"I'm No Donna Reed"

Postfeminist Rhetoric in Christian At-Home Daughterhood Texts

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ABSTRACT

In 2010, media outlets began to buzz about a trend among young conservative Christian women—a rise in at-home daughterhood, a practice in which women forgo college and paid work in favor of staying at home and honing their homemaking skills until marriage. These reports suggested that the practice was out to "turn back the clock on gender equality" and declare, "In your face, feminism!" While these accounts frame at-home daughterhood as a rejection of feminism, I suggest that advocates actually employ postfeminist strategies to make the practice palatable to contemporary women. My argument uses critiques of postfeminism to advance historical and sociological debates about the complicated role of feminism in conservative Christianity. Analyzing texts from parenting workshops and promotional materials, I find proponents acknowledge social progress on gender equity issues, but dismiss feminist politics through tactics of humor and depoliticization.

KEYWORDS

Christian patriarchy movement, feminist identity, homeschool, postfeminism, religion

At the 2010 Christian Home Educators of Ohio convention, attendees fill the rows of seats set up for Janis Garcia's presentation titled "Training Our Daughters to be Keepers at Home." The presenter chats with audience members about her family, and when she tells a young mother in the front row that she has twin twenty-three-year-old daughters, the woman, whose own son and daughter are tucked closely against her, expresses sympathy for Janis, whose children, she assumes, will soon be leaving home. But Janis's daughters have no immediate plans to leave the nest and live independently of their parents. In fact, over the course of her presentation, Janis proudly shares with the audience that her daughters, who are homeschool graduates, do not work outside of the home for pay, did not pursue education after high school, do not have driver's licenses, and have no immediate plans to acquire them. Rather than

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pursuing the milestones others believe would prepare them for autonomous adulthood, the Garcias believe that God's plan is for daughters to remain under their father's protection and his roof until the day they marry, when his banner of authority will be passed to their husbands (Botkin and Botkin 2005). This belief is typical in families that practice at-home daughterhood. The practice, which began to gain popularity in the early 2000s (McGalliard 2010), suggests that single young Christian women eschew college and paid work outside of the home and, instead, spend their days perfecting their homemaking skills, helping their fathers with business or ministry tasks, or establishing an enterprising home-based business of their own. Janis, who says she was "raised at the high point of women's lib" emphasizes that housework is not her daughters' primary role at home; in fact she jokes, "I'm no Donna Reed" when it comes to her own homemaking. The joking reference to Reed, whose American television show is synonymous with the saccharine, selfless, 1950s housewife stereotype, suggests that Garcia does not view herself as a paragon of housekeeping. But, because Garcia and her husband are certain their daughters will one day be at-home wives and mothers, the family is not spending money on college; the girls spend their time writing and publishing online homeschool lesson plans and mastering household management tasks.

Despite Garcia's protest that she is no Donna Reed, popular media representations of the practice portray at-home daughterhood as anachronistic and as a backlash against feminism (McGalliard 2010; Adams 2010; Stein 2010). Admittedly, advocates of this practice clearly do not endorse feminism; they often vocally distance themselves from it (Botkin and Botkin 2007). However, my analysis challenges the prevailing view amongst proponents and opponents of the practice who see at-home daughterhood as being simply anti-feminist. Instead, I argue at-home daughter rhetoric portrays a postfeminist voice, one that suggests that proponents are aware of the need to address feminist concerns about the practice while, at the same time, dismissing feminist politics. In order to make this movement legible to contemporary women, advocates employ postfeminist strategies to suggest that they do, in fact, value women, while at the same time, following McRobbie, subtly "undoing" (2004: 3) feminism through humor and, following Stacey and Gerard (1990) doing so through depoliticization. This postfeminist stance makes at-home daughterhood more palatable to a generation that takes for granted many feminist gains. Scholarship in the sociology and history of religion has established that conservative Christian communities have complex relationships with feminism (Bartkowski 1999; Gallagher 2003; Griffith 1997; Stacey and Gerard 1990). My analysis furthers this discussion by using

concepts from feminist cultural studies and girlhood studies to reveal how a conservative Christian movement works to subtly dismiss feminism.

