readily identify. Mary and Esther are also working their way through a curriculum for girls entitled “Keepers of the Home” that teaches girls homemaking skills as part of their knowledge as Christian females. (Scott Heaney and his sons Frank and Scottie use the corresponding curriculum for boys, “Contenders for the Faith” which teaches home repair and wilderness skills from a Christian perspective.)

Mary Heaney and Faith Cartwright each separately told me of their admiration for Paulina Mullen, a home schooling mother who, in order to contribute financially to her family, founded and continues to run a series of extracurricular camps for Christian home schoolers out of her home. Mary especially respects Paulina’s creativity in finding a way

to live out the model expressed in Proverbs 31, as Paulina has transformed her home schooling experience, her professional training in art, and her home-making skills into a successful home business. Over the years, her “Zion School of the Arts” has grown to include camps on art history, fine arts, fiber crafts, home-making skills, and wilderness survival skills. I observed one day of “Pioneer Times” camp at the Mullen farm, where mothers, fathers, and home schooled children of all ages, some of whom were in “Little House on the Prairie” dress, learned to make soap, dip candles, make a bag out of poplar bark, cook over an open fire, fish with a sapling rod, grind corn into meal, churn ice cream, grow herbs, and weave.



Figure 11. Pioneer girl. A home schooling girl at Paulina Mullen’s “Pioneer Days” camp walks past a candle-dipping station.

When I talked with Paulina later at a “Fiber Crafts Day” gathering of women and girls about the evolution of her home business, she told me about how the home schooling mothers’ interest in domestic skills like making bread, canning, and crafts eclipsed interest in fine arts lessons, such that she instituted camps in order to teach mothers and daughters the homemaking skills that she learned as a child. One of Paulina’s best-attended camps (for which she charges \$225 per person) is called “Proverbs 31 Domestic Arts,” in which Paulina and her two teenage daughters spend eight days teaching other home schooling mothers and daughters to grow, use, and dry herbs; dry, press, and arrange flowers; raise and butcher chickens; garden; make soap; can fruits and vegetables; and bake from scratch with whole grains. Each day is dedicated to learning a domestic skill and begins with a devotional study of a woman of the Bible, such as Ruth, Mary, Sarah, Martha, or Rahab. Paulina and her daughters teach the other women and girls these skills through the resources of their own farm, garden, knowledge and passion for domestic creativity.

Paulina and her Zion School of the Arts represent the productivity practiced by home schooling mothers and children within their domestic worlds. The home schooling mothers with whom I worked would frequently garden and can their own fruits and vegetables; grind their own flour; bake their own bread; cook meals at home; sew, knit, and otherwise craft fiber and textile goods; and, sometimes, look for ways to turn their home schooling knowledge and labor into profit, as Paulina did. For instance, a home schooling mother at the curriculum fair I attended has published the curricula that she and her children developed for their own use, and now they combine home schooling with their publishing business run out of the home. Gina Rossini and Vivian Flanigan each

founded and continue to run separate home schooling tutorials for over a hundred children each.

These mothers, out of practical necessity as well as family ethic, would also put their children to work within the home, teaching them good work habits and housekeeping skills through variously managed chore systems. More than a simple practical necessity, I interpret that the sharing of domestic labor between parents and children exhibits the redefinition of the home as workplace. I further read the mothers' delegation of chores as a pragmatic integration of housework into the larger home economy of the family. "Economy" carries connotations beyond money, employment, and the market; as I reviewed earlier in the historical perspective on the transition to a capitalist economy, economy has first to do with the provision of household needs, whether through market exchange or through the self-sufficient productive labors of the household members. Faith Cartwright explained to me in her very productive kitchen about the transformation of children from economic assets in an agricultural setting to economic drains in an industrial one, and she explicitly tries to counteract this devaluation of children in their family. She teaches all five of her children still living at home the skills of housework, and she depends upon their labor for household functioning. Home schooling families like the Cartwrights return housework to the larger context of the economic system of the household, removing it from its symbolic exile in the private sphere of supposed economic irrelevance. In other words, they take advantage of the economic capacities of the private sphere; they practice a sort of economic privatization, or, if you will, an economization of the private.

In sum, conservative Protestant home schooling families pursue several strategies for the selective privatization of their economic activity. The majority of Christian home schooling mothers pursue in their private homes the voluntary labors of teaching, for which they otherwise would gain a salary and professional employment. They also, along with their children and sometimes husbands, seek out opportunities for domestic productivity in part to increase the family's economic independence. I might also add that a percentage of home schooling fathers in my sample – three of fifteen – ran their own companies out of a home office, and several others were able to work from home on an occasional basis. Though, unlike their wives, their labor is yet pursued for the sake of an income, work-at-home home schooling fathers inhabit their homes as places of economic activity, along with their teach-at-home, home-cooking wives. Though the economic privatization practiced by home schooling families is of a limited scope – they certainly still participate fully in the larger, public economy – it takes on, for me, a greater significance when seen in conjunction with the other operations of privatization: educational, and as we are about to explore, religious. Their diverse modes of privatization emerge as indications of a general strategy that orders much of their activity in the world.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS: CONSERVATIVE PROTESTANT RELIGIOUS PRIVATIZATION

The privatization of education through Christian home schooling makes special sense within the religious subculture of conservative Protestantism that is often described as characteristically privatized. In reference to conservative Protestantism, the “privatization of religion” refers to two aspects: the institutional separation of church

from state, and the conservative Protestant emphasis on personal religious subjectivity over the corporate or social dimensions of religious community.⁶⁶ Such privatization in American conservative Protestant Christianity has emerged out of several historical conditions. Throughout the formation and growth of the nation, the ambiguous role of religion in American society temporarily resolved itself into an unofficial establishment of a moral culture of generic Protestantism (Handy, 1984). The First and Second Great Awakenings gave rise to evangelical Protestantism, a very American form of Protestant Christianity that was uniquely suited to the American context of religious pluralism, disestablishment, and voluntarism (Mead, 1963). Evangelicalism in the 18th and 19th centuries was characterized by an emphasis on emotional conversion experience of the individual, facilitated by revival techniques; simplified theology that minimized denominational differences; the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in individual believers; and moral piety. The emotionalism and individualism of evangelical Christianity facilitated the institutional privatization of religion necessary in a context of disestablishment, and the effacement of denominational differences enabled the articulation of a generic moral code that could work as the moral compass for a republican citizenry. Conservative Protestant Christianity thus proceeds within private, non-public institutions, primarily in terms of the experiences, pieties, and subjectivities of individual Christians.

The privatization of conservative Protestant religion is frequently conceptualized for evangelicals through the notion of “a personal relationship with Jesus Christ” (Smith et al., 1998). When I asked Ruth West, a home schooling mother of three, about her religious affiliation, she said, “Christian – but Christian has a lot of different meanings. I

⁶⁶ Though there is some spirited debate on whether or not the privatization of religion in American society is tantamount to secularization, most seem to yet agree that American Protestantism is privatized to a large extent (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Casanova, 1994; Hunter, 1983; Yamane, 1997).

have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I guess that would be the best way to describe it. Some people say, 'I'm a Christian,' but to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is what you have to have in order to have a strong faith." As we have seen, the concept of a "personal relationship" with God has long historical roots in evangelicalism, reaching back to the revival experiences of a personal and direct religious experience with God. Personal piety and devotional practices of spiritual formation, such as bible reading and prayer, are the avenues by which the personal relationship between God and believer is continually fostered. Home schooling father Rick Rutherford explained his experience of faith this way:

There was a point in time where, we went through a study called "Experiencing God," and I became more aware that it is not about the rules, it is about the relationship. And then once I made that conversion and entered into the relationship, I don't know that I would say that was a salvation experience. It was more of a way of viewing God, and looking at scripture and saying that he wants me to talk to him, he wants to be my friend, and he wants to show me his love... I just think over time it continues to grow. And there are times when I look at it, and finally Lisa and I will have a conversation, and I will say, "Everything's bad. Work's bad. It seems like I'm on a downward spiral. I'm not selling, and I'm arguing," and all this. And she'll just look at me and say, "Well, when was the last time you read the Bible?" And it kind of clicks, yeah, that's right, I haven't been spending any time developing that relationship. And so I think it's constantly evolving...

For Rick, his wife Lisa, and many other evangelical Christians, the continuing development of their religious subjectivity through their personal relationship with God is the essence of their religious life.

For many of the home schooling mothers with whom I spoke, the joys and trials of home schooling served as a powerful means of the formation of their Christian subjectivity. In other words, their privatization of education met with their privatization of religion: home education facilitated Christian discipleship, the sanctification of the

mothers' selves. While there are many ways in which Christian home schooling mothers know themselves to be spiritually transformed through the trials of home schooling, one of the most poignant seems to be through their conviction of their own poverty of love. Many have come to recognize in themselves and have sought in prayer to amend a limited amount of love and patience for their children. Many people with whom I've discussed my research for this project have said to me something along the lines of, "I could never home school, because we would fight the whole time." Christian home schooling mothers do face this challenge, and on their better days they convert it into an opportunity for Christian growth. In fact, Maria Rosenberg told me that she has learned to answer such comments with openness about her weaknesses:

People are saying to you on a regular basis, things like, "Oh, I could never home-school, I'm not patient enough, my children and I would knock heads." And every time stuff like that would come out, the Lord was just saying to me, "Just tell them the truth. Be transparent." I'd say, "I'm struggling. I'm struggling. Would you pray for me?" Strangers at Walmart would go, "okay..." But you know, it just takes so much pressure off of you, if you're trying to sustain some kind of image, you're spending way more energy on that than you can on actually teaching your children or being, growing in the Lord.

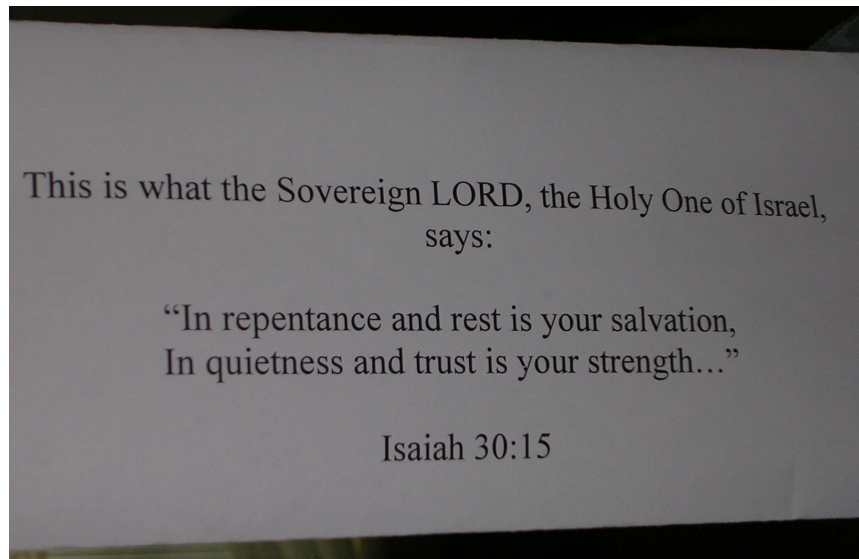


Figure 12. Isaiah 30: 15. Maria has printed this Bible verse on a white piece of paper and taped it to her bedroom mirror.

I several times heard home schooling mothers encourage themselves in their struggles with the thought that God gives them the particular children that He does for the mutual benefit of parent and child. *Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.*⁶⁷ Maria told me of a book that she read with a group of home schooling mothers by Dan Allender entitled *How Children Raise Parents*. Allender, a Christian psychologist, explores how God uses the trials and joys of parenting to teach parents about himself and about themselves in relation to him. About themselves parents learn, deep in their souls, about their own weaknesses, failures, and ineptitudes, even as they experience a deep and abiding love for their children in the midst of the heartache they often cause. Allender argues that, as parents name, confess, and receive forgiveness for their shortcomings, and as they then continue the work of loving their children out of the grace of forgiveness, parents experience nothing less than the truth of Christian gospel: inescapable sin met by unwarranted grace. Parents also learn of God's

⁶⁷ Psalm 127:3, KJV. This verse also happens to be one of Faith Cartwright's favorites.

love for humankind as their parenthood mirrors God's relationship to children whose rebellion arouses righteous judgment and merciful forgiveness at the same time. In

Allender's words:

It is in this process that we begin to reflect God's character into the lives of our children. As we choose to live in the grace of God's freedom, we invite our children to be free. As we express our need for forgiveness, we reveal the heart of our Father who forgives. As we celebrate, humbly and passionately, the wonder of forgiveness, we picture for our children what it means to be received back into the arms of God. We are a living Sunday-school lesson every day as we interact with our children within the character of God.⁶⁸

According to this view – a view which seemed familiar in the experience of many Christian home schooling mothers - parenthood is a powerful means of Christian discipleship.

The testimonies of two mothers in particular – Jessica Daugherty and Erin Olsen – have taught me to appreciate some of the ways in which home schooling motherhood can be a means of Christian self-transformation. In the car on the way home from a trip to the hospital with her mother, Erin Olsen described to me how being a home schooling mother has been a source of transformation for her into a more faithful disciple and a more loving mother, somewhat after the manner of Allender's practical theology of parenting. For Erin, home schooling her four boys has furthered her along her path of discipleship by revealing her inadequacies and bringing her to crisis:

I think that, as my children have aged and I have grown with them, I have learned – especially from some good literature out there that I've read – that I'm not the mother that I want to be, I'm not the Christian that I want to be. I can figure out that I'm not the wife, but I thought, surely I'll be able to love my children because that is the most natural instinct. But I am not the mother that I want to be. I don't love my children as selflessly as I should, I am not as patient, as kind, as loving, as forgiving, as serving of them as I know in my heart that I want to be. I can blame it on stress, I can blame it on being overwhelmed, I can blame it on poor management of my time or my resources. But the truth is that,

⁶⁸ (Allender, 2003) p. 122.

even as a mother, I am sinful and I am prone to failure, because I cannot do it on my own. And I have learned that I need God's grace just to parent my kids the way I'm supposed to. And I thought, *surely* I could've done that. (*Erin laughs.*) You know, I can love my kids, but I am not nearly as selfless as I thought – you know, you just think that the good mom thing is easy, I'm staying at home. It's not easy, and it's not natural. But it is something that turns me back to God for strength and for grace.

Because I need to remember that, they're not just my children, they're God's children, and he has placed them in my care. If you've ever watched somebody else's kids, you're more careful with them than you might be if they were your own. You're more careful about what you say around them, you're more careful about being protective of them because you've been entrusted with someone else's children. And every once and a while I remember that that's the perspective I need to have, that these are God's children that I've been entrusted with. And I need to keep His wishes in mind as I care for them, and honor their heavenly father's desires for them, and know that he has plans for them that I might not understand and therefore I need to be cautious about what I say and do to them. And that's a hard perspective.

I've also learned that my kids need to come to crisis. I want to protect them from crisis, but until they come to a crisis, they are not going to be forced to turn to God either. They are my crisis. (*She laughs.*) They turn me to the Lord. They're going to need to come to crisis, too. And it's going to happen when they're teenagers, and it'll probably turn me right back there, too, 'cause when they crash and burn I'm going to crash and burn. And they have crashed and burned in different areas, and they're going to continue to do that. I think I'm going to have that for the next eighteen years – crashing and burning children. And mom. But it's in our darkest hours that we actually realize that we are not sufficient to meet all of our needs, and we need forgiveness because we are sinful, we need grace because we don't deserve it, and we need resources that we don't have at our disposal. And we have all of that in the Lord, and we will not be disappointed. But to find that out is usually painful. So that's hard, because my kids are going to have to go through that. And I don't want them to go through that. But more than being safe and comfortable they need to know the Lord. So.

In home schooling her children, Erin has been forced to recognize the limits of her capacity to love her children, and she has sought instead to consider her work as a mother in the context of God's prior and superior love for them. Whereas they must encounter their own crises by which to come to God, they are the crisis by which she herself is

made to turn to her Lord and be transformed in her understanding of herself. *Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*⁶⁹

In a similar way, Jessica Daugherty has found motherhood to be a primary means of God's transformation of her religious selfhood. Jessica and her husband Lyle home school their two daughters, ten year old Laura and eight year old Tara. When I asked Jessica how being a Christian impacts her conception of what it is to be a mother, she answered:

Jessica: Well, that's a big answer. It's very hard for any individual to believe that God loves him or her as much as he really does. So everything that I can do to prepare my children to receive that truth, to persuade them that it's true, and to model the fact that it's true – that I've embraced God's love – those things, I have to, I have to do those things. I cannot say, "Oops, we're out of time," or, "We won't think about that today." Anything else can go but that. Now that's not always the way it happens. But that's the way that I believe it should happen. I ought to everyday spend some time thinking about whether they understand who God is, and who they are in relation to him.

Monica: So how do you do that, during the day?

Jessica: (laughs, and in overly-distraught voice, says) You get up and you go, "Lord, what do you want me to do? How can I tell them? How can I tell them?" You do, you pray about it. You beg the Lord to make you what you can be. You lay out your stuff before him and you submit it to him, and you say, "Make me what you want me to be, because I don't want to screw them up." And that is the one thing in my experience as a mother – being a mother has made me more willing to, than anything else has ever had the power to do, willing to submit to God and to ask him, "What is it you really want me to be? What is it you saw when you created me? How can I – ? Change me." And if I can do that, only if I can do that, I believe, will they be able to easily come to that kind of experience. I just – I mean, God certainly reaches people whose parents did not accept him when their children were small, but I just think it's so much better for them if they see that the parents know God, and they see them following him, they see them doing things different from what they would like to do, denying themselves in small ways, everyday, because of God, because of who he is, because of his love that changes me. If she sees that everyday, she's bound to learn that for herself.

Monica: What is it about being a mother that made it click for you, to be able to submit yourself to be who God wants you to become?

⁶⁹ Matthew 18:4, NIV

Jessica: You know, I have bad habits, bad traits, I have sin, I have a sinful nature, and all those things prevent me from being the perfect mother. When our kids are born, we are just – we want to be the perfect mother. It’s just this overriding drive. And you have to learn that you can’t be the perfect mother. And in the process, I just went – I don’t want anything as badly as I want to be better for them. I don’t want to have this bad personality trait, and that one, and this one. So it just went down into the roots of my will, beyond just the knowledge of the scriptures, you know, head knowledge.

For Jessica as for Erin, being a home schooling mother has transformed their Christian selfhood, their understanding of who they are before God. Because of her desire to represent to her children not only God’s love but also a life of discipleship, Jessica has sought her own spiritual transformation.

The path of discipleship for many of these home schooling mothers involves a common stopping place at the moment of the conviction of their own inadequacy as mothers – especially their sense of insufficient love for their children. Perhaps this process of conviction of inadequacy, supplication, and transformation by God occurs for all Christian mothers, but I believe that the conditions of home schooling especially encourage it. As Maria Rosenberg told me, home schooling mothers, perhaps less than mothers who work outside the home or whose children go to school, cannot “put up a good front,” to others or to themselves, of *always* loving their children: “You can’t pretend twenty-four hours a day.” Their constant interaction with their children, along with their heightened responsibility for their education and development, means that these mothers have more opportunity than most to come face to face with their own insufficiency. Or, they may have less opportunity to dismiss their failings as occasional, circumstantial occurrences, for they see that they fall short despite giving their very best, concentrated effort throughout lives devoted to their children’s upbringing.

As these women understand it, to practice Christian discipleship – to follow after the pattern of Christ – is to pursue humility, self-abnegation, and self-sacrifice as the path to Christian re-birth of the self. *Then Jesus said unto his disciples, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”*⁷⁰ Christian home schooling mothers align themselves with this view of discipleship when they testify that their own spiritual growth has come, not through success in parenting and teaching, but through acknowledgement of their failure. Their cross is to home school, every day, in the midst of their own insufficiency, and the life they find includes the transformation of themselves into obedient disciples of Christ.

Home schooling motherhood is thus a means by which is accomplished the formation of their Christian subjectivity, which is also to say the private dimension of conservative Protestantism. A concern for the progress of a private Christian self motivates home schooling activity as well as the more overtly religious activity of maintaining a “personal relationship with Jesus.” Through their experience of the trials and joys of home schooling as a means of Christian growth, these mothers deploy in their home schooling the privatization of religion that characterizes conservative Protestant religiosity in general. Indeed, they incorporate home schooling as a practice of religious discipleship.

While maternal discipleship through home schooling indicates the privatization of religion in terms of an emphasis on religious subjectivity, home schooling also mirrors the privatization of religion in the sense of the location of religion in non-public institutions. Whereas conservative Protestant religion is institutionally distinct from the

⁷⁰ Matthew 16: 24-5, KJV.

public institutions of the state, so does conservative Protestant home schooling remove both education and, to a lesser extent, economy from public to private institutions. In their privatization of education, home schooling parents redefine education as a private concern. Through their several privatizations of the economic activities of career labor and production, conservative Protestant home schooling mothers pursue in the privacy of their homes the activities that would otherwise belong in the more public economic realm of wage labor and market exchange. Whereas both education and economy are frequently pursued in public institutions of school, office, and market, conservative Protestant home schooling removes both, in different degree, to the private institution of the family. By means of this dynamic, home schooling deploys the practice of institutional privatization that also obtains in the separation of the conservative Protestant church from the state.

SELF AND SOCIETY: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF WHITE, MIDDLE-CLASS PROTESTANTISM

The several deployments of the strategy of privatization – educational, religious, and economic – impart to conservative Protestant home schooling domestic culture one of its salient, self-ascribed characteristics: self-determination.⁷¹ They choose their children’s school books and play mates; they grade their children’s school work by criteria they choose for themselves; they choose their own salvation through a confessional, highly personal conversion experience; they choose to practice devotional reading and prayer to develop their individual religious subjectivity; the mothers choose

⁷¹ Here and until the end of the chapter, I understand the self-determination of home schoolers to be not an accomplished fact but rather a feature of their self-construction. In other words, I assume that they are yet shaped by their own social location, as this final section elaborates.

to forego paid employment and instead to home school; and they make their own foods and goods, to the extent that they are able, in an exercise of the power of their choice over the ways and means of production.

Their clear preference for acts of apparent self-determination also is evident in their understanding of “socialization.” In a creative redefinition of socialization, conservative Protestant home schoolers preserve the power of self-determination even as they acknowledge the necessarily social aspects of education and child-raising. More than a few of the home schoolers reported that the question they most frequently hear from others is, “What about socialization?” In other words, “What about the need, for the good both of your individual children as well as of society at large, for your children to learn how to think, act, and feel in keeping with social norms?” Home schooling parents, of course, have ready answers to these questions, and they take intriguingly opposite forms: home schooled children are still “socialized” to be “normal,” and home schooled children are able to resist negative social norms because of their *different* socialization.

Home schooling parent Joe West most directly voiced the two sides to the question of home schooler socialization. On the one hand, he and his wife Ruth strive to raise their children to be “perfectly normal.”

I’ve come to learn, the more I’ve been around home schoolers – there’s a stereotype about home schoolers. Most people don’t know a lot about home schooling. It’s changing because so many folks are trying to home school now. But there’s still a stereotype out there that these are real nerds, social outcasts. So I’ve seen, even within my own extended family (*laughing*), that stereotype is true in some cases. I guess maybe that’s what scared me, to see that this is what some of these people have been up to. But I’ve also been able to see kids who are perfectly normal, perfectly productive, socially acclimated, all the things that we would want kids to be. It doesn’t have to be the stereotype. When you buy into home schooling, it’s not what you’re asking for. It’s not inevitable.

On the other hand, Joe also voices a desire for his children to be “abnormal” in some respects:

...When we tell people we home school, we get a variety of reactions. Some folks will tell us, I’ll talk to folks and they’ll say, “God bless you folks. That is so cool, I almost wish that I could do that.” From that to, “That’s kind of weird, are you qualified to do that?,” to, “I would never try that with my kid.” So we get a good mix of reactions. And some folks just kind of look at us like, “What planet are you from?” Very few folks who do that anymore.

A few of them say, “But, your kids are normal!” Which, you know, which makes me think, “Not exactly, because you’re not with them as much as I am.” I don’t want my kids to necessarily be normal, because like I said there’s a lot of stuff that kids pick up in schools and stuff that I don’t want them to pick up, and if that means they’re abnormal, then that’s okay.

The Wests, as with other Christian home schooling families, want their home schooled children to be both the same as and different from other children, both “normal” and “abnormal,” “in but not of the world.”

On my reading, home schooling parents re-define their children’s socialization to be a matter of parental discretion. They sort through the social norms that they find desirable – in Joe’s case, being “productive” and “socially acclimated” – and those that they don’t – “stuff that kids pick up in schools” – as well as the traits that they find desirable that they do not consider to be socially normative. Contrary to the more common understanding of “socialization” as the relatively straightforward, relatively unintended, relatively determinist reproduction of social norms in the next generation (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), conservative Protestant home schoolers re-define “socialization” as an exercise of private choice in the raising of their children. Socialization here changes from a process of social determination to one of “self”-determination by parents.

