

Eight Kids and Two Book Deals:
Biblical Womanhood Blog Networks, Entrepreneurship, and Gender

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A woman in a Victorian gown sits at the top of the Ladies Against Feminism web page, reading a book and presumably pondering feminism; the website's description reads, "since 2002, LAF has refuted the follies of feminism and promoted a strong, intelligent, biblical view of womanhood."¹ LAF is one of a surprisingly large segment of the blogosphere: Biblical Womanhood blogs, which promote a vision of womanhood based on traditional gender roles. These bloggers are primarily wives and mothers, almost exclusively homeschooling their children, and theologically conservative. However, many of them are also highly business-oriented; their blogs are monetized, through advertisements, selling products, and consulting businesses. Examining how these business connections fit within the broader network of Biblical Womanhood blog gives interesting insight into how Biblical Womanhood bloggers create and maintain their gendered identities online.

Research on blogs has examined their role as a place for creating and maintaining community and individual identity. Antonio Garcia Gomez describes blogs as spaces where writers "discursively construct the self," through not only their own writing but interaction with readers and commenters.² There are two primary genres of blogs: personal blogs contain diary-like reflections on the life, thoughts and feelings of the writer, and filter blogs link to and comment on other online content.³ Biblical Womanhood blogs occupy a unique position between these genres. While their content is often very personal, describing family and spiritual life, their blogs often contain significant social and political commentary, along with links to and commentary on posts by other Biblical Womanhood writers. This kind of frequent linking and

1 Jennie Chancey, Ladies Against Feminism, <http://www.ladiesagainstofeminism.com/>, (accessed 4 April 2013).

2 Antonio García Gómez, "Competing narratives, gender and threaded identity in cyberspace," *Journal Of Gender Studies* 19, no. 1 (March 2010), *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed 19 March 2013), p. 29.

3 Lena Karlsson, "Desperately Seeking Sameness," *Feminist Media Studies* 7, no. 2 (June 2007), *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 19, 2013). p. 138.

commenting lead Aaron Barlow to describe blogs as "fast-moving, densely cross-referential pamphleteering," allowing for collaborative development of ideas about everything from personal theology to favorite recipes.⁴ Personal blogs are often stereotyped as being shallow or inconsequential; they can have the somewhat uncomfortable feeling of a peek into someone's diary, "[featuring] the following suspect traits: it is deeply personal, emotion-laden, and thrives on readerly attachment."⁵ These traits tend to be gendered feminine, while the more detached style of filter blogs is more masculine; however, studies of blog linguistics have shown that female bloggers can and do employ both styles.⁶ Biblical Womanhood bloggers do this in order to maintain an authoritative position while coming across as feminine. Karlsson explains that readers choose to read blogs whose authors have similar lives to their own, allowing them to identify with the life of the blogger.⁷ As a result, blogs tend to preach to the choir; audiences have the choice of literally thousands of blogs, leaving writers with a difficult time attracting readers who are not already interested and inclined to agree with them.⁸ However, though blogs do not necessarily address weighty topics or attract diverse audiences, they provide a valuable window into the lives and mentalities of their writers and the communities which develop around them.

Blogs have been adapted by both religious organizations and religious individuals.

Barlow describes the Christian blogosphere as "nothing less than inspiring and awe-opening in both its extent and its depth."⁹ He describes the community as "based less on external agreement

4 Aaron Barlow, *Blogging America: The New Public Sphere*, (Westport: Praeger, 2008), p. 51

5 Karlsson, "Desperately Seeking Sameness," p. 139.

6 Susan C. Herring, and John C. Paolillo, "Gender and genre variation in weblogs," *Journal Of Sociolinguistics* 10, no. 4 (September 2006), *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed 19 March 2013), p. 452.

7 Karlsson, p. 148.

8 Barlow, *Blogging America*, p. 62.

9 Barlow, p. 138.

than on recognition of personal revelation;” in the case of Biblical Womanhood, this revelation is the importance of motherhood and of traditional gender roles to their understanding of God’s will.¹⁰ Barlow’s observations on Christian blogging hold true for the somewhat narrower world of Biblical Womanhood blogging. He lists growth and community as the two primary goals of Christian bloggers; spiritual growth through reading and writing about their faith, and community with similarly-minded bloggers. The homeschooling community has made particular use of blogs, exchanging both information about curricula, ideological justifications for homeschooling, and emotional support.¹¹ Barlow notes that churches and organizations, in addition to individuals, have attempted to create community through blogs; however, they have had no serious success in Biblical Womanhood blogs. While some have editorial oversight by a male pastor, father or husband, in order to follow the biblical injunction against women teaching, few have strong organizational ties or speak for any formal denomination. The nearest thing to a formal organization is a small number of group blogs such as True Woman, which is affiliated with a conference, and (in)Courage, which is sponsored by Dayspring, the Christian subsidiary of Hallmark Cards. Perhaps even less than Christian blogs generally, Biblical Womanhood blogs lack organizational affiliations.

Participation is a key feature of blogging. Most authors allow comments on their posts; in addition, the most active blogs often include blogrolls, links to other blogs with similar topics. Bloggers often return the favor by linking back to websites which link to them, creating networks of blogs with related content.¹² On the other hand, one study found that three-fourths of blogs had no outbound links.¹³ This was not the case in the Biblical Womanhood blogosphere; though

¹⁰ Barlow, p. 138.

¹¹ Barlow, p. 153.

¹² Barlow, p. 72.

¹³ Barlow, p. 72.

several blogs had no outbound links, the vast majority had at least one. This could be a consequence of sampling methods; the blogs in this study were found by following links, so socially isolated blogs might be less likely to have inbound links leading to them. However, the nature of the Biblical Womanhood blogging community lends itself to heavy linking. For example, many blogs practice weekly link-ups, posts which allow users to contribute an image linking back to a post on their own blog. Raising Homemakers, a group blog, hosts a weekly “Homemaking Link-Up,” inviting posts “about homemaking, whether it be about cleaning, character, cooking, etc.,” which attracts more than 150 posts most weeks.¹⁴ Prominent bloggers also often contribute posts to one or more group blogs, directing traffic from their own blog to those of other contributing writers and from the group blog to their own. Biblical womanhood blogs create a sense of group identity through linking, commentary on others’ content, and interactions with commenters on their own blogs, in addition to providing a space for constructing the author’s own identity through individual content.

Biblical Womanhood blogs display both religious and gender identity. Beginning with Mary Pride’s book *The Way Home: Beyond Feminism, Back to Reality*, some evangelical Christians responded to second-wave feminism by developing a theology around essentialist traditional gender roles. This theology is often referred to as “complementarian,” or patriarchal, to distinguish it from gender egalitarianism; men and women are seen to complement each other, rather than being equals.¹⁵ The view is a relatively recent one: Pride’s book, which emphasizes God’s different intentions for men and women and accuses feminism of manipulating women

14 Emily Rose Brookshire et. al, “Homemaking Link-Up,” Raising Homemakers, <http://raisinghomemakers.com/category/homemaking-link-up/> (accessed 4 April 2013).

15 Alan G. Padgett, "The Bible and Gender Troubles: American Evangelicals Debate Scripture and Submission," *Dialog: A Journal Of Theology* 47, no. 1 (Spring 2008), *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed 20 March 2013), p. 23.

away from God's will, was published in 1985; the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW), one of the major theological organizations promoting complementarianism, was founded in 1987.¹⁶ Biblical Womanhood bloggers describe their embrace of traditional gender roles as a rebellion against mainstream culture, which they understand to be entirely feminist. "We are created equal, and we have different roles. Our world's system does not hand out awards for loving our husbands and children, caring for our homes, offering hospitality, being caregivers, or showing kindness and acts of mercy as we are called to," writes Marci Ferrell of Visionary Womanhood, expressing the common belief that women's work in the home has been entirely devalued by feminism.¹⁷ Complementarian understandings of gender often emphasize female submissive to husbands and fathers; John Piper, of CBMW, argues that men are naturally inclined to leadership, while women have "a freeing disposition to affirm, receive, and nurture strength and leadership from worthy men."¹⁸ However, though proponents of patriarchal families use similar language, there is some nuance within the theology, particularly around the topic of submission.¹⁹ Submission can serve as an ideological litmus test for Biblical Womanhood blogs; more theologically mainstream blogs will mention it less often than conservative, often Reform blogs. For example, In the Nursery of the Nation discourages readers from reading the blog "If you haven't met your husband's needs-- whatever they are" or "If you are struggling with submission to your husband."²⁰ Sarah Mae, a

16 Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood "Our History," Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, <http://cbmw.org/history/> (accessed 25 March 2013).