Methodology

This study is part of a project that examines expectations about romance, purity, and transitions to adulthood amongst young conservative Christian women, many of whom are committed to the related practices of at-home daughterhood and contemporary Christian courtship. Such courtship, which is an alternative to dating or a pattern for romantic, but chaste relationships, is the practice of choice for at-home daughters and many other conservative young Christian adults committed to sexual abstinence. My research involves analysis of a dozen self-help books and other material (including films, websites, magazines, and youth group curricula) aimed at promoting chastity and modesty for young adults. I also interviewed at length four authors of books and curricula that promote abstinence, four couples who had courted and married, and half a dozen single young women committed to purity and chastity. Because most families who embrace at-home daughterhood and courtship also homeschool their children, I conducted focused ethnographic research at homeschool conventions at which I attended workshops on romance, parenting, and education for young adults. I also did research at retreats for young women hosted by some of the most popular figures writing and speaking about purity, chastity, and romance, including Leslie Ludy's "Set Apart Girl" retreat in Colorado and Sarah Mally's "Strong in the Lord" and "Radiant Purity" conferences in Iowa. It was at one of the homeschool conventions that I attended Janis Garcia's "Keepers of the Home" presentation. I later read Anna Sofia and Elizabeth Botkin's *So Much More* (2005) and watched their film *The Return of the Daughters: A Vision of Victory for the Single Women of the 21st Century* (hereafter called *The Return)* (2007). I have chosen these three texts as the centerpieces of this analysis because at-home daughterhood (rather than purity) is the central message in each and because they are representative of the commonly accepted norms of the practice.

Who Are the Daughters?

Sisters Anna Sofia and Elizabeth Botkin, who are single young adult daughters from a well-known family in the subculture of Christian homeschooling,

are considered the most prominent advocates of at-home daughterhood (McGalliard 2010). In addition to their 2005 book *So Much More: The Remarkable Influence of Visionary Daughters on the Kingdom of God*, they starred in and produced the 2007 film, *The Return.* The hour-long film is produced and sold through their family's ambitiously titled publishing ministry, "The Western Conservatory of the Arts and Sciences." The film is presented in documentary style, with the two sisters serving as narrators and experts on the practice of at-home daughterhood. They never actually use that moniker, however. The sisters say it was opponents of their ideas who actually started calling the practice at-home daughterhood. Anna Sofia and Elizabeth claim that, rather than promoting a movement, they are simply conveying God's principles for single young women, the most prominent of which is the expectation that women submit to God and to familial male authority (Botkin and Botkin 2014). While they maintain that they are not promoting strict rules or advocating a trend or movement, their film suggests otherwise. *The Return* features vignettes of four families who seem to have been carefully chosen to represent a spectrum of racial and class identities. But despite their diversity, the families' stories are remarkably similar. Each features a twenty-something daughter who lives at home with her parents and assists her father with his business or ministry. Most of the women are in long skirts, have long hair and use subtle make-up, and most of them talk at length about their fathers. The Botkin sisters (who were in their early twenties at the time of the film's release) wear long black skirts and conservative button-down shirts. They provide commentary at the beginning of the film and introduce each vignette.

Beyond the book (that describes largely what the authors think is a daughter's proper role in the family, especially in relation to her father) and the film, the sisters have a website[1] that features blog posts, audio files, and links to their products, including *The Return.* Notably, their book *So Much More* is not listed. In an audio file on the website titled "It's Not About Staying at Home," the sisters attempt to distance themselves from the book, from the name "at-home daughterhood," and from the reputation that the practice they are promoting is all about things a girl cannot do (like go to college or work, for example.) However, in "It's Not About Staying at Home" Anna Sofia and Elizabeth rehash, largely, the same principles from the book and the film and also imply that going to college away from home in a "defiling"[2] environment is probably not a good idea and that living at home with your father probably is (Botkin and Botkin 2014). The sisters' attempt to distance themselves from certain labels and reputations is one example that

suggests proponents of at-home daughterhood are aware that they must avoid being seen as sexist if they want their values to be taken seriously

