

The Proverbs 31 Virtuous Wife Online: Networked Collective Rhetoric in Quiverfull Women's Weblogs

Rebekah Sims

Abstract: *I argue that the weblog writing of women in the fundamentalist, patriarchal, radically pro-natalist Quiverfull movement constitutes an anti-feminist collective rhetoric that spreads gendered behavior digitally. Implicit use of feminist discursive strategies persuades women to take up the Quiverfull life and creates a richly-networked online space specifically to provide continued support for these religious behaviors. This analysis of Quiverfull weblogs reveals how groups held together by beliefs and connected behaviors, rather than physical locale or institution, propagate themselves through technology. Although this is a small movement, its digital presence specifically offers rhetoricians a window into how religious groups make fundamentalist Christian gender ideology persuasive in the twenty-first century.*

Keywords: *feminism, feminist rhetoric, weblogs, fundamentalist Christianity, Quiverfull*

"Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies... She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her."

— *Proverbs 31:10-11, 27-28, New King James Version.*

Introduction

In her 2006 article "Consciousness Raising as Collective Rhetoric: The Articulation of Experience in the Redstockings' Abortion Speak-Out of 1969," Tasha N. Dubriwny writes that collective rhetoric is a feminist "persuasive process through which a group of people contribute their own stories... as a means of creating a new public vocabulary for framing their lives" (418). This collective rhetoric involves three elements: "an active and participatory audience, the deployment of an experiential epistemology, and the transformation of individual experiences through the articulation of those experiences" (418).

Dubriwny emphasizes that the potential for new collective rhetoric formation may be on the rise due to the proliferation of weblogs and chat rooms (418). In this paper, I take up Dubriwny's call to continue analyzing possible sites of collective rhetoric. I examine the weblog writing of women in the Quiverfull movement to argue that the movement's writers deploy feminist rhetorical strategies online to enact an anti-feminist collective rhetoric. Groups that position themselves in explicit opposition to feminist principles may (unknowingly) draw on aspects of feminist discourse to claim authority in relevant areas of knowledge and to build a space for themselves online. Examining Quiverfull weblogs offers scholars a unique example of how technology facilitates collective identity and ideological conformity among a highly dispersed religious group that functions largely without denominational structures, governing bodies, or educational institutions – infrastructure generally common to organized religious groups.

Collective rhetorics can arise in anti-feminist spaces, using feminist rhetorical strategies such as consciousness-raising and valuing embodied knowledge to create a collective rhetoric that intentionally undermines gender equality. While Quiverfull weblogs are produced by a small religious movement outside mainstream American cultures, they iterate collective rhetorics that are taken up by larger conservative communities as part of cultural arguments against egalitarian social policies. Thus, this project continues development of a theory of collective rhetoric “to expand our recognition that the creation of public vocabularies is a collective, not individual, process, and shed light on the various social circumstances in which such collective rhetorics arise” (Dubriwny 418).

Quiverfull is a patriarchal grassroots Christian movement that embraces “divinely-ordained biological determinism” (Harrison and Rowley 49) and emphasizes “a marriage model that requires the complete submission of women, whose primary calling is to produce as many children as possible” (Ingersoll *Building God's Kingdom* 227). The Quiverfull movement began to coalesce in the late 1980s (Harrison and Rowley 48), following the publication of Mary Pride's *The Way Home: Beyond Feminism, Back to Reality* (1985) and Rick and Jan Hess' *A Full Quiver: Family Planning and the Lordship of Christ* (1990). Such texts function as practical how-to directions as well as model narratives for the movement. Characteristics of Quiverfull followers include homeschooling, stay-at-home motherhood, family-run businesses, radical self-sufficiency, and the family (not the individual) as the basic social unit of American society. Quiverfull families (like other fundamentalist religious groups) remove themselves from secular institutions. This movement does not have an umbrella organization or official leadership; thus, this movement happens largely outside of formal denominational structures. Parachurch structures – such as

publications, family ministry gatherings and conferences, corporations like the former Vision Forum, Christian homeschooling organizations, and online ministries including weblogs – play a large role in perpetuating this movement “because the combined effect of their voices is a steady drumbeat, teaching Christian women to submit” (Joyce 41). Women’s submission in the Quiverfull movement requires not only obeying one’s husband, but complete sexual availability to the husband, uninhibited childbearing, and refraining from employment outside the home. Quiverfull weblogs are written by women with overlapping experience of raising many children, homeschooling, bulk cooking, and budgeting for large families, all with limited face-to-face interaction with like-minded families. This movement’s prolific weblogs are also place for women to find interaction and support from other women to help them continue in this work-intensive, highly-demanding lifestyle.

Although these blogs may appear linear and chronological, they are not: the way that blogs are written, curated, and circulated – especially through reblogging and social media sharing – ties the past and the present together, creating narratives with significant thematic and rhetorical resonances among bloggers. Considering the blogs through Katie King’s concept of *pastpresents*, “palpable evidences that the past and the present cannot be purified each from the other” (“Historiography as Reenactment” 459), shows how co-opted feminist rhetorical strategies perpetuate a rhetoric of demonstration and shape what counts as acceptable gendered behavior within the Quiverfull movement. The mechanisms by which blogs are networked (e.g., tagging, commenting, reblogging, linking) reinforces the borders of such behaviors. Examining the movement’s blog networks reveals that individual sense-making – how women come to understand the cosmic purpose behind their Quiverfull lives – is actually a shared or collective process.

These women’s weblog writing demonstrates the creation of collective rhetoric because weblogs narrate common experiences among women in similar ways and create a common vocabulary to describe and categorize these experiences. In these blogs, persuasion is not merely the altering of another’s opinion, but is instead, in Dubriwny’s terms, “the creation of situations in which the telling of individual experience makes possible a reframing of one’s understanding of the world” (396). For example, Quiverfull bloggers often write about operating from a “Biblical worldview.” This phrase is common among adherents, who are influenced by Christian reconstructionism: “In this view, the Bible speaks to every aspect of life and provides a blueprint for living according to the will of God” (Ingersoll *Building God’s Kingdom* 14). Thus, for people in this religious movement, each action a person takes has eternal consequences, and neutrality is impossible. These weblogs present women’s experiences through the frame of this Biblical worldview. Telling the

story of one's family on a Quiverfull weblog is a way to explicitly, intentionally, frame the day-to-day happenings of large family life as both a Godly, religious practice and as a politically subversive narrative. Laundry and baking are just as spiritual as preaching and witnessing. Dressing modestly and remaining chaste is thought to make a political statement about women's proper role. Lived experience is at the core of the blogger's collective rhetoric, and blogging serves as a digital "validation of lived experience" (Dubriwny 400) for Quiverfull women.