17 Marci Ferrell, "The History of Feminism," Visionary Womanhood, posted 22 March 2012, <http://www.visionarywomanhood.com/feminism-undelivered-promise/> (accessed 4 April 2013).

18 Kathryn Joyce, *Quiverfull: Inside the Christian Patriarchy Movement*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009), p. 16.

19 John P. Bartkowski, "Debating patriarchy: discursive disputes over spousal authority among evangelical family commentators," *Journal For The Scientific Study Of Religion* 36, (September 1997), *OmniFile Full Text Mega* (H.W. Wilson), EBSCOhost (accessed 30 April 2013), p. 397.

20 Bambi Moore, "Why You Shouldn't Read This Blog," In the Nursery of the Nation, <http://www.nurseryofthenation.com/p/why-you-shouldnt-read-this-blog.html> (accessed 4 April 2013).

more mainline blog, never explicitly uses language of submission to describe her relationship with her husband, which has created controversy among more conservative commenters.²¹

Though they vary on the extent to which they require wifely submission, Biblical Womanhood blogs share a conviction in the innate difference between men and women and in the unique value of women's roles as wives and mothers.

Complementarianism's emphasis on femininity, submission, and the centrality of the home puts Biblical Womanhood bloggers in a somewhat awkward position relative to mainstream society. Many (though by no means all) of these writers are college-educated women with past jobs outside the home, and all have been influenced by (and disillusioned with) second-wave feminism. Mary Pride, mother of Biblical womanhood, emphasizes her extensive engineering education and work history as an illustration of how far feminism pulls women from their appropriate roles. While they may not relate to feminism's demand for workplace equality, many Biblical womanhood bloggers react on their blogs to the idea that housework is unfulfilling, either to deny that this is the case or to admit that they sometimes find it so.

Desperate, a recent book by two Biblical Womanhood bloggers, echoes a common sentiment about motherhood: "It's overwhelming, tiring, confusing, and often times, *lonely*."²² (The solution is mentoring friendships between women, remembering that your children are a gift from God, and then writing a book about it.) Kelly Crawford, blogger at Raising Homemakers and author of *When Motherhood Feels Too Hard*, writes: "to keep from losing it all together, I have to die daily. I have to crucify my flesh every day. It's painful. But it's what we're called to

21 Sarah Mae, "How Not Giving My Husband Authority Over Who I Am Makes Our Marriage Better," Sarah Mae, posted February 20, 2013, <http://sarahmae.com/2013/02/how-not-giving-my-husband-authority-over-me-makes-our-marriage-better/> (accessed 4 April 2013).

22 Sarah Mae and Sally Clarkson, "About," DesperateMom.com, <http://desperatemom.com/about/> (accessed 4 April 2013).

do.”²³ These kinds of books and posts have even drawn criticism for not maintaining an appropriately biblical attitude towards motherhood; Bambi Moore, also of *Raising Homemakers*, wrote not long after Kelly’s post that: “In an effort to “be real” (honestly, sometimes I get so weary of that phrase) and try to identify with others, we neglect to speak or write truth. ... **It is sin** to perpetually stay in a place of motherhood where you are joyless.” [emphasis original]²⁴ Mary Pride addresses the claim that housework and motherhood are unsatisfying by reframing homemakers as “household managers”: “A manager is the one in charge. ... She can choose which hour of all twenty-four in a day and which day of all seven in a week to do any of her responsibilities, and only her imagination limits how to she carries them out.”²⁵ She also stretches the definition to explicitly include, and even potentially require, home businesses, based on Proverbs 31, which describes an ideal wife who sells goods: “Homeworking goes beyond saving, though, to actually selling some item you create.”²⁶ Blogging and the online businesses it supports could be understood to fill an ideological gap for women who are dissatisfied with homemaking but feel religiously obligated to do so by giving them an option for other commercial and creative activities.

Financial pressures also motivate women to look beyond homemaking despite their commitment to it; homeschooling a large family on only one income is a daunting task even for families who believe that God will provide for those who follow His will. Evangelical Christianity also features a tendency towards isolationism and self-sufficiency, encouraging

23 Kelly Crawford, “Dying to Be a Homemaker,” *Raising Homemakers*, posted 19 February 2013, <http://raisinghomemakers.com/2013/dying-to-be-a-homemaker/> (accessed 3 April 2013).

24 Moore, “Complaining Mothers and Blog-Theology,” *In the Nursery of the Nation*, posted 26 March 2013, <http://www.nurseryofthenation.com/2013/03/complaining-mothers-and-blog-theology.html> (accessed 3 April 2013)

25 Mary Pride, *The Way Home: Beyond Feminism, Back to Reality*, (Westchester: Crossway Books, 1985), p. 154.

26 Pride, p. 165.

believers to exist independently from secular culture as much as possible.²⁷ Internet businesses are well-suited to the needs of conservative women who need a source of income without seeking work outside the home. Internet businesses allow women greater flexibility to balance work and family needs.²⁸ A survey of more than 200 women online business owners found that, for those with children, the ability to work from home, balancing work and family life, and flexible work schedule were the most common reasons for starting a business.²⁹ Helping home finances was also a common reason, given by 38.8% of business owners with children, compared to 30.7% of those without children.³⁰ Two-thirds of business owners made 40% or less of the total family income through their business income, but the authors of the study note that this lower income is similar to the amount working women contribute to their household budgets due to pay differences between men and women.³¹ Home businesses for women are therefore potentially significant financially, in addition to satisfying ambitions which would otherwise be considered spiritually inappropriate. However, Biblical Womanhood bloggers then have to maintain a balance between their role as business owner and as committed mother. Focusing too much on the former could lead other believers to view them as neglecting their appropriate role; too little, and the business will never get off the ground. Biblical Womanhood negotiate their gender roles in their businesses through the kinds of businesses they participate in, the way they advertise, and the audiences they target.

Most previous research on women entrepreneurs has focused on the difficulties that

27 Pride, pp. 163-164.

28 LaRae Jome, Mary Donahue, and Laura Siegel, "Working in the Uncharted Technology Frontier: Characteristics of Women Web Entrepreneurs," *Journal Of Business & Psychology* 21, no. 1 (Fall 2006), *Business Source Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed 12 February 2013), p. 129.

29 Jome, Donahue and Siegel, p. 141.

30 Jome, Donahue and Siegel, p. 141.

31 Jome, Donahue and Siegel, p. 142.

women face entering male-dominated business worlds. Hanson and Blake point out that entrepreneurial social networks are highly gendered, in ways that can both help and hinder women's success in business. For example, women are less likely to hear about stereotypically male jobs than stereotypically female jobs.³² Hanson and Blake argue that gender stereotypes make it more difficult for women to gain legitimacy in entrepreneurial networks, which often include more men.³³ Something something trust relationships something something. They also found that social networks tend to be very homophilic; this is certainly the case in blogging networks, where women link, comment on, and promote women with similar views and lifestyles, in addition to similar gender and race. While this may benefit Biblical womanhood bloggers when seeking customers, Hanson and Blake argue that homophilic networks limit women's access to resources which might help them start their businesses in the first place, such as start-up capital.³⁴ Women also often run different kinds of businesses than men do, such as feminine-gendered retail businesses in clothing or cosmetics, which could both affect and cause differences in their access to resources compared to men's businesses.³⁵ These businesses are often perceived to need less support from formal agents, such as business and professional services; on the other hand, women also have less access to formal agents through their networks, which are more often composed primarily of family and friends than men's networks.³⁶ Biblical womanhood bloggers have addressed these disparities by creating business resources specifically for each other, both explaining how to use outside resources and mobilizing the Biblical womanhood network itself as a source of customers, advertising, and building business

32 Susan Hanson and Megan Blake, "Gender and Entrepreneurial Networks." *Regional Studies* 43, no. 1 (February 2009), *Business Source Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed 4 February 2013). p. 139.

