

Anti-Homeschooling Harvard Prof Doubles Down: ‘Right-Wing Christian Conservatives’ Became ‘Dominant’ and ‘Took Over’

[Dr. Susan Berry](#) 19 May 2020, 1,768

Harvard law professor Elizabeth Bartholet [doubled](#) down Friday on her attacks against homeschooling, underscoring further her view that homeschooling parents are primarily “right-wing Christian conservatives” who may be abusing their children.

In an interview with the *Harvard Gazette*, Bartholet continued her [call](#) for a “presumptive ban” on homeschooling, this time further describing what she views as a form of education dominated by Christian conservative parents who engage in “maltreatment” of their children.

“Over the past decades, right-wing Christian conservatives became the dominant group in terms of numbers, and they completely took over in terms of political activism,” Bartholet stated. “Their power has to do with their ideological fervor, their tactics, and the absence of any significant organized opposition. Many academics and the biggest teachers’ unions in the country have found homeschooling deeply problematic.”

Bartholet had been [scheduled](#) in June to present to an invited-only audience her call for a vast injection of state control over what she describes as the “unregulated regime” of homeschooling.

Harvard Law School postponed the conference, however, stating the reason as “COVID-19.”

The summit was to have [gathered](#) various education policy and child welfare advocates “to discuss child rights in connection with homeschooling in the United States.”

The focus of the conference had been “problems of educational deprivation and child maltreatment that too often occur under the guise of homeschooling, in a legal environment of minimal or no oversight.”

Bartholet created a firestorm in April when *Harvard Magazine* [published](#) an interview about her *Arizona Law Review* paper, titled “Homeschooling: Parent Rights Absolutism vs. Child Rights to Education & Protection,” in which she lamented the freedom associated with homeschooling and the fact that “parents can now keep their children at home in the name of homeschooling free from any real scrutiny as to whether or how they are educating their children.”

Bartholet provided the *Gazette* with her own history of homeschooling in America:

Behind the rapid growth of the homeschooling movement is the growth in the conservative evangelical movement. Conservative Christians wanted the chance to bring their children up with their values and belief systems and saw homeschooling as a way to escape from the secular education in public schools. They had fought the battle with public school systems to have their children exempted from exposure to alternative values in the schools and lost. When they started withdrawing their children for homeschooling, this propelled expansion of the homeschooling movement.

Many homeschooling experts, however, say her research about homeschooling is shoddy and not at all current, in particular her assertion that Christian parents homeschool primarily to instill their “values and belief systems” in their children.

A 2017 report by William Heuer and William Donovan at the Boston-based Pioneer Institute [noted](#) that, in 2012, only 17 percent of homeschooling families cited religious instruction as the predominant motivation for choosing that option.

“Environment in schools’ had become the predominant reason for 25 percent of homeschoolers, and 91 percent listed it as one of the reasons that was important to them,” the researchers reported.

To Bartholet’s assertion that she has “evidence that there is a strong connection between homeschooling and maltreatment,” Kerry McDonald, senior education fellow at Foundation for Economic Education (FEE) [wrote](#) she agrees wholeheartedly that children need to be protected from abuse.

McDonald observed, however, that one of the many reasons parents choose to homeschool is to do just that – to protect their children from rampant bullying that exists in government schools and abuse by teachers and administrators:

I agree with Bartholet when she says in the article: “I think it’s always dangerous to put powerful people in charge of the powerless, and to give the powerful ones total authority.” She is concerned with families having this power, while I worry about giving that power to government.

“Other dangers” of homeschooling, said Bartholet, “are that children are simply not learning basic academic skills or learning about the most basic democratic values of our society.”

The allegation that homeschoolers are lacking in civic knowledge and the means to contribute to “democratic society” is perhaps best addressed by the 2018 results of the Nation’s Report Card, released by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), that [showed](#) only 15 percent of eighth graders in mostly public schools in the U.S. are at or above the proficiency level in U.S. History, with only 24 percent at or above proficiency in civics.

In addition, a Pioneer Institute study released in April [revealed](#) a historic drop in national reading and math scores among U.S. students since the adoption of the Obama-era Common Core standards a decade ago “Nearly a decade after states adopted Common Core, the empirical evidence makes it clear that these national standards have yielded underwhelming results for students,” [said](#) Pioneer executive director Jim Stergios in a statement. “The proponents of this expensive, legally questionable policy initiative have much to answer for.”



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The risk to children is NOT from homeschooling. The risk is from radical leftist scholars seeking to impose THEIR values on OUR children. [harvardmagazine.com/2020/05/right-...](https://www.harvardmagazine.com/2020/05/right-...)



The Risks of Homeschooling

Elizabeth Bartholet highlights risks when parents have 24/7 authoritarian control over their children.

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Bartholet continued that many homeschooling parents are raising their children to be racist and sexist.

“Many homeschooling parents are extreme ideologues, committed to raising their children within their belief systems isolated from any societal influence,” she said. “Some believe that black people are inferior to white people and others that women should be subject to men and not educated for careers but instead raised to serve their fathers first and then their husbands.”

However, Bartholet’s views about the homeschooling population once again appear, at best, uninformed.

The 2017 Pioneer study’s authors found “large increases in black and Hispanic homeschoolers,” as well as “data indicating an increasing number of Jewish and Muslim homeschoolers in the past 15 years.”

Additionally, a new RealClear Opinion Research poll [released](#) last week found 40 percent of families surveyed during the coronavirus crisis said they are more likely to choose to homeschool their children or engage in virtual learning once the pandemic subsides.

With political party as a factor, 45.7 percent of those parents who said they would be “more likely” to homeschool identified as Democrat, while 42.3 percent identified as Republican.

Among those parents who said they were “more likely” to homeschool, 36.3 percent were white, 50.4 percent were black, 38.2 percent were Hispanic, and 53.8 percent were Asian.

In response to Bartholet’s rant against homeschooling, the Thomas More College of Liberal Arts [held](#) a virtual conference last week titled, “Who Owns Your Children? Home Education in an Authoritarian Age.”

Keynote speaker Professor Robert George of Princeton University observed that, as a result of knowing and teaching many homeschoolers, he views homeschooling parents as encouraging their children’s critical-thinking skills.

“I see more willingness among homeschool parents to let their children raise questions that challenge their parents’ beliefs than I do on many college campuses where very few ... seem to be willing to tolerate students or faculty members expressing dissent from ... doctrines that are held as sacred,” he said.

“Actually, if I’m looking for violations of free speech or freedom of thought, I wouldn’t think to look at the homeschool movement so much as I want to look at the Yale campus or the Oberlin campus or one of the University of California campuses,” George added. “There’s where I see the real concerns about free speech and authoritarianism.”

Source:

[Breitbart](#)