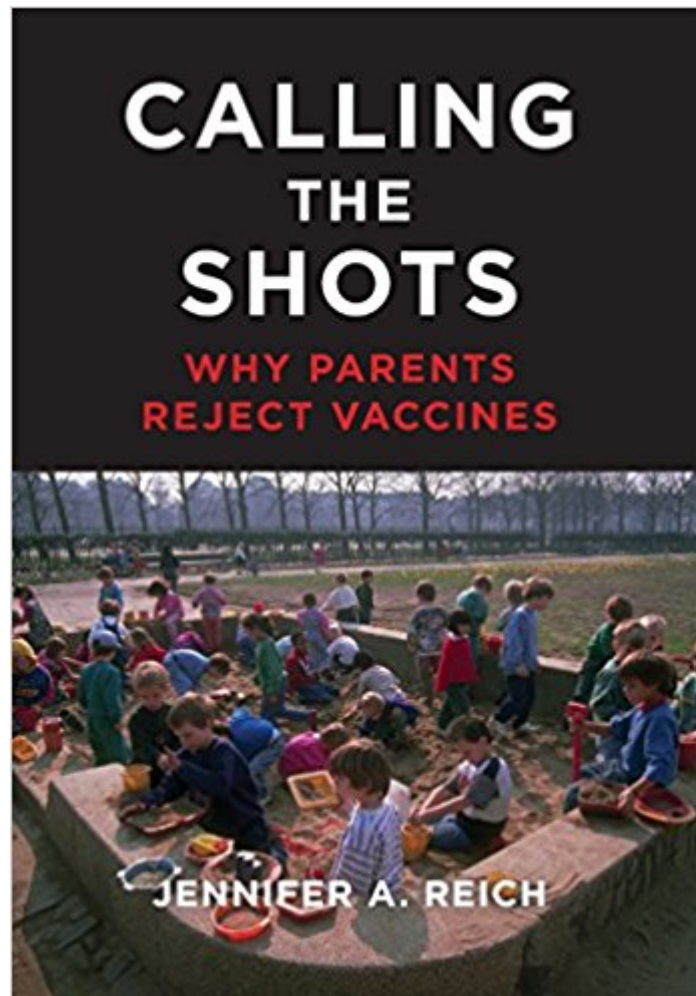




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# Calling The Shots: Why Parents Reject Vaccines



## Synopsis

Honorable Mention, 2017 ESS Mirra Komarovsky Book Award presented by the Eastern Sociological Society  
Outstanding Book Award for the Section on Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity presented by the American Sociological Association  
A rich, multi-faceted examination into the attitudes and beliefs of parents who choose not to immunize their children  
The measles outbreak at Disneyland in December 2014 spread to a half-dozen U.S. states and sickened 147 people.  
It is just one recent incident that the medical community blames on the nation's falling vaccination rates.  
Still, many parents continue to claim that the risks that vaccines pose to their children are far greater than their benefits.  
Given the research and the unanimity of opinion within the medical community, many ask how such parents—who are most likely to be white, college educated, and with a family income over \$75,000—could hold such beliefs. For over a decade, Jennifer Reich has been studying the phenomenon of vaccine refusal from the perspectives of parents who distrust vaccines and the corporations that make them, as well as the health care providers and policy makers who see them as essential to ensuring community health.  
Reich reveals how parents who opt out of vaccinations see their decision: what they fear, what they hope to control, and what they believe is in their child's best interest.  
Based on interviews with parents who fully reject vaccines as well as those who believe in a slower pace or altering the number of and time between vaccinations, the author provides a fascinating account of these parents' points of view. Placing these stories in dialogue with those of pediatricians who see the devastation that can be caused by vaccine-preventable diseases and the policy makers who aim to create healthy communities, *Calling the Shots* offers a unique opportunity to understand the points of disagreement on what is best for children, communities, and public health, and the ways in which we can bridge these differences.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Risk is one of the operative words central to sociologist Jennifer Reich’s remarkably calm book on current vaccination practices in North America. Risk is what parents, paediatricians and policymakers must evaluate in their roles as caregivers, primary-care doctors and advisers” | The group of parents Reich interviewed over a 10-year period that has informed this book are the university-educated ubermoms who favour organic food and have a tendency to avoid gluten and dairy products” | The doctors Reich interviewed recognise that some vaccination is better than none and that being patronising, bossy or confrontational is not in the best interest of the child or the wider community. It is a stance Reich shares.” -Times Higher Education