As Baumgardner and Richards (2000) noted, young American women of Anna Sofia and Elizabeth Botkin's age grow up with a certain expectation of equality born of the successes of the first and second waves of American feminism, which established the rights of women to vote and which made progress toward reproductive freedom and workplace equality. "For our generation, feminism is like fluoride. We scarcely notice that we have it—it's simply in the water" (17). Feminist awareness may even be moving to the foreground, thanks to a string of celebrity feminist identifications. Beyoncé, Taylor Swift, and Emma Watson of Harry Potter fame recently all outed themselves as feminists. But for every popular culture victory, Andi Zeisler (2016), co-founder of the feminist *Bitch* media, notes that there is a policy defeat for women or girls. These authors do not suggest that equality exists in all realms, or equally for all women and girls, nor do they argue that the need for feminist interventions is over. In fact, they are invested in recruiting young women to take up feminist causes. However, they do argue that whether women acknowledge it or not, "feminism is out there, tucked into our daily acts of righteousness and self-respect" (Baumgardner and Richards 2000: 17), and feminist identification is on the rise, though some say it reflects a kind of "marketplace feminism," one "that positions [feminism] as a cool, fun, accessible identity that anyone can adopt" (Zeisler 2016: xiii). It is against this background of feminist history and progress that proponents of at-home daughterhood make their case for girls to opt out of going away to college or pursuing a career away from home.

Literature scholar Toril Moi is credited with using the term postfeminism in the 1985 feminist literary primer *Sexual/Textual Politics*. The term has since been defined in many ways from simply indicating a time after feminism, a time when feminist progress can be taken for granted, to suggesting a kind of compromised feminism, one that advocates gender equity, but distances itself from the name feminism, a label which has been the subject of a virulent backlash on the one hand (Stacey and Gerard 1990; McRobbie 2004; Gerhard 2005;) and commodification on the other (Zeisler 2016).

Religious Roots

At-home daughterhood is one of several practices, including courtship, homeschooling and Quiverfull that fall under an umbrella popularly known

as the Christian Patriarchy Movement. Journalist Kathyrn Joyce describes Quiverfull as a belief system in which families forgo birth control in favor of letting married sex "result in as many children as God wants to bless [a woman] with" (2009: ix). There is significant overlap between Quiverfull, homeschooling,[3] courtship, and at-home daughterhood, and they all tend to promote a conservative, complementarian gender ideology in which men, as fathers and husbands, are seen to be leaders and providers and women are helpmeets charged with caring for the home and family (Joyce 2009).

While the concept behind the Christian Patriarchy Movement is useful as a political tool for identifying patriarchal ideologies, I do not use this term. This term frames Quiverfull, homeschooling, courtship, and at-home daughterhood as simply being anti-feminist when I argue that their rhetoric is actually postfeminist. In addition, the term Christian Patriarchy Movement is misleading because it is not a term with which believers themselves identify. Instead, families might identify as conservative, fundamentalist or even simply Christian. Finally, the term Christian Patriarchy Movement elides variations in each practice and suggests a simple coherence amongst these practices which does not exist in reality. It is not guaranteed that a family that practices one of these elements engages in all of them, or that they practice them with the same enthusiasm and consistency that proponents advocate. For example, many of the young women who participated in my research were homeschool graduates and came from large families, but they worked for pay or went away to college while single and could not be classified as at-home daughters.

With these caveats established, I acknowledge that Quiverfull, homeschooling, courtship, and at-home daughterhood share common values, discourses and theological roots (Joyce 2009). They can all be traced back to a cluster of theological frameworks that have recently been sensationalized in popular media,[4] both for their complementarian gender ideals and, more recently, because of scandal at the top levels of Vision Forum,[5] a leading homeschool curriculum distributor. Christian Reconstructionism, Reformed Theology, and a theology known popularly as Dominionism all have theological roots in Calvinism, which strongly emphasizes the notion of God's sovereignty and interest in all areas of a believer's life (Joyce 2009). In addition, these ideas have influenced the practices of Quiverfull, homeschooling, courtship, and at-home daughterhood, which are then popularized through networks of homeschool families and through curricula and other materials. A full history of each of these concepts is outside the scope of this article, but in order to make sense of at-home daughterhood, it is crucial to under-

stand that complementarian gender ideology and an emphasis on the father-led nuclear family are central to each.[6] It is also difficult to pinpoint a single label for this spectrum of Christian believers. While homeschool materials circulate ideas with roots in Reconstructionism and Dominionism, young adults would be more likely to identify with figures like the Botkins and to call themselves Christian than to label themselves as Recontructionists. For these reasons, I use terms such as proponents or advocates of these practices or believers or conservative Christians.[7]

"In Your Face, Feminists!"

