
HOME SCHOOLING AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT: IDENTIFYING THE DETERMINANTS OF HOMESCHOOLERS' PERCEPTIONS*

Ed Collom

Department of Sociology, University of Southern Maine,
Portland, Maine, USA

Douglas E. Mitchell

Graduate School of Education, University of California,
Riverside, California, USA

This article seeks to estimate the extent to which home schooling parents perceive themselves as social movement participants and to identify the factors contributing to such beliefs. The impact of collective action frames, feelings of efficacy, social network ties, and home schooling motivations are considered. Regression models are employed in an analysis of original survey data from an organized group of Southern California homeschoolers. Home schooling motivations are most salient in determining whether one interprets their activities as part of a larger movement. Social network tie indicators are largely unimportant in the models. The findings highlight the important role of organizational affiliation and integration. Homeschoolers without affiliations and those who are less integrated into their support organizations are not likely to feel as if they are part of a larger movement. Organizational integration—specifically

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Address correspondence to Ed Collom, Department of Sociology, 96 Falmouth St, PO Box 9300, University of Southern Maine, Portland, ME 04104-9300. E-mail: collom@usm.maine.edu

attitudinal affinity—also appears to make home schooling parents become more narrowly focused upon their own children rather than the welfare of all children. Implications for future home schooling and social movement research are discussed.

Home schooling is both a means of educating children according to parental standards and an alternative social movement embracing a unique set of cultural norms and values. Little is known about the movement aspects of parents' choosing to abandon the public schools and teach their children at home. In this article we analyze survey data from a substantial home schooling sample in an effort to assess the extent to which these parents perceive themselves as social movement participants and to identify the factors contributing to such beliefs. Homeschoolers are, to be sure, a quite heterogeneous population with a variety of reasons for taking this significant step. While previous studies have identified key elements in the motivational pattern that leads to teaching children at home, researchers have only begun to consider the larger social movement implications of their actions (see Sikkink 2001; Stevens 2001). While home schooling can be *defined* as a social movement, researchers have yet to directly ask homeschoolers themselves.

After estimating the degree to which homeschoolers see themselves as social movement participants, the primary research question is addressed: What factors lead homeschoolers to perceive their activities as part of a larger movement? Micro and meso hypotheses of social movement participation are operationalized and tested. The extent to which theory that was formulated for "oppositional" social movement participation applies to participation in this "alternative" movement will be assessed. The analysis is based on data obtained from an original survey instrument administered to a concentrated group of Southern California parents who home educate their children. This study offers detailed analyses in an effort to better understand this substantial, growing group of people for whom misperceptions and stereotypes abound.

We begin with an overview of home schooling in the United States. The prevalence, motivations, and characteristics of homeschoolers are summarized. Then we argue that this is an "alternative" (rather than an "oppositional") type of social movement. Next, the setting from which the data were collected is introduced. A California charter school (to which we have given the pseudonym "Home Charter") provides the context for this study. Homeschoolers have always founded support groups and organizations, schools are the next logical organizational step. Home Charter is part of a growing

movement to institutionalize home schooling by creating formal organizations that help parents plan and execute educational programs and provide educational services that families want but cannot provide for themselves (see Stevens 2001). While the sample data employed here is not without limitations, this school provides a unique opportunity for in-depth study of a group that has historically been difficult to identify or interpret. Micro- and meso-theories of social movement participation are then engaged in an effort to determine which factors contribute to homeschoolers' seeing themselves as part of a larger movement. As the impact of collective action frames, sense of efficacy, social network ties, and home schooling motivations are hypothesized, the measures employed in the study are described.

Today, social movements abound. Most of these movements are oppositional, challenging a variety of institutions and practices. Appropriately, the social scientific study of social movements has skyrocketed in the past decade. Yet few scholars have studied *alternative* social movements. These movements create their own social space to defy mainstream institutions (rather than engaging in contentious interaction with them). Alternative social movements have important implications and act as critical cases on which to test existing theory.

American public education is currently under attack given fiscal crises and the move toward standardization and accountability. Home schooling is a growing, heterogeneous movement of organizations and individuals acting collectively in an effort to better their children's lives. This alternative is becoming more and more publicly acceptable. Surprisingly, this research is the first known that simply asks homeschoolers about how they perceive their involvement vis-à-vis others who are also home schooling. This population is important to study as it is truly initiating substantive social change everyday, one household at a time. Moreover, the degree to which homeschoolers see themselves as part of a movement will enhance debates surrounding this controversial practice.

HOME SCHOOLING IN THE U.S.

While the roots of education in America can be traced to home and family initiatives, today's home schooling movement has arisen as a reaction against the public educational system. It originated during the 1960s and 1970s within the "countercultural" or libertarian political left (Lyman 1998). Educational critics came to believe that the public system was unreformable and began to encourage parents to teach their children at home (see Holt 1964). Van Galen (1991) labels

this original group as “pedagogues” to underscore their interest in improving the instructional process. In general, these homeschoolers stood against the bureaucratization and professionalization of public schools and sought personalization and decentralization under family control.

By the 1980s, another influential group began to argue for home schooling from a Christian perspective. These religious sectarians, largely from the political right, are called “ideologues” by Van Galen (1991) to highlight their sense of “crusading” against the secular forces of modern society, seeking to impart religious values upon their children (see Moore and Moore 1981). The religious right came to dominate home schooling in the mid-1980s as the libertarian left group diminished (Grubb 1998; Lyman 1998). Despite Stevens’ (2001) continuing usage of the dichotomy between pedagogues (whom he refers to as “inclusives” or “earth-based”) and ideologues (referred to as “believers” or “heaven-based”), studies of parental motivations suggest that home schooling has now become more mainstream and that there are a host of “middle-grounders” with varying rationales (see also Russo 1999).

Recent estimates report that well over a million children are being home schooled nationwide (Ray 1999; Russo 1999; Stevens 2001). This increasing rate reflects public acceptance of the broadening political dissatisfaction with formal education (Lyman 1998). Several studies and literature reviews have highlighted some specific reasons why parents decide to home school their children.

Pitman (1987), for example, studied a small group of homeschoolers in a rural community in the Northeast. She identified religious, progressive, and academic motivations, with religious concerns being dominant. Mayberry’s (1988) survey of Oregon homeschoolers identifies four groups with differing motivations. The largest group was religiously motivated, a second group was academically motivated, next in size were the pedagogues, and the smallest group she called “New-Agers,” individuals whose worldview was the determining factor. In a study of Oregon homeschoolers, Bates (1991) found that parents’ reasons included: religious convictions, a belief in “family values,” fear of negative peer influences,¹ and dissatisfaction with the secular climate of public education. In a sample of Minnesota homeschoolers, Lange and Liu (1999) found that reasons related to educational philosophy were clearly the most important. However, these homeschoolers were also motivated by: the special educational needs

¹There have also been claims that some white parents explicitly choose home schooling because of their racism against students of color (see Ray 1999).

of their children, the public school climate, family lifestyle and parenting philosophy, and religious and ethical beliefs.

