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**Dancing to the Music of Your Heart:
Home Schooling the School-Resistant Child**

A Constructionist Account of School Refusal

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in Education, The University of Auckland, 2006.

ABSTRACT

School resistance is usually understood as a pathological behaviour or condition indicative of underlying mental disorder for which therapy is ‘indicated’ and home schooling is ‘contraindicated’. However, I argue that the psychiatric/psychological classifications commonly used to identify school resistance (i.e. ‘school phobia’ and ‘school refusal’) are socio-historical constructs that function to socially and discursively position school-resistant children as ‘abnormal’, ‘irrational’, ‘dysfunctional’ and ‘sick’ individuals whose problems are likely to be compounded by school withdrawal. Assuming that school resistance and home schooling can be constructed in multiple and competing ways, I explore the perspectives of seven school-resistant children who are being (or have been) home schooled, their mothers, and nine practitioners working with children. I argue that by applying a different set of assumptions to school resistance, the meaning of this phenomenon can be radically transformed and so too can the experiences of school resisters and their families. This research suggests that for some mothers and their school-resistant children, home schooling can provide an acceptable and effective solution to the problems raised by school resistance.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the children/teenagers, mothers and practitioners who participated in this research for sharing their time, thoughts, experiences and enthusiasm with me.

I would also like to thank my supervisors Alison Jones and Peter Roberts for their encouragement, guidance and support over the last four years.

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