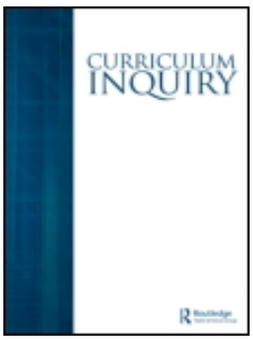

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Contextualizing the Tools of a Classical and Christian Homeschooling Mother-Teacher

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ABSTRACT

This article reports on the resurgence of classical and Christian education in the United States. This education has been especially popular with evangelical homeschooling mother-teachers. It seeks to cultivate the biblical virtues of truth, goodness, and beauty through contemplating scripture. The curriculum relies on the ancient Trivium tools of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom in order to do this. The inquiry seeks to examine the contexts surrounding a mother-teacher's classical and Christian educational practice guided by two questions: (1) Why and how does an evangelical homeschooling mother-teacher use classical and Christian tools? (2) What are the possibilities and challenges of classical and Christian homeschooling for an evangelical mother-teacher? This curriculum is illustrated with the portrait of April Greene, an evangelical homeschooling mother-teacher of two preteen boys. April enacted agency through the complex and dynamic development of her children and herself. April engaged the Trivium using bricolage, making educational meanings by picking and choosing from available resources and tactics to suit her purposes of intellectual and Christian identity formation. She moved beyond the borders of the official curriculum to create unofficial practices as well. These choices allowed her to negotiate the requirements of evangelical identity and the fact that living and leading in the world may require some knowledge of popular culture. April experienced possibilities related to classical and Christian curriculum, pedagogical tools, and mother-teacher identity. Classical and Christian education also presented a number of difficulties for April regarding cost, time, child agency, perspective taking, isolation, and gender burden. April's identity and agency as a mother-teacher reflected her intense devotion. She struggled with competing roles and expectations while thriving on the unique challenge of becoming an evangelical homeschooling mother-teacher.

One of my favorite college instructors called teaching "a glorious hell," meaning that extreme intellectual and emotional shifts circulate through the classroom. It should be no surprise that education often becomes even more impassioned when the teacher is the children's own mother, as is

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nearly always the case in homeschooling (Lois, 2009, 2010). This article presents the narrative of one such loving homeschooling mother-teacher, an evangelical[1] named April Greene,[2] illuminating how she developed and used a curriculum for her children by drawing on the principles of classical and Christian education.

Mothers' involvement in education is an important topic of research, and even more so in the United States now that neoliberal reforms such as the No Child Left Behind Act and similar policies have codified mechanisms for how parents should support the school curriculum (Rogers, 2006). As Ellen Brantlinger (2003) has shown, middle-class mothers have an influential role in shaping school curriculum in ways supportive of social class reproduction. As a mostly middle-class practice,[3] homeschooling offers a window through which we can understand mothers' involvement in choosing, shaping, and delivering the curriculum (Stambach & David, 2005). The homeschooling mother-teacher's role as curriculum developer is supported and constrained by a number of social, cultural, economic, and political factors. These include the persistence of traditional family models (Kroska, 2003; Lois, 2006, 2013); cultural feminism (Bobel, 2002) in which mothers claim that their minds and bodies are uniquely fitted for the home; and social anxiety regarding children's exposure to moral and physical risks (Elliott, 2012). Traditional family models may support the homeschooling mother-teacher's role as a curriculum developer by providing her the time and space to educate in the home. But traditional models may require an undue amount of labor given the expectation that the mother-teacher both maintains the home and teaches her children. Cultural feminism can aid mother-teachers' motivation to design responsive curricula for their own children. But it could narrow the scope of education based on the individual mother-teacher's frame of reference. And social anxiety can inspire transformative curriculum, but fears may also prevent children's and youth's engagement with important issues.

Homeschooling represents mother-teachers' unpaid labor, with close to 90% of instruction done by the mother-teacher at home (Murphy, 2012). Importantly, homeschooling troubles how we might think about the mother-educator role: it pushes beyond the ideology of "good" mothers' involvement in schooling (Griffith & Smith, 2005) and collapses the roles of mother and teacher in one physical and temporal space. Although there is a growing body of work on how homeschooling mother-teachers are socially positioned (Lois, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2013; Morton, 2010; Stevens, 2001), there have been few studies or essays about their unique roles as curriculum developers and teachers.