In this the final section of the chapter, I place my interpretations of the privatizations of conservative Protestant home schooled domestic culture within the larger context of American social structure. In the imposition of this analytical frame, I move beyond the self-presentation and self-understanding of home schoolers, who know their life-ways as the results of the personal, perhaps idiosyncratic choices of self-determining individuals, without reference to larger social factors. Often they have said to me, “This is just what works for our family.” Therefore, in the following section, I move beyond my field notes, observations, and interviews, because the broader, more social causes and effects of conservative Protestant home schooling are submerged in their self-understanding and self-representation.

I now explore some suggestive, somewhat less than conclusive arguments concerning the possible interactions of their private family lives with the stratification of American society into differences of race, class, and religion. I float a line of reasoning which connects the privatization of Christian home schooling with the construction of a distinctly white, middle-class,⁷² conservative Protestant cultural identity. Specifically, I will re-cast their claims to familial and individual autonomy as a misrecognized production of whiteness and economic empowerment.⁷³ First, I argue that claims to self-determination, as practiced in privatization, function as a construction of whiteness by means of an implied opposition to the primarily social identification of racialized

⁷² I am using the term middle-class to indicate a class status that is empowered beyond the means of the working class. I do not attach an income or educational level nor occupational status to the term, though these are often reasonable proxies for empowerment. I focus on economic empowerment rather than income, etc., because it is the exercise of options in self-determination that is here functioning to create class and race identity.

⁷³ I would like it to be clearly understood that I am by no means suggesting that the families with whom I worked were “racist” or “classist” in their intentions. I follow the lead of critical sociologist of education Michael Apple in distinguishing between intent and function; though the intent of home schooling is often race- and class-neutral, it may yet function to reproduce racial and class stratification (Apple, 2006, p. 235).

“others.” Second, I consider how the creation and the exercise of the options of economic and educational privatization perform a class status of economic empowerment. In these arguments, it is the generalized practice of privatization - as a means of creating the claim to self-determination – that brings into being in everyday life the racial, class, and religious difference of white, economically empowered conservative Protestant home schooling families.

The practices of self-determination, as exercised in various privatizations, may function as a construction of white racial identity in two senses: as the exercise of options in individual identification, and as the absence of apparent social identification. For her book *Ethnic Options*, sociologist Mary Waters interviewed sixty middle-class, white ethnic Americans in the late 1980s about their processes of self-identification with one or several European ethnicities of their ancestry, most commonly Irish, Italian, and Polish (Waters, 1990). She found that their white ethnic identities held a surprising meaningfulness for them, despite the fact that her study participants were several generations removed from their immigrant ancestors; that they often chose to emphasize their connection to one out of several genetically valid ethnicities based on a mixture of their own ancestry, the ancestry of spouses, surname, physical appearance, and stereotype; and that their self-chosen ethnic identities did not influence their cultural practices beyond the occasional holiday, food, or turn of phrase. In her concluding chapter, Waters argues that white European-American ethnicities, while presenting themselves as a simple parallel to African-, Latino-, and Asian-American identities, obscure the difference that race makes for life in the racialized United States. In her words, “for the ways in which ethnicity is flexible and symbolic and voluntary for white

middle-class Americans are the very ways in which it is not so for non-white and Hispanic Americans” (Waters, 1990, p. 156). Though the differences are deep and wide between an optional, flexible, and occasional white ethnicity and a rigorously and continuously socially enforced, non-white racial identity, the participants in Waters’ study regularly drew upon the experiences of eventual assimilation and economic mobility of their white European- American ancestors as an argument that the same process should apply for all “immigrants,”⁷⁴ as though ethnicity and nationality operate independently of race.

I appropriate this work of Waters’ on optional white ethnicity to argue that the self-ascription of one’s identity is one of the ways in which whiteness is constructed, for conservative Protestant home schoolers and for others. The social construction of racial difference, while seeming to depend upon such “natural” markers of difference as skin color, also employs a vast array of other, culturally-specific means for making and marking racial difference,⁷⁵ one of which, I am suggesting, for our present historical moment is the presence or absence of individual choice in the ascription of social identity. The difference between white and non-white in the contemporary United States is the difference between choosing an identity for oneself such as Polish-, Irish-, or Italian-American, with very few social consequences depending upon the choice, and having a racialized ethnic identity forced upon you, with vast social consequences. To quote Waters again: (Waters, 1990, p. 157)

⁷⁴ The quotations around “immigrants” are to indicate that the term patently does not make sense in reference to those African Americans brought as slaves to the country, despite the fact that the model of immigration-discrimination-assimilation is often erroneously applied to African-Americans.

⁷⁵ For the classic statement of the various social constructions of race in the United States, see (Omi & Winant, 1994)

The reality is that white ethnics have a lot more choice and room for maneuver than they themselves think they do. The situation is very different for members of racial minorities, whose lives are strongly influenced by their race or national origin regardless of how much they may choose not to identify themselves in racial or ethnic terms.

Whereas non-white “others” are understood to have an innate social identity that is inevitably theirs by birth and by social enforcement, white Americans are understood to be individuals first, and only secondarily, voluntarily, and occasionally identified with a social identity. As Hyde said in her review of several works on whiteness (Hyde, 1995, p. 88): “‘They’ have race, and therefore, culture; I, a white, just am. Definitions and explanations of people of color, both by themselves and whites, are situated in racial group membership...; whites exist as individuals.” When conservative Protestant home schooling families shape their lives as the exercise of self-determination in as many ways as possible, they may be performing more than their identity as individualistic Americans. They may also, though perhaps quite without intention, be practicing a degree or type of self-determination, as opposed to the social determination of race or ethnicity, that is coded “white.” (It is important to understand that social determination does not here mean total social determinism by race; people of all racial identities, both empowered and disempowered, are defined by a combination of social and individual determination. Rather, I am dealing here with perception and performance of racial identity within a racialized society in which non-white racial identity is *read* as having a greater social component than white racial identity.)

While the apparent self-determination of conservative Protestant home schoolers can thus be read as a performance of white identity, so can its re-phrasing as its opposite: the absence of social determination. In her book on the social construction of whiteness

White Women, Race Matters, Ruth Frankenberg talked with white women of various ages and political commitments to learn about the discursive and material structuring of what it is to be white. The burden of her book is to demonstrate the ways in which whiteness is a racial identity with specifiable form and content - rather than the mere absence of race – as a project in the illumination of processes of racial formation for the sake of their transformation. Frankenberg re-terms the racial formation theory of Michael Omi and Howard Winant, and especially their concepts of the ethnic and nationality constructions of race difference, as the “color-evasive” and “power-evasive” discourses of race. For Frankenberg, the color- and power-evasive discourses of race, such as the assumption that to be “color-blind” is to be non-prejudiced is to think rightly about race, are the currently dominant paradigms structuring the social construction of whiteness. She critiques the discursive evasion of color, and hence power, because it defines the absence of “color” as a good and therefore re-inscribes the superiority of “colorless” whiteness.

As she further states (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 147):

The sharp cutting-edge of color-blindness is revealed here: within this discursive repertoire, people of color are “good” only insofar as their “coloredness” can be bracketed or ignored, and this bracketing is contingent on the ability or the decision – in fact, the virtue – of a “non-colored” – or white – self. Color-blindness, despite the best intentions of its adherents, in this sense preserves the power structures inherent in essentialist racism.

In a later chapter Frankenberg explores the symbolic, discursive associations of whiteness-as-race with whiteness-as-color, such that white racial identity is conceptualized by many of her interviewees in terms of the characteristics of white: absent color, generic, homogeneous, undefined, unmarked (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 194-200). Just as masculinity can be discursively established as a generic universal, absent of gender, so is whiteness in this discourse conceived as the generic human condition,

without race. In the color- and power-evasive discourses, then, whiteness is the invisibility of color, the apparent lack of racial identity.⁷⁶

I enlist Frankenberg's characterization of the construction of whiteness to argue that the privatized, apparently non-rationally significant self-determination practiced by conservative Protestant home schoolers can also be seen as the performance of their whiteness. In other words, I am interpreting the absence of overt indications of racial processes as evidence of the presence of covert ones for the construction of whiteness.⁷⁷ For some forms of whiteness – perhaps especially the whiteness of middle-class males – invisibility is the mark (non-mark?) of its existence and the source and defense of its power. As Lipsitz said in a sweeping review of the cultural practices by which whiteness has been and is constructed in the United States as a structural position of power:

Whiteness is everywhere in the United States, but it is very hard to see...As the unmarked category against which difference is constructed, whiteness never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations. (Lipsitz, 1995, p. 369)

Though whiteness may be easier seen by those outside of its category, and though the effects of racialized social structure are anything but invisible, the silence of white racial identity remains a primary mode of its (non)articulation. In their habit of practicing self-determination within an expanded private sphere – in conjunction with their non-recognition of the determination of their lives and selves by race – white conservative Protestant home schooling families live their racial identity as one of absence. Within the

⁷⁶ American anthropologist Hartigan has warned of a danger in discussions of whiteness that presume an enduring essence of white identity that pertains across time, space, class, and gender, for such would be a return to essential theories of race. He critiques Frankenberg for what he sees as the implication in her analysis that all white people share a common whiteness. While I am not convinced that Frankenberg is guilty of the charge, I take to heart Hartigan's warning and trust that the performances of whiteness that I trace are sufficiently specified and qualified by class, religion, and home schooling to communicate their cultural and historical particularity. (Hartigan, 1997)

⁷⁷ I should say that the performances of whiteness were not overtly obvious to me, a white person. The ways of home schoolers may have been more readily recognized as white by a non-white observer.

racialized society of the United States, the persistent practice of apparently race-less self-determination in conservative Protestant home schooling families can be read as a performance of a specifically white religious identity.

Such recognition of self-determination and misrecognition of social determination may have additional significance for whiteness within white conservative Protestant subculture. Michael Emerson, Christian Smith, and David Sikkink have explored the discourses of white conservative Protestants regarding race and have found that aspects of their religious worldview, including “accountable freewill individualism” and “anti-structuralism,” encourage white conservative Protestants to favor individualistic rather than structural explanations of racial inequality. They conclude that “rationales for racial inequality are not mere defenses of socioeconomic privilege, but, more fundamentally, defenses of identity, culture, and worldview” (Emerson et al., 1999, p. 398). Though I cannot agree with their clear cut between the defense of the “identity, culture, and worldview” of a sample of the white population and the defense of their socioeconomic privilege – would not their racial privilege be interwoven throughout their religious culture? – I make use of their findings to support my argument that the practice of the self-determination of private individuals and families can be read as the practice of explicitly white conservative Protestantism. Their emphasis on the autonomy of the individual - as given expression through practices of the privatization of religion, education, and economy - are in keeping with the religious as well as racial culture of white conservative Protestants at large.

While claims to self-determination outside of social forces can thus be read as a construction of white racial identity, so can they be read as the production of relative

economic empowerment. The conservative Protestant home schooling families with whom I worked are difficult to class: they are single-income and seemed to be, on my observation, primarily lower-middle class in this regard, yet most of the fathers were employed in professional occupations, and they have significantly above-average levels of education. I am therefore conceptualizing class in terms not of income, occupation, or education but in terms of the performance of the economic empowerment to recognize and exploit options: the practice of the freedom to choose. In Lillian Rubin's ethnographic studies of white working-class families, *Worlds of Pain* and *Families on the Faultline*, she shows how the structural limitations of class powerfully shape the life chances of these women and men, often by curtailing their options for education, work, marriage, residence, leisure, and family (Rubin, 1976, 1994). In *Worlds of Pain*, she explores the accumulating effects of class as one moves through a life course, she states of working class adults, "the alternatives they perceive still are limited – limited now not just by their childhood experiences but by the cumulative effect of their adulthood as well; limited not just in dreams for personal life but in occupational life as well" (Rubin, 1976, p. 207). Though working-class families find ways to preserve their agency within the workings of structure, the circumstances to which they respond are largely determined by their class position. Indeed, in the sentence that closes the earlier book, Rubin states her belief that these families are bound by structural limitations even, or perhaps especially, when they think themselves to be making free choices:

It may be the singular triumph of this industrial society – perhaps of any social order – that not only do we socialize people into their appropriate roles and stations, but that the process by which this occurs is so subtle that it is internalized and passed from parents to children by adults who honestly believe they are acting out of choices that they have made in their own lifetime.
(Rubin, 1976, p. 211)

Though we may argue about the balance, or lack thereof, that Rubin strikes between structure and agency, I extend her definition of working class identity as the limitation of options to define relative economic empowerment as the increased freedom of choice (though still within structurally permissible bounds). In his critique of conservative educational reform, critical sociologist of education Michael Apple similarly understands the ideological preservation and (unequal) exercise of the free choice of individuals as a means of the production of differential economic empowerment. Apple identifies the emphasis on freedom of choice in education (such as school vouchers) as a constitutive element of neoliberalism, a conservative political perspective that favors the “free” choice of individuals within a “free” market as the hallmark of democratic liberty and the guarantor of the fair and just distribution of resources through competition (Apple, 2006). He argues that neoliberal faith in free markets and their related efforts to privatize erstwhile public social functions (such as education and healthcare) has the effect of reinforcing the stratification of society by race and class. For Apple, the translocation of education from a public function of the state to a private market can only favor the empowered and disadvantage those without political, cultural, or economic capital to effect the choices they would make, “people for whom the possible destruction of public schooling is nothing short of a disaster” (Apple, 2006, p. 197). In this argument, the preservation and exercise of the free choice of individuals within privatized markets is a means of the construction of economic empowerment of the new middle class (as well as the concomitant disempowerment of working classes).

I combine the different analyses of Rubin and Apple to characterize several of the privatizing practices of conservative Protestant home schooling families as a means of the

construction of their identity of economic empowerment. I argue that in having and in exercising specifically their options to privatize their children's education and the labor of the teaching mothers, conservative Protestant home schooling families perform a class status characterized by choice and by resource, that is, by power. Apple explicitly discusses evangelical home schooling as a manner of educational privatization that, without the intent of home schooling parents, is likely to eventuate in greater estrangement and inequality between classes and races (Apple, 2000, 2006). Though I do not consider my identification of the class effects of home schooling to be a matter of criticism in the manner of Apple,⁷⁸ I nonetheless agree with him that the educational privatization of conservative Protestant home schooling produces their status of relative economic power by acting on the freedom of choice. Simply by choosing private education over public, they presume, enact, and thus create their relatively resourced class status.

The privatization of home education in the sense of educational individualism can also be read as a production of a specifically middle-class Protestantism. In her comparative ethnography of two Christian schools, Susan Rose contrasts the pedagogies and philosophies of Covenant and the Academy (Rose, 1988). Drawing on insights regarding the "hidden curriculum," she argues that the educational practices of these schools accomplish class socialization along with religious socialization, as the working-class students of the Academy learn their schoolwork in a manner that prepares them for factory work: memorization and repetition of right answers, the strict structuring of time,

⁷⁸ I mean to say that I am not here being critical of middle-class people for acting after the manner of the middle-class, even though I agree that the actions of individuals within a structure tend to perpetuate the structure. I am not as certain as Apple in drawing connections of culpability and critique between structured behavior and its consequences. I am instead simply identifying the class-related meanings of the privatizations of home schoolers.

and the discipline of the body. By contrast, the middle-class students at Covenant are encouraged by parents and teachers to explore the development of their unique interests and abilities, engaging in creativity and open-ended instruction after the Montessori model. Rose reads the religious and educational socialization of Covenant as an apt preparation for the roles of middle-class management and professional employment. The individuality of learning in conservative Protestant home education is thus potentially indicative and constitutive of middle-class identity.

The privatization of the labor of home schooling mothers can also be read as a performance of middle-class status. In her article “Class-based Masculinities,” Karen Pyke explores the interactive constructions of the power of middle- and upper-class men over lower-class men and over women in general (Pyke, 1996). She identifies the “hegemony of the male career” as an ideological narrative that legitimates and (re)creates the privilege of middle- and upper-class husbands, specifically in ways that compromise the masculine power of lower-class husbands and for which they then compensate with different strategies of marital power. For instance, the “hegemony of the male career” authorizes the career sacrifice of middle-class wives and their re-dedication to home-keeping (as well as the right of middle-class husbands to be freed from housework), even as it makes visible the inadequacy of the wages of working-class husbands to allow for their wives to stay at home. I discuss the complex results of conservative Protestant home-education for conjugal power in the next chapter. For now, I argue that the privatization of the labor of home-educating wives is a performance both of their own and of their husband’s middle-class status. Though home schooling families experience reduced income as a result of the privatization of the labor of teaching mothers, they are

yet able to exercise the option, rendering them economically privileged beyond the means of most working-class families.

Further, the strategies of privatized labor, both educational and domestic, that home schooling mothers often employ have historically been associated with explicitly middle-class families, as was the case in the Victorian idealization of a female private sphere (Coontz, 1988). Such symbolic associations between domestic productivity with the “traditional” femininity of the private sphere may have informed home schooling mothers’ domestic productivity, beyond the economic necessity that may motivate similar activities among working-class women. The privatization of their labor in this way may further create their middle-class identity by means of the performance of the gendered division of labor appropriate to the middle-class.

Conservative Protestant home schooling families do not practice educational, religious, and economic privatization with the intent of producing a racialized and classed religious social location. Instead, they privatize their children’s education, their religious identities, and the labor of teaching mothers as an exercise in creative self-determination in keeping with their most cherished convictions of faith and family. I have argued that their privatizations can be understood to produce the effect of racial, class, and religious identification, quite outside of questions of their intent. Upon my admittedly inconclusive reading,⁷⁹ to understand oneself as a self-determining individual whose race is irrelevant if not invisible, whose religious identity is a matter of personal belief and

⁷⁹ I say again that the arguments of the last section are less than conclusive because I cannot substantiate them with fieldwork and interview data. I cannot do so in part because I did not actively look for the productions of race and class while in the field, and in part because such productions are not readily observable. Further work is necessary to tease out all of the ways in which the domestic practices of conservative Protestants, home schooling and otherwise, is – and, sometimes, is not – a co-production of race and class.

choice, and whose work and the education and socialization of whose children are at one's discretion *is* to live as a white, relatively economically empowered conservative Protestant. The privatization of education, of religion, and of female labor is thus a means of the production of conservative Protestant cultural distinction, overlaid as it is with differences of race and class. It is also overlaid with gender difference, and to gender we turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

KEEPERS OF THE HOME: THE GENDERING OF CHRISTIAN HOME SCHOOLING MOTHERS

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is...submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of God.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Ephesians 5: 15-17, 21-33 (KJV)

As I spoke with Gina Rossini about the relationship between her Christianity and her motherhood, she articulated well some of the complexity of female Christian identity for contemporary conservative Protestant women as they try to discern a femininity that is faithful both to their own unique selves and situations as well as the Biblical and historical traditions of their religious community.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ I have excerpted a long passage from my interview with Gina because I think it is valuable to read

Monica: Do you think that your faith has influenced how you think about being a mother?

Gina: Absolutely. Absolutely. I have gone full circle. I started out in my younger years as very feminist, and I wanted to be a police officer, and, “Women can do anything men can do, just give me a gun and I’ll show you.” Swung *way* back on the other side. I nurse my babies, and make quilts, and make preserves, and, “This is where I belong.” And I think I’ve kind-of landed somewhere in between. I can do that stuff, and yet I can also go out and participate in what’s going on in the world around me. And so, absolutely, I think my faith has helped me to see that there’s a balance there. You don’t need to be all one side, you don’t need to be all the other side. And it doesn’t mean that you can have it *all* necessarily, either. I think there are seasons. When my children were babies, I needed to be there 100%. When they were being nursed, no one else was going to nurse them but me. So I think so, yeah.

Monica: How has being a Christian helped you to be able to balance both sides?

Gina: Well, it’s interesting. It’s an interesting question, because it’s taken me a long time to get to an answer on that. I think, for me, without knowing the Lord, I would struggle with, “What is my role?” I think, knowing the Lord, and having a foundation in the word of God gives you a foundation of who you are supposed to be. How does that line up? How do you work in the home? “The husband is the head of the home.” Does that mean he’s my boss? Does that mean I have to obey him? Does that mean he’s going to make me do things I don’t want to do? So how do you reconcile, what does that mean? For someone who’s grown up in a feminist world, a product of the seventies generation, how do you take this now, and make it work, with what we usually think of as a biblical tradition of this woman who is following her husband and washing his feet, in a negative way. And how do you take those two things and make it work? And for awhile I struggled with, how *do* you make that work? What does that look like? What does it mean? I don’t live in zero century, Palastine, I live in 2005, so how does that look for me?

And I think what it’s done is, the Lord has shown me who *I* am. And that’s really, if you don’t know who you are – because we’re all individuals, we’re made with a specific design and a specific purpose. And because you’re a woman there will be things that you will do, because you’re a woman. There are specific role things. Men cannot birth children. We have not yet arrived at that place in time yet. There are things that women will do because that’s who they are. And to have a household, you need a man and a woman, because they do balance each other. And I think, knowing me in the Lord, first as a person, second as a woman, and then as a mother, and as a wife, as someone who participates in the world, how do all those things come together? And without knowing who you are *first* – and I think, without knowing the Lord, how do you ever know *who you are*?

through the complexity of her process of working through questions of gender and Christianity.

Maybe it sounds funny, but I feel like if I didn't know the Lord I would never know who I was. I would spend my whole life trying to find, "Who am I?" Now I know who I am, and now I'm thinking, "Now, how do I take who I am and plug me in where it's going to do the most good." This is who I am – I'm not hiding this. This is the person I am. Some people might find me aggressive, some people might find me intimidating, some people might find me fun. Whatever it is, this is who I am. Now how can I take this gift set and use it where it's going to do the most good for the most people.

Monica: Now, how does the Lord show you who you are?

Gina: Well, I think some of it's through prayer. Some of it's through trial and error. Some of it's by showing me who I'm not. Often times. I'll be thinking, "This is what I need, this is what I want," and you're banging your head against the wall, and finally you go, "Maybe this isn't the right direction. This doesn't seem to be working." (*Gina's daughter comes into the dining room to ask if she can use a scrap of fabric to make a puppet. Gina says, "Yeah. You know where the scraps are."*) You know, some of it's through reading the scriptures and finding, sometimes when you read the scriptures, the Lord will bring a scripture to light. I might have to explain that for someone who's not familiar with that. You're reading it, and then something really speaks to you. And you go, "Wow, yeah. I can see that." I've had people pray over me, and pray for me, and get what they would call "prophetic words" or "words of knowledge" that "the Lord has called you to be like this biblical person or that biblical person." And oftentimes I'd go and read the accounts of these particular biblical people – one of them was Deborah, and I went back and read about the judge Deborah. What does she look like? And I read about who she was, I could see myself in who she is. Well, okay, I can confirm that, because I'm reading that, and it does, it resonates with me, and I see myself in that person. And so sometimes it will be specific scripture, or types, and you piece those things together over years, and you start to see this mosaic that the Lord is building of you. He's showing you, this is who you are.

You're not like – I'm a very odd duck. I'm not like most women. I'm a weird combination. I think very much like a man. I think like a man. A lot of my thought processes are very masculine in the way I process things. And yet there are some things that are very feminine. And I'm fine with that... And so there are things that are just, and I can't, and it's frustrating to me, because I've wanted to plug myself into this type of mold, and I can't. I think, "Oh look, I'm like that," and I get there and I go, "No, I'm not really like that." And then, "Oh look, I'm like *that*." And again, "No, I'm not." So there really isn't that type that I've found in a feminine form that I can say, "I'm like that." I'm breaking every model I know. And so I'm just learning to live with myself, being okay in my own skin, saying "This is who I am, and it's unusual, and God has a plan for me, and I'm not going to sweat it." And it's a process.

Every once in a while you do question, "Wow, why is it so hard for me to be content with things that other people are content with?" And I've struggled

with that. Is that just a dissatisfaction, am I just discontent in general? Why am I discontent? I mean, there are people who will say home schooling is *it* for them. And it is all they would ever want to do, it is all they spend all their energy on, all their focus on. But I can't say that. I think home schooling is incredible, I think my children have benefited, I think we've all benefited. It is the absolute best solution for our family. And I am as involved as I need to be. But there's still more going on in me. And that's okay. So, anyway, it's just a hard question, because this has definitely been a process. And it's still a process.

Gina has passed and is passing through the uncertain process by which conservative Protestant female identity is pieced together from the sometimes incongruent elements of self, culture, history, and faith. Gina voiced the difficulty involved in the acceptance of Biblical male headship for women of the feminist and post-feminist generations. "How *do* you make that work? What does that look like? What does it mean? I don't live in zero century, Palastine, I live in 2005, so how does that look for me?" In addition to her puzzlement over Biblical male authority, Gina does not fully assent to the Christian gender norms that would enjoin her to be sated with home schooling motherhood as a life devoted utterly to her home-keeping and her children's upbringing. "There's still more going on in me." As a woman who "thinks like a man," who aspires to a law degree and eventual political career, Gina is profoundly ambivalent toward the model for Christian femininity that limits female labor to the home. "I'm breaking every model I know." For all her perplexity about Christian womanhood, however, Gina home schools her children, and she thereby demonstrates a commitment to the Christian upbringing of her children that appears to be the very incarnation of the sanctified model of conservative Protestant femininity: dedicated female labor within the home for the sake of the Christian nurture and education of children.