The term at-home daughterhood was coined in 2010 in an article published in the feminist magazine *Bitch*. The article, "House Proud: The Troubling Rise of Stay-at-home Daughters," lit up the blogosphere with buzz about the puzzling practice. Blogs in both the pro- and anti-at-home daughter camp hashed out the piece as did online news outlets like Jezebel and the websites for *Christianity Today* and *Time* magazine (Adams 2010; Prior 2010; Stein 2010). The tone of author Gina McGalliard's original piece framed at-home daughterhood as an "anachronistic" (2010: n.p.) feminist backlash, and William Lee Adams in the lead for his *Time* magazine post, declared, "In your face, feminists!" This reaction is not surprising. After all, the Botkin sisters (2007) clearly position themselves in opposition to what they understand as the mainstream, secular or "feminist" culture that they blame for destroying American families in their film.

In the film's introduction, the sisters blame feminist culture for taking single girls out of the family home, which they believe God designed as the center of religious and social life. At the same time, the fathers who are profiled in *The Return* emphasize the role of protector that they play in their daughters' lives. One father, Jay Valenti, a successful middle-aged Louisiana home builder, wonders aloud why men in his position would raise their daughters to college age and then just "throw them to the wolves." Images of fathers and daughters smiling, embracing, and working side by side cast a warm, sentimental glow on the father-daughter relationship and family life, but the film establishes a contrasting vision of the outside, feminist world as cold and dangerous. Even though they discourage young women from pursuing college or paid work, advocates of at-home daughterhood still insist that girls are valuable as more than just future wives and mothers. In *The Return* the Botkin sisters ask, rhetorically, "How should a girl spend

her single years?" And they answer that girls should "live productive lives in their fathers' homes until marriage." Their insistence on productivity and value betrays a postfeminist perspective; proponents attempt to demonstrate support for feminist values while distancing themselves from the politics of feminism and the label of feminist. This perspective is an attempt to mediate between conservative ideals and the reality that some feminist advances (such as educational opportunities for women) are so taken for granted they cannot be readily ignored or dismissed.

Even amongst conservative homeschool families, the expectation that girls can, and should, pursue higher education is commonplace enough that the at-home daughterhood message is a controversial one. Because it is so controversial Garcia says the "Keepers at Home" talk is her least favorite to present. The day I attended her presentation, she says, she watched at least half of the audience trickle out of the conference room while she spoke. This example demonstrates that, in the light of feminist advances, advocates of at-home daughterhood must demonstrate that they value women or risk appearing archaic, sexist, and irrelevant. Both Garcia's presentation and the Botkin sisters' promotional materials implicitly acknowledge this reality.

Housewives, Doormats, and the Scary Feminist

Despite popular media depictions to the contrary, conservative Christians cannot escape the fact that feminism is, in many ways, "in the water" (Baumgardner and Richards 2000: 17), entering even the most conservative of spaces (Stacey and Gerard 1990). In his piece that examines domestic labor amongst evangelical[8] married couples, John Bartkowski suggests that feminist consciousness has penetrated evangelical Christianity, and that this consciousness is evident in the way married couples practice varying degrees of gender equity despite strict doctrines of male headship and female submission coming from the pulpit or from Christian marriage experts (Barkowski 1999). In her study of the Women's Aglow organization, a network of Christian women's groups, R. Marie Griffith argues that feminist rhetoric has been re-appropriated to create appealing feminized spaces and discourses in which evangelical leaders argue that women's "liberation" is actually found in submission to God and that in their earthly relationships with husbands they might expect "mutual submission and intimacy" (1997: 45). Mitchell L. Stevens's research on homeschooling also suggests that conservative Christians have a complex relationship with feminist values. Stevens finds that the role of a mother/teacher in

contemporary Christian homes represents a dramatically expanded role for mothers, and in this way responds to "liberal feminist demands that contemporary women be more than 'just' housewives" (2001: 77). The role of mother/teacher allows a homeschool mother to appear committed to her child's needs as well as to exercise some autonomy and achieve career accomplishments in her role as teacher. This is especially useful when "these mothers occasionally find that they need to do some explaining to friends, family, and sometimes even themselves" (75) when facing the question of why a woman would choose to be just a housewife. In their article, "We are Not Doormats," Judith Stacey and Susan Elizabeth Gerard argue that a kind of postfeminist value system exists amongst some conservative Christians who advocate and practice gender equality in their marriage, but oppose feminist politics on issues such as reproductive rights. They define postfeminism as a "consciousness that accepts many [Second Wave] feminist convictions, while rejecting both the feminist label and feminist political engagement" (1990: 99).