While the precise incidence of classical and Christian homeschooling is currently unknown, the online markets provide important information about classical and Christian popularity.[4] At this writing, according to U.S. Amazon.com rankings, classical and Christian texts dominate parent and homeschooling sales. The number one–ranked book in the "parent

participation" category is Susan Wise Bauer and Jessie Wise's *The Well-Trained Mind: A Guide to Classical Education*[5] originally published in 1999 and now in its third edition.[6] Fourteen of the top 20 Amazon.com "homeschooling" best sellers are linked with classical and Christian education. It is curious that evangelicals—a group well known for using the tools of popular culture for outreach and worship—have turned to the ancient precepts of Greco-Roman education.

As U.S. homeschooling grows at a rapid rate,[7] we might assume that classical and Christian education may also continue to expand, especially given the support that mother-teachers are afforded through the proliferation of readily available texts and supplemental materials, support groups, and the availability of homeschooling conferences and online networks offering classical and Christian information and resources.

April Greene is a case that shows how the process of developing and delivering a personalized classical and Christian curriculum unfolds. Because of her intensive use of Internet sites like Amazon.com and Susan Wise Bauer's Well-Trained Mind website (www.welltrainedmind.com) to research and acquire texts and materials to support her program, she represents one of the many involved homeschooling parents who have implemented this unique brand. Furthermore, she is an articulate person who provided through our year of research numerous rich and sometimes surprising insights about the nature of how elements of various cultures (Christian, Western, U.S., popular) informed her practices. April's narrative provides an opportunity to observe how a particular context of educational choice plays out at the nexus of class, race, gender, and religion in U.S. society.

To examine these issues further, I designed an inquiry around the following research questions: Why and how does an evangelical homeschooling mother-teacher use classical and Christian tools? What are the possibilities and challenges of classical and Christian homeschooling for an evangelical mother-teacher?

For the purpose of preparing my readers with a context for understanding my research, I describe the field of classical and Christian education in some detail. I lay the groundwork by first introducing the academic literature showing the interrelationships between the mother-teacher, society, and homeschooling. I also explain the philosophy, content, and evolution of classical and Christian homeschooling. I then present the case of April Greene, a classical and Christian homeschooling mother-teacher.

ROLE OF THE MOTHER-TEACHER IN CONTEMPORARY HOMESCHOOLING

In some of the earliest homeschooling literature, Jane Van Galen (1988) drew a division between "ideologues" (those who choose homeschooling

education for religious reasons) and "pedagogues" (homeschoolers who resist the pedagogy of state schooling). Over the years, researchers have begun to show that homeschoolers' motivations are more complex. For example, Robert Kunzman (2010) has pointed out that evangelical families have a number of motivations for homeschooling and that these families often do care about pedagogy quite a bit.[8]

Jennifer Lois (2013) has recently defined a few key ideas that set the stage for understanding why mother-teachers practice homeschooling. These are as follows: (1) "intensive mothering" (Hays, 1996), (2) "renovated domesticity" (Stevens, 2001), and (3) the dialectic between "savoring" (Lois, 2010) and "sequencing" (Garey, 1999).

First, intensive motherhood is rooted in the historical construction of childhood as priceless (Zelizer, 1985), and thus the role of motherhood is instrumental in protecting and cultivating the precious gift of the child. Lois (2010) has found that homeschooling mother-teachers "ratchet up" the standards of "good" mothering even more so than the intensive mothers generally described in the literature (e.g., Hays, 1996). There is a tacit implication that good mothers are of the intensive brand, and thus those who cannot mother to an intense level (and their children) are, according to this logic, on a less desirable trajectory—one that is not focused on academic achievement and upward mobility.

The new intensive mothering may trap women in gender stereotypes (Lois, 2009). For example, as now-fashionable new traditionalists (Kuperberg & Stone, 2008) and natural mothers (Bobel, 2002), many well-educated, once-professional mostly White middle-class mothers from both religious and secular backgrounds are finding ways to stay at home with their children and commit their time to the home, rather than "sacrifice" their children to the world of institutions. Interestingly, though, this trend toward career women turning back to the home contradicts trends noted specifically in evangelical families, in which mothers have been taking on work outside of the home in greater numbers while continuing to also do most of the child care and housework (Gallagher, 2003).