Bielick, Chandler, and Broughman (2001) report findings from the Parent Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program, 1999. This nationally representative sample includes 245 parents of 275 home schooled students. Parents were asked to identify their reasons for home schooling. These open-ended responses were coded into 16 categories. The four most frequently cited reasons were: "Can give child better education at home" (48.9% of respondents), "Religious reasons" (38.4%), "Poor learning environment at school" (25.6%), and "Family reasons" (16.8% of respondents).

Overall then, there is a general consensus among researchers that the decision to home school is motivated by four broad categories of concern: (a) religious values, (b) dissatisfaction with the public schools, (c) academic and pedagogical concerns, and (d) family life (see also Knowles 1991; Marchant and MacDonald 1994; Muncy 1996; Lyman 1998; Ray 1999).

Several studies also provide demographic profiles of the home schooling population. Nationally, at least 75% (Bielick et al. 2001) to 80% (Wagenaar 1997), and possibly up to 90% (Rudner 1998; Ray 1999) of home schooled students are white. The vast majority (over 95%) of home schooling families are headed by a married couple (Rudner 1998; Ray 1999; Bielick et al. 2001). Families who home school are also more likely to be larger than families who do not home educate (Muncy 1996; Wagenaar 1997; Rudner 1998; Ray 1999; Bielick et al. 2001).

The parents of home schooled children are more educated than average American adults (Mayberry 1988; Muncy 1996; Wagenaar 1997; Rudner 1998; Ray 1999; Bielick et al. 2001). The mothers usually provide about 90% of the home instruction (Ray 1999) and unlike most American women, the majority are not in the paid labor force (Wagenaar 1997; Rudner 1998; Bielick et al. 2001). Home schooling parents are also more likely to be certified to teach than the general population (Rudner 1998). The fathers are more likely to work in professional/technical occupations or to be self-employed (Mayberry 1988; Muncy 1996).

Three studies find that home schooling families have larger annual incomes (Mayberry 1988; Wagenaar 1997; Rudner 1998), while another finds that their incomes are higher only when compared to national households in which the wife is not in the paid labor force (Ray 1999). These families are also more likely to be socially and politically conservative (Mayberry 1988; Muncy 1996) and have strong religious values (Mayberry 1988; Muncy 1996; Ray 1999).

Finally, there is a large body of evidence indicating that home schooling “works” as far as student achievement is concerned. Ray (2000) provides the authoritative literature review and cites 25 studies indicating that overall, home schooled students score above national averages. Only two of the investigations he reviewed demonstrated otherwise. In a separate study employing the same survey data to be reported on here, the lead author (Collom 2005) also finds that students who are home educated outperform national averages. Moreover, student race and family income are found to not be significant determinants of student achievement. The two great divides that public school children face—race and class—are inconsequential for achievement scores among home educated children.

HOME SCHOOLING AS AN ALTERNATIVE SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Despite the heterogeneity in their motivations, home schooling parents do systematically differ from those who choose more traditional educational options. But, are these differences sufficient to consider home schooling a unique social movement? The act of teaching your own children in your home may not be very movement-like. However, underlying such teaching are several collective actions: networking with other homeschoolers, interacting with (or starting) formal home schooling organizations, and interacting with state agents.

The social movement designation is to some extent a semantic question as there are varying definitions of what specifically constitutes a social movement. On the one hand, McCarthy and Zald (1977) provide a very loose conception:

A social movement is a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society . . . we view social movements as nothing more than preference structures directed toward social change. (McCarthy and Zald 1977, p.1217–1218; emphasis in original)

Home schooling can easily be considered a social movement under this belief-centered definition. These parents most certainly have preferences for change. Indeed, they have *acted* on behalf of these preferences.

On the other hand, Tarrow’s (1998) widely cited conception of social movements is quite stringent. He discusses four necessary elements which distinguish social movements from other social

phenomena: (a) disruptive, collective challenges, (b) the existence of common claims and interests, (c) the establishment of a collective identity, and (d) sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities.

Home schooling is not based upon nor does it normally involve any disruptive protest (though evidence, to be presented below, indicates that homeschoolers do have greater levels of protest engagement than American parents as a whole). However, these parents are likely to have developed common claims and to have generated a collective identity. Home educators do not tend to act in isolation. They work together through networks and organizations. By sharing teaching materials and ideas, taking their children on group fieldtrips, and engaging in other social activities, home schooling parents build a community. Such interaction is likely to reinforce their decision to home educate and to contribute to the formation of a collective, “us” feeling.

Regarding Tarrow’s (1998) last definitional element, many homeschoolers and most of their organizations do recurrently interact with state and federal government representatives (Stevens 2001) and local school authorities. This has included lobbying against threatening legislation as well as working with state agents on mandatory testing and degree equivalency issues. Still, homeschoolers have essentially chosen to “exit” (see Hirschman 1970) the mainstream educational system and are not usually engaged in contentious collective interaction with other parties to the same extent as oppositional social movements.

McAdam and Snow (1997) provide a slightly different definition of movements that relaxes the disruptive and contentious tactics element somewhat. They see “social movements as collectivities working with some degree of organization and continuity to promote or resist change through a mixture of extrainstitutional and institutionalized means” (McAdam and Snow 1997, p.xxii). Thus, social movement tactics need not necessarily be disruptive, only “extrainstitutional.” We would argue that homeschoolers’ creation of alternative communities through noncompliance with the public education system constitutes noninstitutional means.

Snow, Soule, and Kriesi (2004) add further support to our argument that home schooling is a movement. In their words, “we argue that movements be considered as challengers to or defenders of existing *institutional authority*—whether it is located in the political, corporate, religious, or educational realm” (Snow et al. 2004, p.9; italics in original). Homeschoolers can be seen as challenging the state’s institutional authority over public education through their nonparticipation.

If we accept that home schooling can be considered a movement then, we can now be more specific by characterizing it as a particular type of social movement. Several typologies of movements exist. Aberle's (1966) oft-cited scheme contains four movement types by differentiating between the amount of change sought (partial versus total) and the locus of change (individual versus social structure). "Alterative" movements seek partial change in individuals' behaviors or habits.² Self-help movements such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Drug Abuse Resistance Education are representative. "Redemptive" movements seek total personal transformation and are typically religious in nature. "Reformative" movements, the most common form of social movements, attempt to change parts of existing society in some fashion. "Transformative" movements seek revolutionary change and replacement of the existing social order.

In Aberle's (1966) criterion concerning the amount of change sought, home schooling seems to fit squarely in the "partial" side. Homeschoolers do not usually seek total change in either individuals or society. Regarding locus of change, home schooling is more difficult to pigeonhole. It does not really attempt to reform the existing social structure, it creates an alternative to it. Also, the change is greater than at just the individual level. While individual parent-teachers and students are changed, a whole new community is created through home schooling networks.

Home schooling seems closest to what have been called "communal" (Kanter 1972) or "communitarian" (Zablocki 1980) social movements. These movements seek "to establish small-scale social systems to remedy [the] ills of the larger society" (Kanter 1972, p.62) and "to live according to their own value systems outside of established social institutions" (Appelbaum and Chambliss 1995, p.544). Communes and utopian socialist communities provide the clearest "total change" examples of these types of movements.