33 Hanson and Blake, p. 139.

34 Hanson and Blake, p. 140.

35 Hanson and Blake, p. 143.

36 Hanson and Blake, pp. 141-143.

relationships. For example, Allume is an annual conference now in its fourth year, which promises to teach “practical skills in blogging, design, writing, and business.”³⁷ *Blog at Home Mom: Balancing Blogging and Motherhood* by Christian Slade, another Biblical womanhood blogger, is ranked #92 in Amazon’s Blogs and Blogging books category, no small feat for a 51-page, self-published book. Some complementarian Christian businesses have also taken a role in supporting the home businesses of these bloggers. Vision Forum, for example, sells complementarian literature and homeschool material, and has published books by several prominent Biblical Womanhood bloggers, including the Botkin sisters, Stacy McDonald, and Jennifer McBride. It also offers an affiliate program, through which bloggers can earn a commission on sales when their readers click Vision Forum advertisements on their webpage. Dayspring, a more mainline Christian business supported by the Hallmark company, sponsors a group blog for Christian women and also offers an affiliate program. These efforts by professional entities, however, are largely overshadowed by the number of resources Biblical womanhood bloggers have created for themselves through articles, e-books, consulting businesses and conferences dedicated to encouraging and supporting women’s online businesses

37 Allume, “About Allume,” Allume: Real Light Living, <http://allume.com/about-allume/> (accessed 4 April 2013).

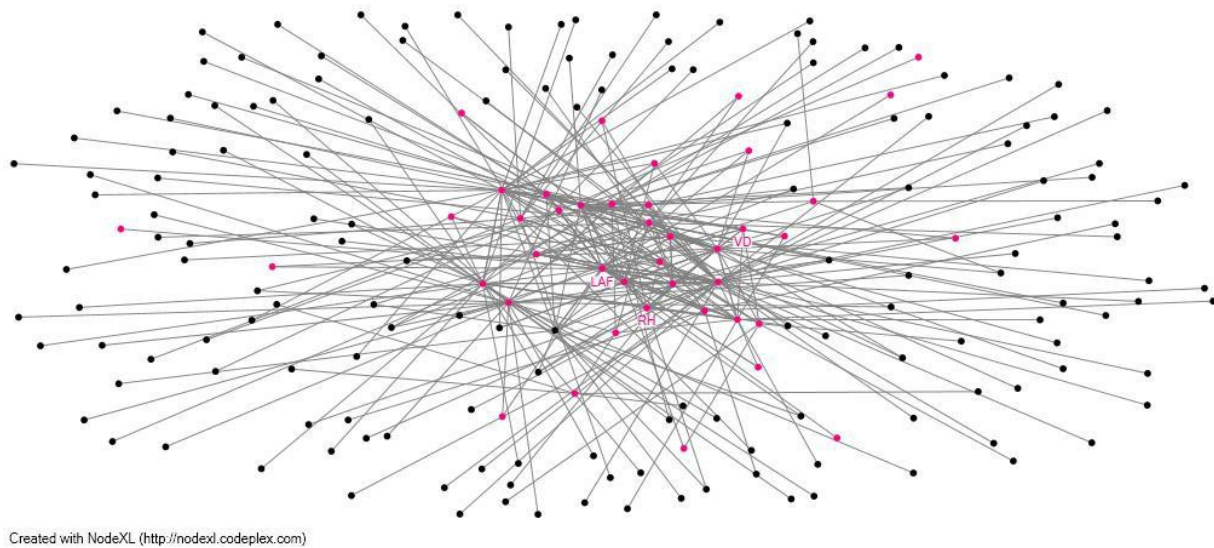


Figure 1: Biblical Womanhood blog network, all blogs

To get a clearer picture of the world of Biblical Womanhood blogs, I collected data on 182 blogs to create a visual representation of the blog network. Blogs were selected using a snowball sampling procedure. Starting with Ladies Against Feminism, each outlink to a relevant blog was recorded, and then outbound from those blogs, and so on. In total, 42 blogs had all inbound and outbound links accounted for, while the remaining 140 were linked to but were not examined for outlinks. In order to be included, blogs had to have a female author, have updated in the past three months from the time the study began, and contain content on Biblical Womanhood. This data was entered into NodeXL, a social network mapping software. In Figure 1, all blogs are shown; those in pink have all inbound and outbound links included. Figure 2 shows only those blogs with all links mapped. Additionally, the blogs were examined for publically available details on their business activities.

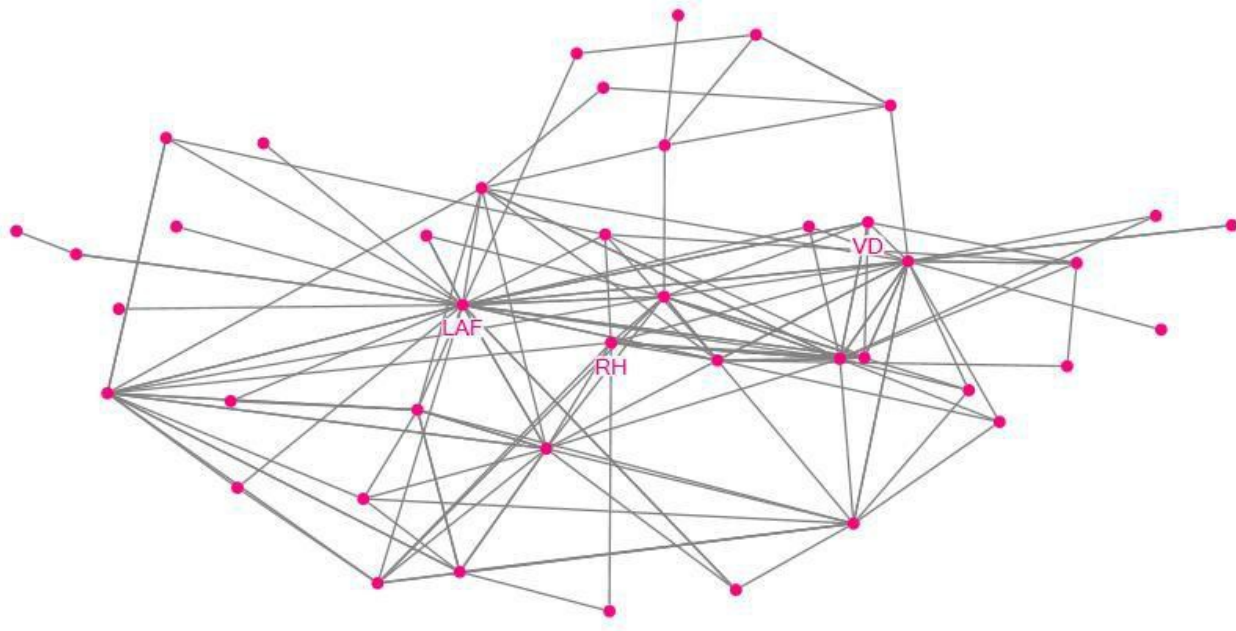


Figure 2: Biblical Womanhood blog network graph, only fully networked blogs.