Second, "renovated domesticity" reflects that—beyond the tedium of the feminine mystique of the 1950s gadget-equipped housewife (Friedan, 1963) and the contemporary evangelical mother doing the work of the movement as an opportunity to engage a limited agency within patriarchy (Brasher, 1998; Schreiber, 2002)—there is now professional value in staying at home when the mother does the work of homeschooling. Indeed, the new role of mother-teacher is empowering in that it combines multiple subject positions. No longer is one simply a housewife (Stevens, 2001).

Contemporary homeschooling mother-teachers are sometimes described as "closet feminists" in that they want the same economic, social, and political rights as women who teach in public and private schools (McDowell, 2000). This position is not difficult to understand if one were to consider the juxtaposition between contemporary discourses of education

that support middle-class mothers' desires to choose ideal education for their children and neoliberal visions of education and employment (Stambach & David, 2005).

The project of "feminism" among homeschoolers reaches to intellectual pursuits. Some homeschooling mother-teachers have themselves creatively bridged life in the home and success in the marketplace, thus making more public these "feminist" ideals. Such is the case with popular homeschooling mother-authors Susan Wise Bauer and Jessie Wise (2009) and Leigh Bortins (2010) who have produced classical and Christian curriculum texts and resources used by homeschooling mother-teachers in the United States and beyond. These mother-authors represent more flexible approaches and arguably a more welcoming tone than some of the evangelical fathers who have published guides on evangelical classical and Christian homeschooling and curriculum (e.g., Callihan, Jones, & Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 1991).[9]

Homeschooling mother-teachers often have missionary experience or imbibe a "missionary spirit" even if they are not particularly religious (Bobel, 2002). Missionary identity connects back to the ideals of renovated domesticity because intensive mothers may logically center the salvation of not only their own children, but also of their surrounding community and world.

Finally, mother-teachers "sequence" by dividing their lives into ordered compartments. These form a basis for rationalizing their actions. For example, mother-teachers understand that the intensive sacrifice of time that they make will pay off as the children become more independent in adolescence, and thus they choose homeschooling as a strategy that allows them to "savor" the time when their children are young (Lois, 2010, 2013). In so doing, they can potentially mediate between the big picture of mothering and being mother-teachers in the moment.

These ideals of "stretching" and savoring time are grounded in homeschooling history. The campaign of evangelical homeschooling pioneers Raymond and Dorothy Moore in the 1970s rallied mothers to extend the informal early education of their children by invoking the slogan of "school can wait." The Moores' (1975) idealized mother-teachers' provision of informal early education at home, and connected late reading (especially for little boys) to positive literacy outcomes. At the same time, the Moores insisted that government early childhood programs like Head Start were waiting as alternate settings for "the prisoner of the ghetto or the mountain hollow, whose life must be enriched" (Moore & Moore, 1975, p. 4). In this way, classed and raced conceptions of motherhood were articulated and embodied in the form of a mother-teacher's educational "choice" to stay at home. In this program, the role of adjudicating difference among mothers was articulated as a moral choice emphasizing the placement of children in the "best" environments for their family type. More generally, the discourses of development and

family differences have been instrumental in differentiating private and public choice making (Kuperberg & Stone, 2008), with perhaps the pinnacle of private choice being to do school at home.

CLASSICAL AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

This section provides an introduction to classical and Christian education. I include an overview of the classical and Christian philosophy, information about evangelicals' motivations to choose this form, a brief history of classical and Christian education's evolution in the United States, and the process by which evangelical homeschooling mother-teachers take up the project of educating their children classically.

What Is Classical and Christian Education?

Classical and Christian education begins with the distinct purpose of the Christian to repair the ruins left by Adam and Eve, reestablishing the relationship between God and humans. For Christians, constructing an "identity in Christ" through imitation is their primary life aim and educational purpose. This can be done in part by transforming the classical education originally designed by pagan Greek and Roman cultures, making it new by repurposing it for uniquely Christian aims.