Gina's story introduces us to the possible complexity of Christian womanhood for conservative Protestant home schooling mothers. On the one hand, their religious

tradition of conservative Protestantism communicates to them an abiding yet by no means monolithic gender ideology that often seems to return and return again to two touchstones: the gendered division of labor in which mothers should “stay at home” and the gendering of authority within the family by which wives should *submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord*.⁸¹ On the other hand, the cultural context of contemporary America is one characterized by women’s – mothers’ – labor force participation and a “post-feminist” presumption of gender equality (Rindfuss et al., 1996; Stacey, 1991; Stacey & Gerard, 1990).

In this chapter I explore the ways in which I understand conservative Protestant home schooling mothers to practice, primarily through their domestic labors in teaching and housekeeping, a largely obedient yet also inventive engagement with the gender ideals of conservative Protestantism. To make this argument, I draw on performance perspectives of gender, selfhood and interpersonal relations of power to understand the gender identities of these women as a function of their routine activities of teaching, mothering and housekeeping – that is, of their practices of gendering. I focus on two aspects of the engendering performance of home schooling mothers: their reinvention of the labor of housekeeping and mothering and their production of maternal submission and authority. I argue that, in their production of gender through domestic labor, conservative Protestant home schooling mothers work within the bounds of the sanctioned sexual division of labor even as they imbue such motherhood with the value – notably symbolic, rather than monetary - of professional occupation. In a later section I look at the educational practices and discourses of teaching mothers and fathers as the doing of a manner of female identity that maintains paternal headship even as it expands

⁸¹ Ephesians 5:22, KJV

maternal authority. Lastly, I argue that their practice of gender differentiation also functions as a means of religio-cultural distinction, as it sets them off from a context of presumed ideological if not actual gender egalitarianism.

PERFORMANCE OF GENDER, POWER AND IDENTITY

Before we look at the gendering practices of home schooling mothers, I must expand upon my theoretical framework for the understanding of gender, as gender has many possible meanings and functions. Much theoretical capital has been invested in the pursuit of understanding the workings of gender for self and society. This effort has been complicated (and enriched) by the fact that the study of gender occurs by way of gendered persons in societies in which gender matters, such that all comers to the question have had more than professional interest and knowledge. Many have sought to discern the nature of the relationships between body and person, between perception and presumption, between nature and culture, between selves and others when it comes to gender. For our current consideration of gender in Christian home schooling families, I make use of the “doing gender” orientation of West and Zimmerman (West & Zimmerman, 1987), derived as it is from Goffman’s work on performance and deference (Goffman, 1956, 1959, 1961).

Erving Goffman wrote in the symbolic interactionism school of social psychology that sought to understand the processes that transmute social forms into the identities and actions of individuals. Goffman particularly studied interpersonal interaction for the ways in which it functions as a mechanism for the production of socially-inscribed identities and relationships. For instance, in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*,

Goffman elaborated the sociological significance of face-to-face interaction, arguing that it is through a multitude of minute behaviors of interaction that we signify to others and to ourselves our social identities (Goffman, 1959). In one sense, *Presentation of Self* is a grandly extended metaphor of human life as performance, of individual existence as an unintended enactment of the character written for each of us by our cultural situation. One element of such a performed identity is its relative position vis-à-vis other persons, and in his essay “The Nature of Deference and Demeanor,” Goffman theorizes the multiplex routines of etiquette by which all persons are variously obligated to perform specific acts of deference to other persons in an interaction web of shifting relative statuses (Goffman, 1956). Goffman argues that each person’s self-image is a composite of self-presentation in demeanor and the receipt and gift of deferential acts.

The individual must rely on others to complete the picture of him of which he himself is allowed to paint only certain parts. Each individual is responsible for the demeanor image of himself and the deference image of others, so that for a complete man to be expressed, individuals must hold hands in a chain of ceremony, each giving differentially with proper demeanor to the one on the right what will be received deferentially from the one on the left. While it may be true that the individual has a unique self all his own, evidence of this possession is thoroughly a product of joint ceremonial labor... (Goffman, 1956, p. 493)

For Goffman, then, individual identity is constructed out of constant interactions in which one performs one’s self and through which one gives to others and receives from others confirmation (or disconfirmation) of presented identity. The self emerges in interactions that express the social structure of relative status.

In their influential paper “Doing Gender,” Candace West and Don Zimmerman draw upon Goffman’s perspective on performances of identity to theorize the construction of gender as an accomplishment of interaction (Goffman, 1976; West & Zimmerman, 1987). For them, gender identity is something that one *does* more so than

someone that one *is*, in the sense that gender identification occurs by way of interpersonal performances of masculinity and femininity that are not the outward expression of an inner gender nature but are, instead, the production of the appearance of such a nature. They therefore define gender as “the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one’s sex category” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 127). While Goffman recognized the performance of gender in some specific situations, West and Zimmerman argue that gender is done in all manner of social interaction, such that one’s sex categorization can be made a relevant factor for behavior in nearly every social situation. For instance, sociolinguists have discerned gender differences in habits of spoken conversation, such as the structured tendency for women to ask tag questions, back-channel, change the topic less frequently, yield to another if they speak simultaneously, and use verbal tools for gaining the attention of their listeners (Fishman, 1978; Okamoto & Smith-Lovin, 2001)⁸². One can sit, stand, walk, run, throw, eat, dress, speak, laugh, cry, sneeze, fight, think, love, and hate as a man or as a woman. In other words, “gender is an adverb rather than a noun” (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999, p. 205). We do our gender as a component of all of our other doings, and this pervasiveness of gender significance lends it its aura of universality and naturalness. Further, the differences between differently engendering modes of interaction can often be seen to create differences in power between men and women, as women learn to do deference and men learn to do dominance as a pervading theme of their gender performance (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 146). This perspective

⁸² Earlier work directly linking gender, interaction norms, and power has been critiqued for treating gender as a factor that operates independently of contextual processes of interaction, such as the relative status of participants within other social hierarchies. For a critical review of research on gender and interaction, see (Aries, 1996; Johnson, 1994; Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999).

conceives of gender as a feature of the situated activity, interpersonal interaction, self-presentation, and, indeed, self-production of everybody, at all times and in all places.

In the rest of this chapter, I examine a variety of the practices and discourses of Christian home schooling mothers for the ways in which they produce a performative religious and gendered identity. Like Goffman and unlike Gina, I do not pronounce upon the existence of a “unique self all his own,” gendered, religious, or otherwise; I am not arguing about what Christian women and men, individually or as groups, “really” are or should be. I focus, instead, on the productions through which such a self is brought into a social being that is more than “his” own. I trace the movements of home schooling mothers in their engagement with the gender tradition of conservative Protestantism, as they bend and shape their gender selves in shifting relation to the currents of Christian and American culture.

GENDERING THROUGH LABOR

Conservative Protestants are often held to affirm male headship, however specially defined, and to hold the “biblical” ideal of stay-at-home mothering and housekeeping, however unrealizable (Ammerman, 1987; Bartkowski, 2001; Bendroth, 1993; DeBerg, 1990; Gallagher & Smith, 1999; Gallagher, 2003; Griffith, 1997; Stacey, 1991; Stacey & Gerard, 1990). Contemporary conservative Protestant home schooling mothers certainly seem to exemplify this gender tradition. They most often relinquish paid employment outside of the home and instead devote themselves to intensive mothering and education for their family’s sake. In a chapter on the implications for gender of home schooling, Mitchell Stevens argues that, despite this appearance of the

utter gender traditionalism of conservative Protestant home schooling, Christian home schooling mothers incorporate aspects of feminism into their self-understanding – especially “the liberal feminist demands that contemporary women be more than ‘just’ housewives” (Stevens, 2001, p. 76). He finds that, far from simply enacting a pre-feminist ideal of stay-at-home mothering, home schooling mothers have found in home schooling “novel ways of being working mothers and garnering significant amounts of household power” (Stevens, 2001, p. 72). By practicing what he nicely calls a “renovated domesticity,” home schooling mothers add to the scope of their maternity and so add also to the status of their domestic labors (Stevens, 2001, p. 83).

When I asked Mary Heaney, a former teacher with a master’s degree in education, if she now considers home schooling to be her career, she articulated to me a characterization of home schooling that blends conservative Protestant ideals of domestic maternity with feminist ones of female employment.

Monica: Would you consider home schooling - being a home educator - a career?

Mary: (laughs a little) Yes, I do. And that’s probably one of the things that gets me the most annoyed, when I speak to people and they trivialize the role of mothers who stay at home, if they stay at home at all, but especially if they stay at home and take on the enormous responsibility of home schooling their children. Because a lot of mothers don’t have the background that I have, being trained as a teacher and being educated in a variety of areas, so a lot of my friends really come into home schooling with more of a deficit, with it being more challenging to them, but they still make it work. And some of them do better than I do, because they work so hard, they try so hard, they put a lot of effort into it to give their children a good education.

And so I do see it as a career. It’s more than just staying home. Some people – what bothers me is a lot of people don’t realize, sometimes people will find out that you’re a home schooling mom, and they’ll think, “Oh, she’s free baby-sitting.” I haven’t had too much trouble with it, I’m probably not as compliant as some people, but one of my friends and a lot of her neighbors who have babies are constantly asking her to babysit. I tried to tell her, she’s going to have to tell them no, because it’s going to hurt her family.

Sometimes my husband will forget himself and will say something like - he's always trying to get me to make money somehow. If he reads an article about some way to make money while at home he'll say, "You could do that." I think, "I'm trying to get the laundry done, how could I do that?" I think when he really stops to think about it he realizes it's not possible, there's not enough time in the day. Usually when he stays home for some reason, we have a field trip day or fun day, so he's not home and watching us go through a day at school and see that there's not a lot of extra time.

Mary described to me her understanding of home schooling as the important work of mothers who stay at home, but also as work that resembles a career. Despite the fact that she now teaches her children at home rather than working as a paid teacher in a school, she yet considers home schooling to be her career, a career for which she has professional training (though it is not required), a career that asks her to give of herself in creativity, intelligence, love, and precious time. "It's more than just staying home," as "staying home" is simply the failure to "go to work," the implied absence of occupation; others – friends, neighbors, and occasionally her husband – sometimes fail to recognize her time spent home schooling as labor, as career, as the tremendous amount of daily effort that keeps her fully and completely occupied. In short, home schooling is emphatically more than "baby-sitting" for Mary Heaney, despite the fact that others do not always appreciate the full extent of her work at home.

While Mary and other home schooling mothers who worked as teachers prior to home schooling may readily understand their domestic labor as a career, there are other ways in which home schooling redefines female domestic labor beyond its relocation of the profession of teaching. Home schooling mothers also transform motherhood into a manner of profession through an emphasis on home-keeping and home schooling as a set of skills requiring explicit training. Home schooling mothers often receive formal training for their work, either through home schooling magazines, support groups,

curriculum fair seminars, domestic skills classes like those taught by Paulina Mullen, or, as was the case for many of the mothers I knew, college degrees in education, early childhood development, nursing, or communications. Such formalization of their home schooling knowledge and skills, either in the course of home schooling or through retrospective use of their education, mirrors the process of professionalization of other career endeavors generally considered more intellectually rigorous and less innately transmitted than mothering and housekeeping. In addition, most home schooling mothers incorporate training in housekeeping skills into their curriculum and “count it as hours.” Erin Olsen tags her instruction to her sons in housework “activities of daily living,” or “adl,” and she told me how she values being able to count as school the “development of long-term life skills while addressing academic activities, whether it’s conflict resolution, or working with siblings, or learning how to create an environment that is more conducive to productivity (that means clean your room).” Vivian Flanigan included formal lessons on cleaning the bathroom within her daughters’ home schooling.

So what I did was – you know, you do the best you can – but what I did was, when I had children, I wanted them to know how to do stuff. I wanted them to be able to clean the toilet, I wanted them to be able to dust, I wanted them to be able to vacuum. And they’re very willing. They’d want to come in – when you’re together, they want to come in and assist you. They want to help mom. It’s just a neat thing. And you’d teach them how to do it appropriately. We’d have lessons, “All right, today, girls, we’re learning how to clean the toilet.” This is serious, this was a lesson. We’d go in and we’d talk about how we do this, what we put here, and what we put there, what we clean with. We’d go through the whole thing. And so the next time it’s cleaned, they each get a turn cleaning it on their own.

By recasting home schooling as work for which they must be trained and housework as skills in which they must train their children – “this is serious, this was a lesson,” - home

schooling mothers grant to their domestic labor the value of training and belie the argument that the knowledge and skills of motherhood come naturally.

Lastly, some home schooling mothers emphasized to me the mindfulness required of them in their home-keeping and mothering. Gail Simpson has a master's degree in communications, and she told me that:

Gail: I don't feel threatened that my intellect and master's degree is a waste, because I do accounting, when someone stole our credit card number, I had to be able to say, "This is what I know doesn't belong on there." I call people about certain bills, and argue with them, and am able to articulate that. I complain to people when their advertising campaign is offensive, and I'm able to do that in a way that is grammatically correct if I go and check a couple of words. And, see, those are things that I think are just part of life. You can experience fun ways to exercise your gifts in communication or math or organization in lots of different jobs. But I really know a lot of people in jobs that only challenge one part of who they are, and are much less satisfied than what I'm doing.

It's just like meal planning, people can look at it and dismiss it... I have a very good friend that I walk with, she's a believer, and she home schools two and sends two to school. We were talking about nutrition, and what the huge implications were for school attendance, and how it affects school performance. A lot of mothers just see their role as, "I've gotta get something on the table," and it's an afterthought. As opposed to thinking, "You know what, this is a real, legitimate job. There are hotels that pay people hundreds of thousands of dollars to cater and to think of what would be aesthetically pleasing, what would be a balanced meal." You could see that as a challenge and fun, or you could see that as nothing important. And I have a friend at church who – we're very different – she just called me and said, "I feel like I need a job." She's not home schooling. But she's like, "I just feel like, I just need a little job, it will make me feel a little better."

Monica: About herself?

Gail: Yeah, and about what she's doing. "And I think all this stuff is – that I'm supposed to be doing something besides this." And I'm like, "I just don't see it that way, because I really can't imagine stretching myself, not just time and energy, but I can't think of a skill that I don't use." Now, I probably could stand to have some sharpening of some things, if I have a very narrow aptitude that's been unchallenged for awhile, but that could happen in any job.

The labors of teaching, mothering, and housekeeping are labors not only of love but also of the mind for home schooling mothers like Gail. While some women like her friend

may find the work of mothering and housekeeping to be insufficient, insignificant, unprofessional, and intellectually unchallenging – perhaps especially women, like her friend, who stay at home but who are not home schooling – Gail affirms that home schooling motherhood is “a real, legitimate job” because it challenges her to make use of a broad range of skills. I do not wish to assert that home schooling motherhood does in fact have a greater intellectual component that is in fact greater than that of a non-teaching motherhood. I understand none of these assertions to be factual claims. Instead, I draw out the self-presentation of home schooling mothers as women whose work is valuable on the level of a career for its intellectual challenge.

While conservative Protestant home schooling mothers thus define their “women’s work” of home-keeping and child-raising in terms of the valuation of career, some of them also have reduced their housekeeping as a result of their home schooling, though not without ambivalence. At the curriculum fair I attended, a home schooling father presented a seminar introducing home schooling as an option, and he warned families considering it that their homes would become messier as a result. “There will be books and papers all over the place – that’s just part of it.” I asked all of the home schooling mothers how they balance their other home-keeping responsibilities with the work of home schooling, and several of them told me with a sigh of their frustrations in trying to keep a home schooling house orderly, as well as about their eventual decision to cut back on housework. Jessica Daugherty’s answer to my question illustrates the reduction in housework, as well as the continued feeling of a responsibility not quite met:

Monica: Is it a struggle to balance home schooling with housework?

Jessica: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. (*She laughs.*)

Monica: Was that a surprise to you?

Jessica: I pictured one of the benefits that we would have with home schooling would be that my children would not be badly equipped as grown-ups because they would be used to following me around to see what is the best, quickest way to clean up a room, they would be used to it, they would not be disgusted by the thought of having to do housework. I thought they'd spend a lot of time cooking with me...*(She laughs again.)* Yeah, we don't get to in a leisurely way work together. It's more, "Okay, we have 30 minutes. You have *got* to get your laundry folded and put away in 30 minutes. Really!" So we get a little stressed – it's not like on "Little House on the Prairie." *(We're both laughing now.)*

Monica: So how do you manage to get everything done that you need to get done?

Jessica: Well, I don't. I don't get everything done that I feel like I need to get done. And I just accept that as part of my beautiful, imperfect life. It's a sacrifice, and I know women who work outside the home have these exact same problems, and so I just figure that's something that we all deal with.

Monica: What are some other sacrifices that you feel that you make?

Jessica: It's never really all clean at the same time, and I never do nice little finishing touches, though I'm not sure that I would anyway. It's just always, a crumb here, or a room there that's not done. The laundry sits there for three days after it's been dried, and it makes me feel bad because I'll walk into the room and can't just relax. Things like that. I don't want to be a neat freak, but I do enjoy just the sight of a nice, clean room. So that's a sacrifice. And you just can't really feel great about having company over, unless you know them well. Unless you have time to really clean the house well. But it balances out.

Monica: I haven't seen anybody yet with a perfectly clean house.

Jessica: No, I haven't seen anybody perfect, but I sure didn't know going into it – especially the home schoolers. I had a friend, and she has five children. And she's a nice woman, her children like each other, they have a good time, she just – the house is clean and orderly, I mean, even the closets. But that's her, that's not me. I don't know how she does it, but not many people do that.

Jessica is not alone in the "sacrifices" she makes in her housekeeping, neither among home schooling mothers nor women who work outside the home; as she said, "I just figure that's something that we all deal with." In the home schooling renovations of domesticity, home schooling mothers add on the labors of teaching to those of

housekeeping, and – in a parallel with the “second shift” of employed mothers – find that their housekeeping becomes a source of stress, guilt, and shame (Hochschild & Machung, 1989). “We get a little stressed...It makes me feel bad...I just can’t relax...You can’t feel really great about having company over.” Even when I asked about “other sacrifices,” Jessica continued to tell me of the frustrations of housekeeping while home schooling, and after I tried to encourage her by saying that no one’s house is perfect, she told me of a home schooling mother who managed to attain the ideal that Jessica cannot quite give up. Several other mothers – Erin Olsen, Jill Hughes, Vivian Flanigan, and Lisa Rutherford – all described to me their conscious decisions, made over and over again, to prioritize the work of home schooling over that of house-keeping, despite the guilt they occasionally feel in doing so. Home schooling thus creates a manner of motherhood that has an additional, though unfortunate, similarity with career motherhood: the burden of the “second shift.” Some home schooling mothers meet this burden in ways similar to those of their working-mother counterparts: a reduction in their labors of housekeeping (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, & Robinson, 2000).



Figure 13. Home schooling books and papers covering the Simpson dining room table.

The relation of housework to the relative power of the genders is a vexed question in sociological research. Some have interpreted the household division of labor according to gender-neutral economic models of exchange and relative resources (i.e., the one with more resources can exchange them for housework) (Becker, 1981; Bianchi et al., 2000; Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Brines, 1994). Others have introduced a gender perspective to illuminate the symbolic import – one that continues despite women’s labor force participation - of housework for the production and reproduction of masculinity, femininity, and gender differences of power (Berk, 1985; Brines, 1994; Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Tichenor, 1999). According to the gender model, the sexual division of household labor by which women do more hours of more continuously demanding housework than men is both cause and effect of the relative disempowerment of women, both at home and in the larger social world. Conservative Protestant home schooling mothers pursue only domestic labor and generally do more housework than their

husbands as a result, such that their private labor can be read as an indication of their lesser power. On the other hand, as we have seen, they often re-work the scope of their home work in a way that reduces their housekeeping, thus potentially interrupting the process by which housework reproduces power-disadvantaged femininity. Through the renovation of their domesticity to include more professional work and less housekeeping, conservative Protestant home schooling mothers may reconfigure the relations of power that would otherwise obtain to their disadvantage.⁸³

In sum, conservative Protestant home schooling mothers practice a “renovated domesticity” in which they greatly expand the labors of stay-at-home mothering to include the full scope of their children’s education as well as their own “employment.” The redefinition of home schooling domestic motherhood into a sort of career is perhaps most strikingly evinced by the transformation of housework among conservative Protestant home schooling mothers into a realm of work that falls outside of their primary calling, as something that is sacrificed for the sake of home schooling.

Though they thus understand the work of home schooling as a career, their renovation of motherhood is a special sort of career identity that does not challenge the sexual division of labor in “traditional” conservative Protestant femininity. In the dedication of their labor to home schooling, these mothers re-inscribe a gender difference between unpaid domestic work and the public employment of their bread-winning husbands. Indeed, in her book *The Gender Factory*, Sarah Fenstermaker Berk has argued that the sexual division of household labor is a primary means of the production of

⁸³ In his work with dual-earner couples, Coltrane explored the process of adult gender socialization by which a more equitable division of household labor could contribute to more equitable relations of gender (Coltrane, 1989). Though it is not my contention that home schooling families divide household labor equitably, they do seem to redefine household labor in such a way as potentially to rework its effects for the gendering of power.

gender difference itself (Berk, 1985). Despite their reevaluation of the meanings of domestic motherhood, their home schooling remains the practice of “traditional” gender differentiation, of stay-at-home mothering, of Christian womanhood.

While conservative Protestant home schooling mothers imbue their domestic labor with some of the symbolic values of professional identity – challenge, training, intelligence, respect, and a higher priority than housework – their work does not accrue to them the monetary value of employment: they are unpaid. In a sense, they trade in their means of earning economic capital for a means of gaining the symbolic capital – sometimes significant – of stay-at-home mothering within conservative Protestantism. Though I wish to discount neither the ingenuity they use nor the meaningfulness they find in re-working the domestic labor of motherhood, the loss of their employment may have unintended, unrecognized, and undesirable consequences for the gendering of power. Indeed, their unemployment can be read as a loss as well as a gain in symbolic capital, for the markets of symbolic and economic capital are not entirely discrete from one another.⁸⁴ That is, the loss of employment by home schooling mothers can entail a loss of their socioeconomic status, the creation of their economic dependency, the fragility of their self-esteem, the curtailment of their options in the present and the future – in short, the lessening of their power in the broader world beyond conservative Protestantism, and perhaps also within it (Acker, 1988; Hartmann, 1981). As Pyke explored in “Class-based Masculinities,” the structural power of middle-class males is created and protected through the career sacrifices of their wives, in ways beyond simple economic theories of power. In an argument against Becker’s human capital theorization that the

⁸⁴ For a review of feminist research that explores linkages between “micro” family relations and “macro” social structuring of power, see (Ferree, 1990).

privileging of the male career best maximizes the economic good of the entire family, Pyke states (Becker, 1981):

This view assumes that family life is organized around family interests rather than the interests of more powerful members. However, this assumption ignores the costs that many wives pay for limiting their own job involvement in support of their husbands', particularly on the loss of a spouse to divorce or death, which befalls most married women prior to the age at which they can draw pensions and Social Security benefits. So it may be in the best interests of married women to focus on their own job development and economic independence, because the majority of them will be supporting themselves when their marriages end. (Pyke, 1996, p. 533)

Though the intent of home schooling husbands and wives may be far removed from considerations of power – may, in fact, think power as the world defines it to be foreign to Christian parental and marital relations – the effects of their choices may yet reproduce the structural inequalities that also structure their options. In other words, though home schooling mothers may experience - and we may understand - their devotion to the labors of home schooling, home-keeping, and mothering as empowering, it may also be the case that their symbolic power hides a structural disadvantage. The two touchstones of conservative Protestant gender ideology – the sexual division of labor and relative authority of the genders – are not unrelated, and so to questions of maternal authority we now turn.

“YES MA’AM, NO SIR:” PERFORMANCES OF AUTHORITY

Despite the connections between money and power within marriage and without, conservative Protestant home schooling mothers practice a manner of “traditional” femininity that, while ultimately upholding male headship, yet entails a degree of maternal empowerment. In their pragmatic combination of maternal authority and

submission, conservative Protestant home schooling mothers are in keeping with contemporary evangelicals for whom elements of gender equality co-exist with elements of gender hierarchy. Sociologist John Bartkowski has reviewed what he calls the “elite” evangelical discourse on gender and compares what he read to what he learned from flesh-and-blood evangelicals through observations of their church life and interviews about their gender practices and beliefs (Bartkowski, 2001). He reports from all quarters that the discussions and experiences of relative power between evangelical men and women vacillate between hierarchy and equality. The affirmations of male headship in the home exist side-by-side with feminist critiques of the patriarchal family, and the concept of “servant-leadership” rewrites male headship as something perhaps approaching mutual submission between genders. He states, “New-guard proponents of the patriarchal family embrace the general idea of mutual submission even while they redefine the phrase to be consistent with their specific dictates for male family leadership” (Bartkowski, 2001, p. 61). Bartkowski notes how pastors, husbands, and wives draw on both of the competing gender discourses – hierarchy and equality, husband headship and wifely submission – in their actual gender practices, with seeming disregard for the apparent contradictions. In the same vein, Griffith explores how women of the charismatic Aglow fellowship understand their female submission to give rise to their healing, their freedom, and their spiritual empowerment, in their homes and in the world at large. “Believing that power issues from vulnerability – or, paradoxically, that vulnerability recreates itself as power – these women avow their capacity to remake all of creation” (Griffith, 1997, p. 199-200). Lastly, sociologist Sally Gallagher has interpreted the language and the practices of evangelical married couples and has found a

simultaneous and equal commitment to “symbolic male headship” and “pragmatic egalitarianism” between genders (Gallagher & Smith, 1999; Gallagher, 2003).