Of 182 blogs and bloggers examined, 49.5% had some kind of home business. This is excluding women whose blogs were monetized through selling advertisements, sponsorship, or participation in affiliate programs through companies like Vision Forum or Amazon; including those methods of generating income from blogging, a majority of blogs had a business component of some kind. Of those 90 business owners, 54% were involved in retail; this is consistent with Jome, Donahue and Siegle's survey of women-owned internet businesses, which were also slightly more than 50% retail. One company in particular, Lilla Rose, was unusually well-represented. Lilla Rose is a direct selling company which specializes in hair accessories; while not explicitly religious, they have a reputation as a Christian company and are popular with Biblical Womanhood bloggers.³⁸ Five bloggers were also affiliated with Dayspring, the Christian

³⁸ Gretchen Louise, "Lilla Rose Flexi Hair Clips," Adornabelle, posted 4 April 2013, <http://adornabelle.com/lilla->

subsidiary of the Hallmark Cards which runs its own Biblical Womanhood blog, (in)Courage. However, in categories other than retail, Biblical Womanhood bloggers diverged sharply from previous findings on women's internet businesses. 51% had written or contributed to a book, which they sold online; this is excluding free e-books, which many of the women offered in addition to or in place of other books. Additionally, 9% advertised their availability for speaking engagements at congregations and conferences; several of them were already fully booked for the remainder of 2013. Neither of these categories were represented in Jome et. al.'s sample; writing books seems to be a business model unique to Biblical womanhood bloggers. Jome et. al.'s two other primary categories were professional services, including marketing, consulting, and clerical assistance, and internet technology, including website and graphic design. These made up about 20% of Jome's sample each, compared to only 9% and 2% of Biblical womanhood businesses, respectively. Many women were involved in more than one category. For example, June Fuentes of A Wise Woman Builds Her Home sells hair accessories through Villa Rose, has written a book called *True Christian Motherhood*, and offers services as a consultant for other bloggers. She also offers coffee mugs and tote bags featuring her blog's logo, and homeschools her 8 children. Though Fuentes is not the norm of Biblical Womanhood bloggers, she is the ideal; Mary Pride says that homemakers should be "Renaissance women," making and selling products, homeschooling their children, and sharing their wisdom and experience with other woman.

rose-flexi-hair-clips/ (accessed 24 April 2013).

Table 1: Biblical Womanhood bloggers' businesses

Category	Number
Retail	49
Publication	46
Professional Service	8
Speaking	8
Information Technology	2
Other Service	1
Total number of blogs	90

For bloggers whose books, products or services are targeted specifically towards similarly minded women, balancing their business persona and blog persona is not a problem. Many actively promote their products in the content of their blogs, such as offering reviews, discount codes, and giveaways to readers. Some women, however, kept their business at a distance from their religiously-oriented blogs. In some cases, this appeared to be purely a practical decision; Villa Rose sellers, for example, performed their business on the existing Villa Rose website rather than creating a new storefront on their own page. Other bloggers, however, appeared to take great care to separate their religious writing from their business. Ideology does not seem to influence the decision to separate one's business from one's blog - both more mainline and very conservative bloggers have separate businesses. Separating also does not necessarily imply hiding one's religion; Stacy McDonald, of blog Your Sacred Calling, also runs an essential oils business called "Common Scents Mom," where she blogs about essential oils as a natural gift from God for promoting health (and takes care to distinguish her suggestions from those of "heathen witch doctors.")³⁹ The remainder of this paper will take three of these blogs as case studies, examining their businesses and their place in the Biblical womanhood blog

³⁹ Stacy McDonald, "Essential Oils, Emotion, and Physical Healing," The Common Scents Mom, posted 25 March 2013, <http://yoursacredcalling.com/commonscentsmom/2013/03/essential-oils-emotions-and-physical-healing/> (accessed 3 April 2013).

network. Ladies Against Feminism, established in 2002 and run by Jennie Chancey, is heavily linked and central to the network, but maintains a separate business identity, apparently to attract a wider variety of customers. Raising Homemakers is a group blog, with 31 unique contributors, many of whom use it as a platform to promote their own products. Visionary Daughters, by Anna Sophia and Elizabeth Botkin, is nearer to the edge of the network, containing almost no outbound links; however, it has an added air of legitimacy because its authors are heavily promoted by the Vision Forum.

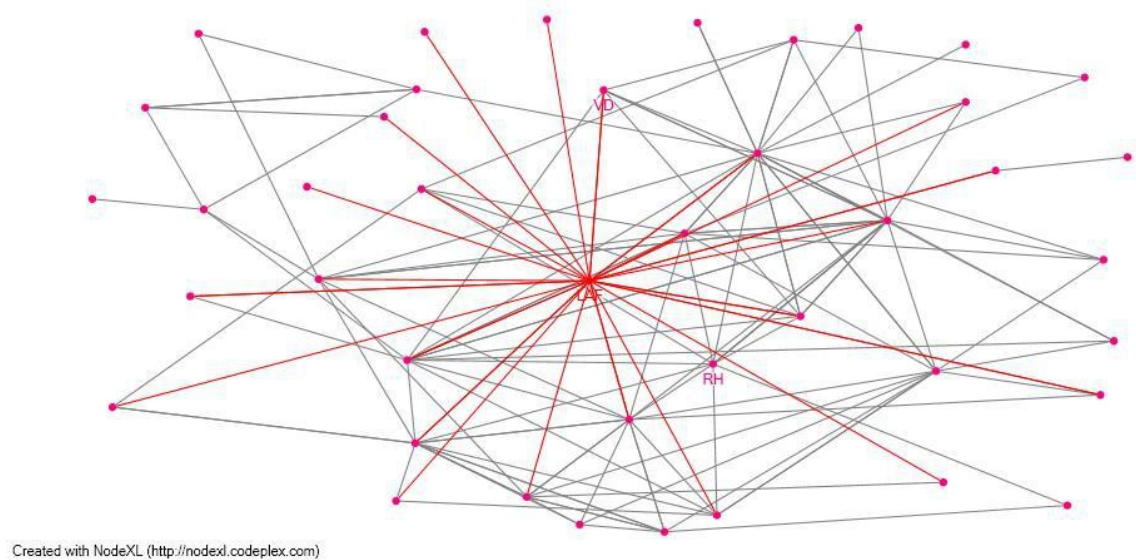


Figure 3: Ladies Against Feminism highlighted in red

Ladies Against Feminism is a popular Biblical Womanhood blog founded in 2002, to “encourage other women in their God-given roles.” It claims a large international readership and positions itself as part of a broader movement:

Since that time, LAF’s readership has grown to hundreds of thousands of people all over the world, and we’ve published articles by writers in America, Canada, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Norway, Belgium, South Africa, Australia, and

New Zealand. We are for maidenhood, modesty, virtue, intelligence, womanly arts, and femininity. Join the new revolution!⁴⁰

The authors claims about readership cannot be confirmed, and recent posts have attracted very few comments; however, the blog's Facebook page has 6,385 "likes," and the blog itself features regular guest posts from several prominent Biblical Womanhood bloggers. Beyond these posts and rare original posts from Chancey herself, LAF functions almost exclusively as a filter blog, primarily commenting on posts from other Biblical Womanhood blogs, as well as evangelical Christian theology blogs and news websites. It also links extensively to similarly-minded blogs, both through advertising and a lengthy blogroll. As a result, LAF is situated near the center of the Biblical Womanhood blog network, and is linked to by many other bloggers within the network, even those who have few outbound links on their webpages. However, because it is closer in genre to a filter blog than a personal blog, its content is in many ways quite different from that of other Biblical Womanhood blogs. While LAF used to post primarily original content, it now posts primarily links to other websites, often with lengthy excerpts and minimal commentary, on a variety of religious issues, both explicitly gendered and not. For example, Jennie Chancey and her co-editor, Kelly Reins, both regularly direct readers to posts on issues such as modesty, appropriate gendered behavior (no ogling for men, no gossiping for women), and parenting, though they rarely add their own personal experience to these posts. On the other hand, the blog often features much more exclusively political content; recent headlines include "5 Reasons Behind the Abortion Industry Push for Chemical Abortions" and "Why is Europe committing demographic suicide?" - both concerned with reproduction and so gendered feminine, but both directing to outside sources which are written in more masculine, political language. The blog is

⁴⁰ Chancey, "About," Ladies Against Feminism, <http://www.ladiesagainstfeminism.com/about/>, accessed 29 April 2013.

also involved in small ways in political organizing, such as driving traffic to a White House petition supporting a German homeschooling family in danger of being deported from the United States.⁴¹ Most of the political content linked to on Ladies Against Feminism is written by men; additionally, the blog is under the pastoral oversight of a male pastor, Stanley Sherman, presumably to avoid violating the Biblical injunction against women teaching.⁴² The website's sidebar and tag cloud give a succinct visual summary of the concerns of Biblical Womanhood overall. (A tag cloud is a visual representation of topics featured on a blog, with more popular topics appearing in a proportionally larger font.) It features pictures of smiling women and young girls, surrounding phrases like "birth control," "birth rate," "family" and "feminism" in large red letters. Rather than promoting biblical womanhood through personal reflections and anecdotes, LAF gives readers theological instruction and political information which presents womanhood as fundamentally linked to reproduction and motherhood.