I am not arguing that a space online for women's voices is inherently empowering nor that the doctrine of submission is paradoxically liberating; instead, this article considers how Quiverfull writers construct online spaces that, although publicly accessible, are domesticated and gendered. Katie King questions, "How do we know liberatory practices when we see them?" and considers "how we engage those interventions created by unanticipated agencies" ("Historiography as Reenactment" 460). Women in separatist religious groups who create publicly circulate blogs demonstrate unanticipated agency: other groups that withdraw from mainstream institutions, such as Amish communities or Fundamentalist Latter-Day Saints, eschew many kinds of technology and do not create the same platform available to outsiders. We do not generally expect a digital presence from such women. Yet, neither the digital interventions nor the practices they document seem liberating to the outsider – especially a feminist outsider. In *Evangelical Christian Women*, Julie Ingersoll notes that examining the ways that women in conservative religious traditions find empowerment and validation in the doctrine of female submission contributes important insight for a scholarly conversation that sometimes dismisses the authenticity of these women's sincere convictions as misguided. Casting "what looks like powerlessness from the outside" as containing "its own process of empowerment" (3), however, does not always account for the manipulative nature of the doctrine of submission nor for the ways in which this constantly reiterated discourse of submission polices how women narrativize their lives: what they say, although in their own voice, must stay within borders for appropriate gendered speech and behavior. Therefore, in this analysis I also emphasize the role that weblog writings play in reifying and strengthening these boundaries. That a space is essentially reserved for women's voices does not necessarily mean that is empowering or liberating.

Quiverfull's Place in Conservative Christianity

Over the past ten years news and web articles on Quiverfull have proliferated, published on feminist sites like *Bitch Media* and the progressive religion site *Patheos* as well as in the mainstream media; however, relatively few studies have been published in scholarly journals, possibly because studying

small, decentralized religious groups who opt out of, and are sometimes suspicious of, academia makes locating and recruiting participants challenging. Published writing about the Quiverfull movement discusses its relationship to past iterations of femininity and gender, its relationship to Christian reconstructionist theology, and its place among the broader religious right.

Quiverfull appears to be a return to the gender norms of an earlier era, perhaps the Victorian; indeed, many inside the Quiverfull movement itself make this claim as do outsiders, calling it “Biblical Womanhood” (Joyce xi, 19-20). Laura Harrison and Sarah B. Rowley pose a counter-argument to this characterization of Quiverfull as a throwback to an earlier time, arguing instead that Quiverfull is not only a “reactionary impulse” but

readily engages with modern culture in order to argue for its world-view. By connecting its movement through modern technology, using the mainstream media to gain credibility by emphasizing common values, and co-opting the rhetoric of feminism, the movement works both within and challenges cultural norms (47).

I agree with Harrison and Rowley: while Quiverfull writing tends to idealize perceptions of a gendered past, it also reenacts elements of that past within a technological present, hoping for a Christianized, theocratic future. Adherents to these behaviors can be found across many fundamentalist Christian churches; what determines Quiverfull identity is less about belief, and more about behaviors concerning birth control, family dynamics, and withdrawal from secular institutions. Therefore, Quiverfull is an ideological movement because it involves behavior-based identification among people who already hold the theological beliefs common to fundamentalist Christians (Harrison and Rowley 48; Mesaros-Winckles). Ingersoll rightly notes that who counts as “evangelical” and who counts as “fundamentalist” is blurry, contextual, and contested (*Evangelical Christian Women* 12) but also that gender has become the core issue in defining fundamentalist identity (28). Culturally, those categorized as fundamentalist have a stronger objection to pluralism and a more marked separation from mainstream culture than do evangelicals. Ingersoll also notes that “fundamentalists pride themselves on laying out a clear, concrete, and unchanging blueprint for gender distinctions” (17). While some evangelicals also subscribe to this view, evangelical culture as a whole contains a broader spectrum of beliefs about gender and gendered behavior. These are the main reasons that Quiverfull Christians are generally understood to be fundamentalists.

Quiverfull behaviors have their roots in Christian reconstructionist theology. In *Building God's Kingdom: Inside the Christian Reconstruction Movement* (2015), Julie Ingersoll writes that while being Quiverfull focuses on certain

behaviors (primarily women's submission, uninhibited childbearing, and homeschooling), the patriarchal dominion theology developed by figures such as R. J. Rushdoony and Gary North formed this movement. This theology emphasizes "the authority of Biblical law and the obligation to submit to it" (16). Among the broader religious right, Quiverfull families represent a more extreme view of gender roles, small government, and social conservatism. In *Saving Sex: Sexuality and Salvation in American Evangelicalism*, Amy DeRogatis argues that Quiverfull sharply departs from other conservative Christian groups because it deemphasizes sexual pleasure and fore-fronts reproduction, and also displays an unusual level of antagonism towards feminism (109-110). Other parts of the religious right have more varied views on gender roles and feminism (see Ingersoll's 2003 *Evangelical Christian Women: War Stories from the Gender Battles*). Thus, even within the context of the religious right, this group departs from the norm.

While it is impossible to determine how many adherents the Quiverfull movement has, Harrison and Rowley identify this group as one that "has salience beyond its own membership," (48) especially when read as a particularly vocal part of a broader twenty-first-century cultural and religious backlash against feminism and gender equality. In addition to people who practice Quiverfull behaviors, there are larger groups of people (and politicians) who are "Quiverfull sympathetic." Although they may not strive for large families or homeschool, they see the Quiverfull lifestyle as something beautiful and pure (Mesaros-Winckles). This is one of two reasons I believe that continued research into this group matters: although the Quiverfull movement is probably fairly small, their gender norms spread beyond those who adhere to the reproductive behaviors. Secondly, this is a movement that adds important political support to groups on the religious right, such as the Homeschool Legal Defense Association (Joyce).

While these books and articles focus on defining Quiverfull membership, documenting its growth, and considering its place among contemporary Christian sects, there has been only limited focus on how this group spreads its rhetoric and practices through digital spaces. Applying feminist theories of rhetoric and persuasion and concepts from digital rhetoric to anti-feminist groups provides insight into why and how the group spreads discursively and digitally, and into what kinds of rhetorical models effectively explain the spread of ideas coded by group members as subversive and who characterize themselves as oppressed. A feminist reading of Quiverfull bloggers is also important because of the role blogs play in operationalizing and spreading the gender dynamics of this movement. Harrison and Rowley identify a tension between women's submission and female discursive agency (49). In a patriarchal movement that values male voices and decisions, and that insists that

women should be silent in churches and submissive in the home, blogs are one of the few places Quiverfull women's voices are accessible to the audience of the general public. Blogs are an extension of the domestic sphere into the digital world. They domesticate a section of the "public," thus authorizing women's voice.