In sum, contemporary scholarship on conservative Protestant views of gender has found that conservative Protestants in their rhetorical, practical and theological creativity continue to maintain a strong commitment to male headship and female submission, even as they incorporate notions of gender equality and mutual submission into their discourse and practice. When submission is re-written as empowerment and when leadership is re-written as servanthood, it can be difficult to retain one’s hold on the relative power of the genders within conservative Protestantism. Indeed, such rhetorical maneuvers on the part of conservative Protestant writers and scholars alike can lead one to wonder about the very meaning of power in these analyses. For my purposes, I examine power not so much as the possession of individuals based on their status in a hierarchy nor their ability to enforce their will upon others but instead as a feature of interaction. Drawing upon the work of Goffman and West and Zimmerman as discussed above, I understand power to be created and re-created in relationship and in interaction, as individuals performatively bring into being their power relative to one another through such often-unintended indications as voice, speech patterns, pitch, posture, clothing, expression, topic, greeting, volume, questioning, and answering (Aries, 1996; Goffman, 1967; Johnson, 1994; Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). I employ such a microsociological perspective not to discount the continued macrosocial structuring of power but to appreciate how such structural differences are created and recreated in the situated activity of individuals. I thus explore the performative construction of authority and of its limitation in the

practices of home schooling mothers, specifically in their practices of teaching: curriculum choice, questioning and answering, disciplining, and testing.

Christian home schooling mothers reflect the two faces of conservative Protestant gender discourse – the egalitarian and the hierarchical - as their teaching practices create maternal authority at the same time that they also undercut it. Perhaps the most obvious way in which the educational practices of home schooling mothers accrues practical authority to them is through the decision to home school itself. In their assumption of the authority to direct in every detail the education of their children, they take on a degree of power over their children’s present and future lives that exceeds that of parents who share the education of their children with teachers and school officials. The power that comes with the authority to determine curriculum, to regulate exposure to information – to define what passes as knowledge, as truth – is surely extensive in itself.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ For a thorough investigation of the power that inheres in curriculum, see Apple’s *Ideology and Curriculum* and his review of the critical sociology of education in the United States (Apple, 1979, 1996).

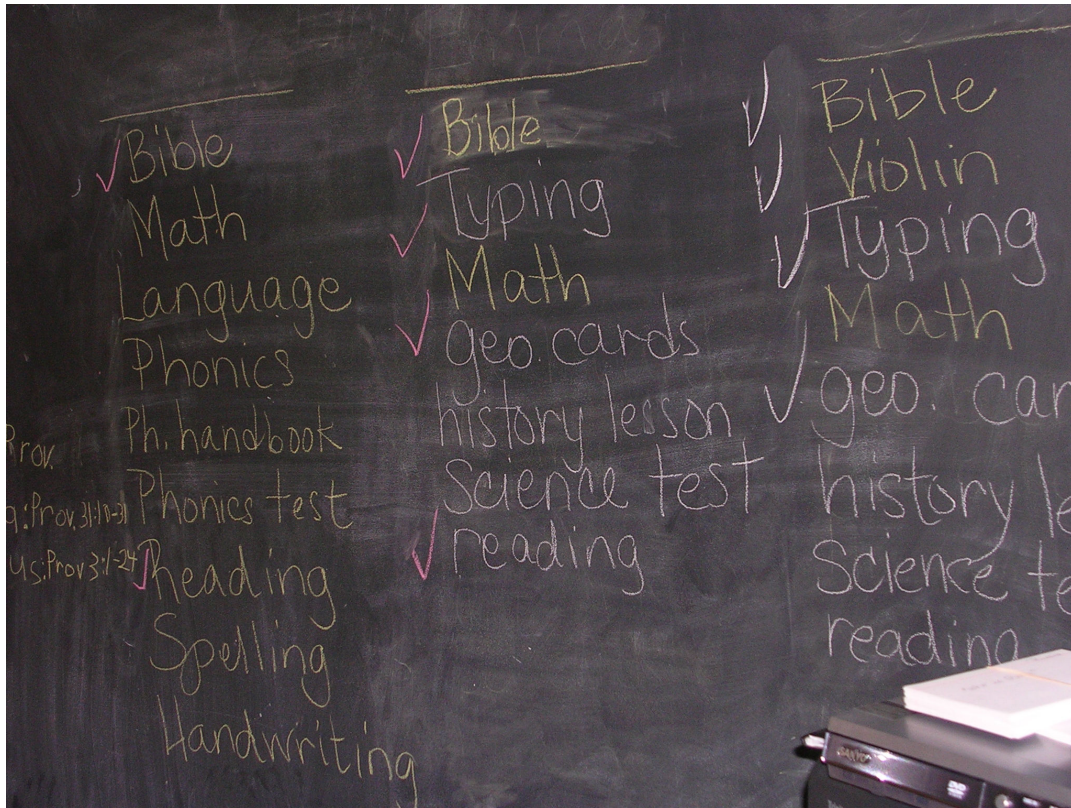


Figure 14. To-do list. Mary Heaney writes on the wall-size chalkboard what each of her three children will study each day, in addition to choosing their curricula.

Their performative production of maternal authority is also evident in the countless teaching interactions in home schooling in which teacher-mothers and their student-children engage in questions and answers. In the morning of my third day with the Heaneys, Mary called Frank, Esther, and Scottie to do their bible lesson together. She asked Esther to go get the large, white, leather-bound, illustrated, King James Version family bible, and after Esther returned, walking slowly and seeming distracted, Mary asked her laughingly, “Are you all right?” They all sat beside each other on the red sectional sofa in their home school room, while I sat in an upholstered chair across from them. Mary began the Bible lesson by asking Frank to recite the books of the Bible in order starting with Genesis, and when he forgot which book came after Colossians, Mary

supplied First Thessalonians from her own memory. It was Esther's turn after Frank, and when she finished (also with Mary's occasional help), Frank joked, "You copied me." As Mary told the children that she had decided they were going to start learning a Proverb a day, mother and children pulled closer together on the couch. Esther leaned on Frank who was leaning on Mary's right side while Scottie leaned on her left.

Mary read aloud Proverbs 1:1-4: "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion." She then asked "So, who wrote Proverbs?" Frank answered "Solomon," and Mary followed with, "Who was Solomon?" Though they couldn't remember the name of Solomon's father's that Mary had read, Esther and Frank did remember that he was the son of someone important – maybe Moses or Abraham? Mary answered, "Solomon was King David's son. What was the purpose of Proverbs?" Scottie then got up from the couch, walked across the room, and picked up the beach ball globe.

Mary said, "Put it down, please."

"Okay, but what is it?"

"A globe, but we're doing Bible now. You're part of this, too."

Scottie returned the globe to its place on the shelf and sat cross-legged on the floor in front of Mary, while Esther shifted her position to lie down on the couch. Mary proceeded to explain how Proverbs was written for everyone, so that they would learn wisdom. During the course of her teaching, Scottie wandered off again, this time to the kitchen, and Mary called to him, "Scottie! Get back in here."

Mary read more verses from Proverbs, including verses 5 and 7-9:

A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels... The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck. ”

Then she asked, “What’s a good interpretation of that?” Esther answered, “Fools who don’t receive wisdom probably think they are smart enough already.”

Mary then asked, “Who are supposed to teach you wisdom?”

Esther and Frank answered immediately and in unison, “Your father and mother.”

“That’s right. Notice that it doesn’t say the church or the government. Wisdom is supposed to come from parents.”

In such question-and-answer teaching conversations, ubiquitous in home schooling, the teaching mothers assume the authority of correct knowledge, and their children turn to them for affirmation or correction. As the teacher, Mary tests the knowledge of her children, judging their understanding against what she knows to be the “right” answer. Perhaps not incidentally, in this case Mary also verbally affirms her authority as one of the sources of wisdom for her children, and authority greater than that of both church and state.

In general, the interaction pattern of questions and answers imparts authority to the answerer, as the questioner admits a lack of knowledge which the answerer then supplies from their temporarily superior position. In questioning for educational purposes, though, the power effects can be reversed, as the teacher-questioner retains the authority to judge the rightness of the answer. The question, in this case, is asked to reveal not the questioner’s lack of understanding but the potential of such lack in the

answerer. The ubiquitous exchange of questions and answers in home schooling effects the mothers' authority by positioning her in the seat of correct knowledge. If differences in status and power are created and maintained through interpersonal interaction, then the teaching interaction between home schooling mothers and their charges establishes maternal authority.

Home schooling mothers also create their power as they pursue various strategies of discipline in their work of parenting and educating. As all but one of the mothers with whom I worked were living in the southeast, I frequently observed children answering their mothers' instructions with an automatic, "Yes, ma'am." When Gail Simpson's children did not so acknowledge her instructions, she would query, "Yes, ma'am?," calling forth the cadence of obedience from Kristen and Peter. Mary and Scott Heaney believe in corporal punishment as a tool for child discipline, and once during the week of my visit, Mary took their youngest, Scottie, into another room to be so disciplined for his direct disobedience, persistent daydreaming, and general non-cooperation. Maternal discipline can be a ubiquitous part of parenting, home schooling or no, such that after a time I took mothers' disciplinary actions for granted. In an article comparing the published parenting advice of conservative Protestants to that of mainstream childcare experts, sociologists John Bartkowski and Christopher Ellison note a preoccupation with questions of authority and discipline among conservative Protestants (Bartkowski & Ellison, 1995). Whereas mainstream childcare experts decry the use of corporal punishment, conservative Protestant family advisers enjoin physical discipline as a tool for the cultivation of appropriate and biblical obedience to parental authority and, by analogy, godly authority. This power to punish, throughout the day and into the evenings

and weekends, accrues to home schooling mothers a significant authority over their children.

In addition to the powers of knowledge production and discipline, home schooling mothers practice maternal authority through their merging of the roles of mother and teacher. As I talked with Jessica Daugherty, she clarified for me how the conditions of home schooling may establish maternal authority as a function of the consistency between parenting and teaching and of the constancy of maternal attention.

If you are home, and when something comes up, and maybe – in other words, you were playing with the toys and you get mad at your toys because the toys don't remain stacked up in a tower, or for whatever reason you're mad. And that point, if you are with your mother you might be told that it doesn't help to get mad at your toys. And if that happens repeatedly, I *see* it happen repeatedly, and I see that this is a thing that she struggles with, and I can help her with it. And so she learns good habits. And at that age, good habits are more important to learn, and harder to learn – well, I won't say it's harder to learn than reading, but more important to learn than letters at that age, and it's easier to learn at home than it would be at kindergarten... So it's much easier to teach her character traits and habits if I'm with her. If I'm busy, if I'm taking her driving twice a day, and then I get involved in other things because she's not my primary concern during the day, then that also interferes with the learning process because I've got so much else on my mind. So it's just a much easier way to learn if you're, if that's the way your family works.

As a home schooling mother, Jessica can teach her daughters the “good habits” of self-control and emotional reasoning because she's always there to notice, to interpret, to instruct. Home schooled children are under the constant care of their mothers. While this consistency of authority may facilitate a superior learning environment, it also makes possible the establishment of maternal power.

As Jessica's insight illustrates, the ready assumption of authority by home schooling mothers may be understandable as a unique integration of the otherwise disparate authorities of mother and all teachers. Whereas children who attend an

institutional school learn to relativize their parents' authority vis-à-vis that of their teachers and school administrators, home schooled children live the vast majority of their lives under one unified authority: their parents, or, as far as their day time hours are concerned, their mothers. Home schooling mother Vivian Flanigan told me about how, when she first pulled her eldest daughter Nora out of the Christian school affiliated with her church, her fourth-grade daughter wanted to continue at home as it was at school. "It got to where I would do things one way and she would say, 'That's not the way Mrs. Brown did it.' Mrs. Brown was her last teacher. So I would say, 'Well, we're not in Mrs. Brown's classroom anymore, and this is the way we're doing it.'" Nora at first resisted Vivian's authority as a teacher because she knew Vivian only as her mother, and when it comes to learning academic subjects, teachers are the acknowledged authority. Vivian assumed the authority of teacher alongside that of mother, and Nora learned that her mother's rules now applied at all times – even in "school" matters.

Nancy and Jimmy Thompson home school their three children at their farm that they work in addition to Jimmy's employment as a fire inspector. Nancy ultimately decided to convince Jimmy that they should home school their children in large part because she was bothered by the presumption that teachers and school officials had more power over her children's learning and upbringing than she did. Further, she understood this troubling of her maternal spirit to be the work of God, calling her to home school.

Monica: Can you tell me some more about how you felt that God was calling you to do this?

Nancy: Oh, yes, I know exactly where that came from. My oldest daughter and I are very close, and always have been. From the time she was little bitty. From the day she started school, that relationship changed. Not severed, but it definitely changed. By second grade, it was to the point that, if the teacher told her to do

something that was contrary to what I told her to do, she felt teacher's rules overrode what momma said. And that's where the battles started.

She had a fantastic second grade teacher, a Christian woman, and I just went to her and I explained the problems we were having. And she had taken chocolate milk away from her class because of one little boy in the class. And I told her, I said, "I'm the parent, I pay for lunch. And I've got to show my daughter that what I say supersedes what you say. And this is where I'm going to best you. And you have no right – my daughter, she doesn't drink white milk at all. And I can get her to drink milk if she has the chocolate. And you have no right to take it away from her. If you need to punish her in some way, then you need to discuss that with me, we'll come up with a solution. I can guarantee you, you're not going to have a problem with Mary Ann. Not more than once or twice, anyway. I'll fix whatever, but she needs to know that momma and daddy really and truly are in control."

Well, it really hurt this teacher because, like I said, she was doing it for one guy, but she was punishing the whole class, and that's not right. But she had to give. And it just *blew Mary Ann away* that I could tell a teacher how things were...

...Also, they had guidance counseling in the schools...The program they had was called "Do So," and it's peer ethics. And they were teaching it. And momma couldn't sit in on that. Well, they would say it wasn't peer ethics, but I got a hold of the curriculum, I mean, I had to force my way to even see it. But they wouldn't let me be in there because some other child might say something of a confidential nature. They were trying to catch sex abusers, and things like that. In the classroom! And I was saying, "Excuse me, you're saying I can't hear it, but you're going to expose my kindergartener and third grader to it? I don't think so." So my two girls were the only two in the entire school that, during those times they were out in the hall. They sat in a desk in the hall. So during those times I was pretty radical. *(She laughs.)*

Nancy initiated repeated encounters with school officials over the relative authority of parents vs. teachers in her children's education, moral training, and even nutrition.

Nancy insisted that she and her husband Jimmy have the ultimate power to determine their children's upbringing, and when it seemed like their parental authority was being too often countermanded, they decided to home school. Nancy believes that "God requires the father to be the head of the house. He's got a lot more responsibility that falls on him. My job is to be submissive to his will, Jimmy's will." Still, when it came to

the relative authority of the mother and the teacher, she withstood very little usurpation of her maternal rights over her children.

While conservative Protestant home schooling mothers deploy considerable authority within their families as teacher-mothers, they and their husbands also exhibit practices that countervail this potential for maternal authoritarianism. First of all, mothers often reported to me that, as their children approached high school, they experienced anxiety over their ability to continue as the primary educator for subjects such as physics, philosophy, and especially “higher math.” Those mothers who decided to continue home schooling took courage in the concept of “independent learning.” Nathaniel Rosenberg and David Cartwright are both eighteen-year-old home school students, and in the week I spent at each of their homes, I witnessed independent learning in action; rather, I didn’t witness it, because their learning happened absent the mothers’ teaching that I was observing. Nathaniel was responsible for the pace and the completion of his schoolwork, working on his own in his bedroom, at the computer, or at the public library to which he drove himself in the family car. David also frequently studied on his own in his room, and his mother Faith would very occasionally check in with him and his teenage sisters Sarah and Susan just to make sure they were more-or-less on pace to finish their subjects. In families with multiple children, independent learning is a necessary component of education at all ages, as children must learn to work on their own while their mother is teaching a sibling. Nancy Thomson told me in our interview that

It’s changed over the years, what I do. I started out teaching like a classroom teacher. Sitting down, and over and over, and teaching them each little part. With the exception that we did a lot of reading. We had some quiet time each day. We read a lot of good books together. I practically am hands-off teaching now, with the exception of math this year, her advanced math, when she needed help. I’d go over stuff with her. Or if Eric struggles with something. I’m glad to

help, I'm glad to teach them, but for the most part I hand them their books and they do it. They're pretty much independent learners. And that really was the goal all along.

Out of practical necessity and for what they understand to be the good of their children, home schooling mothers gradually decrease their own role in their children's education and increase their children's educational self-reliance.⁸⁶

As any good teacher will, home schooling mothers teach themselves out of a job over the course of time. While young home schooling children may view their mothers as the source of all knowledge and authority, as they get older they learn to turn to other authorities, including their own trained minds. At the same time, as their children mature, home schooling mothers relinquish their responsibility to discipline their children's behavior and hand it over to the children themselves, hoping that some of the early training about choice and consequences took root and grew. As any good mother will, home schooling mothers parent themselves out of their temporary role of surrogate conscience and substitute power of self-discipline for their children. Because of the relation of indirect proportion that obtains over time in both teaching and parenting, the authority of home schooling mothers decreases as the maturity and knowledge of children increases.

Home schooling mothers also sometimes actively level the field between themselves and their children even as they are teaching. As the moment of grading seemed to me to present a likely point of tension in home schooling mother-child relations, I asked many of the mothers how they addressed grades and tests. I had

⁸⁶ The educational effectiveness of the "independent learning" of home schooled children of any age may stand in need of further investigation, yet it is beyond the scope of my study to evaluate the teaching methods of home schooling mothers. I discuss their practice of encouraging their children's independent learning as one means through which they perform a limitation of their maternal authority.

expected, based on my biases as a potentially scarred product of public education, that grading and testing would be an overt expression of teacherly authority that would exist in tension with the maternal relationship of solidarity. It was much less of a problem than I thought it would be. Or, it may have been a tension that they addressed by deflating the authority of grades. When I observed Helen Mason and her daughter Virginia check together her math exercise answers against the answer key, I was struck by the camaraderie they exhibited. They laughed when they realized Virginia's unusually low percent correct was due to their inadvertent comparison with the wrong key, and they approached the missed questions together, as a team, as Helen tried to figure out along with Virginia where she had gone wrong. Also, instead of quizzing Virginia on her math skills, Helen and Virginia would race each other in "mental math" exercises to see who could be the first to arrive at the correct answer.

Erin Olsen described her philosophy of testing to me as follows:

I do test for certain things. It was kind of a waste of time, because they all pretty much scored pretty well. Jacob tested out – it wasn't worth it for him because he was doing spelling at a twelfth grade level two years ago, and I said, "Well, I'm not going to waste my time on spelling tests"...Some people are real big on spelling things, and because my kids read so much they don't have a real weakness in spelling. But I wanted to see that they were at grade level, at least. And so, I'll go through spurts in what I really think they need to focus on...

I try to make tests a little more objective. When we did spelling, I introduced it as "this is just a pretest – this is just to tell us where to start. This is not an indication of how good or poor a speller you are – we just need to know where to start." I try to make the kids understand that testing is not something to show them as either successful or failures. And I try not to test them until I think that they're ready to test...Some of them are very competitive, so if they get something wrong, they start over from the beginning because they don't want to get any wrong. And I try to tell them that, if you're going to start over on the test, you should start over on the lesson. A test only reveals what you need to work on – it doesn't mean that you've done poorly, you just need to address something. And I try to keep that focus. When I've given them standardized tests, I say this is not a test of you as a person. This is a test to see if we've covered most subjects adequately. If we haven't, we'll go back and cover them. So I do try to keep it

objective, either I let them self-test or have outside testing. I've had to test them sometimes, and I don't give them answers. I say, "I can't do that – this is just your chance to work on it, and we'll work on whatever you have a hard time with later." I think life is a big enough test for them in general, though.

Erin here discusses several strategies that, it seems to me, remove her own educational authority, and perhaps that of the test itself somewhat, from the testing scenario. First, through independent and objective testing, the right to judge a child's answer as wrong is grounded not in the mother-teacher's personal authority but in another source altogether, be it a testing service or an answer key. Mothers as well as children are beholden to the independently given score. In addition to independent testing, Erin redefines the purpose of the test as a measurement, not so much of her children's learning but more so of her own teaching. "This is a test to see if we've covered most subjects adequately." In this way she takes up the position of the tested rather than the tester along with her children. Third, she explains how grades can quickly change significance for home schoolers. Because tests are given only when the student is "ready," and because they can revisit material and re-test *ad infinitum* rather than using the test as the marker for the end of the lesson, test scores and grades become subordinate to mastery of the material. "If you're going to start over on the test, you should start over on the lesson." In sum, grades and tests do not cement the authority of home schooling mothers who give them, because they experience tests and grades alongside their children rather than handing them down to them as it were from above.

The home schooling mothers with whom I worked also practiced the lessening of their interactional authority over their children when they identified themselves as co-learners with them. Many mothers considered it to be a tremendous benefit of home schooling that they could learn all manner of interesting things along with their children.

Lisa Rutherford throws herself enthusiastically into whatever her boys want or need to learn. She told me that, “If something ever happened where I would have to put them in school or do something, I would still want to know what’s going on in their lives. I like to see what they’re creating. Sometimes it’s overkill, but I like to know. It’s funny, I learn so much by what they’re learning.” Often, as I would sit watching mothers and children read together from a book, the mothers would say wonderingly, almost to themselves, “I never knew that.” Who does remember, really, the wealth of information to which school children are exposed? Though the mothers clearly have less to learn than their children, their own learning continues along with their students, such that their position of authority as teachers is balanced by their self-ascribed status of fellow learner. As Faith Cartwright said to me jokingly as she showed me her scrapbook of her early home schooling years, “After all, home schooling really is all about me and what I want to learn.”

Practices of maternal authority are occasioned by the very circumstances of home schooling, as is the potential for the practical lessening of the father’s authority within a home schooling family. When I asked each mother and father about the fathers’ involvement in home schooling, I frequently heard that fathers support the work of mothers, that they are not involved in the concrete, day-to-day work of home schooling but are included in more abstract ways. For instance:

Monica, to Jason Olsen: So, how would you describe your role in home schooling?

Erin Olsen, after a long pause: Enabler.

Jason, smiling: First is a support role. That includes, obviously, helping to acquire whatever she needs to do it. But it also means picking her up when she falls and encouraging her to continue. Because there are days when you just feel

like giving it up. When she's having a bad day and I'll be having a good day, and vice-versa. Part of it is a support role, because the part where I actually do the teaching is minimal compared to the amount of time she spends. I spend a lot of time with music, though. The subjects I really teach are music, and computers, and religion, and sex ed. That's the stuff that I cover. And sometimes it's more formal, and sometimes it's less formal. But those are the topics that Erin's counting on me to bring to the table...Otherwise, I just try to stay out of the way. *(He laughs.)*

Jason Olsen did more direct teaching than many of the other fathers because his employment could easily translate into lessons for his sons; still, the circumstances of home schooling, in which he works at the office while she teaches at home, limit paternal involvement. Jason understands his primary role to be supportive of Erin's work. Mothers and children spend the day in rich collaboration as they share the identity-forming process of education, whereas fathers who leave for work are absent and often minimally informed and involved in the home schooling endeavor itself. Their wives and children may make efforts to include them, but such post-facto inclusion does not match the experience of being there in the thick of it. While most of the fathers were, in fact, very involved with their families on evenings and weekends, the activities of home schooling proper were the mothers' domain. In addition to the work of home schooling that takes place in the home, an impressive organizational network of support groups, tutorials, and cooperatives has been formed, and in Stevens' study of these organizations, he notes the prevalence of female leadership (Stevens, 2001). Home schooling, in its domestic as well as organizational dimensions, is the work of women, such that the role of fathers in home schooling can migrate to the margins.

Beyond the above-mentioned practices of the limitation of maternal authority, the potential this feminization of the home school creates for great maternal authority within the family is counteracted, discursively and practically, by several strategies for the

creation of paternal authority: the gendering of discipline, the rhetorical assertion of male headship, the characterization of fathers as principals, and, as mentioned above, the discursive and pragmatic interconnection between income and power.⁸⁷

Conservative Protestant home schooling mothers of boys face a special dilemma regarding their authority over their sons. If, as many conservative Protestants believe, men are given by God the desire, aptitude, and birthright to lead within the home, then is it right and good for sons to be under the authority of their mothers all day long? *For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?*⁸⁸ Further, regardless of gender ideology, many of the mothers experienced power struggles with their sons, especially in the early teen years. Lisa Rutherford's oldest son, Max, who was fourteen at the time of my observation, had in recent years adopted an attitude of antagonism to his mother that lead her to question their future together in home schooling.