Jennie Chancey herself has not always necessarily lead the Biblical Womanhood lifestyle which she endorses for mothers and their daughters; according to her LinkedIn profile, she is college-educated, with a BA from King College, and worked in Media Relations for two years before leaving the workforce to start her own business. Her family now lives in Kenya, where her husband works for a charity ministry, and she homeschools her ten children.⁴³ Despite her own education and work background, Ladies Against Feminism has argued consistently against college education for women, and most kinds of work outside the home. This generational tension, between mothers who left the workforce to embrace Biblical Womanhood and their

41 Kelly Reins, "Good Job! Thank You For Your Support," Ladies Against Feminism, posted 9 April 2013, <http://www.ladiesagainstfeminism.com/education/good-job-thank-you-for-your-support/> (accessed 24 April 2013).

42 Chancey, "About."

43 Chancey, "About," Sense and Sensibility Patterns, <http://sensibility.com/about/>, accessed 19 April 2013.

college-aged daughters, has been recently discussed on the blog, with a guest post by a daughter scolding her peers for failing to adopt their parents' views with sufficient fervor. Eliza Walquist, a twenty-five year old stay-at-home daughter, notes that "[homeschooled children] have not experienced the dangers or sorrows of a worldly lifestyle, of drunkenness, of immodesty. Many of our parents were led out of various kinds of worldliness and taught the Bible's principles relating to modesty, music, etc."⁴⁴ She encourages homeschooled daughters to "search their hearts" for signs of sliding away from their parents' standards.

In a similar vein, Chancey recently reviewed a book discussing alternatives to college for Christian young women. The book argues that "If a young woman spends four to eight years debating worldly philosophy and studying for a career, she is simply not going to possess as much competence in running a home and living a life of self-sacrifice for her man and her babies."⁴⁵ The article generated far more comments than most LAF posts, with in-depth discussion of appropriate career options for women. For example, a woman might feel "called" to medicine, and Chancey and other commenters endorse medicine, particularly midwifery, as an appropriate career for a woman, with various religious supports in place so that she might complete her education with as little secular influence as possible. (The author of the book, commenting on the thread, specifically cites concerns about avoiding biology classes which teach evolution.) However, most commenters still felt that traditional universities should be avoided as much as possible, and that a woman midwife or nurse could not hope to also be married and have children (Chancey recommends it for women "not called to marriage," or

44 Elisha Whalquist, "Tearing Down Our Defenses With Our Own Hands," Ladies Against Feminism, posted 18 March 2013, <http://www.ladiesagainstofeminism.com/biblical-womanhood/tearing-down-our-defenses-with-our-own-hands/> (accessed 24 April 2013).

45 Jennie Chancey, "Chuckling College?" Ladies Against Feminism, posted 15 December 2012, <http://www.ladiesagainstofeminism.com/book-reviews/chuckling-college/> (accessed 24 April 2013).

whose children have left home.) The book's statement that college destroys a young woman's "unique individuality" also sparked a somewhat heated debate on the extent to which Christianity requires women to follow their father's goals for them rather than their own. Using quotes from Chancey and authors like her, commenter Jenn84 accused Biblical Womanhood ideology of denying women the chance to pursue their own interests. Chancey and others responded by assuring her that she was misinterpreting their position, while affirming that women's best interest was to be under the influence of her father. "It's just like a couple dancing—if they both lead, they're not going to have a very fun time. Men and women are equal, because they were both created in the image of God; yet vastly different, because of the unique roles God designed them to fill," Melanie Ellison claimed, summing up the basic theological claim of Biblical Womanhood: Women can do all sorts of things, but, if it interferes with their roles of daughter, wife and mother, they probably should not.

In a 2004 article in LAF's archives, Chancey describes in greater detail the circumstances under which women might pursue work beyond wife- and motherhood. She lists several questions for women considering employment to consider:

Will it require me to leave my children in someone else's care? ...
 Will it require me to neglect my role as helper to my husband? ...
 Will it place me under the direct authority of or work in close contact with a man who is not my husband? ...
 Will it cause me to neglect my duties to my local church body and my own neighbors? ⁴⁶

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then Chancey does not recommend the job for any woman, though widows and single women have more flexibility given their lack

⁴⁶ Chancey, "Can a woman ever do work outside the home?" Ladies Against Feminism, posted 19 August 2004, http://www.ladiesagainstfeminism.com/artman/publish/Comments_and_Letters_23/Can_a_woman_i_ever_i_do_work_outside_the_home_12641001264.shtml (accessed 24 April 2013).

of motherly and wifely duties.

Small home businesses are one of the few options that fit all these requirements, particularly the requirement that women not use childcare or work closely with men. Chancey herself runs a home business, “Sense and Sensibility Patterns,” which sells sewing patterns based on Regency era through 1950s era clothing, and offers online sewing classes. The business is apparently quite successful, with 5947 “likes” on Facebook and an active community which shares tips and photos of completed works on a forum. However, Chancey does not include a link to her business in the sidebar of Ladies Against Feminism, nor does Sense and Sensibility Patterns link back to LAF. (Sense and Sensibility Patterns does include several links to Biblical Womanhood blogs, but they are at the bottom of an extensive link list of historical costuming resources, and grouped alongside websites about such unrelated things as vintage jewelry and quilting, rather than being highlighted.) This is fairly unusual in the Biblical Womanhood blogosphere, where bloggers often promote their businesses on their blogs or combine them entirely. About 29% of bloggers kept their businesses at a separate URL from their blogs. Some seemed to do so in order to maintain a more secular professional image, as Chancey does, while many others appeared to separate their blogs from their businesses purely for convenience, for example in order to use online selling platforms such as Etsy. The decision to separate the two might have something to do with Chancey’s audience for the patterns; historical costumers are a surprisingly large group with a no cohesive political or religious ideology. While other clothing vendors in the Biblical Womanhood blogosphere explicitly highlight the modesty of their designs, Chancey limits her

descriptions to the historical background of the patterns, suggesting that her target audience is not exclusively Christian women. The nature of Chancey's blog might also have led Chancey to keep her business separate; heavily linked-to and provocatively named, Ladies Against Feminism is subject to regular criticism by both commenters and outside, liberal blogs. Chancey likely sees highlighting Sense and Sensibility Pattern's affiliation with Biblical Womanhood as risky, especially given the tendency in evangelical Christianity to see themselves as persecuted by the wider culture. Mary Pride, in her book promoting Biblical Womanhood, made a telling estimate: "Let's say that Christians are 20% of the United States population," though she added that she imagined the actual number of 'true Christians' would be much lower.⁴⁷ In fact, Protestants are about 51% of the United States population, and evangelical Christians, who are most likely to fit Pride's definition of true Christians, are at least 26%. This distorted perspective is representative of evangelical Christianity's understanding of itself as an embattled minority, contributing to the great care with which Chancey separates her religious from her professional online persona. Chancey's central position in the Biblical Womanhood blog network would seem useful for promoting her home business, but for Sense and Sensibility Patterns it is in fact a liability.

⁴⁷ Pride, p. 80.