The definitive characteristic of communal movements is that they build alternatives to mainstream social institutions. It is for this reason that we refer to such movements simply as "alternative." As Rothschild-Whitt (1979, p.510) states:

Alternative institutions may be defined in terms of their members' resolve to build organizations which are parallel to, but outside of, established institutions and which fulfill social needs (for education, food, medical aid, etc.) without recourse to bureaucratic authority.

²Aberle's (1966) "alterative" movements are often misquoted as "alternative" (see Locher 2002 and Steward, Shriver, and Chasteen 2002).

Unlike reformative and transformative movements, alternative social movements are not “oppositional.” They create their own social space to defy mainstream institutions (rather than engaging in sustained, disruptive interaction with them). We believe that the alternative versus oppositional dichotomy (see Williams 1973) is an important one when considering social movements.

Most alternative social movements seek partial rather than total change. In addition to the home schooling movement (an alternative to public education), another example is the community currency movement which builds an alternative local economy (see Meeker-Lowry 1996; Collom forthcoming). Alternative social movements of the “partial change” variety are still very substantive. Flacks (1974, p.70) has argued that social movements need “to find ways to make history through everyday activity. Such activity includes countless experiments to reconstitute patterns of everyday life...” (see also Flacks 1988). Using these words, home schooling is an “everyday” social movement in which actions are “history making” as parents are influencing the conditions and terms of everyday life for their children.

Alternative social movements such as home schooling may also be considered as examples of “new social movements” since they break the boundary between politics and personal life. Major movements of the 1970s (such as the peace, environmental, feminist, gay rights, and animal rights movements) are argued to represent a new post-industrial era in which class conflict is no longer fundamental (see Crossley’s 2002 review). New social movements (“NSMs”) tend to emphasize quality of life and identity issues. “NSMs are, in part, a response to the resulting encroachment of centralized bureaucratic institutions on the life spaces of individuals and local communities” (Croteau 1995, p.25). Thus, it seems appropriate to add home schooling to the long and heterogeneous list of NSMs.

While we have defined home schooling as an alternative social movement, the contribution of this empirical research is that it purposely asks homeschoolers themselves. Only two other sociological studies have approached the social movement aspects of home schooling. Stevens’ (2001) study operates at the meso-level by focusing upon homeschoolers’ organizations. This ethnography is based on the author’s visitation to ten organizations and participation in several organization-sponsored events. Stevens documents the growth and domination of the “believers” religious-oriented social movement organizations and the decline of the “inclusives” liberal-secular social movement organizations. This research clearly illustrates how homeschoolers work collectively and are organized.

Sikkink (2001) employs national survey data to measure homeschoolers' political and protest engagement. This comparative analysis estimates the impact of six different types of school choice (home schooling, assigned public school, chosen public school, private secular school, catholic school, and other religious school) upon protest behavior. Sikkink finds that parents who home school their children are more likely to have recently participated in a protest or boycott than parents who have chosen any of the other five schooling choices. This research is also a useful backdrop as homeschoolers are most likely to exhibit the hallmark social movement activity—protest.

This article is quite different from the two previous studies. Individual-level data was gathered in order to assess the extent to which home schooling parents perceive themselves as social movement participants and to identify the factors contributing to such beliefs. Social movement hypotheses are operationalized in an effort to predict who holds these perceptions. This study has important implications surrounding home schooling itself as well as social movement theory. Will hypotheses formulated for oppositional social movements be supported in this alternative case? As described in the following section, data for this study were provided by 235 of the parent/teachers enrolling their children in a California charter school based on home schooling.

DATA AND METHODS

The Setting: Home Charter

Homeschoolers have been a difficult population to identify given their geographical dispersion and a lack of adequate sampling frames (Stevens 2001). Moreover, many homeschoolers hold alternative worldviews and are unwilling to participate in “studies” by unknown “researchers.” To compound these problems, a systematic social movement analysis of homeschoolers requires the obtaining of “sensitive” data. In short, it was quickly realized that building rapport would be a nontrivial task in this project.

Access was gained to a Southern California K-12 charter school that was founded by a group of homeschoolers.³ “Home Charter” has 551 students and is essentially an organized home schooling operation. Its educational charter identifies parents as the primary instructors. The school is used principally as a resource for home

³California was second only to Minnesota in adopting charter legislation. As of 1999, 36 states and the District of Columbia have charter laws supporting nearly 1,500 schools and over 250,000 students nationwide (RPP International 2000).

schooling advice and materials and it offers some classes (primarily scientific, computer-based and vocational) and a variety of extracurricular activities. In an effort to better understand their clientele, Home Charter's administration permitted the authors to survey the primary parent/teacher from each of the 330 families that have children enrolled at the school.⁴ An initial orientation to the study was provided to a large group of parents at a general, school-wide assembly. Numerous smaller meetings further facilitated the building of rapport.

While Home Charter may seem like an unusual organization, it has been reported that 29% of California charter schools *regularly* use home-based learning with the parent as the primary instructor (SRI International 1997). A full 15% of California charter schools rely on home-based education as the *predominant* instructional method. Moreover, as Stevens (2001) demonstrates, homeschoolers have always created support organizations and networks, making this enterprise much more collective than is commonly assumed. While we cannot guarantee that our sample represents homeschoolers as a whole, the demographic characteristics and motivational patterns of those comprising our sample closely parallel the findings cited earlier from previous studies of the population. Furthermore, our detailed survey instrument and analysis is unique, making an important contribution to an emerging literature.

The primary parent/teachers of Home Charter students are required to meet individually with an academic advisor on a monthly basis to review their home-based instruction. Consistent with the previous home schooling research (see above), the primary parent/teachers are overwhelmingly the mothers of the children. A standardized survey instrument was developed and administered to the parent/teachers at Home Charter following one of their monthly meetings. A "point-and-click" computer program was developed and the survey was administered electronically. The Home Charter academic advisors were asked to solicit survey participation from each primary parent/teacher attending one of these mandatory meetings. They agreed to vacate their cubicles (and computers) so respondents would have privacy while completing the survey.⁵ The instrument

⁴One reviewer suggested that we examine the perceptions of the children who are home schooled too. While we agree that it would be interesting to test for the association between children's and parents' attitudes, we never intended to do so and therefore lack the necessary data to conduct such an analysis.

⁵We are not aware of any response bias and many of those not participating did not decline to complete the survey. Some parents missed their scheduled monthly meeting, others were not asked to complete the survey by academic advisors who ran out of time for their conferences, and a few had technical difficulties with the computer data collection program.

was fielded from mid-November to mid-December 2000. Of Home Charter's 330 families, 235 primary parent/teachers completed the survey. This 71% response rate is higher than any other known survey of homeschoolers (Collom 2005). Also, the sample size is larger than most—less than Mayberry's (1988) 461, but equivalent with Bielick et al's (2001) 245.

Dependent Variables

Our survey contains four items to measure parents' perceptions of their participation at Home Charter. Answers to these questions indicate the extent to which these parents consider themselves participants in a broader social movement. The four survey items and their frequency distributions are reported in Table 1.