Two other mothers of sons – Maria Rosenberg and Nancy Thompson – told me about their approach to the question of a mother's authority over her son. I asked Maria about her husband Ralph's role in home schooling:

Well, for us it translates into some practical help, in terms of higher math, especially for Nathaniel now. But it also, for me it's really more, we joke about this, that he's the principal of the school. But really, that's the role that he plays, because I go to him when I'm trying out curriculum, when I'm trying to think through some issue about school, like if I want to do a unit study but I'm pressed for time and I don't know if it will work. He always reminds me of the things that I've said are the most important to me. So he'll bring me back to the basic foundational things.

⁸⁷ I discuss the construction of paternal authority for the sake of exploring not masculine gender identity in home schooling but feminine. Male and female, like black and white, are articulated conjointly, such that the characterization of fatherhood is relevant to that of motherhood. Still, conservative Protestant home schooling femininity remains my primary focus in this chapter.

⁸⁸ I Timothy 3:5, KJV

And he's also the principal in terms of disciplinarian. As the boys get older especially. The younger boys, they still are pretty responsive to mom, but they hit a certain age, and they really need that man's authority, so it's not just some woman pushing them around. They know that dad is serious, but he's also a great listener. So he does help a lot with the discipline and especially, it's not even so much the discipline as the authority. They know that if I have to call dad about an issue, then there's going to be a high price to pay. So they know that I actually have back-up...The older they get, the more they need him, I think, they more they need a man to look to.

Maria and Ralph are raising and home schooling five sons – Nathaniel, Benjamin, Simon, Jeremiah, and baby Aaron - and so Maria has much experience with the differences between a mother and a father regarding authority over sons. In my time in their home, I witnessed Maria discipline her sons with a firm hand, yet she understands that there is something different about Ralph's authority for the boys. "They really need that man's authority, so it's not just some woman pushing them around."

Nancy Thompson also discussed with me what she has had to learn over the years about raising her now fourteen-year-old son, Eric, that is different from raising her two older daughters Mary Ann and Tracie.

Nancy: Then when Eric started school, Eric didn't want to accept my authority over him. Eric came into this world knowing he was male, and that females were to be submissive. He's just got that bent. And so we had a lot of struggle early on over who was in charge, and over whether the work was going to be done. And so Jimmy (*her husband*) had to play a much bigger role there, to the point that when he was either first grade or second, I think first grade, my best threat to him was, "I will put you on that yellow bus." In first grade he decided he wanted to go to public school. And we lived as far out of town as we do now, but not here. And Eric said, "You can drive me." I said, "No way, sonny. I will get up that early and I will get you ready and I will get you on that bus, and you will ride the bus home in the evening." And that's all it took. He never went.

And then, as he got older, as a young man, he is under a woman's authority all day every day. It's not a good thing. Because that's not who he has to become. I cannot teach him to be a man. Only a man can do that. And we had a lot of advice from other friends on how you accomplish that. And I went to a counseling training thing, they were doing a seminar on raising boys. It was one night a week. And I went to that. And that was very helpful.

Monica: What kind of things did they say?

Nancy: We had a reading list. And it's all taught from a Christian perspective. We talked about having mentors in boy's lives – having good mentors, safe mentors...And instead of him being always under me, when Jimmy comes home, he and dad go and do. Now that my parents live out here, my dad does not need to be out in the woods cutting down trees by himself, so he'll call, "Can I have Eric for a little while?" So Eric and granddaddy do a lot together...

There's a group of young men at church. Last night they went to see "Batman Begins." I have not seen it, and that's unusual, that I would just let him go with a group somewhere where I'm not going and I haven't seen it. But I trusted the young men that he was with...And he called last night after worship, some of the guys wanted to go see a movie. And I let him go. One of the guys brought him home, he got home about 1:00 this morning. Now that's not something I do on a regular basis, but it was fun, and I know and trust the boys. He's pretty good to take care of me, too. I found already that, even as young as he is, if I'm going to be out late at night, I'd rather have him with me, than me in a car loaded with the girls. Because people will say and look, you know, especially with girls...

...And there's one other family that we've known along the way that has given us lots of advice. Especially about my husband being in control. I no longer punish. I very rarely punish. It had got to the point where I would pick up the phone, tell daddy what he did, and I'd be doling out punishment. And the way we worked around it was, now, and especially if it's something severe, I pick up the phone and say, "Your son needs to talk to you." And he has to tell dad why. So it's no longer momma snitching. He has to tell dad honestly why momma's upset.

Monica: And is that different with the girls?

Nancy: I never would have done that with them. They're not males. They don't naturally feel like they should have authority over me. He does. And that's God-given, that's not wrong. And that's what I've had to learn to live with. But, you know, he does have to respect me, because he is my child. But he is male, and he has to learn to be the head of a house. So how does he do that? You know, he has a tough role to play. And outsiders, really, are the ones who told my husband, "You are the one who has to be in charge. Don't make your wife dole out punishment." And that's what I told him. I mean, I can certainly say, "Eric, this is what I want done." And he takes it well now. But it's because he understands that it is more fair now. Because when it's serious he deals with another man.

Monica: I hadn't thought about that before.

Nancy: I wouldn't have either until I had a teenage boy.

True to her convictions about the God-given authority of males over females, Nancy has modified her approach to disciplining Eric so that Jimmy's paternal authority supplants

her own. She also actively cedes her authority over Jimmy to other males – his grandfather, his older male friends from church, and, increasingly, himself. Nancy understands secession of her authority over her son as a corollary required by the authority of husbands over wives; she no longer assumes the power of parental discipline over Eric because to do so would be to usurp Jimmy’s place as the head of the family. “That’s what I’ve had to learn to live with” – the God-given authority of males over females, including mothers and sons.

Maria and Nancy turned more and more to their husbands for the discipline of their sons as they met with resistance to their own maternal authority. While the enhanced authority that home schooling mothers wield over their children might seem to run against the conservative Protestant tradition of male headship in the home, the mothers counteract this tendency when they consider their husbands to be the superior authority. As boys become men, the authority of mothers over children gives way to the authority of men over women; gender supplants age as the most relevant characteristic for assessing relative power within the family, and the doctrine of female submission is upheld in the midst of a potentially disconfirming situation.

In his book *Bringing Up Boys*, conservative Protestant family values spokesman and psychologist James Dobson advises mothers and fathers of boys about gender differences in children and, especially, the importance of fathers in the upbringing of sons.⁸⁹ Whereas Dobson advocates intensive mothering during the infant years (and so discourages the out-of-home employment of mothers of young children), he describes the psychological processes of “disconnection” and “differentiation” by which boys begin to

⁸⁹ I bring in Dobson here not as an authority on psychology but as an exemplar of the gender and family discourse of many sectors of conservative Protestantism.

identify with their fathers instead of their mothers. Dobson explains that boys take more risks, seek more adventures, and lack the self control of their female peers because of sex differences in hormones and brain chemistry, such that a strong father-son bond is necessary for boys to learn from men how to turn their potentially dangerous male genetic heritage to the good. Fathers are the key to preventing male teenage rebellion, violence, and homosexuality (which he characterizes as a psychological disorder), such that mothers should encourage their sons to turn to their fathers (and the fathers to turn to their sons). Dobson's advice coordinates selections from psychological research into child development with the Biblical model of essential gender differences and paternal authority. Males are created by God to rule the earth, so mothers like Caroline, Maria, and Nancy should, as they did, submit their sons to the authority of their husbands.

In addition to the different discipline of sons as means of the construction of paternal authority, conservative Protestant home schooling parents give voice to a gender ideology of male headship in the midst of the pragmatic maternal authority occasioned by home schooling. Many of the parents with whom I spoke articulated their view of gender differences in terms that combine elements of gender equality within an overall structure of gender hierarchy. Home schooling father Dave Simpson could assert that God made men and women with "equal value, different roles" but also that "yes, in a Biblical sense, I am my wife's authority." Jimmy Thompson told me that, "I think somehow God has wired us to be different as males and females," and he elaborated later:

I think one of the things that fathers, at least Biblically, are called to provide is the spiritual leadership. I think, as I read the Bible, and not trying to be egalitarian or anything about it, I do believe that God has called husbands in the family to be the spiritual heads of the house to lead them, to show them the way, to live out an example, to make sure they're exposed to the truth of scripture on a regular basis.

Despite the qualifications of male headship in rhetoric and in practice noted by Bartkowski and Gallagher and exhibited to me by home schooling parents, the assertion of greater male authority remains a discursive strategy for its production.

In addition to such assertions of male headship, however qualified, a full eleven of the fifteen families with whom I spoke articulated the husband/father's role in home schooling by way of a half-joking analogy with the school principal. (And I, for my part, laughed anew at each telling of the joke.) For instance:

Monica: Lisa told me that you were afraid that I would ask you this question, but how would you describe your role in home schooling?

Rick Rutherford: (laughs) The heavy. The principal...I am the heavy, I truly am the heavy. If she has to call the principal, things have gone too far. And I have to have a conversation about how you respect your mother...And so, that's probably most of my involvement, though.

In the conservative Protestant home schooling authority structure, mother-teachers are responsible for the day-to-day teaching, and so they need to exercise a considerable degree of control over the students. Father-principals step in with a still greater power of discipline when the authority of mother-teachers proves insufficient. Whether for daughters or sons, home schooling mothers frequently make phone calls to their husbands at work during the day for the purpose of paternal discipline, of "back-up" when the children will not obey their mothers. Further, in a traditional school setting, principals have a degree of authority over the teachers as well as the students. Home schooling father Dave Simpson modified the joke to say, "She's the teacher and I'm the principal, and I sleep with the teacher;" sexuality is thus linked with administrative and disciplinary authority – in other words, such power is gendered as well as organizational - within the family. Through the performativity of the label "principal," calling him the principal

creates his authority, as does the practice of his principal power through the mid-day telephone call or the evening “talk with dad.” I read the oft-utilized analogy of home schooling fathers with principals as a situation-specific reiteration of the conservative Protestant doctrine of male headship, one that rhetorically creates paternal authority even as it acknowledges the perhaps more significant day-to-day authority wielded by mothers.

In addition to the serious joke about the principal, home schooling parents draw upon a fourth means of the construction of male headship: the primary provision of income by fathers and the power such earnings accrue. Though Rick Rutherford was nervous about answering for his involvement in home schooling, his wife Lisa articulated a variety of ways in which she understood him to be an integral part of the home schooling operation, especially regarding its financial aspects.

Monica: How would you describe Rick’s role in home schooling?

Lisa: He’s really worried that you’re going to ask him that. He feels that he does nothing.

Monica: Oh no! That’s how all the fathers start, but then they elaborate, and they end up doing a lot.

Lisa: Um, Rick’s role. First of all, Rick was raised in a family of dual income, and so he’s going to have his own thing to say, but I can tell you what I see. He believed that women work. Women work, and they work, and his mother still works. His father’s been through job changes, but his mother stayed working. So for him to be able to switch gears – you want to talk about a God thing. Because I don’t know that he would ever have changed that without a lot of prayer and some sharing of books and things like that to try to explain my thought processes on it. He did not initiate it. However, he had to be the one to say, it’s okay to cut back to part time, it’s okay to quit, and please don’t go back to work, is where we’ve evolved to now. So that’s a big, huge change in who he was as a person.

In addition, that has meant that he’s had to work harder. His hours are longer, he travels more. He would like to probably be a fly-fishing guide. Which makes nothing! That would be really great for him. But that would be impossible. And in our case, I think sometimes the idea - we have a lovely home, well we’ve invested in nothing else. It means he doesn’t get to buy fly-fishing gear that he

wants to get. It means that he doesn't get to get the equipment for the computer. It means financially cutting back where he would not necessarily do it.

... And he's pretty good if I say, "Well, the new math program is going to be \$189.00, what do you think?" He's not ever one to go, "Oh, no, you need to rethink." He says, "If you say that's what we've got to do, then that's what we've got to do." I like that. So he's excellent support. And everybody has to have that.

In addition to some other ways in which Rick helps with home schooling – the occasional special project or math lesson – Lisa notes here four different ways in which Rick's contribution to the home schooling aspects of their family lives relate to the earning and spending of money. First, Rick changed his mind about Lisa's employment. Though she worked as a nurse through the early years of their marriage, and though Rick originally assumed that she would always be employed, he now encourages Lisa to continue home schooling instead of nursing. "He had to be the one to say, 'It's okay to cut back, it's okay to quit.'" Second, the loss of Lisa's income requires him to "work harder," to earn more money in his career in sales. Third, Lisa recognizes that their dependence on Rick's income means not only that he must remain in a well-paying job despite his occasional desire for other work, but also that his earnings are spent on family needs rather than his own personal ones. Lastly, perhaps in part because Rick earns their income, Lisa goes to Rick for his approval of the larger expenses of home schooling.

I have called such ascription to fathers of the ultimate power of income a discursive strategy for the construction of their paternal authority because I learned of it through the words of their wives more so than through observations of the spending practices of these families. Regardless of their actual processes of expenditure, many home schooling parents, both mothers and fathers, speak of the role of the fathers in home schooling in relation to money. When I asked Scott Heaney to describe his role in home schooling, he said laughingly, "Well, I'm like the government. I give money to the

program, and I set a few guidelines and then I give them the freedom to develop it.”

When I asked Alan Rossini about his role in home schooling, he said, “One of my big roles is earning a living. That’s a very important part of being part of the family, making sure that we have a roof over our heads, and the bills are getting paid, so that’s the responsibility, making sure that we have a place to live, and that the cars are running, all that stuff.” Whether the husband or the wife actually makes financial decisions large or small, whether the father’s income is thought of as his, hers, or everyone’s, the fact remains that conservative Protestant home schooling parents commonly construct a discursive connection between fathers and the power of providing income. This connection creates paternal authority through its rhetorical appreciation of him as the provider of the money that keeps the family clothed, fed, and sheltered; in other words, it creates his economic power and her economic dependence.

Beyond discourse, the sexual division of labor in home schooling families, in keeping as it is with the idealized separate spheres of industrialism, creates the greater economic power of employed husbands over wives who stay at home to home school. Much feminist scholarship has supported the conclusion that the industrial work-family system of separate spheres contributes to class stratification within white, middle-class marriages, as it creates gender difference and safeguards to men the power and status of earned income and to women the disempowerment of economic dependency (Acker, 1988; Ferree, 1990; Hartmann, 1981). Despite the symbolic wall that separate spheres gender ideology erects between public and private, the structuring of “public” power in political and economic systems affects the structuring of “private” power within marriages and families. Though few if any of the conservative Protestant home schooling

mothers with whom I worked would consider themselves to be disempowered within their families by virtue of their non-income, the effects of structure – of the systemic linking of gender and power through economy – operate outside of intent and, often, awareness. When conservative Protestant home schooling parents indicate fathers' financial contributions as a primary source of their involvement, I interpret this as a reinforcement of paternal authority by virtue of its association with the domestic power that comes, for men at least, with the provision of the family income.

Conservative Protestant home schooling mothers and fathers each perform their situated domestic authority in practice and in discourse, just as they also act and speak under conditions that create limitations on both paternal and maternal power within the family. It thus seems wrong-headed to try to determine the balance of power between the genders in conservative Protestant home schooling families; after all, power is not a possession that is shared equally or unequally but is a feature of situated activity and interaction, created anew in every moment in ways that nonetheless reproduce social structures of stratification. I cannot then say that conservative Protestant mothers or fathers are ultimately empowered or disempowered through their practices of gender, for they are both. The most I can say is that the “traditional” sexual division of labor of home schooling conditions the domestic practices of mothers and fathers such that maternal authority is strengthened in some situations and, in others, subordinated to the greater authority of the father.

Though the sexual division of labor thus has complex results for the sexual division of power, the privatization of female labor in home schooling does accomplish gender dualism in a manner that is in keeping with the conservative Protestant gender

ideology of difference, if not of hierarchy. Though I have structured the discussion so far in terms of the ways in which conservative Protestant home schooling mothers perform a gender identity that is only partially reflected in their Christian gender ideals, their practices accomplish without ambiguity one feature of conservative Protestant gender: its duality. Whether the genders are in egalitarian or hierarchical relation, or whether or not home schooling mothers are “employed” or “stay at home,” are questions that leave untouched the presumption of gender dualism. Throughout the ups and downs of the empowerments and disempowerments of home schooling mothers vis-à-vis their children and husbands, the fact of their gender distinction as females – as one of two distinct, naturally given gender categories – remains constant. The sexual division of labor by which home schooling mothers work at home while their husbands earn the family income is one of many ways in which gender dualism is produced in practice, for conservative Protestant home schooling families and for many others (Berk, 1985). The dualistic gender identities constructed through home schooling may not be identical to those entailed by either the separate spheres or the conservative Protestant gender ideals, but they do clearly produce and reproduce gender difference itself.

DIFFERENCES, RELIGIOUS AND GENDERED

In this the final section to this chapter, I argue that the performance of gender dualism in conservative Protestant home schooling families functions as a means of their religio-cultural distinction. In other words, the doing of gender is, in this case, also the doing of religion. Throughout their century-long history, conservative Protestantism has consistently employed a commitment to “traditional” gender ideology to mark their

distinction from liberal Protestantism and American culture at large. I briefly review the uses of gender difference for conservative Protestant cultural distinction, from the nineteenth century evangelical establishment and first-wave feminism through the birth of fundamentalism, to second-wave feminism and the complex workings of gender for contemporary conservative Protestants.

Evangelicalism, the established “religion of culture” of the mid-nineteenth century (Handy, 1984), embraced the definition of male and female identity according to their segregated spheres and integrated this view of gender with Christian belief and practice (Bendroth, 2002). Evangelical church women formed myriad organizations to promote causes that fell within their sphere, such as sanitation, orphanages, schools, and social missions work. Indeed, many historians have noted the diverse ways in which women of the gilded age made far-reaching use of the authority given them within their sphere, even as they were culturally removed from positions of public power. Historian Margaret Lamberts-Bendroth states, “Separate women’s benevolent and missionary societies, though firmly rooted in the ideology of ‘woman’s sphere,’ gave women confidence and skill in enterprises that took them increasingly beyond the four walls of home. The revivals gave women new access to the larger world” (Bendroth, 1993). Through the symbolic commingling of Christianity, family, privacy, and womanhood, the gender ideology of the late nineteenth century, both within evangelical Protestantism and without, described a circle for the sphere of female identity inside of which women knew their power within their place. Despite the testament of female voluntary and waged labor to the unreality of this separate spheres model, its symbolic formulation of gender

retained for some its cultural appeal as an ideal of gender identities and relations characterized by clarity, complementarity, and apparent conformity to political economy.

The cultural turmoil of the 1910s and 20s called into question this earlier semblance of consensus on gender. By 1920 the separate spheres ideology was already far declined as women enjoyed political participation and as increasing numbers of women entered the labor force in professional occupations. DeBerg describes the gender confusion created by the “New Woman” ideal of these decades (DeBerg, 1990, p. 27):

The New Woman chafed under the restrictions imposed upon her by the separate-spheres ideology. Her departure from the private sphere to the public realm constituted yet another significant threat to American masculinity and became the cause of a great deal of alarm. Women’s nature and sphere of activity became the battleground on which men fought for their own identity as men.

DeBerg describes also how the fundamentalist-modernist controversies engaged in these gender battles by formulating theological differences between conservative and liberal Protestants through the idiom of gender. Fundamentalists defined themselves as biblical inerrantists and keepers of “traditional” orthodoxy in part through their defense of “traditional” gender roles as they found them attested in literalist readings of the Bible and in the created order. She argues that the urgency of the esoteric theological debates about biblical inerrancy and fundamental doctrine, as well as the popular support they generated in some quarters, can be credited to the fundamentalist defense of Victorian gender ideology at a time of gender confusion. In short, the central fundamentalist tenets of biblical inerrancy, an intentionally created natural order, and dispensational premillennialism were articulated through their opposition to changes in gender identity and their support of separate spheres (Bendroth, 1993).

In the late 1940s and 50s, American culture swung toward social conservatism in the wake of nearly a century of social turmoil on a world-wide scale. Conservative and liberal Protestants alike, as well as American culture at large, embraced a new version of dualistic gender ideology. The ideal of the middle class nuclear family was thought to be the bedrock of social stability as well as religious community, and women were given identity and social purpose through their work in the home (Bendroth, 2002). The 1950s incarnation of separate spheres departed from its Victorian ancestor on the important question of women's public participation; whereas the first wave feminists argued for women's suffrage and engaged in politics and reform activism because of their sphere, women of the 1950s middle class were more stringently privatized (Bendroth, 1993). The convergence of conservative Protestant and general American gender views precipitated a period of cultural engagement for neo-evangelicals in particular (Hart, 2002), perhaps made more desirable and more possible because of a cultural consensus on gender.

Those who dreamed of the social stability built on a foundation of middle class nuclear families awoke in the 1960s to pervasive questioning of cultural norms, including stratification by race and gender (and, perhaps less obviously so, class). Whereas liberal Protestants in the spirit of the times repented of their former familism and sought racial and gender equality, conservative Protestants again differentiated themselves by their "traditional" views on gender (Bendroth, 2002). As in the 1920s, gender dualism worked especially well as a marker for conservative Protestant difference because it is, for them, required by their distinctive theological commitment to conservation of the "timeless" truths of the faith as revealed in the plain sense of the words of an inerrant scripture.

Throughout the 1970s and into the 80s, the elite spokespeople for conservative Protestantism articulated a strong defense of gender dualism and the domesticity of women, grounding their arguments in biological determinism and “literalist” reading of certain Bible passages. At this time, conservative Protestant spokespeople defined male headship in the economic terms of breadwinning, such that biblical wifely submission was cast as the refusal of paid employment outside of the home. The conservative Protestant affirmation of gender difference and hierarchy thus implied male domestic authority as well as the sexual division of labor (Bartkowski, 2001; Gallagher, 2003).

The feminist movement of the 1960s and 70s did bring changes to American culture, most inescapably perhaps in the legitimation of the influx of women of many classes, races, ages, and marital and parental statuses into the labor force of a post-industrial economy. Whereas in 1962, 43% of American women ages 25-54 pursued paid employment outside of the home, by 1990 the number had grown to 74%, and 80% of unemployed women were looking for full-time jobs (Gerson, 1993). Despite their ideological opposition, conservative Protestants underwent the post-industrial changes in economic structure along with the rest of the American population, and the mismatch between their economic and family reality and their gender ideals was and continues to be the source of some tension. In her 1987 study of a fundamentalist religious community, Nancy Ammerman argued that the peculiar salience of gender for fundamentalists lies in the fact that the maintenance of their cultural “plausibility structures” depends upon a family structure and culture in keeping with Biblical inerrancy, cultural distinction, and the defense of the “traditional” (Ammerman, 1987). However, this “traditional” family ideal is less and less feasible as its economic base in

an industrial economy is eroding (Stacey, 1991). 83% of fundamentalist women in Ammerman's sample had paid employment, despite the fact that such work made it difficult for them to live in consistency with their religious commitments to a particular view of gender and family. The sexual division of labor that had been entailed in their gender theology was increasingly difficult to observe, such that beliefs in economically-defined male headship and female submission existed in tension with culture, political economy, and personal experience.

Because of this tension between conservative Protestant gender ideology and a post-industrial, post-modern, post-feminist culture, the 1990s have been marked by a renewed concern for conservative Protestants regarding gender. Most famously, in 1998 the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a resolution to supplement their denominational statement of doctrine that held that (Hankins, 2002):

A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God, as is her husband, and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

While some conservative Protestants have thus re-affirmed their commitment to gender difference and hierarchy, others have nuanced their beliefs and practices regarding gender as they work back and forth between their religious tradition and their lived experience. As we have seen, various students of conservative Protestant Christianity have explored the rhetorical subtleties employed by evangelicals in particular when they articulate their religio-cultural understanding of gender identity. While they use the Biblical language of male headship and female submission, they also make use of the also Biblical rhetoric whereby the power valences of these terms are (almost) reversed (Bartkowski, 2001;

Gallagher & Smith, 1999). In a Christianity for which the power of Jesus Christ is most astoundingly exhibited in his voluntary crucifixion, the relationship of power to service, sacrifice, and submission may be paradoxical.

For instance, womanly Christian submission can be experienced as a process of empowerment, spiritually if in no other way, as women in subjection testify to their power to bring spiritual health to themselves, their marriages, and the social and spirit worlds at large through their submission as wives (Griffith, 1997). In a similar way, conservative Protestants speak of the “servant-leadership” of men and so promote a soft patriarchy in which to have power is to relinquish its use for one’s own benefit and to employ it in the service of others (Bartkowski, 2001). Sociologists Stacey and Gerard further note how conservative Christian women “choose to submit,” such that their agency and autonomy are at least rhetorically vouchsafed to them in their submission (Stacey & Gerard, 1990). In contemporary conservative Protestant gender discussion, to submit is to be empowered, to choose subjection is to be an autonomous subject, to lead is to serve.