Classical and Christian education can be understood through three elements:[10] the method, the content, and the cultural-historical position of the teacher and student (Callihan et al., 2001). The method is the pattern by which the students are guided through three educational stages (grammar, logic, rhetoric) called the Trivium (or "three roads").[11] Classical and Christian is further distinguished from other forms of education by the unique subjects of Latin, theology, rhetoric, logic, and sometimes Greek and/or Hebrew. Culturally, the teacher and student recognize that their education is a form "indigenous" (Callihan et al., 2001, p. 13) to Western culture, the time and place in which Jesus Christ was born, and the recognition that early missionaries traveled to the West more so than they did to the East and South.[12] This point is tied significantly to the classical and Christian identity. Together, these three elements of method, sequence, and culture develop identity by teaching the "genuine biblical worldview, [establishing] Scripture at every point as the foundation on which to build all knowledge" (Wilson, 1996, p. 15). Given a well-developed Christian identity and worldview, one may act wisely in the world. Bauer and Wise (2009) emphasize that classical learning is language focused rather than built on images encouraging passivism (e.g., television). In this frame, knowledge is integrated and spirals across years of study while the approach must be rigorous and systematic (Bauer & Wise, 2009). Drawing from all of these principles mentioned, mother-teachers develop classical and Christian study as a personalized curriculum.

Why Do Evangelical Parents Prefer Classical and Christian Education?

Data on evangelical parents' motivations is very limited, but recent studies do suggest that parents seek some instrumental outcomes from classical and Christian education (Anthony & Burroughs, 2012; Hahn, 2012). In actuality, the meanings and purposes of this education are more complex than simple reproduction. Parents pass on the knowledge, understanding, and wisdom necessary to participate in "culture" rather than to simply prepare for work in industrialized society (Leithart, 2008; Littlejohn & Evans, 2006; Veith & Kern, 2001).[13] In this education there may be a sequential relation of first heavenly contemplation, and then worldly benefits, with material rewards stemming from contemplation, for "as he seeks first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all other things (including such things as knowledge and livelihood) will be added unto him" (Bianco, 2013, p. 60). In this way, classical and Christian education could be seen as especially pleasing to God.

How Did Classical and Christian Education Come Together?

The historian H. I. Marrou (1956) explained how the unlikely coupling of classical and Christian was initially made. In the earliest days of the church, the classical school was seen by Christians as a separate entity for academics, while the parents and the church were responsible for Christian education. Christianity's growth, however, relied on the ability to translate the Bible into new tongues. Because ancient Christians lived in a classical world, they absorbed the commonsense notions from the dominant culture around them: that civilization is required for existence and that there is already in place a technique for producing perfectly developed human beings. The logic of choice was instrumental for connecting the classical and Christian in an enduring partnership, such that a classical education would allow a man to choose among vocations, while becoming a Christian also involved making a choice for the faith. This identity of Christians as choice makers was compelling in that it had the potential to promote both the economic and social status of Christians, and the spread of the Christian faith. At the same time, many church fathers saw classicism as a rival for solving the problem of human existence. Indeed, the process of conversion involved creating an identity that renounced the arrogance of classical culture. Ultimately, out of necessity Christian children attended classical schools, avoiding idolatry and Pagan influences by learning to "behave like someone who knows he is being given poison and takes good care not to drink it" (Marrou, 1956, p. 321). Immunity came in the form of instruction from the parents and the church through the development of the religious consciousness, the antithesis.

Classical and Christian education's contemporary popularity has been activated with the "discovery" of a single speech text, written in 1947 by

Dorothy Sayers.[14] Her speech, entitled *The Lost Tools of Learning*, was reprinted in *National Review* in 1979, just as the New Right was emerging in reaction to a decade of civil rights gains—the political climate was quite suitable for her words to spread. One young evangelical father, Douglas Wilson, founded the classical and Christian Logos School in Moscow, Idaho, in 1981 after reading Sayers's speech and seeking an educational alternative for his young daughter (Wilson, 2007). To support newly forming schools inspired by Sayers and his 1991 book, *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning*, Wilson organized the Association for Classical and Christian Schools (ACCS; www.accsedu.org)[15] that year (Leithart, 2008).