Items (a) and (b) are direct queries concerning parents' perception of movement involvement. The frequency distributions of these two questions indicate that these parents do overwhelmingly feel as if they are part of a movement. Exactly half of the sample "strongly agreed" with item (a) and another 31% agreed with the statement somewhat. Moreover, 60% of the sample believe, "to a great extent," that their activities set an example for other families. Another 35.4% agree with this "to some extent."

Items (c) and (d) are intended to tap into collectivist beliefs. Holding collective beliefs is a major indicator of social movement participation (see Klandermans 1997; Tarrow 1998). These items were constructed so that the "More A than B" response represents more individualistic beliefs, the second response is mixed, and the last ("More B than A") reflects more collectivist beliefs. On item (c), only 11.9% of the respondents hold more collective beliefs (framing their actions as benefiting all children). The responses for item (d) indicate that 17.5% of the respondents see Home Charter as a collective organization functioning as part of the charter school reform movement.

Thus, there is a divide here as respondents do see themselves as participating in a movement when asked directly. Yet only a small minority of these parents hold collectivist beliefs as measured by items (c) and (d). It will be particularly interesting to see if the independent variables have similar effects upon these measures.

Frequency distributions for items (a) and (b) are clearly skewed. Only one respondent selected "strongly disagree" and no one chose "somewhat disagree." Therefore, these last two categories were recoded and combined with the "neither agree nor disagree" option.

Table 1. Dependent variables: frequency distributions of homeschoolers' perceptions of social movement involvement

	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Somewhat agree</i>	<i>Neither</i>	<i>Somewhat disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	Total (N)
a) I see my participation at Home Charter as an important part of a larger school reform movement	50.0% (116)	31.0% (72)	18.5% (43)	0.0% (0)	0.4% (1)	100% (232)
b) To what extent do you feel that your participation at Home Charter sets an example for how families can improve the schools?	<i>Not at all</i> 1.3% (3)	<i>Very little</i> 3.1% (7)	<i>To some extent</i> 35.4% (80)	<i>To a great extent</i> 60.2% (136)		100% (226)
c) Which of the following two statements do you agree with more: (A) I am responsible for giving my child(ren) a head-start in the competition to get ahead. (B) I am responsible for helping to create good schools from which all children can benefit	<i>More with "A" than "B"</i> 52.0% (118)	<i>"A" and "B" Equally</i> 36.1% (82)	<i>More with "B" than "A"</i> 11.9% (27)			100% (227)
d) Which of the following two statements more accurately describes your view of Home Charter? (A) It is an organizational resource for homeschoolers. (B) It is an important part of the charter school reform movement.	<i>More with "A" than "B"</i> 32.3% (74)	<i>"A" and "B" Equally</i> 50.2% (115)	<i>More with "B" than "A"</i> 17.5% (40)			100% (229)

Table 2. Factor loadings from principal components factor analysis (rotated matrix)

Perceptions of participation items	Factor	
	1	2
Item (b): participation sets example	.83	-.13
Item (a): part of larger movement	.77	.24
Item (d): charter school movement	-.10	.79
Item (c): good schools for all	.17	.63

N = 235.

In respect to setting an example, only three respondents selected “not at all,” so this category was collapsed into the “very little” one. To prepare these indicators as dependent measures and retain the sample size of 235, the few missing cases on each item were recoded with the whole number nearest the mean value.

These four items were subjected to principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation. Two factors were extracted (see Table 2). The first two items exhibit high loadings on the first factor while items (c) and (d) load highly on the second factor. Given the clear factor structure in the data, the factor scores from the rotated extraction were saved as variables using the regression method. These two scales will be treated as the dependent variables indicating self-conscious movement participation. Items (a) and (b) comprise a scale of *perception of movement involvement*. Items (c) and (d) create a scale of *collectivist beliefs* (descriptive statistics are reported in Appendix A).

Independent Variables

Our survey of these home schooling parents was designed to test several well-known hypotheses from the social movement literature. A fairly strong consensus currently exists among social movement scholars studying movement emergence (McAdam 1999). It is argued that macro-level factors such as political opportunities (see Tarrow 1998), meso-level factors such as mobilizing structures (see McCarthy and Zald 1977), and micro-meso linkage factors such as framing processes (see Snow et al. 1986) are all important in determining the how, when, and where of social movement emergence. The related, yet distinct, process of individual participation in collective action has received much less attention in the literature. Yet, as Marx and McAdam (1994) note, the two go hand in hand.

Explaining why an individual comes to participate in collective action does not suffice as an account of why a particular movement emerged when it did. By the same token, knowing what mix of factors produced a movement tells us little about the processes that led particular individuals to get involved (1994, p.86).

Within the current dominant consensus, micro-level factors are slighted (Klandermans 1997; Goodwin and Jasper 1999). Early studies of collective behavior were micro-centered (see Turner and Killian 1957; Smelser 1962; Gurr 1970), but have been rightfully criticized for arguing that individual discontent and other psychological factors represent the immediate cause of movement emergence (see McAdam 1999). Fortunately, a new social psychology of protest has emerged (McVeigh and Sikkink 2001) with a social constructionist view (see Gamson 1992; Klandermans 1997).

Reviewing the literatures surrounding determinants of individual activism, Marx and McAdam (1994) argue that there are two categories of important factors. The first contains psychological aspects or attitudes that may predispose one to participation. The second concerns the social organization of one's life and how these conditions may encourage or discourage participation. Hypotheses concerning both attitudinal and microstructural factors will be developed.⁶ Overall, five different sets of independent variables will be tested for their effects upon our dependent measures: perception of movement involvement and collectivist beliefs. These predictors include (1) attitudes about education, (2) efficacy of participation, (3) network ties, (4) enrollment motivations, and (5) parent demographics.

Attitudes are a central topic of study for scholars interested in the social psychology of social movements. Most discussions emphasize notions of "attitudinal affinity" and "sense of efficacy." It is argued that people are more likely to participate in a social movement if they believe in the *vision of change* that is advocated and if they believe in the *efficacy of participation* itself.

A strong attitudinal affinity with the goals of a movement is frequently cited as producing activism (see McAdam 1986). At a minimum, attitudes represent a "latitude of rejection" (Petty and Cacioppo 1981) as those who are unsupportive of the proposed change are highly unlikely to get involved. Those who hold positive

⁶While this literature was designed to differentiate social movement participants from nonparticipants, the assumption made here is that the dynamics determining *perceptions* of social movement participation will be similar.

attitudes comprise the recruitment pool or mobilization potential of a prospective or already existing movement (Klandermans and Oegema 1987; Oegema and Klandermans 1994).

As important as supportive attitudes are, they constitute a necessary, but not sufficient, determinant of movement participation. It is widely argued that people are more likely to protest if they believe that their actions will be efficacious (Piven and Cloward 1977; Finkel and Opp 1991; Gamson 1992; McAdam 1999; Passy and Giugni 2001). Attitudes need to be “accompanied by perceptions that collective action will be efficacious” (Finkel and Opp 1991, p.346). “Even if the value of an outcome is very high it will not motivate individuals as long as they do not believe that the outcome can be produced by their efforts” (Klandermans 1984, p.585). In short, people generally need to feel both aggrieved and optimistic before they are willing to take action (Gamson 1992; McAdam 1999; Passy and Giugni 2001).