Methods: Gathering Narratives

For this project, I selected four primary blogs for analysis under the following criteria:

1. The blog was active as of 2015 and included at least five posts per year since its inception; thus, during the data analysis period of this study, it represented a currently active Quiverfull family with multiple years of fidelity to movement behaviors.
2. The blog's writer(s) identified as either Quiverfull or as conservative Christians who eschew all birth control and practice female submission (that is, Quiverfull in practice if not in name).
3. At least some of the blog's contributors were married women raising children, and it is evident that the blog is primarily written, curated, and managed by a woman or women.

On these central blogs, I analyzed the blog's oldest 10 posts, the posts that specifically chronicle the family's conversion to Quiverfull ideology, and all posts written between May 1, 2015 and September 1, 2015, as well as other posts that specifically address gender and femininity. Each blog post was categorized by topic(s) addressed and analyzed for language use and narrative structure. What follows is a brief profile of the central blogs:

- *Titus 2:¹ Encouraging, Exhorting, Equipping Christian Families in Jesus Christ*

Launched in 2006 and updated several times each week, The Maxwell family is one of the most visible and prolific pro-natalist families and showcases a sort of "best-case scenario" of how Quiverfull life can work. The Maxwell family patriarch and matriarch homeschooled a large brood of children, who have continued the family business of creating and marketing homeschool products and started their own

1 Proverbs 31 and Titus 2 are two Bible passages used to describe the role of a Quiverfull woman. Many bloggers identify themselves as "Proverbs 31 women" or "Titus 2 women." Titus 2:4-5 urges older women to "admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed" (NKJV).

Quiverfull families. The family's photos indicate a large and comfortable home. The Maxwells travel widely and run Christian homeschool conferences across the Midwest. This blog is written and maintained primarily by the young adult women of the family and matriarch Teri Maxwell; however, patriarch Steve Maxwell and the young adult men contribute from time to time.

- *Large Families on Purpose*

This blog is written by Erika Shupe, a homemaker in Oregon. Unlike other Quiverfull bloggers, Shupe has a degree from a public university in early childhood education and experience as a public school teacher. Unlike the Maxwell family, the Shupes did not create and market homeschool products, run conventions, or organize large family businesses, although recently Shupe began to offer lectures to conferences or retreats on home organizing and de-cluttering. Shupe writes frequently about the challenges of budgeting for a large family and offers tips for living frugally. In January 2017, this family moved to a new blog, *Family Living on Purpose*.

- *Life at Providence Lodge: Large Family Life in the Woods*

Written by Julianne Primer, a homeschooling mother of nine children, this blog was active between October of 2006 and February 2016. Primer lists her occupation as "helpmeet" and emphasizes the family's off-the-grid living. This blog represents the more geographically isolated Quiverfull family. Although Primer narrativizes her life in ways similar to the other bloggers, the style of her writing tends towards the poetic, rather than straight prose.

- *A Wise Woman Builds Up Her Home*

An active blogger since December 2006 and a homeschooling mother of eight, June Fuentes writes for both this blog (her personal blog) and contributes to *Raising Homemakers*, a multi-authored blog focused specifically on teaching daughters to "run a household for the glory of God" and "to journey together in learning how to teach and train our daughters in the homemaking arts" ("About"). She defines the purpose of her personal blog: "I have a heart to see mothers all around the world grasp the vision of biblical motherhood and to see this noble role restored in the 21st century to the glory of God" ("About").

Sampled Posts

In addition to in-depth analysis of the above blogs, I also analyzed Quiverfull conversion or conviction posts from the following blogs: *Raising Arrows*, *My Blessed Home*, *Raising Olives*, *Beyond Blessed 10*, *Are They All Yours?!*,

Making Home, Ladies Against Feminism/Beautiful Womanhood, No Greater Joy, Journey to Homemaker, and Full Hands Full Heart. I found these blogs through web searches and links from the four main blogs. The selection criteria for blogs used primarily for Quiverfull conversion narratives all met criteria 2 and 3, but not all of these blogs were as active as the central blogs. Additionally, the blogs that I analyzed for the conversion posts represent a broader spectrum of Quiverfull. Some, such as Raising Arrows, are written by women whose beliefs and practices fall much closer to mainstream Christian evangelicals, and others represent families whose withdrawal from the secular world and interpretation of female submission are much more extreme, including Rebekah (Pearl) Anast's posts for *No Greater Joy*.

Currently, there is no way to determine how many people follow Quiverfull practices or what might constitute a representative sample of Quiverfull families, or even of Quiverfull bloggers. This group has no formal organization or denominational structure, and loosely defined edges (that is, there are people who are Quiverfull in practice even though they do not claim this title). While Quiverfull weblogs abound, there are also what might be termed 'shadow' Quiverfull families – people who adhere to Quiverfull beliefs privately, and do not write publicly. These families are even harder to find and track. Therefore, while I have gathered diverse Quiverfull experiences, I cannot make generalizations about movement demographics, for instance what an "average" Quiverfull family looks like. Instead, I strive to include blogs that represent a range of Quiverfull experiences across different parts of the United States.

Quiverfull Women in the Blogosphere

Ingersoll points out that gender expectations, norms, and ideologies are a creative and dialectical social process over which no one group has complete control: "Sites of conflict over gender ideology serve as windows into the process of cultural production of a symbol that is both religious and cultural" (*Evangelical Christian Women* 8). That gender is a consistent source of discussion and conflict within and among religious groups is one of the reasons that serious inquiry into digital writing is so important: the blogosphere is a visible site of cultural production, a place where myriad gender roles are performed, explicated, enforced, and manipulated. The Christian women's blogosphere is a lively and diverse place: it is home to high-profile, former-evangelical-turned-progressive-Christian Rachel Held Evans, *Rev Gal Blog Pals* (a bloging for women clergy), a wide range of evangelical bloggers barred from leadership in their own churches or denominations who found a voice and audience online, and women who critique American missionary practices from within Christian traditions, such as *Jamie the Very Worst Missionary*. It is also home to very conservative Christian voices, including Quiverfull bloggers.

The advent of the Christian women's blogosphere has caused conversation, especially among more conservative denominations that do not have female clergy, about whether writing on the internet constitutes "teaching," and from whence the authority to teach others through blogging comes. Some, including Anglican priest and blogger Tish Harrison Warren, write that a lack of institutional accountability (to formal denominational authority, for example) means that women bloggers "can teach any doctrine on earth under the banner of Christian faith and orthodoxy" ("Who's in Charge of the Christian Blogosphere?"). She hopes to see women bloggers, as part of a responsibility to provide theologically rigorous, correct teaching, will embrace "church hierarchy and accountability." However, as blogger Sarah Bessey (author of *Jesus Feminist: An Invitation to Revisit the Bible's View of Women*) notes, the internet gave evangelical women like her a voice and community outside of the usual power structures: "Blogging gave us a way past the gatekeepers of evangelicalism" (Miller, "Women Bloggers Spawn an Evangelical 'Crisis of Authority'"). In the Christian blogosphere, I would argue that authority and responsibility are produced and regulated by the blogging community or sub-communities themselves, with influence from outside forces such as news media, publications, and religious organizations.