Sayers (1947/1979) had believed that children's maturity was becoming delayed as young people faced the new "mass propaganda" of the media, more school subjects were being taught with less rigor and integration, and objectivity was becoming blurred through the softness of modern schooling (Sayers, 1947/1979). Set within a general orientation of curriculum in the 1930s–1950s toward child needs and natural development (Burman, 1994), her project linked popular curriculum discourse and personal experience with the articulation of a clear moral and religious sensibility. Sayers's curricular antidote to contemporary culture was to guide youth's natural trajectory, as linked to the wisdom of the ancient Greek Trivium, her tools.[16]

But it was arguably the homeschooling daughter-mother duo, Susan Wise Bauer and Jessie Wise, who deserve credit for in 1999 invigorating classical education by providing a comprehensive yet accessible guide for homeschooling parents craving a new kind of educational program. Bauer and Wise's (1999) *Well-Trained Mind*, which incorporates Sayers's principles, was revolutionary in that it went beyond the traditional packaged or self-designed eclectic homeschooling curricula and made possible for thousands of homeschoolers a new form of coherent, rigorous education that helped mother-teachers to acquire a classical education along with their children. The program itself offered choice in the form of resource lists and materials from which mother-teachers could select rather than a narrow educational prescription. It framed parents' identities as intellectuals motivated to act tirelessly for their children's futures.

What Does It Mean for a Homeschooling Mother-Teacher to Adopt a Classical and Christian Curriculum?[17]

In developing her own curriculum, there are a number of steps the mother-teacher should take after reading books on classical and Christian homeschooling, talking with other parents who use this form, attending conference sessions, and perhaps even joining a co-op. First, she should understand the meanings and purposes of classical and Christian education and begin to embrace why this curriculum is integral to her identity as

a Christian, and to the identities of the Christian children she and her husband are raising. Second, she should understand how her children's development progresses through learning stages that correspond with the Trivium. Sayers (1947/1979) was influential in defining three Trivium-based learning stages that inform instruction: the "Poll-Parrot" (ages 5–11), the "Pert" (ages 11–14), and the "Poetic" (ages 14–18).[18] The Trivium affords the main goal of classical and Christian education, which is to develop a Christian conception of cultural "excellence" through the antithesis, that inner consciousness needed in order to read the world in particular, biblical ways that run counter to "worldly" perspectives (Wilson, 1996). The three stages correspond to the biblical pattern of "growing in knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, in favor with God and men" from Proverbs 24:3–4. As children and youth mature intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually, the balance of attention to knowledge, understanding, and wisdom should respond to the needs of their age and stage. The following descriptions apply broadly with some variation, and are taken from Bauer and Wise's (2009) *The Well-Trained Mind* program.

In the grammatical, knowledge-based "Poll-Parrot" stage, the mother-teacher takes advantage of her child's propensity to soak up content. She supplies all kinds of facts, stories, and pictures that lay schematics for creativity in subsequent stages. Chanting and singing are recommended strategies. Mother-teachers should not encourage their young children to express themselves to a great degree, as they may not develop a frame of reference that allows for the best articulation later on (Bauer & Wise, 2009). The mother-teacher does not require her children to dig for information, but rather becomes an informational buffet: telling stories, reading history and science, teaching math facts, and requiring the child to repeat back the information.

As the children progress to the contradictory "Pert" stage, their minds develop to analyze critically. The Pert child should have mastered the skills of reading, writing, and basic arithmetic with fluency so that the child may now focus on concepts and ideas. Patterns and relationships specific to subject areas are taught in this stage. In addition, formal logic instruction allows Perts to sift out the trustworthiness of arguments. Students become more independent and venture away from textbooks and toward more research using primary source materials. The role of the mother-teacher is to dialogue[19] with the child rather than to simply "deposit" information. Children's understandings are refined through argument, discussion, and debate.

Adolescents who can express themselves in words brand themselves in a way that supplants the stress on outward appearances typical for teenagers (Bauer & Wise, 2009). The "Poetic" stage focuses on the arts of self-expression and seeks to hone rhetorical skills through practice. The grammar stage provided content knowledge, the substance of arguments. And the logic stage showed the truth value of various arguments. Rhetoric

is a subject of study, but it is put into practice through the subject areas, and particularly writing. For these adolescents, persuasion and eloquence are emphasized through expressive communication, application, and synthesis, and pedagogy including discussion, speeches, imitation, and practice. The mother-teacher generally sets up the curriculum at this stage and checks in while students tend to be very independent.

I now introduce the case of April Greene, who uses the tools of the Trivium to shape her Pert sons through dialogue. Later in this article, I will show examples of her identity and agency as a mother-teacher as "film clips." While not a full motion picture presenting a narrative of her life, these carefully chosen film fragments show key facets of her classical and Christian mother-teacher role. I organize April's experiences, orientations, emotions, and the situations in which she finds herself around two themes to demonstrate both the classical and the Christian influences of her chosen curriculum. But first, I provide some general background on the study design and methods, as well as April's local context.