The primary parent/teachers at Home Charter were asked three questions concerning their attitudes about education and home schooling by indicating the extent to which they agree or disagree with the following statements:

- 1) Creating more alternatives to public schools is important.
- 2) Home education builds stronger families.
- 3) The home schooling movement is uniquely contributing in preparing students to be tomorrow’s leaders.

Each of these statements taps into a core attitude about education (and home schooling particularly) and reflects an element of the Home Charter mission. Thus, they can be considered the “collective action frame” at Home Charter offering “ways of understanding that imply the need for and desirability of some form of action” (Gamson 1992, p.7; see also Klandermans 1997; Benford and Snow 2000). Responses to these items were skewed as most parents “strongly agreed” with the statements: 87.7% on item (1), 82.1% on item (2), and 79.9% on item (3). Therefore, these items were dichotomized and those who strongly agree are coded “1” while those who did not strongly agree are coded “0” (the 3 missing cases on item (1), 4 on item (2), and 7 on item (3) were assigned the modal value of “1”).

Three survey items were prepared to tap into survey respondents’ feelings of efficacy. The first concerns personal efficacy resulting from their participation. The second and third questions concern parents’ beliefs about Home Charter’s effectiveness.

- 4) My participation at the Home Charter has made me much more effective in educating my child(ren):
- 5) Do you feel that the Home Charter is a dynamic, effective organization capable of continuous improvement?
- 6) How satisfied are you with your child(ren)’s experience at Home Charter?

Item (4) had five responses choices (ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”) and 60.9% of the parents “strongly agreed” with the statement. The variable was recoded into a three-point scale—the first three response options were collapsed—given low cell counts and 4 missing cases were assigned the whole number nearest the mean value. Respondents were given “not at all,” “very little,” “to some extent,” and “to a great extent” options on items (5) and (6). 81.3% and 77.4% stated “to a great extent” on the items respectively. No one selected “not at all” on either item and the missing values (13 on [5] and four on [6]) were assigned the whole number nearest the mean.

These six attitudinal items were subjected to principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation. As expected, two factors were extracted (see Table 3). Items (4), (5), and (6) exhibit high loadings on the first factor while items (1), (2), and (3) load highly on the second factor. All of the “cross-loadings” on the opposite factor are very low. The factor scores from the rotated extraction were saved as variables using the regression method. This results in two attitudinal affinity scales: *collective action frame* and *efficacy of participation*.

The literature previously reviewed and these measures provided the basis for testing the first two hypotheses of this study:

Table 3. Factor loadings from principal components factor analysis (rotated matrix)

Attitudinal items	Factor	
	1	2
Item (f): Home Charter satisfaction	.79	.14
Item (d): more effective teacher	.74	.15
Item (e): HC efficacious organization	.72	-.05
Item (b): builds stronger families	.03	.73
Item (c): prepares future leaders	.06	.72
Item (a): alternatives important	.11	.65

N = 235.

Hypothesis 1: Those who agree with the collective action frame at Home Charter are more likely to see themselves as involved in a larger movement.

Hypothesis 2: Those with feelings of efficacy surrounding Home Charter are more likely to see themselves as involved in a larger movement.

Social network ties are also widely argued to be important preconditions for social movement participation. “Without structural factors that expose the individual to participation opportunities or pull them into activity, the individual will remain inactive” (McAdam and Paulsen 1993, p.644). Interpersonal social networks are argued to be the most important microstructural factor since they are the richest source of movement recruitment (Snow, Zurcher, and Eklund-Olson 1980; Opp and Gern 1993). In addition to structurally connecting individuals with movement opportunities, social networks also play an important socialization role (Passy and Giugni 2001). “Strong or dense interpersonal networks encourage the extension of an invitation to participate and they ease the uncertainty of mobilization” (McAdam and Paulsen 1993, p.644). Without activated networks, social movements will certainly face nonconversion—the failure to transform sympathizers (Oegema and Klandermans 1994).

Respondents were asked three questions concerning their social networks. The first two attempt to reflect networks that existed prior to joining Home Charter. The third considers current networks. The items are:

- 1) How involved were you with the home schooling community? (Not at all, Marginally involved, Somewhat involved, Greatly involved)
- 2) How many total years have you been home educating any child(ren)? (1; 2–3; 4–6; 7–9; 10+)
- 3) About how many Home Charter families would you say you are close friends with? (None; 1–2; 3–4; 5–6; 7+)

In respect to item (1), 18.3% of the respondents stated that they were “greatly involved” with the home schooling community prior to joining Home Charter (seven missing cases were recoded with the whole number nearest the mean). It will be particularly interesting to see whether the degree of previous involvement has any impact upon one’s interpretation of their participation.

About half of the parents are relatively new to home schooling. The year when the data were collected was the first year that 19.1% of the parents had home schooled and 31.9% had been home schooling for only two to three years. The seven missing cases on this item were recoded into the four to six years category since it is nearest to the mean. On item (3), 33.2% of respondents report that they are friends with “1–2” families (two missing cases were recoded into the “3–4” category which is nearest to the mean). These variables provided the data to test:

Hypothesis 3: Network ties are expected to be positively associated with perceptions of movement involvement.

The specific reasons motivating parents to enroll their children at Home Charter may also play an important role in how they interpret their participation. Drawing from the previously cited research on why people home school, 16 different enrollment motivation items were constructed and fielded. The items were presented to respondents in a random order, preceded by the following statement:

Please consider how important each of the following reasons is in your decision to take direct responsibility for your child(ren)’s education and to enroll them at Home Charter. Rate each item on a scale from one to five with “one” meaning that the reason is not important at all (or not applicable) and “five” meaning that the reason is extremely important.

These sixteen enrollment motivations were subjected to principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation.⁷ The items did cluster into the four broad categories indicated from the previous research: dissatisfaction with the public schools, academic and pedagogical concerns, religious values, and family life. This provides evidence that this sample of homeschoolers is similar to the samples drawn in the previous research. Table 4 provides the rotated matrix and the survey item wording.

Given the factor structure in the data, the factor scores from the rotated extraction were saved as variables using the regression

⁷Eight of the items had two missing values, three items had three, two items had four, two items had five, and one item had six missing values. All were recoded with the whole number nearest the mean.