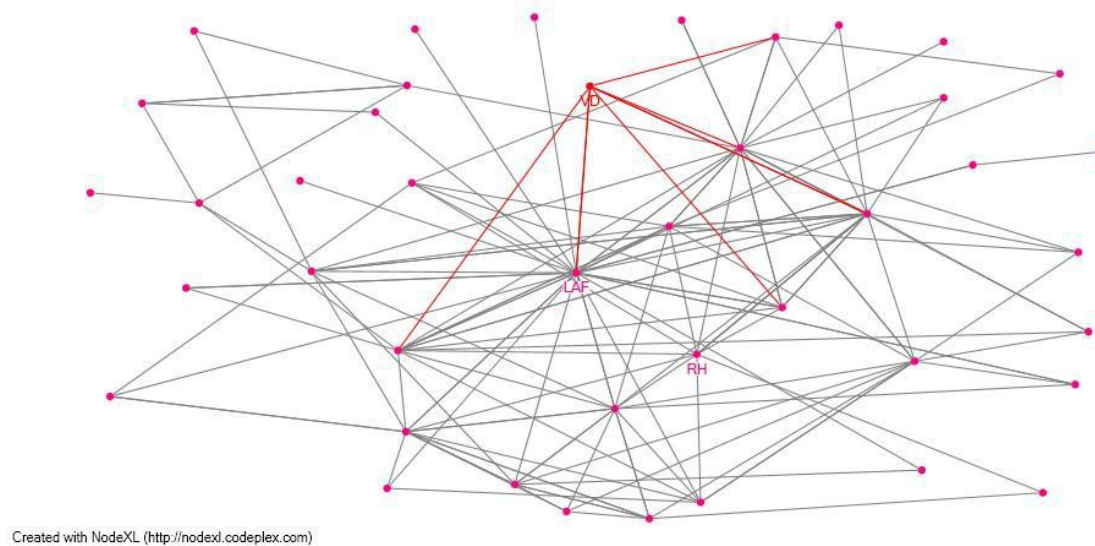


Figure 4: Visionary Daughters highlighted in red.

Anna Sophia and Elizabeth Botkin write for the blog Visionary Daughters, which primarily posts advice on modesty, family relationships, and dating for unmarried young women, in addition to promoting the Botkin's many educational products. Their blog is much more typical of personal blogs, featuring photos from family weddings, first-person reflections, and commentary on popular books and movies. Their father, Geoffrey Botkin, is regular a Vision Forum contributor and founder of Western Conservatory of the Arts and Sciences, a family publishing company which offers books, DVDs, and CDs on cultural and historical topics. Anna Sophia and Elizabeth publish regularly through their family business and through Vision Forum, largely focusing on the appropriate attitude for young, unmarried women to have towards their family and their faith. They also regularly speak at conferences with their father, such as the Vision Forum's annual Father and Daughter Retreat, on daughters' role in fulfilling their fathers' vision of Christian home life.⁴⁸ Their popular book has given them a significant following, and

⁴⁸ Joyce, *Quiverfull*, p. 218.

they are linked to by many other Biblical Womanhood blogs. However, the only outbound link on their blog is to Ladies Against Feminism, and they do not allow comments on their post; as a result, their blog is much less densely linked than blogs, putting them nearer to the edge of the network. Without commenting and a blogroll, Visionary Daughters conspicuously lacks the community element that characterizes blogging.

While the well-connected Ladies Against Feminism presents an outwardly-focused view of womanhood, with its discussions of current events and negotiation of women's role outside the home, Visionary Daughters understands womanhood to be largely a matter of internal, psychological orientation. Drawing heavily on Calvinist theology, the Botkin sisters routinely implore their readers to look within themselves, recognize their own sin, and root out any selfish desires that are contrary to God's will (or, more practically, to their parents' will.) For example, in a Valentine's Day post for young women still waiting to meet their future husbands (and any young man a woman has significant interactions with should probably be a potential future husband,) they write that it is well and good for women to want a good husband, but they probably do not deserve one:

The bad news is, none of us are naturally likeable, desirable, or eligible. Because of sin, we all start out as ugly stepsisters, and we don't automatically become Cinderella upon reaching marriageable age. The good news is, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness." (1 Pet. 2:24)⁴⁹

Rather than thinking about their Prince Charming, the Botkins recommend that young girls attend to their spiritual lives in order to better serve the man they eventually marry. (Elsewhere on the blog, they note that God does not automatically reward good spiritual behavior with a

⁴⁹ Anna Sophia Botkin and Elizabeth Botkin, "All I Want For Valentine's Day," Visionary Daughters, posted 13 February 2013, <http://visionarydaughters.com/2013/02/all-i-want-for-valentines-day> (accessed 22 April 2013).

good husband, and that while all women should be working towards marriage, God's will might leave them single well into their thirties.)⁵⁰ Why eligible Christian girls remain unmarried is a regularly discussed topic for the Botkin sisters, who, at ages 25 and 27, are both single. The answer invariably requires a change in the unmarried woman's attitude. For example, encouraging men one is interested in marrying to get on with proposing (or encouraging one's father to hurry up and find a suitable man) is unacceptable; "When we step outside our feminine jurisdiction by trying to tell the men how to do their job, we make the problem worse."⁵¹ (In the same post, the Botkin sisters note that their advice does not apply to men, who they have no authority to speak to.) Christian women must therefore strike a balance between the understanding that they are Biblically mandated to be wives and mothers, but that femininity prohibits them from pursuing that role in an active way.

The Botkin sisters also encourage women to set their feelings aside when their family's desires, or God's will as they understand it, go against them: "First of all, my feelings have nothing to do with it. Gratitude or bitterness are not really feelings but decisions, decisions that have nothing to do with the circumstances themselves, but with how we choose to perceive to them."⁵² Anna Sophia describes herself at 17 as afraid of writing, public speaking, and being on camera, tasks she has since pursued consistently in the service of her family's publishing company.⁵³ The Botkins suggest that other young women likewise put aside their own needs. Responding to a lengthy e-mail from a young woman who wanted to submit to her father, but found his leadership insufficient, they said: "Our first concern is that, **for all your attempts to**

50 Botkin and Botkin, "Is It My Fault That I'm Not Married," Visionary Daughters, posted 28 July 2010, <http://visionarydaughters.com/2010/07/is-it-my-fault-that-im-not-married> (accessed 22 April 2013).

51 Ibid.

52 Anna Sophia Botkin, "Greater Expectations," Visionary Daughters, posted 24 October 2010, <http://visionarydaughters.com/2010/10/greater-expectations> (accessed 22 April 2013).

53 Ibid.

help your father, your focus appears to be more on yourself – what will stimulate *you*, what will challenge *you*, what will teach *you* new skills, what will use *your* gifts — rather than on what will fulfill *his* dreams and use *his* gifts.”⁵⁴ (Emphasis original.) They explain that it is not a daughter’s place to seek support from her father for her own needs; rather, she should put her needs aside, and figure out as best she can what he wants her to do. By expressing her dissatisfaction at all, the Botkins warn her that she’s disobeying the Biblical injunction to honor her father, and seriously urge her to repent for the sinful behavior of both thinking poorly of him and telling other people about it. The responsibility to improve the relationship is entirely hers, and her failure to do so is described as a serious sin.