The blogosphere is not a stable place: writer's own identities evolve and shift throughout their years of keeping a blog. The delineation between discursive action (writing about doing a feminine task) and real-life action (doing a task) is not necessarily clear. Technological action is sometimes cast as less "real" (consider web and text shorthand "IRL" for "in real life") than is offline life. Yet, writing a blog post about femininity is also a concrete, gendered task. Because of the dispersive nature of the Quiverfull movement, spreading the movement requires both online and offline action. The borders between the two are porous. As Clandinin writes, "Narrative inquiry is about attending to lives, the living of those lives in process and in the making" (141), and about finding resonances among the narrative accounts (143). Narrative accounts written by the bloggers draw on a common set of published texts, which provide some of the resonances between accounts. The web spaces are especially important as this group resists traditional denominational structures, instead creating informal networks centered around parenting, homeschooling, and frugal living. They withdraw from institutions including public schools, claiming that "government schools" interfere with the agency of the family. However, they increase engagement with the secular world through social media and technology, using these spaces as a place for women's voices to write a silenced or unheard narrative into existence. Technology provides a way for these families to withdraw from secular institutions and create a parallel home-based subculture without sacrificing the ability to evangelize.

Justification for Quiverfull lifestyle on blogs centers around “conviction” by God and a sense that the secular world is swiftly moving away from Christ, so withdrawal is the best way to save the children – who will later out-populate other groups. Quiverfull bloggers write the narrative of their families, but they also pick up on and contribute to a movement-wide narrative of rampant feminism and a dangerously secularized America.

Quiverfull women are positioned, inside and outside their communities, in something of an oppression matrix. These bloggers perceive Christians — particularly fundamentalist Christians — as an oppressed minority in the United States. Women within aggressively patriarchal religious movements are marginalized by their own movements (though the movement argues that femininity is liberating); however, the Quiverfull movement preaches that Christians are becoming a marginalized culture in the United States. An outsider committed to gender equality, it is easy for me to see women within the Quiverfull movement as victims of a patriarchal system, oppressed by the men in the movement. Indeed, women who have left the Quiverfull movement argue this as well (Garrison; Ettinger). However, for those inside the movement, it is the “secular” outsider who is the oppressor, and, as women, they believe they are performing a valiant and subversive role.

Narrative weblogs allow Quiverfull women — who are often quite isolated from other similar families — to weave their daily experiences into a meaningful, coherent narrative. These women see life not as a random set of events, but as a specific, God-ordained narrative, and they connect every life challenge and every child to a prayer or lesson from God. Narrative weblogs storify family life and create a framework for interpreting the family’s lack of birth control as a radical commitment to God.

Blogging with a Meek and Quiet Spirit: Gendered Digital Demonstration and the Creation of Collective Rhetoric

While blog posts occasionally address explicit theological/Biblical exegesis or analyze gender roles, blogs are principally a virtual space to perform the feminine role. These blogs show what I call a rhetoric of feminine demonstration. Rather than arguing for a particular way of life through appeals, logic, and analysis, these individuals believe that they can best propagate this movement by performing gender, on- and off-line. Posts center on demonstrative rhetoric, describing feminine activities completed and providing the reader directions for these tasks, such as finding modest clothing, caring for long hair, organizing closets and bedrooms shared by many children, bulk food preparation, and multi-age homeschooling. Bloggers also write about “feminine”

personality characteristics and about submitting to their husbands happily, about pregnancy as a spiritual experience and about being a keeper of the home. Blogs generally have open comment spaces, where other women write “me too” type comments, sharing similar experiences and encouragement. Nancy Baym writes that the internet researcher must recognize that “the internet is woven into the fabric of the rest of life” and that researcher needs to “seek to understand the weaving” (86). This is precisely how Quiverfull women’s weblogs operate: they function as digital spaces to create practical and emotional support for what can be a demanding life with numerous responsibilities, bringing the daily tasks of life at home into a space where others can access and respond. The story that the bloggers create weaves together the internet life and the “live” offline experience: the blog is a space for one to be used to make sense of the other. It is a place to recognize the “why” behind Quiverfull behaviors, for both the writer and the audience. And, the “why” behind Quiverfull behaviors is not something writers arrive at alone: it is a networked process wherein bloggers encounter similar ideas through publications, other blogs, and parachurch ministries. For example, June Fuentes regularly offers Biblical-Womanhood-themed “Linkup and Giveaway” digital events to cross-link blog posts on femininity (“Wise Woman Linkup & Giveaway!”). Engaged by these ideas, women create writing that articulates their own Quiverfull-conversion process.

Because these writers see themselves as fundamentally counter-cultural, they use weblogs to weave a pro-family and pro-children narrative in a world they understand as hostile to both. For example, the blog content on *Titus 2: Encouraging, Exhorting, Equipping Christian Families in Jesus Christ* uses feminine demonstration nearly exclusively, rarely straying into explicit argument or analysis. Every post includes pictures of family activities, highlighting feminine care for children, cooking, and modest outfits. The “Family News” tag is the most frequently used (1,472 times as of July 19, 2017). Occasional blog posts that create explicit arguments, such as the series of posts that exhort men to help their families engage in debt-free living, are generally written by family patriarch Steve Maxwell. Blog posts written by Teri and Sarah Maxwell include a few sentences describing family activities and several pictures of the activities. Thus, they demonstrate and perform gender rather than analyze it.

Therefore, there are two steps to achieving what I call this rhetoric of feminine demonstration. The first step to the rhetoric of feminine demonstration is performance of a very specific, hyper-feminized gender. This genre of blogs occupies the homemaking sphere even on the internet: blogs are a space to perform and record the feminine role in a virtual public space. Blogs have a high percentage of cooking and homemaking posts and post tags, which either showcase the happy home or provide the reader instructions on an

aspect of large-family living (laundry management, selection of Christian reading materials, chore schedules). Some blogs, such as the Maxwell Family blog, contain far more pictures than writing. The pictures show the daily life of their family, emphasizing multi-generational connections, women's homemaking, and family activities. By sharing personal testimony about family living and femininity, Quiverfull women generalize their experience and create a shared, gendered identity. Self-creation through blogging generates and reifies a shared feminine cultural norm. Women are expected to conform to this norm. However, this norm is presented as a liberating choice, an appropriation of feminist discursive moves within a religious space (Harrison and Rowley 58).