Beginning in the 1980s and into the 1990s and the twenty-first century, conservative Protestants have continued at least a rhetorical if not an actual commitment to “traditional” gender ideology, in which they affirm their belief in male headship and in the divine ordinance of a separate spheres division of labor even as they have marriages marked by gender egalitarianism and female labor force participation. Gallagher describes this seemingly contradictory contemporary evangelical gender arrangement as a fertile combination of “symbolic male headship” and “pragmatic egalitarianism,” in which male authority is explicitly affirmed in tandem with the experience of near equality

of men and women in domestic, economic, and political activity (Gallagher, 2003). If the commitment to their “traditional” views on gender is one of language only, why do evangelicals maintain it – especially since it introduces a tension between their beliefs and their practices? Gallagher reads the rhetorical and pragmatic maneuverings in contemporary conservative Protestant formulations of gender as a strategy by which they maintain their position of “engaged orthodoxy” – of being separated from the norms of American culture even as they are in transformative relation with them. Their “engaged orthodoxy” is thus held to be even more central to conservative Protestant identity than their gender ideology (Gallagher & Smith, 1999; Gallagher, 2003; Smith et al., 1998). She understands their continued commitment to headship as a consequence of their self-understanding of being “in but not of the world,” of being religio-culturally distinct.

Conservative Protestant home schooling parents, as I have shown, also exhibit something like a rough “pragmatic egalitarianism,” or at least a manner of domestic life in which both husbands and wives are both empowered and disempowered in both discourse and practice. They are unusual among their co-religionists, however, for their practice of a gendered division of labor according to an albeit renovated domesticity in which home schooling mothers privatize their labors of teaching while home schooling fathers earn the family income. In Rudner’s study of home schooling families, 23.1% of home schooling mothers were employed, as opposed to the nearly 60% employment rate of mothers in 1991 (Rindfuss et al., 1996; Rudner, 1999). Their gendered division of labor thus makes them different, just as it makes gender difference itself. Conservative Protestant gender ideology has long associated this particular gendered division of labor and the gender differentiation it engenders with biblical revelation and the Christian

tradition. It is God's best plan for humankind for Christian women to stay home while Christian men provide and protect, and since conservative Protestant home schoolers follow this pattern, their home schooling makes and marks their religious distinction. In creating gender difference through their division of labor, conservative Protestant home schooling families also create their Christian identity as one of difference from social norms.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates.

Deuteronomy 11:18-20, KJV

Conservative Protestant home schooling parents bring into being their religious identity as Christians as a component of many of their practices of parenting and teaching, not only in speaking of it as they sit, walk, lie down and rise up, but also in: disciplining; asking and answering questions; praying; choosing the books their children will read; cleaning the house; asking God for the grace to love their children; leaving work to home school; leaving home to go to work; writing and correcting tests; cooking from scratch; calling dad at work when the kids don't listen; pulling their children out of school; teaching the Bible; pacing their children's education; and finding Christ in science, history, math, language, and, perhaps most especially, family. In this concluding chapter, I will summarize the chapters that have gone before in the hopes of underscoring the religious significance of home schooling for these families, the ways in which home schooling is their manner of being Christian. I make explicit the analytic linkages that have so far been implied between their home schooling practices and their Christian identities. Following the summary, I will reiterate some of the arguments first presented

in the introduction in order to specify again the ways in which this study of home schooling parents adds to an understanding of conservative Protestants in general. I close with a reflection on my complex relations to the parents of whose lives I learned and wrote, as well as my relations to the literatures that authorized my learning and writing.

In my interviews and observations with these parents, I originally sought to answer one central question: How do the practices of conservative Protestant home schooling parents bring into being their conservative Protestant identity? In other words, how is conservative Protestant home schooling a religious practice, or, more specifically, a practice of religious identity? I came to this question out of my interest in the theoretical concepts of practice and performativity and their application to conservative Protestantism. As formulated by Anthony Giddens in his theory of structuration, Pierre Bourdieu in his theory of practice, and Sherry Ortner and Ann Swidler in their separate writings on culture and action, practice theory argues that the individual and collective actions of human beings are made possible by the cultural inheritance of generic, pragmatic schemes (Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1979, 1984; Ortner, 1984, 1996; Swidler, 1986). The practical activities of individuals are organized in such a way that the larger, structural forces of stratification and social difference are made manifest in them. (“Structure” in this case refers to the macro-social forces and institutions that shape individual experience so that it tends to reproduce systems of stratification and hierarchy.⁹⁰) Drawing on this understanding of practice as structured and structuring activity, I looked to the everyday activities of conservative Protestant home schooling parents in teaching, parenting and housekeeping as processes of structurally-infused identity formation.

⁹⁰ In this very general understanding of “structure,” I am borrowing from Sewell (Sewell, 1992).

Further, I understand the conservative Protestant identity of these parents, as well as their racial, class and gender identities, according to a performative notion of selfhood. As formulated in the “doing difference” perspective of sociologists West, Zimmerman and Fenstermaker, who themselves build upon the symbolic interactionism of Erving Goffman, our social selves exist by means of interactions in which we signify to ourselves and to others our social identities (Goffman, 1956, 1959, 1961, 1976; West & Fenstermaker, 1995; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Rather than understanding racial, gender, or class identity to be a given feature of a person, the concept of performed selfhood holds that such structurally significant identities emerge on an individual level through mutually signifying social interactions. The types of cultural identity I discussed – conservative Protestant primarily, but also middle-class, white, male and female – are, for me, in this study, a matter of performance and recognition, not of some sort of innate or given reality. When I have argued that a certain set of practices, done in a certain manner, creates the conservative Protestant identity of home schooling parents, I have meant that their manner of performance can be taken to signify conservative Protestantism – not that their activities are, in a true or real sense, the “essence” of conservative Protestantism. I am dealing in representations of self only, not in claims to the characterization of “real” selves.

With this theoretical background in mind, I reiterate the research question that guided my fieldwork observations, interviews, and subsequent research and writing: How is conservative Protestant home schooling a practice of religious identity? Based upon the theoretical recognition of the possible structural significance of practices and performed identities, I add to this question, another: How is the conservative Protestant

identity created through home schooling also inscribed with the meanings of race, class, and gender? My answers to these two questions form the bulk of the preceding chapters.

I identified three strategies of action that organize the practical activity of home schoolers in such a way that religious, racial, class, and gender identities result. I termed the three strategies of action unification, privatization, and gendering, and I devoted one chapter each to their elaboration. In lieu of a chapter by chapter summary, I will summarize by way of a restatement of my overarching argument for the book. First, I established in each respective chapter that much of the activity of conservative Protestant home schooling parents can be comprehended under the rubrics of unification, privatization, and gendering. Second, I argued that, by means of these three strategies, conservative Protestant home schooling parents accomplish the work of home schooling and parenting in a specific manner that performs their Christian identity. In other words, they home school *as conservative Protestants* by means of their practices of unification, privatization, and gendering; these strategies of action signify their religio-cultural difference. Third, I contended that their pragmatic strategies also produce and reproduce their identification as white, middle-class Protestants, as well as reproducing dualistic gender differentiation.

In the second chapter, I defined unification as an orientation of activity (including the activity of the mind) toward coherence and away from multiplicity or disjunction: home schooling activity has a centripetal force. For instance, I showed the many ways in which conservative Protestant home schooling parents aim for a holism of faith, family, and education, ways that include the integration of academic subjects with conservative Protestant orthodoxy; the intermingling of educational and family life; and the

harmonization of schooling with child development. In the third chapter I explored the strategy of privatization, which I somewhat loosely define as the location of activity within the spheres of domesticity and/or subjectivity: home schooling activity faces inward. I explored how conservative Protestant home schooling families practice the privatization of education, of female labor, and of religion. For instance, I showed how the devotion of the labor of home schooling mothers to the unpaid teaching of their own children privatizes not only their own work, and not only the education of their children, but the mothers' home schooling also becomes a means of the development of their personal religious subjectivity within the domestic realm. In the fourth chapter I explored the practices of gendering by which conservative Protestant home schooling parents divide their labors according to a manner that re-inscribes gender dualism and hierarchy. Specifically, I argued that the gender division of labor between male breadwinners and female home schoolers supports in practice the conservative Protestant belief in innate gender difference as well as male headship.

In each respective chapter, I began to build the foundations for understanding unification, privatization, and gendering as practices of conservative Protestant identity. I now gather into one statement the argument that is scattered throughout previous chapters. Unification, privatization and gendering bring about conservative Protestant religious identity by virtue of the resonance of these schemes of action with the explicitly religious practices of conservative Protestants, as established in other studies on conservative Protestant religiosity. For instance, unification brings about conservative Protestant identity by deploying in home school education the *habitus* that operates within conservative Protestant devotional life. Drawing upon the work of Griffith and

Harding, I interpreted the bible study and prayer times of home schooling mothers as interpretive unifications characteristic of the bible reading and prayer of other conservative Protestants (Griffith, 1997; Harding, 2000). Home schooling mothers pray and read the bible with an interpretive movement toward correspondence between biblical narrative, prayerful narrative, and the self-narration of their own circumstances. This same unification that motivates their devotional practices also operates in their educational practices. Just as these mothers create sacred understanding of their situations through an interpreted correspondence with biblical text, so do they create a unity of faith, education, and family through a pragmatic emphasis on their correspondence.

In addition to unification, how do their practices of privatization signify their conservative Protestant identity? Evangelical Protestantism - that of the 18th and 19th centuries as well as the conservative Protestant variety of the 20th – has long been known to be privatized, in two senses: institutionally, as well as individually (Bellah et al., 1985; Hammond, 1992; Handy, 1984; Mead, 1963). The privatization of religion – or the location of the authority of religion in non-public institutions and in the soul of the individual believer - characterizes conservative Protestant religiosity (Hunter, 1983; Smith et al., 1998). For instance, consider the evangelical soteriological concept of the “personal relationship with Jesus,” as centrally significant today as it was in the revivalism of the Second Great Awakening that spread evangelical Christianity across the frontier. Even in their seeking after a public influence for conservative Protestantism, evangelicals utilize what Christian Smith terms the “personal influence strategy” by

which Christian individuals are to impact the world as individuals and not via the institution of the church (Smith et al., 1998).

The same dynamic of privatization that characterizes conservative Protestant religiosity also operates in home schooling, as these parents privatize both education and, to a lesser extent, female labor. For instance, conservative Protestant home schooling privatizes education in the same two senses in which religion is thought to be privatized: by the location of education in the non-public institution of the family, and by an emphasis on the unique educational development of the individual selves of home schooled children. In their limitation of their work to the home, and in their frequent domestic production, conservative Protestant home schooling mothers locate in the private institution of the family the activities that would otherwise be done in the public institutions of office and market. The privatizations of education and of female labor thus reprise the privatization of conservative Protestant religion. Further, in a more direct way, the conservative Protestant emphasis on the religious selfhood of individual believers also shapes the meaning that home schooling holds for the mothers. In their experience of home schooling as a sometimes painful means of discipleship, conservative Protestant home schooling mothers explicitly understand their home schooling as one of the ways in which their religious subjectivity – their private religion – is brought into being. The privatization of religion that characterizes conservative Protestant religiosity also characterizes conservative Protestant home schooling; because of the religious resonances of privatization, I read home schooling as a mode of conservative Protestant religiosity.

As with unification and privatization, the gendering practices of conservative Protestant home schooling parents can be read as a performance of conservative Protestant religious identity. Conservative Protestant gender ideology is founded upon two touchstones: the gendered division of labor between the employment of husbands and the housekeeping and childcare of wives, and the gendered hierarchy of domestic authority (Bartkowski, 2001; Gallagher & Smith, 1999; Gallagher, 2003). The conditions of conservative Protestant home schooling – conditions in which teaching mothers stay home to home school and in which fathers are upheld as the source of income and the “principal” of the home school – satisfy these two gender idealizations, though with some modification toward the pseudo-employment of home schooling mothers and their enhanced domestic authority. When conservative Protestant home schooling couples organize their activity in a manner that creates gender difference according to the conservative Protestant model, they also create a mark of symbolic identification with conservative Protestantism. In their practices of gender dualism and hierarchy in home schooling, conservative Protestant home schooling parents create their Christianity in the context of their marriages and families.

By means of these arguments, I have answered the first of my research questions. How is conservative Protestant home schooling a practice of religious identity? By means of the pragmatic strategies of unification, privatization, and gendering, conservative Protestant home schooling parents accomplish their daily activities of teaching and parenting in such a way that their conservative Protestantism is also performed. Because the schemes of unification, privatization, and gendering are characteristic of the overtly religious practices of conservative Protestants, their

deployment in home schooling activity renders home schooling also a religious practice. In other words, these parents are doing the same thing – acting as Christians – in their prayer, their bible reading, their curriculum choices, and their pacing of education; in their home production, home education, and Christian discipleship; in their disciplining, employment or unemployment, submission and authority. Such are the specific ways in which their identity as conservative Protestants is constructed in the daily practices of home schooling. This is what it means for them to be conservative Protestant: that they do these things in these ways.

The critical reader may ask, however, if others who are not conservative Protestant may also do these things in these ways. The Kellers, the Catholic family with whom I worked, sought a unity of Catholic doctrine with their children's curriculum, and Jill Hughes, a liberal Protestant home-schooling mother, left her work as a journalist and now works at teaching her children, composting, and gardening. As I understand it, the practices of unification, privatization, and gendering do not signify conservative Protestantism because they are exclusive to conservative Protestants; they are not. Rather, I have argued that the common deployment of these schemes of action in conservative Protestant religiosity *and* in home-schooling renders home-schooling a religious practice for conservative Protestants. The manner in which they perform their Christian identity is also the manner in which they home-school. Within the field of meaning of conservative Protestantism, the practices of unity, of private religion, and of gender are already constituted with Christian significance, such that their re-deployment in home-schooling carries the mark of Christian identity. When Nancy Thompson foregoes employment and devotes her labor to her family, such gendered action can be

understood as a performance of her Christian womanhood, despite the fact that the same actions are not religious in the same sense for Jill Hughes. The field of meaning of liberal Protestantism is differently constituted with respect to the gender and religious significance of female labor. The same actions can have different meanings for identity, depending upon their prior significances.

In the latter sections of each chapter, I turned my attention to my second research question: How is the conservative Protestant identity created through home schooling also inscribed with the meanings of race, class, and gender? In chapter two, I suggested that their tendency toward unity also tends away from encounters with racial, class, and religious multiplicity in their educational and family lives. Conservative Protestant home schooling creates an educational environment that is particularly homogenous along the dimensions of religion and race, in distinction to the frequent heterogeneity of public schools. For critical sociologist of education Michael Apple, home schooling is but one manifestation of the conservative reformist program that ultimately reproduces educational disparity between races and classes (Apple, 2000, 2006). I make a similar argument here, as the unification that organizes home schooling activity prioritizes sameness and greatly reduces the opportunity for encounters in education across racial and religious difference.

In chapter three, I argue that home schooling privatization also performs a conservative Protestantism that is marked by a social location of white, middle-class status. The privatization of female labor and of education indicates both the gender idealization long associated with the middle-class as well as the resources necessary for private education and single-income family life. Further, I consider the self-ascribed self-

determination of conservative Protestant home schoolers as exercised in their privatizations of education and labor. I argue that such an understanding of the self as autonomous and unencumbered by socially-given circumstance is part of the discourse by which whiteness is socially constructed. Their claims to self-determination can thus be read as a construction of whiteness as individual autonomy, as the apparent absence of a necessary and pervasive social identity. Drawing upon the work of sociologists Ruth Frankenberg and Mary Waters, I show how white racial identity in the racialized United States is conceived as the absence of racial determination, just as whiteness is the absence of color (Frankenberg, 1993; Waters, 1990). While non-white “others” are understood to have an innate racial and therefore social identity that is inevitably theirs by birth and by social enforcement, white Americans are understood to be individuals first and foremost. Whereas the meaning of whiteness is written as the absence of social determination, the meaning of racial “otherness” involves the attribution of a biologically necessitated, socially pronounced, and highly structurally significant racial identity. By their various practices of privatization – reconceived as claims to self-determination – conservative Protestant home schooling parents perform a religious identity that also carries the significations of whiteness and the middle-class.

In chapter four, I explore the gender and class effects of the gendering activity of conservative Protestant home schooling parents. Through the pragmatic distinctions drawn between the labor and the domestic authority of males and females, conservative Protestant home schooling brings into being the gender differences that many conservative Protestants take to be natural and God-given. Their practices of gender difference are also practices of class difference, as the male breadwinner – female home

schooler model of gender distinction symbolizes middle-class status. The home schooling version of the separate spheres gender model also inscribes a class difference between genders, as home schooling mothers forego an income and become financially dependent upon their employed husbands.

In brief: The practices of unification, privatization, and gendering bring into being a conservative Protestant identity that is specifically inscribed with representations of whiteness, the middle-class, and a dualistic conception of gender. The performance of their religio-cultural identity as conservative Protestants is produced by the deployment of the dynamics of unification, privatization, and gendering throughout both their religious and their domestic practices. At the same time, their sameness with other Americans emerges as a matter of their shared participation in the stratification of contemporary American society into categories of gender, race, and class difference.

The foregoing chapters make four specific contributions to the scholarly understanding of conservative Protestants in the contemporary United States. First, my work adds to the understanding of conservative Protestants in general by exploring a heretofore relatively unexplored yet growing subset of the conservative Protestant population: home schoolers. While not all conservative Protestants home school, those who do – and they are growing in number – understand home schooling to be well-suited to their religious identity. Something about home schooling speaks to the position of conservative Protestants in contemporary American culture. If we are to understand that position, we should study the religious and social dimensions of conservative Protestant home schooling. There are very few book-length studies of home schooling in general,

none of which are ethnographically focused on the domestic culture of home schooling and none of which explore conservative Protestant home schooling in particular.

My project on home schooling augments the literature on conservative Protestants in a second way: it explores the domestic religious practices of conservative Protestants, whose public religion often receives more analytical attention. It is sociologically important to understand the domestic religion of conservative Protestants because the public and the private spheres are not discontinuous with one another. To understand the public movements of conservative Protestantism, it is necessary to understand their domestic religious worlds as well. For instance, the unity that conservative Protestant home schoolers seek between family life, faith, and education sheds light on the activism of other conservative Protestant families on behalf of religious expression in public education. Home schoolers illustrate the potential for alternative responses to the problem of religion and education, alternatives that present their own problems for a pluralistic, participatory democracy. The study of the domestic religion of conservative Protestantism may thus illuminate the internal diversity within conservative Protestant culture as these Christians respond in differing ways to shared challenges to their erstwhile cultural authority.

A third and, to my mind, more significant way in which my study adds to the literature on conservative Protestants is in my use of the concepts of practice and performativity to characterize the structurally significant aspects of conservative Protestant religious identity. In this connection, I understand my work to be an extended critique of the sociological characterization of conservative Protestant identity as a function of their religious belief or worldview. Commonly, the question of conservative

Protestant religio-cultural identity is framed as a difference located in the mind, a difference of belief or worldview, rather than a social structural difference. In fact, foremost sociologists of conservative Protestantism Nancy Ammerman, James Davison Hunter, and Christian Smith have separately found that conservative Protestants are not demographically distinct across structural categories, and they therefore conclude that conservative Protestant religious culture is not a product of, say, a specific class or race position (Ammerman, 1987; Emerson & Smith, 2000; Hunter, 1983; Smith et al., 1998). Because conservative Protestants are not isolated in a set of social structural categories, the argument goes, structural differences must not be determining factors in conservative protestant cultural identity. From there, the common analysis moves on to factors considered more cultural than structural, like worldview.

In distinction to these positions, I argue that the operations of structural difference are still relevant to conservative Protestant identity, even if they cannot be posited as a source of their religious differentiation. For different groups of conservative Protestants, their different locations in systems of racial, class, and gender stratification matter differently, but their social location always matters. For white conservative Protestant home schooling mothers and fathers of the middle class, their specific race, class, and gender locations enter into their religious identity. Indeed, I argue that the very practices by which they construct their conservative Protestant difference in their domestic lives are also a means of the production of their white, middle-class, and gender identifications.

The theoretical notions of practice and performativity have enabled me so to attend to the effects of situated practical activity for the simultaneous construction of a

variety of social identities of difference: religious, racial, class, and gender. In this respect my work suggests an alternative model for conceptualizing the ambivalence in the relationship of conservative Protestantism to the broader American culture. In my view, the symbolic religious difference created between conservative Protestants and other Americans is accomplished by means of strategies of action that, at the same time, reinscribe the identification of these parents within the larger structures of stratification that encompass all Americans. Their strategies of action accomplish both their difference and their sameness. Rather than supposing that conservative Protestants are the same in some respects and different in others, I propose a model of conservative Protestant cultural ambivalence in which their difference and their sameness are articulated in tandem. Further studies should then consider the ways in which those features taken to be characteristic of a distinct conservative Protestant culture are also, at the same time, inscribed with aspects common to all who share a situation in time, place, and social structure.

I therefore find that my work presents a more theoretically nuanced and complex understanding of the nature of the religious distinction of conservative Protestants vis-à-vis other Americans. Most who write on conservative Protestants agree that they are culturally ambivalent, somehow simultaneously fully integrated into American society and removed to the cultural margins, “in but not of the world.” As just mentioned, Ammerman, Hunter, and Smith characterize conservative Protestant difference from “the world” as a difference of belief or worldview. Thus we come to my fourth contribution to the scholarly literature on conservative Protestants: I reframe the discussion about their cultural difference from the identification of differentiating features to an examination of

processes of differentiation. Instead of asking, “In what ways do conservative Protestants differ from others?,” I ask, “In what ways do the habits of conservative Protestants create a religious identity that is taken to be different?” Instead of seeking evidence for a given religious distinction, I seek to understand the processes by which the claim to religious distinction is made.

This may seem a subtle change, but it makes a world of analytical difference. Framing the question the first way – “In what ways do conservative Protestants differ from others?” – leads to discussions of what is or is not necessary to conservative Protestantism, to essentialist characterizations of religious identity, and to a nearly exclusive attention to the cognitive aspects of what is a fully social religious identity. It is similar to asking, “In what ways do women differ from men, or white people from black people?” Such a formulation begs the question of a difference that must be continuously made and remade, a difference that is made in different ways at different times. Framing the question the second way – “In what ways do the habits of conservative Protestants create a religious identity that is taken to be different?” – gets past debates about the essence or reality of conservative Protestant distinction and moves directly into processes of the social construction of difference. Analysis of gender and racial identity have long ago made this switch, from sex role theory to gender, from scholarly characterizations of racial differences to analysis of the historically-contingent social construction of racial categories (Ferree, 1990; Omi & Winant, 1994). It is past time that a similar analytical move is made in the study of the social construction of conservative Protestant identity, and perhaps religious identity in general.

In summary, my work adds in four ways to literature on contemporary American conservative Protestantism. It adds: 1) an exploration of conservative Protestant home schoolers; 2) ethnographic attention to the domestic religion of conservative Protestantism; 3) a concern for the co-articulation of conservative Protestant identity with racial, class, and gender difference; and 4) a theoretical expansion of the scholarly discussion of the social construction of conservative Protestant identity. Taken together, these contributions advance our understanding of contemporary conservative Protestants, a religious community that comprises 25% of the American population and whose influence may extend, for good or for ill, beyond their own religious worlds (Woodberry & Smith, 1998).

I, THEY, WE: REFLECTIONS ON AUTHORIAL VOICE

In writing these interpretations of conservative Protestant home schooling, I have felt myself as author to be somewhat awkwardly positioned between the standpoints of a variety of academic discourses and between these and conservative Protestant belief. One tension that emerges from this situation – one that I have sought to mediate without resolving – is that between agentic understandings of social behavior and social structural ones. Whether human beings act out of their own self-direction or whether their actions must be thoroughly and inescapably conditioned by social forces is one of the enduring conundrums of social theory, indeed is one of the launching pads for the insights of practice theory upon which I have drawn. Though different practice theories give different political and analytical priority to the preservation of agency in structure (Ortner, 1996), a common thrust of argument is the assertion that agency and structure

depend upon one another, operate in and through one another. In choosing my own actions I enlist and reproduce the social and cultural structure that empowers human activity even as it constrains it (Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1979, 1984; Sewell, 1992; Swidler, 1986).

Though practice theory hints at a theoretical integration of structure and agency, my interpretations of conservative Protestant home schooling hint at the endurance of the tension between them. The conservative Protestant home schooling parents with whom I worked do not, by and large, employ a sociological hermeneutic in their self-understanding. They do not generally consider the ways in which their daily practices are implicated in a larger and contested semi-system of social stratification and unequal relations of power, for instance. Instead, they understand themselves to be making decisions about the course of their own and their children's lives, decisions that seem to them for a variety of acknowledged and unacknowledged reasons to present the best available option. By contrast, I have brought their practices into the context of the mutual construction of socially structured identities for my own analytic purposes. They may say that they look for a Christian curriculum because they want their children's education to be congruent with their religion; I may then read the desire for Christian curriculum as a situation-specific strategy for the creation of a difference between a unified Christian education and the several pluralities of secular public education. I have tried to voice both perspectives – my understanding of their perspective, as well as my more sociological one.