The Botkins’ gender theology is strictly non-negotiable, as illustrated by the lack of a comment option for readers. Failure to take an appropriately gendered attitude, and pursue appropriate feminine roles such as being a wife and mother, is sinful, and puts girls at risk of eternal damnation. Fortunately, the Botkins also offer a solution: their blog aggressively promotes books and other materials by themselves and their family on how to correct one’s theological attitude. The entire sidebar of the blog, where other blogs usually place outbound links, is given over to advertisements for their own and their family’s publications, including a book on courtship, a study course on cultural ideas of beauty, and a documentary film about ideal Christian daughter behavior. By remaining aloof from the rest of the Biblical Womanhood blogosphere, and through their Vision Forum associations, the Botkins maintain an air of professionalism and expertise in a genre usually characterized by discussion and negotiation. Interestingly, their emphasis on internal spiritual life gives them some amount of flexibility for

54 Botkin and Botkin, “But My Father Isn’t Like Your Father,” Visionary Daughters, posted 15 March 2010, <http://visionarydaughters.com/2010/03/but-my-father-isnt-like-your-father> (accessed 22 April 2013).

the actual activities that women pursue. Describing working with their brother while he filmed a documentary in Egypt, they wrote: “We learned that sisterly duties don’t have to be limited to domestic things, far removed from what the boys are doing. We discovered how much fun it is to be part of a man’s world, even if it means taking the plunge into finding world politics as fascinating as they do.”⁵⁵ The post is accompanied by a picture of the sisters chopping vegetables for dinner while looking over notes on a computer, suggesting that “men’s tasks” are open to women as long as they are done in the service of men and without distracting from womanly duties. They make a similar point on their CD “Adventures Girlhood,” sold on the Vision Forum website, which warns young women that “girliness” should not prevent them from “fulfilling [their] calling in [their] family.” Of course, that is not to say that activities are not gendered - the Botkins’ web design services for their brother’s documentaries undoubtedly were secondary to their more traditionally feminine tasks. However, the ultimate message is that while the external trappings of gender might be bent in service to one’s family, the internal attitude of submission is both non-negotiable and difficult to cultivate, requiring the help of books, DVDs, and podcasts.

55 Ibid., “Our Egyptian Adventure,” Visionary Daughters, posted 14 October 2011, <http://visionarydaughters.com/2011/10/our-egyptian-adventure> (accessed 22 April 2013).

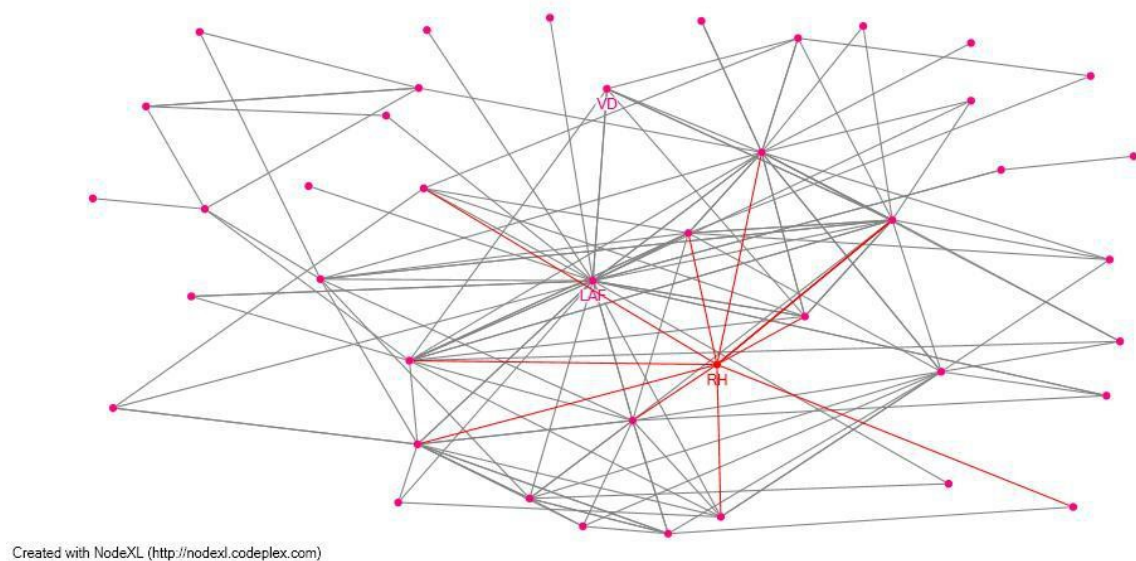


Figure 5: Raising Homemakers highlighted in red.

Raising Homemakers (RH) is unique in that it is a group blog. While LAF and Visionary Daughters occasionally feature guest posts, RH has 31 different contributors. (Not all contributors post regularly, but about half of them had posted in the past month.)⁵⁶ Topics include practical homemaking skills, such as recipes and sewing advice, parenting advice, theology, and culture, with an emphasis on sharing women's personal experiences. It focuses specifically on mothers who are raising daughters for Biblical Womanhood, though it also occasionally discusses sons as well, for example how to raise sons to make sure they grow up to want to marry a homemaker. RH regularly promotes books written by contributors and products sold through contributors' businesses, through blog posts highlighting sales and special discounts to readers.⁵⁷ Books by contributors are also featured in the blogs' sidebar and on several

⁵⁶ Raising Homemakers, "Meet the RH Contributors," <http://raisinghomemakers.com/writers/> (accessed 25 April 2013).

⁵⁷ For example: June Fuentes, "Overwhelmed but not Overcome," Raising Homemakers, posted 14 March 2013, <http://raisinghomemakers.com/2013/overwhelmed-but-not-overcome/> (accessed 25 April 2013).

recommended reading and resources lists (not exclusively - these lists include unaffiliated writers.) The bios of each author, included after her posts, often include links to the author's books or businesses. Promoting home businesses is a significant part of RH's content.

RH invites far greater reader participation than either LAF or Visionary Daughters. Comments are welcome, and most posts get at least a few, in addition to shares on Twitter and Facebook. The blog has a Facebook page with 18,718 likes, more than three times as many as Ladies Against Feminism, and a Pinterest board with 1,670 followers. Additionally, they host a weekly "Link-Up" inviting readers to share posts on homemaking and Biblical Womanhood, which features hundreds of links a week. However, the greater amount of reader interaction and large number of contributors do not necessarily imply greater diversity of content; almost all of the authors are theologically similar, differing slightly in the topics they prefer to write on but little on the details of their beliefs.

Raising Homemakers takes a similarly internal, psychological view to womanhood to that presented by Visionary Daughters, with greater emphasis on personal experience and the more superficial trappings of femininity. "Girlhood and teatime just seem to go together, don't they?" writer Jill Novak coos on a post about tea as a gesture of both femininity and hospitality. "Hearts are more receptive when the pace of life is slowed and everyone can relax and enjoy one another." The post concludes with an advertisement for Novak's book, *The Girlhood Home Companion*, and magazine, *The Mother-Daughter Tea Cozy Club*.⁵⁸ The trappings of femininity, such as wearing an apron to serve tea, represent a deeper internal attitude of submission, self-sacrifice, and commitment to gender roles. Caroline Allen makes a similar point in her post about

⁵⁸ Jill Novak, "Teatime Hospitality," *Raising Homemakers*, posted on 22 April 2013, <http://raisinghomemakers.com/2013/teatime-hospitality/> (accessed 25 April 2013).

appropriate dress for young girls: “What has happened to the ruffles and dresses and bonnets? These articles of innocent girlhood are today viewed as musty relics of a bygone era, so much so that even five year olds do not want to be seen in them.” She says that parents, mothers in particular, have a responsibility to dress daughters in appropriately feminine ways (for example, putting a daughter’s hair in pigtails whether she likes them or not) as a way of guiding her “spiritual walk.”⁵⁹ (This post was also concluded with several book recommendations, written by other Biblical Womanhood bloggers rather than the author herself.) Modest clothing, which involves not only covering the body but also being sufficiently feminine, reflects a variety of important traits; Heather, describing the process for creating modesty guidelines for one’s family, says that “Some **synonyms** of modesty are: lowliness, meekness, humility, submission, quietness.”⁶⁰ (Emphasis original.) Teatime and ruffles, while perhaps cliché and shallow, represent more profound feminine traits.