INVESTIGATING HOMESCHOOLING MOTHER-TEACHERS

During the recruitment phase of a yearlong case study of U.S. homeschooling mother-teachers, I learned that classical and Christian curriculum was gaining in popularity. To systematically examine evangelical mother-teachers' homeschooling practices, I used ethnographic techniques in the field (participant observation as well as interviews and artifact collection).[20]

While I selected three primary mother-teacher participants who used a range of curricula, all three were influenced by classical and Christian methods at least to some degree. All three of these mother-teachers were middle class and European American, as were all of the participants in the study. Only April Greene identified specifically as a classical and Christian homeschooler, and thus her practice is the focus of this article.

Primary participant #1 was Sonja Davidson. She had grown children and one homeschooled 16-year-old son. She was eclectic but generally traditional and used a sequential and Western-focused approach to history. Her son homeschooled quite independently, and he relied on a mixture of texts, CD-ROMs, and supplementary activities. Primary participant #2 was Janie Barrett. Janie had several older children attending college and public secondary school while she homeschooled five girls aged 6–13 and tended a newborn baby. Her curriculum approach drew from her love of good books. Janie's eldest homeschooled child had the special privilege of using the family's computer to practice an online logic curriculum.

Primary participant #3, April Greene, had two boys: Micah was 12 years old and Charlie was 11 years old. April had homeschooled her sons from

preschool onward. April had a bachelor's degree in the humanities and had worked briefly in business before settling down to raise her family, and worried about how she could return to the workforce when her boys left home for college. April's husband, Chris, worked in the business world and was the pastor of the Greene's home church. They had both served as missionaries in communist nations for a period after college. April relied on her older sister and a friend, both classical and Christian homeschoolers who lived in other states, for long-distance curriculum support. Her sister, in particular, was instrumental in forging the way for April to homeschool. April's family clearly struggled with financial issues. For example, April feared that they would not be able to pay impending medical bills for Micah's minor surgery and worried that they temporarily did not have enough cash to drywall their living room, which sat in a half-finished state through months of this study. April sought involvement in a co-op focused on classical education and would have liked to do a virtual classical academy or private classical school. However, none of these options were available. Community and money for educational resources were two things that April felt that she lacked in her program.

I interviewed for background information 11 women and men who had leadership roles in the local evangelical and/or homeschooling community. These data are not the specific focus of this paper, but they provide useful contextual background in which to situate local homeschooling practices.[21] Two of the homeschooling leaders, Sarah Andrews and Nat Weston, were veteran homeschooling mother-teachers. Although their involvement in the study was much more limited than the primary three mother-teachers' participation, these two mother-leaders provided some additional information about curriculum. Therefore, this specific information is included in the general findings on homeschooling mother-teachers' practices.

With the 14 individual participants (3 primary mother-teachers [April, Janie, and Sonja], 2 mother-leaders [Nat and Sarah], and 9 additional leaders) I did a total of 21 interviews, approximately 1–2 hours each in length. This included three in-depth semistructured interviews with each of the three primary mother-teachers and one semistructured interview with each of the others. The interviews were taped and professionally transcribed verbatim. The first mother-teachers' interview was a life history, the second interview was about curriculum and pedagogy, and the third interview was about connecting homeschooling practices with life outside the home.[22]

Participant observation and ongoing conversation allowed for direct access to homeschooling practices, typically at least one half-day per month with each mother-teacher for a total of 31 mother-teacher visits over the course of the school year. The nature of the observation varied based on the number of children, ages of the children, and type of homeschooling curriculum, pedagogy, and activities. April Greene did much direct

instruction and I did straightforward ethnographic observations of practice with some participation (e.g., occasionally helping the children with mathematics, washing the dishes, etc.). I did observations of church and community activities to understand the broader social and political factors influencing homeschooling and curriculum. Church and community observations were in addition to visits with individual mother-teachers. In total, observations yielded more than 500 single-spaced pages of field notes and memos.