Others argue that postfeminism nods to gender equality while letting women off the hook for political engagement and allowing young women to still be legible as nice, feminine women. For example, Angela McRobbie suggests the continued "feminization of popular media" alongside "ambivalent, fearful" (2004: 7) responses to feminism can be explained by this force. In her essay on postfeminism, Jane Gerhard characterizes the force as being "forged against [the] ghost of the scary lesbian/feminist" (2005: 1), and McRobbie argues that in the 1990s, young women had to practice a "ritualistic denunciation" of feminism in order to "count as a girl" (2004: 7). In contrast, Zeisler suggests that while feminist identification might now be cool and fun, it ultimately serves the marketplace. And, there are still very prominent women for whom the feminist label is scary. Marissa Mayer, CEO of the multinational technology company Yahoo! is quoted as saying, "I don't think that I would consider myself a feminist. I think that I certainly believe in equal rights, I believe that women are just as capable, if not more so in a lot of different dimensions, but I don't, I think, have, sort of, the militant drive and the sort of the chip on the shoulder that sometimes comes with that." She further states, "And I think it's too bad, but I do think that feminism has become in many ways a more negative word. You know, there are amazing opportunities all over the world for women, and I think that there is more good that comes out of positive energy around that than comes out of negative energy" (McDonough 2013: n.p.).

Mayer's statement suggests a postfeminist orientation; she advocates equal rights, declares women's capability, and champions "amazing" oppor-

tunities for women, but she distances herself from the negative, "scary" label of feminist. She appears to waffle in her statement, though; she describes women as being "more competent" than men, then dismisses feminism as negative, then expresses regret about the negative reputation of feminism, and finally comes around to her postfeminist conclusion. She acknowledges that women have amazing opportunities, but seeks to associate herself with "positive" energy, not negative, feminist energy.

Both Mayer's statement as well as the rhetoric of at-home daughterhood suggest that tension results from trying to reconcile an anti-feminist stance or complementarian gender ideology with a culture in which some feminist gains are well established. This tension is also evident in Janis Garcia's convention presentation about being "Keepers of the Home," as she seeks to defend her choice to focus her daughters' futures on marriage and motherhood while insisting to her audience that the girls do more than housework, and assuring everyone that she is no Donna Reed. Similarly, the women who took part in Stacey and Gerard's research insist that "we are not doormats" (1990: 111), and the mothers in Stevens's homeschool study construct an identity that allows them to be more than just housewives. These approaches all fit Stacey and Gerard's (1990) definition of postfeminism—a perspective that accepts feminist values, while rejecting the label and politics of feminism.

Undoing Feminism

Advocates of at-home daughterhood betray a similar tension; they distance themselves vocally from feminism, but they must acknowledge some of the claims of feminism if they wish to avoid being labeled as antiquated or sexist. Like homeschool mothers, those who advocate at-home daughterhood must answer to curious neighbors, family members, and to the Christian audience they aim to win over into this worldview. Promotional texts for the practice do this in two primary ways, both of which can be understood as postfeminist projects. First, in a move identified by Angela McRobbie in her essay "Notes on Postfeminism and Popular Culture: Bridget Jones and the new Gender Regime" (2004) advocates of at-home daughterhood evoke and then dismiss feminism with irony, as Janet Garcia does in her presentation when she claims that she is "no Donna Reed." The second, consistent with Stacey and Gerard's findings in "We are not Doormats" involves the "simultaneous incorporation, revision and depoliticization" (1990: 99) of core feminist values.

By naming the actress Donna Reed, whose name has become a kind of shorthand for the idealized midcentury American housewife, Garcia communicates to her audience that she is savvy in relation to feminist critiques of traditional gender roles. In fact, she identifies as having grown up in the era of "women's lib," but she ultimately rejected its values in favor of conservative, complementarian gender ideals. McRobbie identifies this simultaneous evocation and dismissal of feminism in her analysis of advertising. In her essay, she identifies how certain advertisements "use the language of feminist cultural studies against itself," such as when a model in a Wonderbra ad stares down at her own cleavage, mobilizing Laura Mulvey's critique of the "male gaze," but actually showing feminism to be a "thing of the past" (2004: 8) since the model is the subject of her own gaze. Because this ad both references and dismisses feminist critique, McRobbie argues that this representation is complicit in an "undoing" (3) of feminism. Garcia does the same when she pairs her joke about Donna Reed with her disavowal of feminism or "women's lib."