The second step is a form of anti-feminist, pro-feminine virtual consciousness-raising. Sowards and Renegar, in "The Rhetorical Functions of Consciousness-Raising in Third-Wave Feminism" note consciousness-raising has evolved

as a response to current rhetorical exigencies [such as personal or social injustices] ... rhetorical responses function as consciousness-raising in the public sphere, through mass media, popular culture, and college classrooms, fostering both public and private dialogue about gender inequities and aiming at self-persuasion" (537).

The same principle holds for Quiverfull women. Rhetorical exigencies Quiverfull bloggers routinely identify include feminism, Satan, and birth control, all of which they believe to be active agents preventing families from living out the Quiverfull mindset. For example, Erika Shupe writes that "The enemy [Satan] does seek to discourage us... He seeks to undermine our parenting, work, and marriage efforts, causes us to feel overwhelmed... to disrupt the unity within our family." She writes that she experienced "a great deal of spiritual attack during the first few months of starting up our blog" and "The enemy does not like what we're writing... but we also realize that he wouldn't care so much if we weren't making a difference for the Lord" ("Family Planning - Surrendering Control to God, Our Story, Part 2 of 2"). Blogging and child-rearing, for Shupe, are both direct ways to work against the devil and to further the work of God. Similarly, on the *Full Hands Full Hearts* blog, Stephanie (screen-name Quivermindedmama) identifies Satan as an anti-Quiverfull force with a direct connection to feminism. She writes that "Feminism tells women that it's okay to have their cake and eat it too. We can have everything we want as women... but we can also reap all the rewards of being men, too." According to this writer, feminism is connected to desires of the flesh: "One look at society as a whole shows a believer that living only to fulfill one's fleshly desires is of Satan, the Great Deceiver, and it leads us neither to true happiness nor God's will for our lives" ("Christianity and Feminism: Are They Biblically Compatible?").

These anti-feminist posts allow women to define a feminist/femininity binary and position a Godly woman as one who embraces femininity.

This femininity is based in action, conforming to a gender hierarchy and enacting wifely submission. Women, who bear the load of child care, home-making, and homeschooling, consistently write that their work is 'easier' than that of the husband: they have less responsibility and stress through submission. In "Wives, Submit to Your Husbands," Quivermindedmama writes that God designates some roles for men, and some for women: "When I think about it, I really would not want my husband's role. I would not want to be accountable to the Lord for our family. It's much easier to be the wife, to support my husband, and to hit my knees and pray for him when he really struggles." Similarly, Shupe found herself in support of Quiverfull aims long before her husband, yet she writes,

pressuring and Bible-thumping my husband was a mistake girls; I don't recommend it... my talking and talking (nagging, really, even though I did it with a smile) did not serve me well. Ultimately I did begin praying and stopped talking ("Family Planning - Surrendering Control to God, Part 1 of 2").

The bloggers often recognize a desire to be a "controlling woman" but categorize this as a manifestation of Satan and a rejection of God-ordained gender roles. These weblogs that demonstrate the feminine sphere forward the argument that women are most fulfilled when they perform the role which God intended for them – what the movement calls a "helpmeet." This is the rhetoric of feminine demonstration's ultimate argument: women are not fulfilled, and are not doing God's will, until they are at home raising children. In a 2012 post titled "Femininity," blogger Julianne Primer writes, "As the darkness of sin and evil seem to be sweeping across our nation, a thinking woman must wonder; what can I possibly do about it? You can be a city set on a hill... just by being who God created you to be." She writes that "Biblical femininity" is the answer to such problems as poverty and violence. Her reflection on femininity as an answer to social problems is interspersed with pictures of young daughters in handmade clothes, completing homekeeping tasks. "As we set forth to cultivate femininity in our homes, let us think not only of ourselves, but of the darkness of the nation creeping in around us. We are, in part, the answer." Similarly, Fuentes writes that feminists "had reached outside the walls of their influence to have a hand in tearing down other's homes" and that the answer is to embrace that God has called them to family and home life ("Destructive Feminist Influence"). Thus, domestic actions inside the home are understood to have real, concrete implications for a spiritual and cultural fight against feminism.

Bloggers' reflections on domestic actions are highly descriptive and directional, a demonstration of knowing and enacting womanly knowledge, spreading discursive action which parallels and reflects domestic non-discursive action and thus creates and contributes to collective rhetoric. Dubriwny writes that a collective rhetoric occurs with "the deployment of an experiential epistemology" (401). This experiential epistemology is empowering because participants are encouraged to rely on their own perceptions of reality, especially when those realities differ from dominant model. Quiverfull women's experiential epistemology empowers them to see the world through a pro-natalist lens and cast their domestic choices as actions with spiritual and political implications. For people in this movement, a woman's value lies in bearing and caring for children, and the web-based discursive action of bloggers reifies this epistemological frame. An outsider, however, may see the Quiverfull woman's own perceptions of the world as dangerous and disconnected from mainstream reality. Indeed, ex-Quiverfull bloggers often cite exactly this as they reflect on their own exit from the movement. Vyckie Garrison writes that when she first left her Quiverfull family and entered a women's domestic violence shelter, she did not have the language necessary to describe what happened to her as abuse because the language of Christian patriarchy and submission were the only vocabulary she had to describe her marriage and family ("How Playing Good Christian Wife Almost Killed Me"). Hannah Ettinger, who runs a blog chronicling her own escape from a Quiverfull family and ongoing analysis of Christian patriarchy, Quiverfull, modesty culture, and fundamentalism, offers space on her blog for other young women who grew up Quiverfull and left to tell their stories. Similarly, these women's stories often indicate isolation from people outside immediate family, extreme parental control, medical neglect, and physical abuse. The exit from their Quiverfull families happens through physical intervention on the part of other family members who have left (such as older siblings), grandparents, or concerned friends and neighbors (Ettinger "Quiverfull/Christian Patriarchy Rescue: Jennifer's Story" and "Quiverfull Escape: Sarah's Story"). The language of the movement prevents some women from describing abusive relationships as such, casting them instead as appropriately submissive and patriarchal.