Table 4. Factor loadings from principal components factor analysis (rotated matrix)

Enrollment motivation items	Factor			
	1	2	3	4
Concerned about the quality of teaching at other schools	.06	.78	-.10	.05
Concerned about the curriculum at other schools	.07	.78	.31	.10
The testing programs at other schools are inappropriate	.25	.58	.17	.16
I do not trust the government's ability to provide an adequate education	.11	.54	.34	.21
Home Charter offers resources and support for home schoolers	.78	.08	.15	.01
Home Charter's educational program is of superior quality	.80	.17	.02	.00
Home Charter's strength and focus on science education	.72	.00	.21	.11
HC is an important part of the charter school reform movement	.78	.15	.05	.08
The opportunity to give my child(ren) religious instruction	.06	.32	.68	-.16
At home during the day and want to provide guidance to child(ren)	.22	.21	.55	.21
It is not the government's responsibility to provide public education	.07	.34	.57	.12
I have always believed in the philosophy of home schooling	.17	-.11	.75	.11
The scheduling of other schools is too inflexible for my family	-.01	.06	.35	.62
My child(ren) have special learning needs that cannot be met	.01	.00	.02	.75
My child(ren) have unique abilities that would not be fostered	.10	.21	.16	.59
My child had a difficult experience at his/her previous school	.15	.23	-.34	.61

N = 235.

method. The first factor will be referred to as *attracted to Home Charter*, the second as *critical of public schools*, the third as *ideological reasons*, and the last as *family/children needs*. These various enrollment motivations are expected to have different effects on the dependent variables.

The *attracted to Home Charter* scale reflects a belief that Home Charter is an organizational alternative to the public schools. Those who came because of their attraction to this organization itself are likely to be more invested and feel like a member of this community. Therefore, this scale is hypothesized to be positively associated with the dependent variables. Criticism of public schools is a grievance. Thus, those who are more likely to have joined Home Charter for these reasons are expected to be more likely to feel as if they are part of a movement.

Parents who came to Home Charter for ideological reasons are expected to be less likely to identify themselves as movement participants. That is, embrace of these ideological views reflects a more traditional motivation for home schooling. As cited earlier, this tradition has been waning in recent years and is therefore not likely

to engender feelings of participation in a “movement.” The *family/children needs* scale is also hypothesized to be negatively associated with the dependent variables. Families that joined Home Charter for individualistic or personal reasons cannot be expected to see their involvement with this organization as participation in a movement. Thus, these items will be used to test:

Hypothesis 4: It is expected that the *attracted to Home Charter* and *critical of public schools* motivation scales will be positively related and the *ideological reasons* and *family/children needs* scales negatively related to the dependent variables.

Nine independent variables are included in the analyses as controls. Two aspects of respondents’ educational backgrounds are important to consider. The first is the educational attainment of the primary parent/teacher. This is an ordinal variable categorized as: “Did not graduate from high school,” “High school graduate,” “Attended some college,” “Earned Bachelor’s degree,” and “Earned Master’s or other graduate degree” (two missing cases were assigned to the mean/mode “some college” category). Second, respondents were asked if they had ever taught in a public or private school. A notable 29.4% responded affirmatively and were coded “1” on this dummy variable (four missing cases were coded with the mode value “0”). These educational characteristics of this sample align closely with the samples from the previous research discussed earlier.

Other standard demographics are also tested. A dummy variable for gender was created (males = “1”). As typical with homeschoolers, only 6.4% of Home Charter’s primary parent/teachers are men (see Stevens 2001). A dummy variable was also created for race (minorities = “1”). Parents were not asked to identify their own race in the survey. However, school databases were available which contained racial information for every Home Charter student. Parents who home school children whose ethnicity was coded as African American, Latino, Asian American, or “other” are considered minorities here. This coding method identifies 16.6% of the primary parent/teachers as minorities. This figure also corresponds with the previous literature indicating that 80–90% of home schooled students are white (Wagenaar 1997; Rudner 1998; Ray 1999).

Respondents were also asked to provide their birth year. This number was subtracted from 2000 and the responses were coded into six age categories: “30 or less,” “31–35,” “36–40,” “41–45,” “46–50,”

and “over 50.” The category “36–40” is nearest the mean (and three missing cases were recoded here). The primary parent/teachers were asked to select the category in which their annual household income falls (a “decline to state” option was also provided): Less than \$15,000; \$15,000–\$19,999; \$20,000–\$24,999; \$25,000–\$29,999; \$30,000–\$34,999; \$35,000–\$39,999; \$40,000–\$49,999; \$50,000–\$59,999; \$60,000–\$74,999; \$75,000–\$99,999; \$100,000 and over. Twenty-five (10.6%) respondents chose the “decline to state” option. These parents were recoded into the “\$40,000–\$49,999” category which is nearest the mean value.⁸ Marital status was also measured in the survey. As in the case of home-schoolers in general (Rudner 1998; Ray 1999), the vast majority of primary parent/teachers (93.2%) are married. A “married” dummy variable was created and those who are single, divorced, separated, or widowed are coded “0” (two missing cases were assigned the mode value of “1”). A dummy variable concerning employment was also created. Those primary parent/teachers who had some form of paid job (39.6%) were coded “1.”⁹ As indicated in earlier research (Wagenaar 1997; Rudner 1998), the majority of primary parent/teachers are not in the paid labor force.

Finally, religiosity was considered in the models given its importance in home schooling (Stevens 2001) and in social movements (McVeigh and Sikkink 2001). The following three items were measured in the survey:

- 1) To what extent do you currently incorporate religion into your home curriculum? (Not at all, Very little, To some extent, To a great extent)
- 2) Generally speaking, would you consider yourself: Very religious, Somewhat religious, A little religious, Not very religious, Decline to state
- 3) Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days? (More than once a week, Once a week, Once a month, Only on special holy days, Once or twice a year, Less often, Never or practically never, Decline to state)

⁸Dummy variables for the income categories and “decline to state” option were also constructed and tested in the models. The results of the analyses did not differ, so nothing is lost by recoding the “decline to state” people into the mean category.

⁹Surprisingly, 23 (9.8%) respondents left this item blank. It was assumed that these people were not employed and skipped the question instead of selecting “no paid job.” Thus, they were recoded as “0” in the dummy variable (which is also the mode value).

After recoding—to make the ranges consistent from low to high and to replace the missing values and “decline to state” responses with the mean values—it was found that the three items were significantly correlated. Therefore, a simple additive scale was constructed. The internal reliability of the scale is acceptable (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .642$) and does not improve if any of the items are excluded.

OLS regression models were employed to test the contributions of all of the independent variables upon one’s perception of their movement involvement. All 18 of the independent variables were entered simultaneously in two models (one for each of the dependent variables). Nested models, stepwise procedures, and separate tests for each of the four research hypotheses produced no notable differences. The control variables were consistently insignificant in all of the models tested. Not one of the nine variables has any impact upon parents’ perception of being involved in a movement. Appendix B provides the correlation matrix that indicates that none of the bivariate associations between the control variables and dependent variables are significant. The exclusion of the control variables from the models does not change the impact that the hypothesis-testing predictors have upon the dependent variables. Therefore, to keep the models parsimonious, the control variables were excluded from the final runs and are not reported.

Multicollinearity does not pose a problem in the models. The variance inflation factor for each of the predictors is small (highest is 1.65) and well within acceptable levels (less than 10; see Belsley, Kuh, and Welsch 1980). Also, the highest valued dimension from the condition index is only 7.67 (contact the authors for a copy of the collinearity diagnostics).