The Botkins's film provides a second example of undoing feminism with irony or humor. The opening vignette of the film features twenty-three-year-old Katie Valenti at work in the family business. Dressed conservatively in a pale pink sweater, long denim skirt, and pearl drop earrings, Katie, who serves as both interior decorator and bookkeeper for her father, a home builder, pours over building plans, granite samples, and spreadsheets as family members describe why the pair work well together. "She knows his taste better than anyone else, so she does the best job," her sister, Megan, says, "And he loves having someone he trusts take care of his books." Katie's commentary suggests that she sees the relationship as beneficial, as well. "I love making his homes beautiful," Katie says. While both father and daughter endorse this relationship with enthusiasm, there is evidence that proponents of at-home daughterhood must defend the practice against perceived critiques as oppressive or limiting, and they do so in the postfeminist manner of evoking and dismissing feminist critiques. In his interview for the film, Jay Valenti explains that the Bible teaches that a young woman's "main sphere of influence is the home." But, he is quick to add, "That doesn't mean they can't leave the house. Katie runs errands for me all the time!" By joking that his daughters are not imprisoned at home, Valenti evokes and dismisses the obvious feminist critique that could be made of a twenty-first century father advocating for his daughters to enact Victorian-era ideals. Still, his insistence that his daughters are not locked up at home is further evidence of the tension inherent in at-home daughter rhetoric—a strong

emphasis on domesticity coupled with a persistent refrain that single young women are productive, valuable, fulfilled, and more than junior housekeepers or future mothers.

The second tactic that advocates of at-home daughterhood use to make the practice palatable is the depoliticization of feminist values. The rhetoric in *The Return*, for example, depoliticizes feminist-sounding arguments about the importance of education and opportunities for young women. In one story, seventeen-year-old Jasmine Baucham explains that she is not going away to college.[9] Instead, she is staying at home under the authority of her father, pastor, and author Voddie Baucham, who is well-known on the homeschool conference speaking circuit. Jasmine, who is described in the vignette as a "research assistant," studies topics of interest for her father's books and sermons. Voddie, who holds a doctorate in ministry, argues that in this way Jasmine is receiving the equivalent of his higher education. Voddie says, "Jasmine has gifts. She has abilities, and those are being developed … . She's doing the kind of research that she wouldn't be doing until a master's degree program." Jasmine claims that she gets "more intellectual stimulation, more emotional security, more of everything," by working at home for her father than she would if she had gone away to college.

Like Jay Valenti's insistence that his daughters are not locked away at home, the Bauchams seem here to be addressing potential criticisms of their conservative gender ideology. In fact, Jasmine, who is African-American, explicitly says she has had to defend her decision to members of her extended family who believe that it is especially important for her, being black and a woman, to make her own way in the world. Jasmine's response is a clear renunciation of both feminist and racial politics. "In my household, I never have to feel like a double minority," she says. "It's not my job to fight my racist battles." By working only for her father, Jasmine does escape the institutionalized racism and sexism that still pervade many American work environments, but she also does little to counter either of these forces on a larger scale. Jasmine demonstrates that she is aware of feminist and racial politics, but distances herself from both.

Rather than appealing to a neo-Victorian notion that women are somehow more naturally suited to domestic tasks, Baucham insists that not only is his daughter capable of graduate-level research, but she is actually *doing* it. It may be true that Jasmine is doing challenging and fulfilling work, but she is doing the work as her father's assistant. She is not earning graduate credentials, and therefore will not be able (or expected) to translate her work to a career outside the home, nor, presumably, will she be able to publish

on her own in academic venues. The Bauchams incorporate, depoliticize, and dismiss feminist values.