While the feminist movement's deployment of experiential epistemology has often focused on disrupting dominant patriarchal narratives and using discourse as a mode of liberation, the Quiverfull movement's effective use of experiential epistemology demonstrates that such a rhetorical move is not inherently liberating. In fact, it is deployed in ways that foster gender inequality. The weblogs' intentions are transformative and create a web-based discursive reality that departs from available secular options. As Dubriwny writes, "Specifically, a collective rhetoric drawing upon an experiential epistemology

should be transformative for all participants, for it is through the creation of a 'social reality' through discursive structures that experiences gain meaning" (401). Persuasion within the Quiverfull movement — and within collective rhetoric generally — happens not through argumentative models of persuasion, but through "the creation of situations in which the telling of individual experiences makes possible a reframing of one's understanding of the world" (396). In a 2010 post from *Life at Providence Lodge*, blogger Julianne Primer narrativizes her childbearing experience through the frame of a Quiverfull journey: "I have a confession to make as I begin. Although being quiver full has always been my conviction, it has not always been my heart" she writes. She alternates intimate details of childbirth and miscarriage with notes about her own feelings about children, changing from tired and frustrated to joyful. Attempts to control her fertility, she interprets as direct rebellion against God. Tellingly, she states, after a miscarriage "Here was the baby I had not wanted, gone from my womb and into the arms of Jesus. His little body testament that God is God, and I am not... I knew I was called of God to have babies... I have been saved from myself through childbirth ("My Journey to Becoming Quiverfull"). Her body, she feels, is not hers to control.

Fundamentally, collective rhetoric also blurs the line between creator and audience, and experiences are validated through participation in the collective rhetoric. While on a blog, though the primary creator and the primary audience seem clear, both are creators of the collective rhetoric, through writing, commenting, reading, circulating, and recirculating. Blog writers are both experiencing and shaping collective rhetoric as they write, framing experience for both self-persuasion and audience persuasion. Rhetoric is geared towards participation in both the digital and home sphere. The prevalence of instructional posts calls the readers to try things at home, as well as to share their own homemaking, homeschooling, and child-rearing wisdom for the benefit of the greater collective.

Once a Quiverfull woman has created a narrative weblog, she then contributes to a collective narrative that forwards a specific ideology. When she virtually performs gender and raises the feminine consciousness through web writing, she participates in building and reifying a collective sense of identity. Through these two steps of a rhetoric of demonstration, Quiverfull women's posts build a collective rhetoric through both the actual writing or articulating of experience, but also through the linking and recirculation of posts among networks of bloggers. Through a network of links and references among different blogs, it is possible to see collective rhetoric not only as something that happens within long-standing, formally-organized groups, but also as a performance that when enacted, creates and reifies collective-defining behavior by narrating family and the feminine as the opposite of feminism and secularism.

Overlapping individual experiences narrated in discursively similar ways lends a thickness to the Quiverfull blogosphere: it is quickly clear what is acceptable and what is unacceptable, and bloggers rarely stray from the movement's narrative. While each individual blog is typically written chronologically (with occasional flashbacks), the narrative of the movement is not necessarily linear, but instead one wherein authors use the (sometimes imagined) past to make sense of their present actions.

Rhetorical Pastpresents: Narrative Evolution among Quiverfull Blogging Families

Both the workings of these blogs and the subsequent construction of gender ideology in this movement can be theorized as *pastpresents*. Katie King defines "pastpresents" as "implosions across discursive and other realms... palpable evidence that the past and the present cannot be purified from each other: they confront me in each experimental historiography with interruptions, obstacles, new/old forms of organization, bridges, shifts in direction, and spinning dynamics" (459). Pasts and presents "mutually construct each other," and pastpresents are important for making knowledge (*Networked Reenactments* 12). Knowledge valued by communities is not necessarily newly produced or invented by that community; instead, a community's valued knowledge may be reusing or reframing ideas from the past in present actions. For example, the Quiverfull woman as a performed identity is a kind of past-present: it depends on a romantic rewriting of ideal womanhood based on an imagined past "Biblical" woman combined with tropes of domesticity. The justification for having large numbers of children rests in part on the historicization of America as once a "Christian" nation, to which this movement believes it should return. The actions of the present depend on a specific construction of the past and a desire for a pro-natalist and fundamentalist future America. Then, women live in the present as though that past is real and that future is coming, incorporating those constructions into daily actions. The reader of a blog is also in a moment of pastpresent, reliving the blog's narrative at a moment in the present – operating "amid a pastiche of time frames" (6).

Understanding these blogs as pastpresents allows readers to trace where authoritative knowledge is centered, and to trace how these women present alternative knowledge "where a contrast of knowledge against knowledge alters their value" (King 17). Feminine knowledge is held up in contrast to feminist knowledge, and the instructions for these kinds of activities are passed from woman to woman via web writing. DeRogatis notes, too, that this movement relies on women to pass knowledge to other women, through Titus 2 and Biblical Womanhood ministries (110). The alternative knowledges (feminine,

domestic) that these bloggers emphasize are meant for blog readers to use, not to simply consume: rhetoric of feminine demonstration is successful when it inspires further propagation of Quiverfull behavior. The knowledge of how to be a Proverbs 31 and Titus 2 feminine woman is taught and circulated through these blogs, in King's terms "newly made and remade" (17). The process of moving from a place of not knowing how to be a faithful Quiverfull woman and not doing, to a place of remaking and performing feminine demonstration is chronicled through the span of a Quiverfull woman's blog. For example, the "Exemplary Women" tag from *Life at Providence Lodge* chronicles admiration of a woman who knits socks, hats, and gloves for the writer's children. Primer writes of her own knitting journey, her desire to learn focused on being able to provide knitted goods for her family. Knitting here is not for fun or for making things for herself; instead it is to "make steps towards being kind, gracious, industrious and generous like the knitter" ("Betsy Knits"). Similarly, a post on family heirloom quilts casts sewing as indicative of character, care for family, and industriousness, rather than hobby or artistry ("Vintage Quilt"). Thus, domestic tasks are given eternal, spiritual, and familial importance. Although the how-to of these knowledges is not limited to the Quiverfull movement (feminists knit too), it is the spiritual, gendered purpose behind these acts that casts them as alternative, Biblical, feminine knowledges that in their uptake and propagation work against secular feminism. Through writing, the bloggers revitalize the knowledge of past women, perform in the present, preserve it for future readers, and believe that these actions have eternal ramifications.

One way to examine pastpresents among this movement's weblog world is by tracing the co-development of Quiverfull and ex-Quiverfull blogging. This shows the interruptions and meeting points each inserts into the development of the opposing narrative. There are points of intersection (i.e., the *Steadfast Daughters in a Quivering World* blog, a direct answer to ex-Quiverfull blog *Quivering Daughters*) between the two narratives. News stories, such as that of Joshua Duggar's sexual assault history, interrupt the usual writing on popular Quiverfull blogs, such as *Raising Arrows* ("You Can't Keep Sin Out"). This causes a brief break in the family narrative and an unusual level of engagement with the secular world – a momentary implosion into another realm. While ex-Quiverfull bloggers also address this issue, doing so does not rupture the narrative of their blogs; instead, it fits into their narratives that show Quiverfull as a dangerous world for women and children. More recently, Quiverfull blog writers including Roberts and Shupe have shifted their blog directions towards homeschooling or large-family living, dropping the name "Quiverfull" altogether, possibly in response to the increased, critical media attention.