What I have not tried to do – what I trust I have not done – is to supplant their own understanding with mine; that is, my interpretive renderings are not what is “really”

happening behind, beneath, beyond, or in some other relation to what they understand themselves to be doing. I take what is now the thoroughly accepted epistemological stance of ethnography: all we have, they and I, are our constructions of a reality that may or may not exist behind the veil (Marcus & Fischer, 1999). Still, such an easy reconciliation of differences of view evades the problem that those with whom I worked may find neither my specific interpretations of them nor the notion of relative interpretations itself to be particularly congenial. In her ethnography of fundamentalists at Southside church, Nancy Ammerman explained her complex stance as follows (Ammerman, 1987, p. 10-1):

After visiting a Sunday morning service at Southside, I approached the pastor about studying his church... It is not surprising that his first question was, "Are you born again?" Because my religious history is Evangelical, I could honestly answer "yes." The religious experiences of my childhood had prepared me for the language and expectations of a group like this... Although I am not Fundamentalist (and I disclaimed that identity whenever it was explicitly bestowed on me), I am committed to the Christian faith; and I knew that I could translate much of my experience into terms this group would recognize and accept. I could speak the language of an insider. When they had norms about drinking, dancing, and how to dress, I conformed. When they sang, I sang too; when they prayed, so did I; and when they read the Bible, I followed along in a King James Version. Because I was identified as saved and spoke the language of a saved person, I was accepted by most of the congregation and granted access that a complete outsider might never have gained.

I promised in return that I would present an inside view of Fundamentalism that was fair and accurate. Where I describe their ideas and experiences, I hope the people I studied find it so. Where I analyze what I saw, using the categories of secular sociology, I do not expect that they will accept my explanations. Although I would never wish to argue that sociological views of reality are any more true than religious ones, accepting multiple explanations is not a comfortable position for the people of Southside.

For me, as for Ammerman, the differences between the interpretations given in my empathetic, more descriptive voice and those presented in my more overtly analytic voice exist side by side and in unresolved tension.

Ammerman's description of herself as one identifiable as a believer raises another set of complex relations between the perspectives of academic discourse, the home schooling families, and me. Despite Ammerman's self-disclosure of being "committed to the Christian faith," she positions herself primarily as a religious outsider. (Is being "committed to the Christian faith" the same thing as being a Christian?) She twice locates in the past her religious identification with those whom she studied - in her "religious history" and her childhood. She speaks of the need for translation between her own religiosity and theirs as between two different languages. She structures her sentences with "they" clauses and "I" clauses and avoids the inclusive "we." While her religious identification vis-à-vis those with whom she worked is ambivalent - she is an outsider who can appear, to them as well as to herself on occasion, to be "in" - she speaks the discourse of sociology without qualification.

While Ammerman takes up the stance of a sociologist mixed with a special religious sensibility (one that signifies for her only at the point of entry), I am not as certain of my authorial location in relation both to my study participants and to the academic study of religion. Throughout my fieldwork and writing, I moved uncomfortably back and forth between identifying fully with the conservative Protestant home schooling parents as fellow believers; critiquing the biases of religious studies from the perspective of evangelical religious commitment; critiquing conservative Protestantism from the perspective of religious studies and critical sociology; desiring to forsake an academic career for what seemed at times to be the splendid coherence of Christian belief removed from academic criticism; and desiring to incorporate academic discourse, finally and fully, into my own ways of thinking so that I could write as an

academic without betraying myself. I have not resolved my stance in relation to conservative Protestant religious belief and the academic study of religion; I still fall, leap, slide, trespass, and wander among these different grounds of knowing.⁹¹ The foregoing chapters combine moments of understanding that I gained as a fellow Christian with those that I created for myself out of the tools of the academic analysis of several disciplines. The former have receded into the background as I have moved from fieldwork to writing, as the interpretive and writing process require me to take up the position of the academic. Nevertheless, I have understood more and differently than I have written. Any tensions that remain in the text between the perspectives of “native” and academic discourses should be taken as an indication not only of the difference between “their” understanding and my sociological one, but also of the conflicts among my own various perspectives. There is thus a complicating, residual ambiguity for me in relation to the mostly shared social location of those I have studied, not only in relation to religion but also to class, race, and, for half of the parents, to gender.

Of course, the greatest liability for me of the partial sharing of social location has been the difficulty of achieving and maintaining critical distance without foreclosing on a mutually-derived understanding. In his book of essays exploring the relationships that Catholic Americans have forged with the saints, God, and each other, Catholic historian of American Catholicism Robert Orsi discusses the academic study of religion and its traditional dependence upon the constructed “otherness” of the religious, particularly the non-Protestant religious (Orsi, 2005). He initiates this discussion by reflecting on his research relationship to the Catholic women who pray to Saint Jude, the patron saint of

⁹¹ That the academic and the religious can be understood as conflicting epistemologies is explored in the following works (Hart, 1999; Marsden, 1994; Nord, 1996; Orsi, 2005).

lost causes. A woman that he calls Clara asked him following their interview if he had ever prayed to Saint Jude, and after he said no, she said, “You have to promise me that someday you’ll ask Saint Jude for something you really want, at a time when you really need him... Then maybe you’ll understand what we’re doing” (Orsi, 2005, p. 148). Her question to Orsi awoke in him an awareness of the “in-betweenness” of his position vis-à-vis those he studied: his simultaneous co-identification as a Catholic, though of a particular sort, and his appreciation of the profound differences between his own religious understanding and theirs. He states (Orsi, 2005, p. 162):

The dilemma of fieldwork in one’s own religious culture is that difference is either never clear and sharp enough or else... difference is constituted by factors outside the researcher’s experience and then inherited by him or her. The fieldworker in one’s own tradition faces difference that is at once both too little and too much, and this paradox can be paralyzing. The people we are talking to are simultaneously and disconcertingly both other and not, and we cannot respect and use the distance between us because we cannot establish it securely – it is forever shrinking and expanding... In the end either the people among whom we have gone (themselves confused by our ambivalence and ambiguity) reject us, or we come to identify with them so closely that we lose the distance necessary for understanding and wind up defending and celebrating them.

Whereas much of the study of religious culture is predicated upon the difference between the perspectives of scholar and practitioner – indeed, it is this recognition of difference, of a gap of understanding, that motivates and enables interpretation - the study of one’s own religious culture destabilizes this foundational difference. This unstable position of same-yet-other seems impelled to resolve itself into either difference (rejection) or sameness (celebration).

The ways in which I was alike to the home schooling parents with whom I worked and the ways in which I was at the same time unlike them placed me in a position of thorough-going ambivalence throughout my fieldwork and writing. I was (and am) a

white, middle-class conservative Protestant female, and yet I was (and am) a researcher and neither a parent nor a practitioner nor product of home schooling. For reasons I do not yet understand, the tension between same-yet-other seemed for me to pull more toward the pole of sameness than difference, such that the greater challenge for me was to maintain the recognition of difference that is necessary to understanding. A rigorously maintained appreciation of the difference between my understanding of them and their understanding of themselves is necessary in order that I not presume the acquisition of a knowledge that is unavailable to me: their own self-knowledge. It is further necessary in order that I do not construct a knowledge of them out of my own experiences rather than theirs. There is always a gap between knower and known, and the danger of my “insider” fieldwork was the seeming disappearance of the gap that permits interpretive understanding by revealing the work that needs to be done (as well as the limits of what the work can achieve).⁹²

In order to maintain the recognition of the gap between my knowing and theirs, I made use of several interpretive strategies of distancing. First, I have enlisted scholarly literatures as the authorization of an alternate authorial voice to that available to me as a fellow middle-class, white conservative Protestant woman. I have made use of a wide variety of scholarly literatures in the construction of my research questions and analytical categories – critical sociology of education, practice theory, the history and the sociology of conservative Protestants, symbolic interactionism, and performance theories of race and gender – in the hope that I could then understand and speak from a variety of positions that contrasted with those of my study participants. In thus employing the

⁹² See Gill for a discussion of the importance of minding this gap in the study of other cultures and religions (Gill, 1998).

categories of academic discourse, I have re-asserted the difference between their religious perspective and that from which I think and write. Orsi knew his difference from Clara to be rooted in his academic orientation to her experience, and I used academic discourse to achieve the same effect (Orsi, 2005, p. 149):

However I had grown up, my childhood was long ago, and since then I had been trained in disciplines that generally sought to conceptualize religious experience in categories other than those that practitioners themselves used to think about their own lives – academic categories, moreover, that insisted on their own primacy, authority, and universality.

In my writing of conservative Protestant home schooling as the practices of unification, privatization, and gendering – practices that I also read as the production of a religious identity overlaid with racial, class, and gender meanings – I was not writing within the categories of their own understanding.

In addition, with respect to our commonalities of class, race, and religion, I sought out the ways in which religion, race, and class were happening for the families. I made use of some of the literature regarding the construction of whiteness, as well as feminist understandings of middle-class family and marriage, to open my eyes to the workings of race and class that, without such aid, would be largely invisible to my eyes. My project, moreover, is explicitly the exploration of the difference that conservative Protestantism makes, such that I attended to the production of conservative Protestantism as one who does not presume its given-ness. I have tried, then, to consider the ways in which the self-representations of home schooling parents were also accomplishing other, misrecognized ends, such as their economic, gender, racial, religious, and political empowerment. Though I have sought to overcome some of the analytic blindness caused

by sameness of social location,⁹³ I no doubt failed to see many of the operations of class, race, and religion that an observer from a different standpoint would have recognized.

Further studies must correct my oversights.

Though I used the perspectives of scholarship for the purposes of critical distancing, I yet chose to frame my readings in such a way that the academic perspectives incorporated in altered form much (though certainly not all) of the understanding that came from my similar racial, class, and religious social location. To have discounted entirely my “insider” understanding for the sake of my “outsider” one is an approach that I consider neither possible nor desirable. To do so would have been, first, to misrepresent the process of qualitative research as I experienced it. I could not do other than perceive the creations of the conservative Protestant identity of home schooling parents from the perspective of a white woman of the middle-class whose religious identity is similar to their own. Neither could these perceptions of mine help but form the basis for my analysis of their lives.

Second, to write solely as though I were a pure “outsider” would also have been to deny a valuable source of understanding their ways of life. Despite all the serious challenges partial insider-hood brings, appreciation of these challenges should not overwhelm the value of interpretations that combine some emic with some etic understandings. The value of insider perspective has been defended in feminist research as well as in qualitative research that is both of and by persons of marginalized ethnic

⁹³ In an analysis of her interview as a white woman with a black female dietician, Marjorie DeVault argues for the importance of disciplined attention to race in qualitative analysis, as opposed to the more standard practice of allowing race to emerge inductively as an analytic category. Though DeVault explores the potential for misunderstanding and negotiated understanding between an interviewer and interviewee of different races, her point applies to my own situation. Race always matters, as does gender and class, though it may not always be readily available for recognition by the qualitative researcher. Explicit attention to race, even when it seems less relevant than other aspects, can help to address the large potential for misunderstanding (DeVault, 1995).

communities (Baca Zinn, 1979; DeVault, 1990). Though there are real differences between the study of the disempowered by the similarly disempowered and the study of the empowered by the similarly empowered, in both cases the shared experiences of student and studied can make for a negotiated understanding that respects in a thorough-going way the perspective of those under the microscope. Though such respect of the views of others is not, in itself, sufficient for the production of a more complete scholarly understanding, it is a necessary precondition.

In the essay that closes *Between Heaven and Earth*, Orsi begins to develop a paradigm for the academic study of religion in which the discipline takes up the stance of resolute in-betweenness vis-à-vis the religious lives of those under its study, a paradigm for constructing understandings of religion that are neither confessional nor fully secular.

In his words (Orsi, 2005, p. 198):

This alternative...is characterized by a disciplined suspension of the impulse to locate the other (with all her or his discrepant moralities, ways of knowing, and religious impulses) securely in relation to one's own cosmos. It has no need to fortify the self in relation to the other; indeed, it is willing to make one's own self-conceptions vulnerable to the radically destabilizing possibilities of a genuine encounter with an unfamiliar way of life. This is an in-between orientation, located at the intersection of self and other, at the boundary between one's own moral universe and the moral world of the other. And it entails disciplining one's mind and heart to stay in this in-between place, in a posture of disciplined attentiveness, especially to difference.

Orsi dares to hope that the dynamics of "othering" that powerfully operate in encounters between one way of knowing and another can be paused to allow a third position to emerge: a form of research relationship between selves that are neither same nor "other." Such a relationship can bring into being a third understanding, one that creates common ground between two differently positioned knowers without denying the differences between their knowing.

I cannot claim to have proceeded exactly as Orsi describes, because my encounters with conservative Protestant home schooling families did not open to me the possibility of utter unfamiliarity and the desire to position them as “other.” Still, my persistently same-yet-different relation to the conservative Protestant home schoolers with whom I worked often impelled me to create something like Orsi’s third ground “at the intersection of self and other.” I have tried to write in a way that refuses to transform the families with whom I worked into either my opposite or my reflection; I neither analyzed them as an “outsider” nor mistook myself for an “insider.” I have tried to write into the foregoing chapters the tension between my understanding of their understanding, on the one hand, and my more distanced interpretations of them on the other. I remain, as I began, both like and unlike the conservative Protestant home schooling families with whom I worked. We have worked together so that I could understand something of their world, though I have understood it in my own way. Conservative Protestant home schooling families live lives that are dense with significance. It is my hope that the meanings I have rendered from their lives have brought about an understanding that is greater than it was at the beginning.

APPENDIX A

STUDY PARTICIPANTS

I interviewed thirty-two home schooling parents – sixteen mothers and sixteen fathers – plus two more home school entrepreneurs: Paulina Mullen, who founded and runs Zion School of the Arts, and Greg Borden, who founded and runs the Aslan Academy tutorial. Of the sixteen families with whom I worked, ten permitted me to spend one school week with them in observation in addition to interviewing the parents; I interviewed the parents of the remaining six families without observing their teaching practices. The majority of interviews took place in their homes, though I interviewed two fathers over the phone due to scheduling difficulties (Dave Simpson and Ralph Rosenberg) and spoke with Lyle Daugherty and Greg Borden in their offices. My interviews with the mothers lasted between one and two hours and, with the fathers, roughly one hour. Three of the sixteen families with whom I worked were not strictly conservative Protestant: the Hughes family is liberal protestant (Episcopalian), the Keller family is Catholic, and the Rosenberg family is conservative Protestant and Jewish.

FAMILIES OBSERVED AND INTERVIEWED

I began my fieldwork with Helen and Thomas Mason and their four children: eleven-year-old Virginia, nine-year-old Justin, seven-year-old Brian, and three-year-old Elizabeth.⁹⁴ The Masons live in a racially and ethnically diverse, middle-income

⁹⁴ For the sake of anonymity, the names of participants have all been changed, as have some of the ages of the children and other personal details.

suburban housing development. Their home is regularly the gathering place for the children of the neighborhood, perhaps because they have a pool and a trampoline in the back yard. Thomas works for an evangelical campus ministry organization and so is able to work from home on a regular basis. The Masons consider themselves to be evangelical, and they attend a conservative Episcopal church. During the week I spent with them, Helen and Thomas hired a contractor to draw up plans and make an estimate for the cost of adding on to their three-bedroom house; the cost was more than they could afford, and so they decided to shelve the plans. Helen told me that they had prayed about getting the estimate and “had a peace about it. But even if we never use the plans, maybe the person who buys the house after us will.”

Until the year I worked with them, they had sent all of their school-age children to the local public elementary school. They had recently decided to home school their eldest daughter Virginia for her fifth-grade year, for a combination of reasons: Helen had worked as a fifth-grade teacher, their school district had just included fifth grade within middle school, and they felt that Virginia was at an age where some additional time with her mother would help her to develop emotional and moral maturity. Virginia returned to public school after one year of home schooling, and Helen and Thomas are still thinking of bringing their other children home when they reach the fifth grade. But, as Helen told me, she and Thomas take things “one year at a time, one child at a time.”

Mary and Scott Heaney home school their three children, thirteen-year-old Francis (Frank), ten-year-old Esther, and seven-year-old Scottie in their home in a subdivision of a small city. Scott runs his own computer programming company, and he and Mary consider themselves to be fortunate that they are able to live very well without

Mary having to work. Mary has a master's degree in education and taught for several years at the Christian school affiliated with their fundamentalist, Independent Baptist church. She decided she wanted to home school when she thought about the quality of education as well as family life that she and Scott could give to their children at home, and Scott agreed. She also felt it was a calling of God upon her life. After home schooling for six years, they are happy with the relationships the kids have with each other and with them. They believe strongly that families should spend time with each other, and so they limit their children's involvement in youth group because it takes away from family togetherness. Nearly every evening they have family church, where Scott reads aloud a short story from a family devotional book, teaches a little, and prays. They then sing a hymn together – mostly off-key, but they laugh and say that God doesn't mind – as Scottie conducts them with a ruler.

Faith and Gary Cartwright have adopted five children – Terrence (19), David (18), Sarah (17), Shari (8) and Sammie (6) – in addition to their birth daughter Susan (16). They joke with Susan about the confusion she must have experienced with her changing position in the birth order – she was an only child, then a youngest, then a middle. Faith told me that, if you are against abortion, you should also be for adoption, because she believes that every child who is born is intended by God to exist and should therefore be cared for. Gary, Faith, Susan, and Terrence are white; Sarah, Shari, and Sammie are biracially black and white; David is black. With the exception of Terrence who has moved out of the house, Faith home schools all the children and also finds time to work for a large Christian home schooling organization. Gary has worked in several jobs over the years and now runs his own manufacturing and distribution company. They

have recently remodeled the kitchen and dining room in their four-bedroom home, which sits in a middle-class neighborhood in a small city. Every Sunday Gary, Faith, David, Sarah, Susan, Shari and Sammie pile into the “Cartwright bus,” as the kids not-so-affectionately call the family Suburban – and go to Vineyard, a non-denominational, multi-ethnic, conservative Protestant church. In the week I spent with them, they celebrated Sammie’s sixth birthday according to Cartwright tradition: Sammie chose the supper menu – meatballs, mashed potatoes, green salad, and strawberry shortcake – and the whole family regaled her with an exaggeratedly loud and tuneless rendition of “Happy Birthday.”

Erin and Jason Olsen have five children – sons Jacob (14), Dustin (12), Timothy (10), Jesse (8), and daughter Sharon (4) – whom Erin has home schooled throughout their educational careers. Jason used to work in the music business but, for reasons of finance, now runs his own computer consulting company. He and Erin bought their home in a rural area outside of a wealthy small town in part because it has an apartment in the basement for Erin’s mother, who lives with them, is Korean-American, and has a physical handicap. Erin has a degree in special education for children with severe disabilities, and though their children are not severely disabled, Erin feels that several of them have what could be labeled mild learning disabilities. They attend their non-denominational, reformed church as often as they can, but frequent illness keeps them home most Sundays. Erin told me “I’m a firm believer that Sabbath was created for man, not man for the Sabbath.” The Olsens have a love of music and media; as Erin said of Jason, “My husband is Best Buy’s best customer.” Not a day went by in which Dustin did not ask me if I had heard of or liked this or that band or movie – I was generally

found out to be utterly uninformed, but Dustin was gracious to me in my ignorance - and Erin showed me the on-line computer game that she and the kids play together. When I told Erin that I could tell her their pseudonyms when I give them a copy of this work, she said it wouldn't be necessary because "we'll be the ones with the kids in the home school rock band."

Lisa and Rick Rutherford each experienced a religious renaissance in their early adult years, and it is important to them that their three children – fourteen-year-old Max, 10-year-old Ryan, and, eventually, 2-year-old Carrie – receive an education that is in keeping with their conservative Christianity. They have read books with Max that critique evolution from the perspective of creation science, and Rick enjoys it when Max can think critically about movies and television from a Christian perspective. Though they began home schooling for religious and educational reasons, they have continued because they enjoy the closeness of their family and because they feel the children are thriving academically. With Max's unusual learning style and with Ryan's physical handicap, Lisa and Rick think that their home is the best environment for their children's learning. They adopted Carrie from Korea relatively recently, and Lisa is planning to home school her as well some day. Rick works in sales, which keeps him traveling fairly often, and Lisa has an associate's degree in nursing. Rick and Lisa attend an evangelical Southern Baptist church in which Lisa teaches Sunday school to adults. As she does with Max and Ryan, she pushes her students to think through the reasons for what they believe rather than simply asserting their doctrine. She told me about a time when she raised the question of in vitro fertilization in her class, arguing that perhaps the moral wrongfulness of stem-cell research applies as well to this medical technique. Lisa feels that she is

considered “way out there” by some of her fellow Christians and Christian home schoolers; for instance, she has a tattoo on her ankle and is required to keep it covered during all tutorial events. Still, she values the practice of questioning belief and finding answers, and she trains her sons to do the same. (By the way, she researched what the Bible has to say about tattoos and decided that they are allowable, tutorial rules and the dislike of Max “Alex P. Keaton” Rutherford notwithstanding.)

Gail and Dave Simpson home school their two children, ten-year-old Kristen and six-year-old Peter, in their home in a middle-class subdivision of a wealthy small town, in which Dave runs his own fitness equipment company. They also send Kristen to Aslan Academy, a tutorial founded by Greg Borden that is committed to the integration of Christianity into all subject disciplines. Though Dave and Gail value the freedom to include Christianity in the academic parts of their children’s education, it is also important to them that Kristen and Peter are taught Christian values in their interactions with adults and peers throughout the day. With her master’s degree in communications, Gail is often aware of the possible implications of what her children say and hear and of what she says to them. For instance, she feels that scheduling family time together around a school calendar communicates that the institution of the school is more important and more powerful than the institution of the family. Gail is therefore struggling somewhat with sending Kristen to tutorial because it introduces an externally-derived order to their family life. Gail and Dave are also working through how to teach their children to love their friends and neighbors, some of whom are not Christians, without approving of all of their choices. The Simpsons are part of a Presbyterian Church-America congregation.

Jill and Adam Hughes have home schooled their eight-year-old son Jim (“Jimmers”) for several years, and they plan on home schooling four-year-old Beth and two-year-old Kelly some day. Though her faith is important to her, Jill home schools her children not primarily for religious reasons but because she finds such joy and meaning in raising her children. Jill practices what she has come to call “organic Christianity,” an approach that looks to the many mundane aspects of human existence to find the most Christian good in them. Instead of “shouting from the rooftops, ‘I’m a Christian!’” she lives her faith through her parenting, her marriage, her friendships, her resource consumption, and her leisure activities. She combines organic Christianity with what she calls “crunchy” perspectives to do things like compost, garden organically, buy an old home instead of a new one, have three home-births, breast-feed, and home school. Home schooling also works well for them because it allows the kids and Adam to spend time together despite his work schedule as a newspaper columnist, which keeps him home some mornings and at work some evenings. Adam helps with the home schooling in many ways, including leading Jimmers’ two-member boy scout troupe which, as he said, “has taken off like a dead catfish.” Jill and Adam are members of an Episcopalian church; Jill identifies by my measure as a liberal Protestant, and while Adam is a faithful member of the church, he is currently agnostic about his religious beliefs.

Maria and Ralph Rosenberg have always home schooled their five boys – eighteen-year-old Nathaniel, fourteen-year-old Benjamin, thirteen-year-old Simon, six-year-old Jeremiah, and baby Aaron. They decided to home school while they were living in a city in which the public schools were of poor quality, and they did not choose private school because of the financial cost and because of the educational pressure it seemed to

Maria to put on its young students. Maria and the boys attend a non-denominational, charismatic church, and Maria's Christianity is a large part of her sense of herself. Her faith in Jesus has brought her healing from an emotionally abusive childhood, in part through the grace-filled sacrament of home schooling. Ralph is Jewish, and they are raising the boys to be Christians, to observe several Jewish holidays, and to have Shabbat dinner every Friday night. Ralph works as an independent consultant while Maria home schools, and though they must budget carefully, they meet their needs and then some. In addition to teaching her own children, Maria also teaches an occasional class at a tutorial and takes part in an organization of home schooling parents so that she can educate and encourage mothers who are new to home schooling. In fact, I met Maria through a home schooling moms' Bible study to which Erin Olsen brought me. She and Erin are friends, Maria told me, "because we both understand grace."

Christine and Henry Bennett home school their twelve-year-old son Matt in a northern small town in a house that has been owned by Henry's family for many years. Though they sent Matt to the local Christian school for a time, and though Christine teaches music at the school, they feel that home education is currently the best option for Matt's education and for their family as a whole. The Bennetts were the only family with whom I worked who do not live in the southeast, and Christine is the only mother who also works nearly full-time at several part-time jobs. She has a degree in education – she had to choose between music and physical education, and she chose music – and also works at her parent's convenience store, while Henry works in natural gas sales and leads the youth group on Wednesday nights at their evangelical Christian and Missionary Alliance church. They take their home schooling one year at a time, and though they

may one day send Matt to the public high school, they strongly value the chance to teach him his academic subjects in a manner that includes their Christian faith.