“In this gripping book, Reich illuminates the processes through which (mostly affluent) parents reject vaccines. The book impressively situates these anti-vaccine parents in a broader context. Reich carefully documents how a range of organizations – including medical offices, drug companies, and child protective services – are all players in this social drama. Reich’s concept of “individualistic parenting” is valuable. Since parents’ decisions can have dire consequences for other children, the book is not only interesting, but it is of enormous social significance. Highly recommended!” -Annette Lareau, author of *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*

“Recent outbreaks of preventable diseases such as measles and whooping cough are focusing attention on this issue, making Reich’s able contribution especially pertinent.” -Kirkus Reviews

“Calling the Shots treads confidently into the explosive terrain of vaccine refusal. In this must-read exploration of the burdens of modern mothering, Reich takes seriously the desires of mothers to make their own decisions to protect their children from risks. But she also shows how anti-vaccine stances by the privileged few may undermine the social compact and threaten the public good. This is a well-written, important, and very timely book.” -Steven Epstein, author of *Inclusion: The Politics of Difference in Medical Research*

“Calling the Shots is intellectually rigorous and politically engaged scholarship of the highest quality. Jennifer Reich illuminates the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors surrounding childhood immunization, one of the most important and contested public health policy issues of our day. Debates about vaccine refusal have too often been marked by over-simplification and unfounded assumptions, and Reich’s thorough, meticulous analysis provides a much-needed corrective.” -James Colgrove, author of *State of Immunity: The Politics of Vaccination* in

## Twentieth-Century America

Jennifer Reich is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Colorado, Denver. Her publications include the award-winning book *Fixing Families: Parents, Power, and the Child Welfare System*.

Ever wonder why some parents decide not to vaccinate their children, despite broad scientific consensus that vaccines are safe and essential for public health? In clear and accessible prose, Jennifer Reich provides a sharp, yet empathetic analysis of why "anti-vaxxers" make these seemingly illogical decisions. Each chapter introduces us to a new facet of this debate: safety, risk, expertise, trust, and ideas about what makes a good parent all play an important role. Of particular interest are Reich's chapter on the history of vaccination, which sheds much-needed light on the power of the state to make decisions about citizens' bodily integrity, as well as her conclusion, which provides suggestions for improving vaccination rates.

it was for my daughter; she's satisfied but she says it's just OK

I've been eager to have resources like this one in order to, when asked, engage wisely in conversations with young parents. This book provides information on both sides of the issues of the full course of vaccinations, a partial course of vaccinations, or no vaccinations.

As deep as it is impactful, Reich's *Calling The Shots* is a must-read book for people on all sides of the vaccination debate. With a great deal of empathy, Reich takes a measured approach to understanding the values and strategies behind parents' decisions to not vaccinate their children, or to alter their vaccination schedules, but then also broadens the scope to give readers a grip on the wider political and medical climate that shapes those seemingly individualistic decisions. The issue of vaccines, we learn, sits at the intersection between our individual rights and the collective responsibilities to the public good; a sensitive contact point between our ideas of the self and our society. Each chapter introduces readers to people who are on all ends of the debate, giving voice to everyday folks (not just celebrities like Jenny McCarthy) to shed new light on issues of risk, safety, expertise, professions, the medical industry, and even the very concept of 'nature' in childrearing. We learn about how Paula sees vaccine schedules as not matching with what she perceives as her family's unique combination of risk factors, how Katie aims to manage her child's risks rather than

vaccination, and how Margaret sees vaccines as 'unnatural' and a risk unto themselves. We hear from anti-vaccine chiropractors and from health care professionals who meet with concerned parents on a daily basis. Regardless of one's prejudices and opinions, reading this book will enlighten. Detailed and lively, *Calling The Shots* will surely improve the national debate on this absolutely critical issue. Bravo!

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