An example of such a pastpresent is the four-post Quiverfull conversion narrative found on the *Raising Arrows* blog. In 2006, Quiverfull mother Amy

Roberts wrote this sequence of posts narrativizing her conversion to the Quiverfull mindset. In these posts, Roberts narrates an ongoing conversation with God: “I sat there in front of my computer in the wee hours of the night and prayed and cried—not because I repentant, but because I didn’t want this conviction. I was the last person who needed to have more babies!” (*sic*, “Becoming Quiverfull Part 1”). Ten years later, she edited the first post, inserting a paragraph in blue text that reads in part, “the term ‘quiverfull’ has become tainted with horrendous stories of abuse and families in shambles.” She urges readers not to make the number of children an “idol” (“Becoming Quiverfull Part 1”). She revisits her continually developing Quiverfull identity, reflecting on the changes in public discourse relative to the stability of her persuasions about birth control, children, and God. The Quiverfull-identified past is not pure: public attention to Quiverfull – articles in mainstream publications, the writings of ex-Quiverfull women, and sexual misconduct by high-profile men in the movement – has created a situation wherein Roberts, though she continues the rhetoric of feminine demonstration, engages in ongoing revision in how she frames formal identification with broader religious movements.

In part two of her 2006 conversion narrative, Roberts (like Shupe) urges her readers to expect God to “convict” the husband in Quiverfull conversions, and to avoid nagging or persuading the husband toward this goal. She writes that there is a God-ordained order for family decisions: husband first, then wife. However, key in Robert’s conversion narrative is the presence of Quiverfull web communities, *Mothers of Many Young Siblings* (now defunct) and the *Quiverfull Digest* specifically (“Becoming Quiverfull Part 2”). These groups modeled movement behaviors and family norms, inspiring her to adhere to abstinence from family-planning measures and wifely submission practices. Quiverfull vocabulary and discursive moves, such as Bible verse citation and descriptions of conversations with God, mark this narrative sequence as a conversion or conviction story. Roberts’ blog is widely-read and linked by other Quiverfull blogs, and she has published e-books and homeschooling materials. Among her blog and linked/networked companion blogs, posts use the same language and movement-specific vocabulary, the same Bible verses, and the same narrative structures. Through reading, commenting, and reblogging, writers effectively pass on to new members specific discursive structures as ways to describe and present their daily activities in an online space. Because these blogs are searchable, linked, and long-lasting, readers do not have to “enter” this lifestyle at the same point as others: access to blogs means that the narratives can persuade others to join this movement repeatedly, without the usual face-to-face interaction conversion requires. Past narratives, once up on the blog, are read and applied in the present lives of other women.

Writers whose practices shift cannot escape the narratives they have created, another form of pastpresent in the Quiverfull blogosphere. In January 2017, the Shupe family blog moved to *Family Living on Purpose*.² This new blog home, from a fairly well-known blogger, shows evolution in conformity to Quiverfull behaviors. Shupe's family experienced some major changes, including transitioning their elementary and middle-school-age children to public school as of Fall 2016 ("A Public School Stay-at-Home Mom - Time Management, On Purpose"). Their high-school-age children are completing their education at home ("Homeschooling High School, or Supplementing Public School"). This blog (unlike the previous one) includes multimedia elements and a way to contact Erika Shupe for speaking events. While Shupe now identifies as evangelical (rather than fundamentalist), Shupe's first years of blogging show close conformity, in both behaviors and discursive moves, to Quiverfull rhetoric of demonstration. For instance, the family had originally committed to being dresses-and-skirts-only for women ("Modest Dress: The Heart of the Issue Surrounding Clothing, Sexuality & Biblical Femininity"), but more recent pictures show daughters in pants. The new blog's posts continue a focus on the how-to of large family life, but do not have as much explicitly religious content. Shupe indicates that the impetus to shift to public school was the result of changing life circumstances, but declined to articulate further although readers requested more information. While this does not necessarily mean that the Shupes, for instance, have changed their beliefs about large family living or gender roles, their children will have a fundamentally different coming-of-age experience than the children of the other bloggers included here, with far more contact with a religiously and ideologically diverse public, especially given their West Coast locale.

This transition to public school was something of a surprise, given the original blog's emphasis on homeschooling, including a commitment to "continue homeschooling through high school (starting this year) and continuing education college courses - all from home" (Shupe, "Continuing the Vision - What Large Families On Purpose Is...And What It Isn't.") In the comments on her public school blog, Shupe received some comments from long-time blog readers who quoted some of her earlier posts about the value of Christian

2 This blog became inactive in October 2017. All content has been removed from the URL for *Family Living on Purpose*.

homeschooling — perhaps a form of border-policing³. However, many more commenters left notes of support, including their own transitions from homeschooling to public school or private Christian schooling. Furthermore, the comments on this new blog demonstrate that there are other families who also transition from homeschooling to public school. Even on this new blog, which has a less intensely religious tone – something nearer to a mainstream mom blog – commenters frequently reference earlier blog posts expressing surprise and sometimes discomfort with this change that they read as quite radical. Here, Shupe’s past writing (though no longer easily accessible on her former blog) has been preserved and taken to heart by her readers, who use quotes and references to push Shupe to give more details about her current family situation and current beliefs and practices. *Family Life on Purpose* shows both the quieter, moderating shifts among some Quiverfull families (including the commenters who mention considering public school) as well as the reaction of many true believers when a family of relative prominence has a public change in practice.

Conclusion: Patriarchy, Isolation, and the Limits of Voice

Being a Quiverfull woman is a gender performance that is physically and mentally taxing, and can become dangerous (Garrison; Ettinger). Women who adhere to these practices are often in a near-constant state of pregnancy and nursing, some for twenty years. Quiverfull families often live on a small income and refuse government assistance (Joyce 139). Some, like Primer, live off-the-grid. Women typically have complete responsibility for home care, juggling the roles of homeschool teacher, homemaker, mother, mentor (to other women), and wife. To survive this demanding environment, women must have a strong sense that God deeply values this way of life. As Ingersoll notes, “In this world, ideological neutrality is impossible” (*Building God’s Kingdom* 112). Birth control is inherently evil as it seeks to control what Quiverfull followers understand as God’s choice. Therefore, activities like bearing children and homeschooling have a profound divine purpose for these families. A powerful sense of cosmic purpose drives Quiverfull ideology.