FINDINGS

First, it is noteworthy to again mention the noneffects of the control variables. Demographic factors are often very important predictors of social movement involvement and beliefs. The fact that they have no explanatory power for Home Charter parents suggests that demographics may not be divisive for this population. Even religiosity—a major division underlying the motivation to home school—has no impact in the models. Despite the heterogeneity of homeschoolers, they have a commonality insofar as their backgrounds do not have any impact on the way in which they interpret their participation in this activity.

Table 5 presents the findings from the regression models predicting each of the dependent variables. Five of the independent variables

Table 5. OLS coefficients from the regression of perception of movement involvement and collectivist beliefs on collective action frame, efficacy of participation, network ties, and enrollment motivations

	Movement involvement			Collectivist beliefs		
	B	(SE)	Beta	B	(SE)	Beta
Collective Action Frame	.23***	(.06)	.23	-.14 ⁺	(.07)	-.14
Efficacy of Participation	.27***	(.07)	.27	-.19*	(.08)	-.19
Home Schooling Involvement	.01	(.05)	.01	.01	(.07)	.01
Years Home Educating	-.03	(.05)	-.03	-.09	(.07)	-.11
Friends with Other Families	.09 ⁺	(.05)	.10	-.02	(.06)	-.03
Attracted to Home Charter	.33***	(.06)	.33	.20**	(.08)	.20
Critical of Public Schools	.10 ⁺	(.05)	.10	-.03	(.07)	-.03
Ideological Reasons	.02	(.06)	.02	-.01	(.07)	-.01
Family/Children Needs	.06	(.05)	.06	.04	(.07)	.04
Intercept	-.17	(.17)	—	.29	(.22)	—
R-Square		.393			.064	

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, ⁺ $p < .07$; two-tailed tests; $N = 235$.

have significant, positive effects on perception of movement involvement. First, the two attitudinal items are highly significant. Those parents who agree with the collective action frame at Home Charter and those who believe in the efficacy of their participation are more likely to feel as if they are participating in a larger movement.

Only one of the network ties indicators is significantly related to the movement involvement measure and its effect is weak. Those parents who have more friends at Home Charter are slightly more likely to perceive their involvement in a movement context. Previous home schooling experience has no significant impact upon the movement involvement scale.

Two of the enrollment motivations scales have significant effects, one very strong and one very weak. Those who are home schooling because of their attraction to Home Charter itself are more likely to feel as if they are a part of a movement. This is the strongest predictor in the model according to the Beta-weights. Also, those parents who chose this route because of their criticism of the public schools are slightly more likely to feel as if they are participating in a movement. Overall, this model is impressive as it explains about 40% of the variance in the movement involvement measure.

The next set of columns in Table 5 show the effect of the predictors upon the collectivist beliefs scale. Only three of the independent variables are significant and the effects are rather weak. While both

measures of attitudinal affinity—collective action frame and efficacy of participation—are significant, they are both *negatively* related to the collectivist beliefs measure. So, those parents who agree with the collective action frame at Home Charter and those who believe in the efficacy of their participation are less likely to hold collectivist beliefs and more likely to embrace more individualistic notions of their involvement. As in the previous model, those parents who home school because of their attraction to Home Charter are more likely to hold collectivist beliefs. This model is considerably weaker than the previous. Only about 6% of the variance in the collectivist beliefs measure is explained.

The differential effects of the collective action frame and efficacy of participation scales indicate that Hypotheses 1 and 2 receive mixed support by the models. As expected, the relationships were positive in the movement involvement measure. However, the negative associations in the collectivist beliefs model were unanticipated. Hypothesis 3 concerned network ties. Only one of the three network indicators in one of the models had any effect and it was very weak. Thus, network ties are not important in producing feelings of being involved in a larger movement among this sample of homeschoolers. Hypothesis 4 receives some support in the models. Three of the eight possible relationships are significant, all in the hypothesized direction. The attraction to Home Charter scale is the only variable that is consistent across the two models. Now the findings can be discussed more substantively.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As reported in the Data and Methods section, the univariate findings concerning the degree to which home schooling parents consider themselves social movement participants produced mixed results (see Table 1). The items comprising the perception of movement involvement scale received very strong support from our sample. These respondents do see themselves as participating in a movement when asked directly. However, few parents identified with the collectivist beliefs responses. They tend to hold more individualistic or mixed beliefs according to these results. While home schooling parents identify as part of a larger movement, they appear to place their own children first and foremost—they are the immediate beneficiaries of this action after all.

The multivariate analyses indicate that there are few consistent bases to the feelings of movement involvement among homeschoolers.

Demographic factors and network ties are consistently *insignificant* in predicting these perceptions. Despite the heterogeneity of homeschoolers and this sample, they have a commonality insofar as their backgrounds do not have any impact on the way in which they interpret their involvement in this activity. Participation in this movement may have some type of equalizing effect. Homeschoolers are divided by their motivations and beliefs, yet it does not appear that they are divided by their personal, demographic characteristics.

Nor are these homeschoolers divided by their degree of network ties. Those with few ties are no less likely to feel part of the movement than those with many. Is this a peculiarity of home schooling or does the social movement literature provide any suggestions for interpreting this finding? One possibility lies within work that characterizes the type of activism in which individuals engage within social movements. Home schooling is a tremendous responsibility for parents to assume. It may be considered as “high-risk” or “high-cost” activism given the stakes involved. In his model of movement recruitment, McAdam (1986, p.69) proposes that network ties have no direct effect upon high-risk activism, only on “low-risk” activism. Could this help to explain the lack of network effects found here?¹⁰ If network ties are not so directly relevant in high-risk activism, it may be that they are not determinative of who feels “in” this movement either. There are numerous possibilities, so we can only speculate here. Social network ties are critical for *all* social movements. However, their impact most certainly varies widely and in this particular case, they do not determine homeschoolers’ perceptions of movement involvement.

A consistent foundation of the perceptions of home educating parents was found. One of the enrollment motivations had uniform effects and was the strongest determinant in both models. Those who are attracted to the Home Charter organization itself are more likely to feel as if they are part of a larger movement and to hold collectivist beliefs. These parents view Home Charter as an organization that can effectively help them resolve their academic and pedagogical concerns. This finding is quite sensible as “pedagogues” were the originators of this movement back in the 1960s. It is likely that parents are knowledgeable about the history of the movement and this particular

¹⁰McAdam (1986) argues that network ties initially push people into low-risk activism and “each succeeding foray into safe forms of activism increases the recruit’s . . . commitment to an activist identity, as well as his receptivity to more costly forms of participation” (1986, p.70). In the case of home schooling, it may be that network ties are important for getting parents into low-risk activism (such as contacting school officials and speaking at public board meetings) that eventually influences their decision to home school (the high-risk activity).

set of homeschoolers may see themselves as continuing to “carry the torch.”

The differential effects of the attitudinal predictors were unexpected. As hypothesized, the collective action frame and feelings of efficacy measures had positive effects in the first model. However, they both had a significant negative impact upon the collectivist beliefs scale. Thus, rather than a general discussion, both models will be considered in detail separately.