Because of the importance of these feminine traits, one of a woman’s primary duties is to teach her daughters how to be a homemaker, with all the theological implications of submission, and to model appropriate spirituality for her children. Kathy, in a post titled “When Daughters are Resistant,” describes a daughter’s disinterest in homemaking skills as a sign that she does not understand “the importance of bringing every area of life in submission to the Lord.” While having a daughter who does not want to be a homemaker is undoubtedly difficult for women who value homemaking as the only appropriate, or at least most appropriate, option for women, Kathy emphasizes that mothers should control their emotional responses: “Once you

59 Caroline Allen, “Keeping the 'little' in your little girl,” Raising Homemakers, posted 2 April 2013, <http://raisinghomemakers.com/2013/keeping-the-little-in-your-little-girl/> (accessed 25 April 2013).

60 Heather, “Developing a Standard of Modesty for Your Family,” Raising Homemakers, posted 25 March 2013, <http://raisinghomemakers.com/2013/developing-a-standard-of-modesty-for-your-family-2/> (accessed 25 April 2013).

realize that their resistance is not a personal attack on you, you are more free to be long-suffering, patient and filled with grace...and you may even be able to smile at them” (Long-suffering-ness is a favorite feminine trait on *Raising Homemakers* in particular.) Kathy then describes strategies for encouraging daughters in homemaking, including limiting time spent on “sports, clubs, lessons, and just hanging out with friends ... texting, [on the] phone and computer, and ... [reading] fictional books.” Girls who are never at home might come to desire the esteem of their peers, which will distract them from their duties at home.⁶¹ While this might seem harsh, Biblical Womanhood authors tend to be skeptical of friendships in general as a distraction from family life; friendships between women might encourage gossiping and discontent, while friendships with men threaten women’s “emotional purity.” Sports, clubs, or even friendships risk distracting from the primary purpose of womanhood. In her letter to her daughter on her first birthday, Bambi Moore writes: “My prayer is that God would let you taste the joy of being a wife and mother, the way he has for me. ... These, precious girl, are amazing and miraculous pleasures of womanhood.” (She also warns that Satan will try to pull her away from her divinely ordained purpose by “blur[ring] the lines between manhood and womanhood.”)⁶² The vision of femininity presented by *Raising Homemakers* is very much based in the narrow realm of the home and the family, to the exclusion of other activities if necessary.

A mother’s attitude, as reflected in her parenting and homemaking skills, is granted almost supernatural power to bring about blissful marital relationships, well-behaved children, and a peaceful home. Sara Elizabeth, in a guest post, notes:

I’ve often noticed that when my husband has a difficult day, my attitude can either

61 Kathy, “When Daughters are Resistant,” *Raising Homemakers*, posted 18 April 2013, <http://raisinghomemakers.com/2013/when-daughters-are-resistant-2/> (accessed 25 April 2013).

62 Moore, “A Letter to My Daughter on Her First Birthday,” *Raising Homemakers*, posted 19 March 2013, <http://raisinghomemakers.com/2013/a-letter-to-my-daughter-on-her-first-birthday/> (accessed 25 April 2013).

drive him away or can bring him comfort in a dwelling that envelops him in peace. I can see this in my children as well-my own words and tone can create anxiety in children dealing with uncertainty, or it can create calm and reassurance in the midst of an emotional storm. My family looks to me as an anchor, always looking well to the ways of the household. (Proverbs 31:27)⁶³

This glowing description of a mother's power to make a comfortable home is balanced by regular recognition of the difficult, tedious nature of the work. Sherry K. Hayes, in a post titled "Home WORK," capitalized for emphasis, says "Coziness begins with organizing and planning, then it moves into the realm of real, honest, nitty-gritty, get-yourself-sweaty *labor*." She encourages mothers to demonstrate household management to daughters, involve them in household tasks, and push them to work harder at housework than they feel able. This will help daughters to appreciate both the difficulty of housework and its rewards: "We need to be setting the bar higher, both for ourselves and for our children. Instead of rushing through domestic duties so that we can fit in more entertainment, we need to be looking at our home-work as entertainment."⁶⁴ Bloggers also described the challenges of motherhood in much greater detail on Raising Homemakers than on other blogs, perhaps because of its greater orientation towards personal stories. Marilyn Boyer describes how her spiritual life, prioritized in a house with little opportunity for quiet, supports her parenting: "I need God's direction as to how to raise 14 unique personalities to direct each one to serve his/her Creator. It's not an easy task; actually, it's impossible in my own strength"⁶⁵ Another blogger, Arabah Joy describes the fears of inadequacy she feels in the face of difficulty raising her four children. She then reiterates Boyer's point that

63 Elizabeth, "A Mother's Heart and Hands: Nurturing the Atmosphere of the Home," posted 15 April 2013, <http://raisinghomemakers.com/2013/a-mothers-heart-and-hands-nurturing-the-atmosphere-of-the-home/> (accessed 25 April 2013).

64 Sherry Hayes, "Home WORK," Raising Homemakers, posted 4 April 2013, <http://raisinghomemakers.com/2013/home-work/> (accessed 25 April 2013).

65 Marilyn Boyer, "Quiet Times in a Busy Household," Raising Homemakers, posted 15 December 2012, <http://raisinghomemakers.com/2012/quiet-times-in-a-busy-household/> (accessed 25 April 2013).

mothers are called to do the impossible, and warns that failure to take on this task appropriately represents a failure of faith:

A mother's unbelief is expressed with laughter. Or internet surfing.
Or avoidance of responsibility. Or busyness or shopping or friends.
Or even hard work, striving like Abraham and Sarah to fulfill
God's promises *for Him*. **But at the core, in the shadows of the
heart, there is unbelief in God.**⁶⁶

Mothers must therefore monitor their emotional reactions and behaviors carefully, since unbelief might lurk behind everything from not working at all to working too hard. None of the bloggers describe similar emotional work for fathers; women are uniquely required to self-regulate in order to appropriately fill their gender roles not just in housekeeping, but within themselves. Sarah Mae, author of the book *Desperate* discussed above, continues this theme in a post which ends in a promotion for her book: "Today, if you are having one of "those days" and you need some serious encouragement, might you consider checking out *Desperate – Hope for the Mom Who Needs to Breathe?*"⁶⁷ Though motherhood and homemaking are depicted as difficult and sometimes unfulfilling, they are also mandatory; divine support and internal self-regulation, supported in some cases by appropriate products, are presented as the solution to any dissatisfaction. While *Ladies Against Feminism* focuses on external requirements on women (such as why college and jobs are unacceptable,) and *Visionary Daughters* prioritizes inner life with a strong Reform theology bend, *Raising Homemakers* attempts to find a balance in the middle. It describes and celebrates the external trappings of femininity as a way of representing the inner spirit that must accompany them, cultivated despite competing

⁶⁶ Arabah Joy, "For When Motherhood Seems Impossible," *Raising Homemakers*, posted 26 July 2012, <http://raisinghomemakers.com/2012/for-when-motherhood-seems-impossible/> (accessed 25 April 2013).

⁶⁷ Sarah Mae, "Long Day with the Babies? Try this..." *Raising Homemakers*, posted 23 April 2013, <http://raisinghomemakers.com/2013/long-day-with-the-babes-try-this/> (accessed 25 April 2013).

desires or emotional difficulty through appropriate religious belief.

Though the emphasis on home business seems incongruous in the context of a blog community based on complementarian theology, businesses in fact support Biblical Womanhood bloggers in developing and expressing their gender identities through their blog networks. They offer a theologically approved way to participate in activities outside of the traditional realm of housekeeping. On a typical Biblical Womanhood blog, advertisements for items such as dresses and sewing patterns serve to indicate what kinds of activities are appropriate for the reader, while books on housekeeping, parenting, and the spiritual requirements of womanhood offer support for achieving the correct internal feminine attitude. Though personal blogs are often criticized as shallow and overly emotional, Biblical Womanhood blogs use personal reflection to develop a gender identity which both accepts and supports particular kinds of business ambitions. Womanhood in this community requires various levels of submission and strong commitment to wifehood and motherhood, but it can have several other dimensions, such as various levels of political engagement, theological depth, and emotionality, as well as different criteria for deciding what kinds of activities are appropriate for women. Women in the blog network are both the creators and consumers of products designed to encourage variations on this image of femininity, which developed through posts, comments, and links within the blogs themselves.

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