3 Interestingly, she also received this comment: “I’m about as far away from you lifestyle-wise as a person can get: liberal, atheist, large city-dweller, career woman, no children. That said, I love reading your blog and find it fascinating how you approach family and motherhood and stay so organized. Hats off to you and here’s recognizing talent, regards of beliefs or differences.”

While a networked collective rhetoric enacted through weblog writing can provide a space for women's voices within a patriarchal movement, it is still a space that is easily compromised. In 2009, Joyce wrote an article for *Religion Dispatches* about a Quiverfull woman, Carri Chmielewski, who blogged about her commitment to unassisted homebirth throughout her increasingly difficult and complicated pregnancy with her ninth child. On her blog, Chmielewski wrote, "God never meant for man (Pregnant Women) to surrender himself (herself) to the total control of man (dr./technology, etc.) God considers that idolatry. We are to surrender ourselves to GOD" (qtd. in Joyce). Three weeks past her due date, Chmielewski gave birth and experienced amniotic fluid embolus. Her child died, and she survived in critical condition. Quiverfull critics, and indeed some Quiverfull sympathizers, accuse Chmielewski's husband of hiding and deleting much of her writing; now, her long-running blog is no longer available for general readers. Blogging as a rhetorical intervention failed, both as a record of Chmielewski's experience, and as a way for others to find and help her. Chmielewski signed her blog entries "Homeschooler, Homebirther, Homechurcher," and Quiverfull critics Joyce and Garrison argue that this description and her blog narrative are "an apt summary of the lifestyle: one of deeply interwoven home industries, where a family is reliant on itself to as great an extent as possible, but ultimately always reliant on God" (Joyce, "My Womb for God's Purposes") While many Quiverfull families do not go to such extremes in homebirth, isolation — especially of women and children — is a real and pervasive issue.

Chmielewski's story was actively discussed on blogs and forums (such as the *Free Jinger Forum*) critical of the Quiverfull movement; visible ex-Quiverfull writer Vycki Garrison even wrote an open letter to Chmielewski, calling her to reconsider her beliefs. Despite such discursive intervention and significant conversation about Chmielewski, there is no record available that documents success of an intervention. There is no indication available that Chmielewski read the open letter. Commenters on Chmielewski's blog urged her to get medical attention. A non-Quiverfull blogger who followed Chmielewski's blog wrote, "Some of us gently posted on her comments, telling Carri we were worried for her, urging her to get medical care and to pray for wisdom over this matter" but "She took those as 'negative' words that let Satan in" (Calulu). Discursive intervention, both direct or indirect, was ineffective. While readers were able to identify the small Midwestern town where Chmielewski resided, there is no internet record as to whether anyone tried non-discursive interventions, such as traveling to her, or calling child protective services. In typical Quiverfull writing, the daily off-line performance of gender and the on-line performance of gender are closely aligned, but when Quiverfull practice becomes immediately dangerous to a particular blogger (as happened with

Chmielewski's pregnancy), online communities seem unable to help via discursive means. Blog and forum followers witnessed Chmielewski's husband erase posts and conversations about her pregnancy; eventually, all of her internet writing was thoroughly deleted and scrubbed even from internet records such as the Wayback Machine on the Internet Archive. When blogs are compromised by those inside the movement who wish to silence dissent or hide danger, rhetorical erasure occurs and women's voices are shut down.

Chmielewski's story is important to individuals who evaluate the implications of following Quiverfull because it demonstrates the power this movement's ideology can hold over the minds of its followers – though not over all of its followers, as shown by Shupe and Roberts, both of whom have moderated their views and practices over the course of their blogging years. What each of these blogs makes clear, however, is that conversion and fidelity to this sort of fundamentalist behavior does not require a person to physically encounter a charismatic leader and relocate themselves and their families to a compound, separated from the world. Instead, Quiverfull shows that such behavior can spread through internet discourse and create fervor for individuals inside a movement even when there is no immediately present community. Additionally, it shows that while internet discourse is central to how people enter this ideology, targeted, personalized internet-based discursive intervention may not help original members to leave the movement, or even to moderate their behaviors and engage in self-advocacy. It may be that one's geographic location (large, West-Coast city vs. rural Midwest) and educational access (such as a college degree, pre-Quiverfull conversion) are moderating factors in the extent to which a family embraces the more isolationist aspects of Quiverfull. Just as there is no way to count the number of Quiverfull adherents, there is no way to know how many, or what percentage, eventually abandon the movement.

As King writes, "our visions of pasts and futures create our presents" (460) – rhetorically speaking, a Quiverfull present requires an idealized, Biblical past, and a desire for a future America populated by patriarchal families with submissive women. Entrenched, richly-networked fundamentalist internet media reinforces the worldview that Quiverfull weblogs create and circulate. Those who have left or moderated their practice show at least some willingness to question this vision of the past and this desire for the future, and the practical effects these past and future visions have on their experience of the present.

Younger, first-generation Quiverfull teens and young adults (those who grew up with Quiverfull parents and are part of the millennial generation) questioning their upbringing use online ex-Quiverfull communities to connect with other doubters and to leave abusive or oppressive families. Online community helps build support networks and self-advocacy skills. For example,

Homeschoolers Anonymous is an internet community central to ex-Quiverfull young adults. These blogs often use the same strategies of experiential epistemology and rhetoric of demonstration, albeit for very different purposes, emphasizing experiences erased by pro-Quiverfull collective rhetorics. Ex-Quiverfull writing offers a window into the darker side of Quiverfull experiences – a reminder that what Quiverfull blogs showcase is never the whole story.

This movement is not likely to become a widespread and central part of American Christianity, and indeed the label (though not the gender ideology) seems to be waning. While it can be easy to discount small, non-conformist religious movements, a movement's cultural impact can be disproportionate to its size because it contributes to a larger national discourse that is at best apathetic towards the relevance of feminism to the twenty-first century and much more often hostile. Since this population cannot be counted, and since the movement resists traditional institutionalization, the best way to measure the spread and influence of Quiverfull ideas is by the continued propagation of its media, publications, and web writings, and by the cultural impact these ideas have – especially when it comes to legislative issues such as LGBTQ rights, equal pay, and reproductive access.⁴ Understanding the ways that rhetorical strategies developed by feminist movements are at work in Quiverfull (and similar religious movements) is key to understanding the continued propagation and persuasiveness of fundamentalist Christian gender ideology in the twenty-first century.

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4 See for example "Listen to Michelle Duggar's Anti-anti-discrimination Robocall" from the *Washington Post* in 2014 – an example of Quiverfull activism that reached national media.

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About the Author

Rebekah Sims is a doctoral student in rhetoric and composition at Purdue University. Her research interests include curriculum development, writing program evaluation, and religious practices in digital spaces.