The first dependent variable concerned perceptions of being involved in a larger movement. In this model, factors related to the charter school itself are particularly important. Believing in the efficacy of Home Charter and the initial attraction to the school itself are most determinative of one feeling as if they are in a larger movement. Also, recall that neither of the previous home schooling experience variables is significant. While its effect is weak, it is only current friendships at the charter school that contribute to the movement sentiment.

Home Charter is, in effect, a “social movement organization” (see McCarthy and Zald 1977). It appears that as parents become more integrated into the organization, they are more likely to feel as if they are part of a larger movement. Adoption of Home Charter’s collective action frame, feelings about Home Charter’s efficacy, and establishment of friendships with Home Charter families are each clearly shaped by interaction with and within this particular organization. Because of its limitations, this cross-sectional data cannot do justice to the complexities of the motivations behind *initial* action and ideological transformation emerging from organizational *involvement* (see Pierce and Converse 1990). Nonetheless, the fact that previous experience and demographics do not play a role here does highlight the critical importance of the social movement organization itself. This suggests, quite sensibly, that homeschoolers without organizational affiliation and those who are less integrated into their support groups are less likely to feel as if they are part of a social movement. In future research, it would be particularly interesting to explicitly test this implication with a sample that has a greater range of organizational involvement than our present data offers.

The puzzling results of the second model surround the negative effects of the attitudinal items. Why would those who agree with the collective action frame at Home Charter and those who believe in the efficacy of their participation be more likely to hold more individualistic beliefs surrounding their home schooling? Previous research clearly argues that movement participants will adopt more collectivist orientations (see Klandermans 1997; Tarrow 1998). Those

who have greater attitudinal affinity with Home Charter may be more committed to their own children or perhaps they have simply “bought” into the organization and therefore place their children first and foremost (a message reinforced by Home Charter). These parents believe in the organization and its goals and adopt more narrow interpretations, putting their children first. Yet at the same time, these same attitudinal factors contribute to feeling as if one is part of a movement. Perhaps these findings reflect a peculiarity of homeschoolers. As Stevens’ (2001) study demonstrated, homeschoolers are simultaneously engaged in very individualistic (teaching their own children at home) and collectivist (creating and joining support organizations and networks) environments. Further research is certainly needed and again, it would be interesting to investigate a more comparative sample containing parents that have varying degrees of organizational involvement.

The premise of this study is that home schooling is an alternative social movement. The extent to which home schooling parents perceive themselves as social movement participants was estimated with original survey data. Micro and meso theories of social movement participation were operationalized in an effort to identify the factors that lead homeschoolers to perceive their activities as part of a larger movement. The importance of organizational affiliation and integration at Home Charter suggests that homeschoolers without affiliations and those who are less integrated into their support organizations are not likely to feel as if they are part of a larger movement. Organizational integration—specifically attitudinal affinity—also appears to make parents become more narrowly focused upon their own children rather than the welfare of all children.

Being the first of its kind, this study is an important one as it contributes to a better understanding of the dynamics and nature of the growing home schooling movement. While the findings should be treated as preliminary, it is our hope that they will enhance the dialogue surrounding this controversial subject. This research also serves as a test case for social movement theory. The rich body of existing theoretical work was formulated primarily vis-à-vis oppositional social movements. The findings from this study suggest that existing social movement theory is also applicable to home schooling, an alternative social movement. However, one noticeable deviation surrounds the non-effects of social network ties found here. It is unfortunate that social movement scholars have largely neglected alternative movements. While these “movement participants” rarely make the headlines, they often manage to become truly empowered by reconstructing the terms of everyday life.

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Appendix A. Descriptive statistics

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. dev.
Movement involvement	-3.04	1.32	.00	1.00
Collectivist beliefs	-1.84	2.49	.00	1.00
Collective action frame	-3.19	1.14	.00	1.00
Efficacy of participation	-4.40	1.07	.00	1.00
Attracted to home charter	-3.95	1.53	.00	1.00
Critical of public schools	-3.93	1.82	.00	1.00
Ideological reasons	-3.42	2.61	.00	1.00
Family/children needs	-2.01	2.59	.00	1.00
Home schooling involvement	1.00	4.00	2.17	1.15
Years home educating	1.00	5.00	2.64	1.22
Friends with other families	1.00	5.00	2.56	1.16
Educational attainment	1.00	5.00	3.08	.84
Previously taught	.00	1.00	.29	.46
Male	.00	1.00	.06	.24
Minority	.00	1.00	.17	.37
Age	1.00	6.00	3.40	1.34
Household income	1.00	11.00	7.07	2.28
Married	.00	1.00	.93	.25
Employed	.00	1.00	.40	.49
Religiosity scale	.00	5.00	3.93	1.29

N = 235.

Appendix B. Correlation matrix

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)	(20)
(1) Movement involvement	1.00																			
(2) Collectivist beliefs	.00	1.00																		
(3) Collective action frame	.29	-.13	1.00																	
(4) Efficacy of participation	.46	-.04	.00	1.00																
(5) Attracted to home charter	.52	.10	.15	.56	1.00															
(6) Critical of public schools	.12	-.02	.05	.00	.00	1.00														
(7) Ideological reasons	.08	-.09	.37	-.10	.00	.00	1.00													
(8) Family/children needs	.06	.03	.03	.00	.00	.00	.00	1.00												
(9) Home schooling involvement	-.02	-.06	.18	-.21	-.07	-.05	.32	-.07	1.00											
(10) Years home educating	-.11	-.12	.15	-.28	-.19	-.18	.36	.07	.52	1.00										
(11) Friends with other families	.07	-.08	.06	-.03	-.09	.06	.16	-.06	.20	.23	1.00									
(12) Educational attainment	-.04	-.06	-.12	-.03	.01	-.17	-.10	.06	.04	.08	-.15	1.00								
(13) Previously taught	-.08	.02	-.10	-.11	-.03	-.10	-.06	-.20	.00	.02	.04	.31	1.00							
(14) Male	.03	.00	.01	.01	.07	-.01	.05	.06	.04	-.01	-.04	.14	-.02	1.00						
(15) Minority	.11	-.05	.07	.01	-.03	.17	.17	-.05	.16	.06	.17	-.11	-.06	-.02	1.00					
(16) Age	.00	.05	-.05	.00	.13	-.09	-.01	.10	.06	.23	.02	.21	.07	.10	-.13	1.00				
(17) Household income	.00	.07	.00	-.01	-.01	-.01	.01	-.15	-.01	.01	.05	.12	.04	-.04	-.07	.07	1.00			
(18) Married	-.09	.01	.06	-.04	-.06	-.03	.06	-.10	-.08	.00	-.03	-.04	-.12	.07	-.11	-.08	.38	1.00		
(19) Employed	-.04	.15	-.17	-.04	.03	-.11	-.27	.02	-.08	-.10	-.08	.25	.22	.18	-.10	.07	.00	-.09	1.00	
(20) Religiosity scale	-.02	-.05	.12	-.09	-.16	.03	.36	-.21	.19	.14	.18	-.10	.03	-.04	.13	-.01	.07	-.05	-.22	1.00

N = 235.