If at-home daughterhood does not arm them with the credentials needed to pursue careers, what compels twenty-first century young women like the Garcia daughters, Jasmine Baucham, and Katie Valenti to participate in it? McRobbie suggests it is not only advertising agencies and pop culture producers who have an interest in undoing feminism; contemporary young women themselves often adopt a kind of postfeminist identity. They do this in order to be socially legible as young women or to use McRobbie's words again, to "count as … modern, sophisticated girl[s]" (2004: 9). In order to appear modern and sophisticated, a young woman must show she is simultaneously aware of and unengaged in feminist politics. She can then be seen to be choosing freely her postfeminist stance and distancing herself from the specter of the scary feminist. Jasmine Baucham does this when she acknowledges that as an African-American woman she is a "double minority," but that it is not her job to "fight her racist [or sexist] battles."

Conclusion

Both proponents and critics of at-home daughterhood frame the practice as a simple rejection of feminism. But a close analysis of promotional texts suggests that the practice actually utilizes postfeminist rhetoric. Despite attempting to distance itself from feminist or mainstream culture proponents must reconcile their values with feminist progress in order to remain viable. They cannot ignore the kind of taken-for-granted status of feminism or the recent popularity of feminist identification. As a result, the fathers and daughters featured in *The Return* use common postfeminist methods in an attempt to undo feminism either through irony or humor or by incorporating, revising, and depoliticizing feminist values. While at-home daughterhood is antithetical to feminist politics that support women's collective well-being, proponents are keen to display that they do value their daughters.

If we believe the story that at-home daughterhood is simply an anachronistic rejection of feminism, we fail to see the role that postfeminism plays in resolving the tension that results from advocating old-fashioned gender ideals in a world in which many feminist gains are taken for granted. We also risk overlooking the ways in which the practice works to undo feminism, not just explicitly in its rhetoric, but also in subtler ways through postfeminist strategies of humor or irony and depoliticization. In addition, the post-

feminist frame allows us to understand the appeal of a practice like at-home daughterhood to contemporary young women. In a subculture where the cool, fun, marketplace feminist identity is not an option, a postfeminist identity also allows young women in at-home daughterhood to count as girls, acknowledging they are aware of sexist battles, while distancing themselves from the fight and from the image of the scary feminist. In the meantime, the rhetoric assures, they will not be left alone to find their way in the cold, feminist world; they will not be thrown to the wolves.

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Notes

1. BotkinSisters.com (previously VisionaryDaughters.com)
2. 11 minutes, 29 seconds
3. When I address homeschooling, I am referring to the conservative Christian subset of homeschool families of which a large portion of the homeschool population in the US is comprised. However, there are homeschool families who practice other religions, are not religious, or who oppose the politics of conservative Christian homeschool families. For more on the demographics of homeschooling in the US, see Stevens (2001).
4. For more on the sensationalizing of Christian Reconstructionism and Dominionism in popular media see, Michael J. McVicar (2013) and Molly Worthen (2008).
5. Vision Forum was once one of the most prominent distributors of products for homeschool families. Anna Sofia and Elizabeth Botkin are the children of Geoffrey Botkin, whom some consider to have been Vision Forum president Phillips's "right-hand man" (Joyce 2009: 29). The Vision Forum Ministries board voted to shut down the organi-

zation in November 2013 following Phillips's admission of an "inappropriate romantic relationship" with a woman (Lee 2013). The woman has since filed a lawsuit against Phillips for alleged sexual assault and mental abuse (Marcotte 2014).

6. Reliable estimates do not exist for the number of participants in Quiverfull and at-home daughterhood. However, research suggests that there are at least one million homeschool students in the US (Joyce 2009).
7. In using the term conservative Christian, I follow historian of religion Julie Ingersoll, who questions the ability of terms like evangelical to capture the spectrum of Christians who might alternatively be called fundamentalist, Reconstructionist, Protestant or non-denominational (Ingersoll 2003).
8. Much of the literature about the relationship between feminism and conservative Christianity uses the term evangelical. Evangelicals are Christians who hold that the ultimate authority is the Bible, have a born again experience, and believe in the importance of sharing their faith (Emerson and Smith 2000). Families who practice at-home daughterhood fit this description, although they may not self-identify primarily as evangelical.
9. Some bloggers suggest that Baucham has participated in CollegePlus, a Christian program which allows students to cobble together a degree by earning course credit through CLEP (College Level Examination Program) testing, online courses, and the occasional community college class, but that she is doing so while living at home (Libby Anne: 2012).

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