FAMILIES INTERVIEWED

I interviewed Caroline and Chris Keller on a summer day in the rural home that they built themselves; Caroline told me that she and her daughters helped to put on the roof. They live and work on a farm, and in addition to farming, Chris, who used to work as a nurse in the military, now works as a security guard. In fact, security was one of the reasons he agreed to home school; he felt that the public schools were no longer a physically safe environment for his children. Though they sent the elder of their six children to a public school for many years, Caroline found herself re-educating the kids every night, not only about their math and reading but also about the anti-Catholic sentiments to which her children were exposed. Caroline has used a pre-packaged curriculum published by Seton Hill to educate all of her children except the oldest, and several of their kids have gone on to earn post-graduate degrees. Though she has loved home schooling, she is ready to “retire” after nearly thirty years, and she is looking forward to getting a job that will allow her to interact with other adults throughout the day. She invited me to stay for supper – we ate green beans from their garden and steak from “George,” one of their cows that they had butchered – and I was able to talk with Chris before he left for a meeting at their Catholic church.

Ruth and Joe West live in a mixed-race, mixed-income neighborhood near the down-town of a small city, and they home school their three kids, Billy (9), Amy (6), and Danny (5). Joe works as an editor for a church-related publishing company while also

going to seminary part-time, and they attend a southern Baptist church. Ruth told me that she decided not to have me observe their home schooling because she wasn't sure what there was to observe, and indeed Ruth teaches her young children in a simple way. They work in the kitchen or living room in summer and in Ruth and Joe's bedroom in winter. Ruth gets one child started on an assignment and then moves to work with another one, and after they have done their lessons for the day, often finishing by early afternoon, they may read books, go for walks, play with neighbors or each other, do chores, or run errands together. She does not involve the children in any home schooling groups because these seem to her to take away from the point and pleasure of home schooling: learning at home as a family. All of Ruth's sisters home school their children, and though Ruth and Joe home school theirs differently, they appreciate the facts, common to many home schoolers, of low student-teacher ratios, close sibling relationships, parental control over curriculum, and freedom of religious instruction.

Nancy and Jimmy Thompson live in the country in a farm house close to Nancy's parents, where they home school their two younger children, seventeen-year-old Tracy and fourteen-year-old Eric. Their eldest daughter, Mary Ann, was home schooled as well for most of her education, and she went on to earn a bachelor's degree in missions from a Christian school. Nancy wanted to home school for some time before she pulled her children out of public school; though she met with some skepticism from her mother and from Jimmy at first, Jimmy agreed to allow her to try it for a year to see how well it worked for everyone. When Nancy first started home schooling, she stuck closely to lesson plans and reading lists, but she now educates her children in a more holistic manner, taking advantage of many circumstances as opportunities to put down the books

and learn from life. I interviewed Nancy several days after she returned home from surgery, and she told me how she had asked the doctor to teach Tracie, who is thinking of a career in nursing, a little bit about stitches, surgery, and post-operative care. “People love to tell you about what they know, if you just ask them,” which was also true of the farmer who stopped his work to explain about the operation of the combine to Nancy, Jimmy and the kids when they pulled alongside him en route during a vacation drive. They are active members in their Church of Christ church, and they save as much money as they can in a bank account that is designated for missions work.

Jessica and Lyle Daugherty have always home schooled their two daughters, ten-year-old Laura and eight-year-old Tara, because it makes the best sense to them as a means of raising and educating their girls into emotional, behavioral, intellectual, and religious maturity. I interviewed Jessica at a table in the living room of their house, which is located in a middle- to upper-class neighborhood of green lawns and mature trees far outside of a small city. Jessica worked as a journalist prior to home schooling their girls, and she has Laura and Tara write every day, preferring to teach them the mechanics of grammar and writing through composition rather than drills. Lyle works as an art editor for the same publishing company as Joe West, and his photography studio is adjacent to the home school room upstairs. They are involved in a Church of Christ church. Jessica preferred not to distinguish among Christians with labels such as conservative, charismatic, and liberal, as she feels that such categories introduce division and judgment where there should be unity and grace. When I spoke with Jessica and Lyle, it was summertime, and this means for them a break from school and a chance to

rest, to garden, to journal, and to invite friends over for supper, the last of which Jessica told me was “my favorite.”

Gina and Alan Rossini have five children – four birth children and a niece whom they’ve adopted – and they home school them all in their house in a mixed-race, mixed-income neighborhood. While Gina and the kids are at home most days, so is Alan, who works from his home office as an independent computer programming consultant. Gina returned to school as an adult to finish her bachelor’s degree in secondary education in English, and she was beginning the process of applying to law school when I spoke with her. A woman of much energy, she also writes, performs, and records her own music – she gave me one of her CDs – and runs a home schooling tutorial. They originally sent their two older children to a Christian school because Gina and Alan, who each converted to evangelical Christianity as adults, regretted their own lack of Christian education. Gina articulated to me her awareness that her own education in public school provided her with a decidedly secular worldview, and she and Alan want a truer education for their children. They especially value the chance, afforded by the flexibility and efficiency of home schooling, to partake of the local and global community as a resource and as a mission field. Gina and the children frequently volunteer at soup kitchens, nursing homes, and homeless shelters; go witnessing to the power of God; and support an orphanage in Kenya, to which they have traveled. They are currently part of a church plant, which grew from their Disciples of Christ congregation.

I spoke with Vivian and Bill Flanigan in the kitchen of their large, brick home in an upper-middle class, suburban neighborhood. When Vivian answered the door, we both laughed when we saw that we were wearing identical clothes, a pink polo shirt and

jeans. Under a glass top on their kitchen table where we sat I could see a collage of photographs from the recent wedding of their eldest daughter, who, as Vivian told me, would soon be starting a graduate program in English literature. Vivian herself has a master's degree in reading and a bachelor's degree in education, and though she worked for several years as a teacher, she found her life's work in home schooling her three daughters and running a large home schooling tutorial. Bill owns his own roofing materials company and works out of their home in an office above the home school room; the girls would frequently do their school work and play in his office during the day. In fact, he told me that he was most grateful that home schooling enabled him to spend significant time with his daughters, to the point where he never missed a soccer practice let alone a game. Vivian and Bill are visibly proud of their daughters, now nearly grown, and they recounted to me with pleasure the times when waitresses and stewardesses spontaneously commented to them on their strikingly well-mannered girls and pleasant family interaction. They attend a southern Baptist church.

Last Name	Parents	Children	Religious Affiliation	Mother's Education & Occupation	Father's Education & Occupation	Race	Research Method
Bennett	Henry and Christine	Matt (12)	fundamentalist, evangelical; Christian and Missionary Alliance	Bachelor's (music ed); currently part-time teaching and store management	Bachelor's; natural gas sales	White	Interviewed and observed
Cartwright	Faith and Gary	Terrence (19) David (18) Sarah (17) Susan (16) Shari (8) Sammie (7)	charismatic, evangelical, fundamentalist; Vineyard Fellowship	Bachelor's (education); currently part-time office assistant	Bachelor's; owns and operates manufacturing and distribution company	white: Faith, Gary, Susan, Terrence black: David biracially black and white: Sarah, Shari, Sammie	Interviewed and observed
Daugherty	Lyle and Jessica	Laura (10) Tara (8)	conservative Christian; Church of Christ	Bachelor's; formerly employed as a writer	Bachelor's; art editor for Christian publishing company	White	Interviewed
Flanigan	Vivian and Bill	Nora (adult) Amber (adult) Louisa (17)	evangelical, "Bible believing;" Southern Baptist	Bachelor's (education) and Master's (reading); formerly employed as a teacher	Bachelor's; owns and operates a construction supply company	White	Interviewed
Heaney	Scott and Mary	Frank (13) Esther (10) Scottie (7)	fundamentalist; Independent Baptist	Bachelor's (education) and Master's (education); formerly employed as a teacher	several credits short of a Bachelor's; owns and operates computer consulting firm	White	Interviewed and observed
Hughes	Jill and Adam	Jim (7) Beth (5) Kelly (1)	Liberal protestant; Episcopalian	Bachelor's; Formerly employed as a journalist	Bachelor's and Master's; journalist	White	Interviewed and observed
Keller	Chris and Caroline	Charles (adult) Louis (adult) Kyle (adult) Troy (17) Tricia (16)	Roman Catholic	Bachelor's; Formerly employed in medical information	Associate's (nursing); farmer, security guard	White	Interviewed
Mason	Helen and Thomas	Virginia (11) Justin (9) Brian (7) Elizabeth (3)	evangelical; conservative Episcopalian	Bachelor's (education); formerly employed as a teacher	Bachelor's and two Master's; management position in campus ministry organization	White	Interviewed and observed
Olsen	Jason and Erin	Jacob (14) Dustin (12) Timothy (10) Jesse (9) Sharon (4)	reformed evangelical; non-denominational reformed	Bachelor's (special education)	Bachelor's; owns and operates computer consulting firm	white: Jason half Korean, half white: Erin one-quarter Korean, three-quarters white: all children	Interviewed and observed
Rosenberg	Maria and Ralph	Nathaniel (18) Benjamin (14) Simon (13) Jeremiah (6) Aaron (infant)	Jewish and charismatic, evangelical; non-denominational	Bachelor's; formerly employed in human relations	Bachelor's and Master's; independent computer consultant	White	Interviewed and observed
Rossini	Alan and Gina	Michelle (15) Mark (14) Johnny (10) Crystal (8) Melissa (3)	conservative Christian; Disciples of Christ	Bachelor's (secondary education-English)	Bachelor's; independent computer consultant	White	Interviewed
Rutherford	Lisa and Rick	Max (14) Ryan (10) Carrie (2)	evangelical; Southern Baptist	Associate's (nursing); Formerly employed as a nurse	Bachelor's; sales	White	Interviewed and observed
Simpson	Dave and Gail	Kristen (10) Peter (6)	conservative protestant; Presbyterian Church of America	Bachelor's (education) and Master's (communication); formerly employed as a teacher	Bachelor's and Master's (business); owns and operates exercise equipment sales company	White	Interviewed and observed
Thompson	Nancy and Jimmy	MaryAnn (adult) Tracie (17) Eric (14)	evangelical "believer;" Church of Christ	Bachelor's (education)	Bachelor's; fire inspector	White	Interviewed
West	Joe and Ruth	Billy (9) Amy (6) Danny (5)	evangelical; Southern Baptist	Bachelor's (education)	Bachelor's and currently in seminary; editor at Christian publishing company	White	Interviewed

Study participants, in alphabetical order, including religious affiliation, education, occupation, race, and research method (ages of children in parentheses).

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDES

The following are the complete interview guides that I used in directing the conversations I had with the home schooling parents. The interviews were loosely structured, such that I did not always ask all of the specific questions listed below and I did not always explore topics in the same order. I began each interview by asking the parent about the process by which they decided to home school their children, and I tried to direct our discussion to cover all of my research topics in as natural a way as possible.

I. Basic Information (asked of all participants; *=ask of second spouse interviewed per couple):

A. Family information

1. How many children are in your current nuclear family?
2. How many children are currently living in your home?
3. Information about children currently being home schooled:

Child's name (write 1st initial only)	Age	Grade level	Sex	Yrs home schooled	Ed. prior to home schooling	Ed. Supplemental to home schooling	Your child?
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4. Have you home schooled any other children in the past?
 - a. If Yes: how many children, ages, years home schooled

B. Marital status:

*What is your marital status? Single, divorced, married

if SINGLE: go to C.

if DIVORCED:

How long has it been since your divorce?

How many times have you been married?

Do any children from previous marriages now live elsewhere?

if MARRIED:

How long have you been married to your current spouse?

How many times have you been married?

- C. What percentage of the work of home schooling would you estimate that you do?*
1. If married: What percentage of the home schooling does your spouse do?
 2. Does anyone else help with the work of home schooling? Who? How?
- D. What is the highest level of education that you have completed? (GED, high school, associate's degree, bachelor's, master's, professional, Ph.D., etc.)*
- E. What is your racial or ethnic background?*
- F. Parents' occupation:
1. (do not ask of single parent) What is the occupation of the parent who does not teach the children?:
 2. Does the teaching parent currently have volunteer or paid employment outside of home schooling?
 - a. If so, what jobs?
 - b. What is the teaching parent's work experience prior to home schooling?
- G. Why did you decide to home school your children?*
- H. Did you consider sending your children to a Christian school?*
1. If yes: Why have you chosen home schooling instead?

II. Interview guide for teaching mothers:

- A. Home schooling Practices
1. How did your family decide who would do most of the teaching? What factors did you consider?
 2. Resources for teaching:
 - a. How long have you been home schooling?
 - b. Have you received any sort of training in how to teach?
 - i. If so, what training have you received? (when, how long, where)
 - c. Do you use any curriculum packages, teachers guides, etc.?
 - i. If so, which ones?
 - ii. Which resources have been helpful for you in learning to teach, and which have not been helpful? In what ways?
 - iii. What have you learned from these resources?
 - d. Do you participate in any home schooling groups or associations?
 - i. Which one(s)?
 - ii. How would you describe your participation in the group(s)? (What do you do as a member of the group?)
 - iii. Why did you decide to join this/those groups?
 - iv. What benefits do you receive through your participation in the group(s)?

3. Teaching Practices:
 - a. How do you decide which subjects to teach?
 - b. How do you decide how to teach them?
 - c. Would you walk me through a lesson that you think illustrates the way you teach?
 - d. How do you decide the order of lessons for the day or week?
 - e. What do you do to get the kids to begin schoolwork? Do you do any actions or say anything in particular?
 - f. How do you decide when to move on to the next subject? (How do you decide that the lesson has been learned?)
 - g. How do you decide to end the school-time for the day?
 - h. How do you handle the transitions between school-time and the times when they are not doing schoolwork (e.g., before and after school-time, before and after meals)?
 - i. What generally happens immediately after the schoolwork is done?
 - i. How do you decide which days will be spent schooling, and which parts of the day?
 - j. How do you keep track of the time spent schooling?
 - k. How do you keep track of the lessons you've taught?
 - l. Do you assign homework? Why or why not?
4. Do you give graded assignments and tests?
 - a. If YES: Who grades assignments and tests?
 - i. If you grade:
 1. Has it been difficult to grade your child's work?
 2. Imagine that you give your child an F on a math test. How would you explain the grade to the child?
 3. Have there been any conflicts with your children over grades? How have you handled them?
 4. How do you feel if they do well on their tests?
 5. How do you feel if they do poorly?
 - ii. If someone else grades:
 1. Why did you decide not to grade your child's work?
 2. Have there been any conflicts between you and your child over their grades?
 3. How would you talk with your child about a poor grade? About a good grade?
 4. How do you feel if they do well on tests?
 5. How do you feel if they do poorly?
 - b. If NO graded assignments and tests:
 - i. How do you keep track of what your child has learned, and what they have not learned?
 - ii. Why did you decide not to grade and give tests?
5. Reflecting on home schooling experiences:
 - a. Are there any times when it is more difficult to get the children to focus on their schoolwork?
 - i. Is there a pattern to these times?

- ii. How do you handle these situations?
 - iii. Are there other times when they seem to pay attention better than usual? Is there a pattern to those situations?
 - b. Are there any times when you find it difficult to teach? Easier to teach?
 - i. Is there a pattern to these times?
 - ii. How do you handle these situations?
 - c. In general, how would you compare how you teach your children to how a public or private school teacher teaches his or her students?
 - i. Do you consider being a home educator a career? In what ways? If not, why not?
 - d. How would you compare your time with your kids when they're in home school vs. when they are not? What is the same, and what is different?
 - i. In your mind, is school-time clearly separate from the rest of the day, or not?
 - ii. How formal or structured do you like your teaching to be?
 - iii. When are you not teaching your children?
 - e. What are some verbs or actions that you associate with teaching?
 - f. What experiences have you drawn on in knowing how to teach?
 - g. What do you like best about the way you teach?
 - h. What do you wish you could change about the way you teach?
 - i. How would you describe the way that your child/ren learn?
 - j. Is there anything about home schooling that has surprised you?
- 6. Would you consider your faith to be a resource for your teaching?
 - a. How would you characterize a Christian teacher?
 - b. Are there any Bible verses or stories that impact the way you think about teaching?
 - c. Are there any Christian books on teaching or home schooling that you found useful or insightful?
 - d. Have your relationships with other Christians impacted the way you teach?
 - e. How would you compare being an explicitly Christian teacher with non-Christian teaching? How are they the same? How are they different?

B. Home Space and other places – Meanings, Uses

- 1. How do you balance your teaching with your other work in the home?
- 2. Where do you teach your lessons when you're in your home?
 - a. Do you try to teach always in the same place in your home, or do you move around the home?
 - b. How did/do you decide where to teach? What factors did/do you take into consideration?
 - c. Do you do anything to make the place "ready" for schoolwork?
- 3. Where in your home do the kids seem to learn the best?
- 4. Where do the kids do their homework?
- 5. Have you changed anything about your home to make it work as a school? (eg, furniture arrangement, decorations, the uses of different rooms, etc.)
- 6. Do you ever teach lessons outside of the home?
 - a. Where else?

- b. What do you think about when you plan for a lesson outside of the home?
 - c. Have you found that these other places work well for teaching a lesson? If so, how? If not, why not?
 - 7. Do you ever get “cabin fever”? Do the kids?
 - 8. In what ways would you say that your home is like a school? In what ways is it different?
 - a. What words do you associate with “home”?
 - b. What words do you associate with “school”?
 - c. Do you think about your home differently, now that it is also a school?
 - 9. Home and Outside World
 - a. When people ask you what you do for a living, what do you say?
 - i. How do people usually react?
 - ii. How do people at church react?
 - b. When you think about the “American public” or “American culture,” what words or images come to mind? How would you characterize American culture?
 - c. How would you describe the “typical” American family?
 - i. Would you say that your family is typical or atypical? In what ways?
 - d. How would you compare the environment within your home to the world outside your home?
- C. Teaching and Mothering:
- 1. Being both mother and teacher:
 - a. How would you describe being a mother? What words or actions do you associate with being a mother?
 - b. Do you think of the mother and teacher roles as separate or intertwined? (Do you think of yourself as sometimes a mother, other times a teacher, or both mother and teacher at all times?)
 - c. How would you compare your relationship with your children with that of mothers who do not home school?
 - d. What has been the best part of being both teacher and mother?
 - e. What has been the hardest part of being both teacher and mother?
 - 2. How would you describe the duties or character of a Christian mother?
 - a. Do any Bible verses, Bible stories, or Biblical images shape your understanding of Christian motherhood?
 - b. Have you had any relationships with other Christians that have shaped your understanding of being a Christian mother?
 - c. How would you compare being a Christian mother with being a non-Christian mother? How are they the same? How are they different?
 - 3. Home schooling and your spouse:
 - a. Does your husband ever teach lessons?
 - i. If so, how would you compare how he teaches to how you teach?
 - ii. If not, how would you describe your husband’s influence on your children’s education?
 - b. When you talk with your husband about schoolwork, what do you talk about? Can you tell me about a specific conversation

- you've had recently with your husband about the kids' schoolwork?
 - c. How would you compare your relationship with the kids to your husband's relationship with the kids? How are they the same? How are they different?
 - d. Has the increased time you spend with the kids impacted the family dynamics?
 - 4. How would you describe being a father? What words or actions do you associate with fatherhood?
 - a. How would you compare being a father to being a mother? How are they the same? How are they different?
 - b. How would you describe the duties or character of a Christian father?
 - c. Do any Bible verses, Bible stories, or Biblical images influence your understanding of Christian fatherhood?
 - d. Have you had any relationships with other Christians that have influenced your understanding of Christian fatherhood?
 - 5. Your relationship with your husband:
 - a. What are your household responsibilities, beyond home schooling?
 - b. Do you think that home schooling has impacted your relationship with your husband? In what ways?
 - c. If you and your husband cannot come to an agreement, how do you make the decision? How often does this happen?
 - 6. How would you describe a Christian marriage?
 - a. Do any Bible verses, Bible stories, or other Christian books shape your understanding of Christian marriage?
 - b. How would you describe the duties and character of a Christian wife?
 - c. How would you describe the duties and character of a Christian husband?
 - d. Do you consider your marriage to be a Christian marriage? In what ways yes, and in what ways no?
 - e. Does being Christian make your marriage different from non-Christian marriages? In what ways yes, and in what ways no?

III. Interview guide for fathers:

- A. How did your family decide who would do most of the teaching? What factors did you consider?
- B. How would you describe your involvement in your children's education?
 - 1. What sorts of topics relating to schoolwork do you discuss? Would you tell me about a conversation you've had recently with your child about schoolwork?
 - 2. Do you help the children with their schoolwork? Can you tell me about a time when you've done so?
 - 3. How do you decide if you or your wife will help with a particular schoolwork assignment?
 - 4. Do you discuss the kids' schooling with your wife? What sorts of things do you talk about?
 - a. Can you tell me about a recent conversation you had with your wife about the kids' schoolwork?

- C. Are there times when being the non-teaching parent seems to make a difference in your relationship with the kids? Can you tell me about some of these times? (e.g., frustration with certain school subjects or lessons, disappointment over a grade)
- D. When you tell others that your wife home schools your child/children, what are some common reactions?
 - 1. How have people at church responded?
 - 2. How have people at work responded?
- E. How would you describe being a father? What words or activities do you associate with fathering?
 - 1. How would you compare fathering to teaching? How are they the same, and how are they different?
 - 2. How would you characterize being a Christian father?
 - a. What Bible verses, Bible stories, or Christian books shape your understanding of Christian fatherhood?
 - b. Have you had any relationships with other Christians that have impacted your understanding of Christian fatherhood?
- F. How would you describe being a mother? What words or actions do you associate with mothering?
 - 1. How would you compare being a mother with being a father? How are they the same, and how are they different?
 - 2. Are there any Bible verses, Bible stories, or Biblical images that influence your understanding of a Christian mother?
 - 3. Have you had any relationships with other Christians that have impacted your understanding of Christian motherhood?
- G. Your relationship with your wife:
 - 1. What are your household responsibilities or other responsibilities to your family?
 - 2. Do you think that home schooling has impacted your relationship with your wife? In what ways?
 - 3. If you and your wife cannot come to an agreement, who gets the final say? How often does this happen?
- H. How would you describe a Christian marriage?
 - 1. What Bible verses, Bible stories, or Biblical images have shaped your understanding of a Christian marriage?
 - 2. How would you describe the duties or character of a Christian husband?
 - 3. How would you describe the duties or character of a Christian wife?
 - 4. Do you consider your marriage to be a Christian marriage? In what ways yes, and in what ways no?
 - 5. How does being Christian make your marriage different from non-Christian marriages?

IV. *Asked of mothers and fathers at the end of each interview:*

- A. Religious history
 - 1. Religious affiliation:
 - a. What church do you attend?
 - b. How long have you been attending there?
 - c. How many times per week do you go to a worship service or other function at your church?

- d. How important is your faith to you? (very important, important, somewhat important, not important at all)
- e. Do you identify with any of the following Protestant groups? You may choose one, more than one, or none.
 - i. theologically liberal, mainline, Pentecostal, charismatic, evangelical, fundamentalist.
- f. Do you consider yourself to be “born again?”
- g. Do you consider yourself to be “spirit-filled”?
- h. How often do you pray?
- i. How often do you read the Bible?
- j. For the following statements about religious beliefs, please tell me whether you disagree strongly, disagree, neither disagree nor agree, agree, or agree strongly:
 - i. It is important to have an ongoing, personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
 - ii. Jesus Christ is both fully human and fully divine.
 - iii. The Bible is the inspired word of God and is a trustworthy authority for all matters of faith and practice.
 - iv. The Bible is the inerrant word of God, without error as a whole and in its parts.
 - v. The Bible should be read literally, word for word.
 - vi. Salvation from sin is available only through Jesus Christ.
 - vii. It is important to me that I share my faith with others to try to convert them to Christianity.
- 2. Were you raised in the church?
 - a. Which denomination(s) did your family of birth attend?
 - b. How would you describe your childhood family’s church participation?
 - c. How would you compare your current religious beliefs to those of your childhood family? How are they the same, and how are they different?
- 3. If grew up in church: Have you ever considered going to a different denomination or church than the one you were raised in? (Have you ever done so? Do you do so now?)
 - a. What factors did you consider when choosing a church for yourself and your family?
- 4. If did NOT grow up in church: What factors did you consider when choosing a church for your family?

B. Concluding questions

- 1. Is there anything that I didn’t ask you that you would like to tell me about?
- 2. At some later date, after I look over our interview, I may have some small follow-up questions to help me make sure that I understood your answers. If this happens, may I contact you within the next year with brief follow-up questions?
- 3. Do you know of any other Protestant Christian home schooling families that would be willing to talk with me?
 - a. Can you ask them if it would be alright for you to give me their names and phone numbers?

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