I collected, read, and coded sections of the websites, books, and curricular resources that the mother-teachers deemed most important for their teaching and that related directly to the observations and interviews and gathered and read some of the texts that I saw the mother-teachers using in their teaching so that I would have a better understanding of what they were studying when I was not present. Collecting data through layered sources allowed me to triangulate findings as part of the analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Like the vast majority of homeschoolers, April is married, White, middle class, evangelical, and has given up professional employment to stay at home full time with her children (Murphy, 2012). April has two children and, like most homeschoolers, she does have at least some college education (Belfield, 2004). April educates her children at home for moral and religious reasons, and has low regard for the local public schools (the predominant reasons for homeschooling gathered by the National Center for Education Statistics in 2009). April would historically be called an "ideologue" because of the religious obligation she felt to homeschooling (Van Galen, 1988). However, by exploring April's interpretations as well as my alternative readings on her practices gleaned from my own observations, I want to provide a more nuanced explanation of why April chose classical and Christian homeschooling and persisted with this curriculum.

I use an identity-agency approach (Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, & Cain, 1998) to present both April's interpretations of her educational choices and my outsider's data and analysis of how April uses the curriculum and who benefits from classical and Christian curriculum. This kind of analysis adds to the literature because although there has been germinal work exploring homeschooling mother-teachers' voices (Bobel, 2002; Lois, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2013), there is less research information available on homeschooling mother-teachers' practices.

During analysis of April's case aided by NVivo software (versions 9 and 10, QSR International, Doncaster, Australia), I coded deductively for identity-related themes, and inductively for novel themes. For the purpose of better understanding how April used the curriculum as a tool, I used James Gee's (2011) figured worlds discourse analysis tool to view how April enacts curriculum relative to her identity. To show April's metaphors of identity-agency, I constructed "stanzas" of her talk around the metaphors

of identity that she repeatedly expressed (Marsh & Lammers, 2011). The stanzas are direct quotations from interviews (sans filler words) and excerpts from my original field notes. My stanzas are presented like free-verse poems. I used this representation because I found that April's discourse had distinct cadence and rhythm—aesthetic qualities—and so I arranged her words in a way that I felt would carry more meaning for readers. This method is in line with Dorothy Holland et al.'s (1998) original work in which participants' songs and testimonies were presented as texts in varied formats. In the presentation of April's case, these stanzas will serve to introduce the "film clips" of two important themes showing her identity-agency.

HOMESCHOOLING MOTHER-TEACHERS' VIEWS OF EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM

Sonja and Janie did not implement classical and Christian curriculum fully and did not think of themselves as classical and Christian homeschoolers. Neither did the mother-leaders, Nat and Sarah. This was likely due to their saturation in other methods at the time classical and Christian curriculum was becoming popular in the locale, as well as their personal interests in the arts (Sonja); mathematics, science, and biographies (Janie); and thematic teaching (Nat)—subject and content areas outside the traditional core of classical and Christian education. Alternatively, Sarah sought out specific methods to address her children's learning disabilities that would have likely been incompatible with a classical and Christian program.[23] Still, each mother-teacher articulated an appreciation for this program. They seemed to recognize that classical and Christian education allowed mother-teachers to provide solid education while cultivating Christian identities. All of the mother-teachers studied connected their own curriculum with a desire for rootedness—for example, to U.S. History lessons reflecting the character ideals of the U.S. founding fathers (the signers of the Declaration of Independence and the framers of the Constitution), literature and world history that emphasize the virtues of the ancients, and creation science and traditional mathematics instruction emphasizing God's design. At the same time that they passed on traditional knowledge, there was also an emotional element to each mother-teacher's program—a deep longing for lasting family unity. Janie, Nat, and Sonja (the mother-teachers with college-age children) communicated that they saw homeschooling as a method for building continuity of family relationships. Sonja in particular used rich metaphors of transition in which the threshold to college was "a birth, feeling like you don't want to give birth but you have to do it" and an act of "releasing your child like an arrow from the bow, hoping that you formed strong, straight and true arrows in your quiver." These metaphors of identity and agency communicated a strong, agentive role of mother-teachers in

forming their children and letting them go, but they were metaphors that also conveyed almost unbearable pain and uncertainty, and an immense sense of personal responsibility. This intensity was communicated by Janie and Nat as well.

Another clear theme was that each of the mother-teachers and mother-leaders constructed their identities against other mothers, including school teachers and other homeschooling mother-teachers and mother-leaders. These relationships were somewhat complicated. For example, April articulated "we are not freaks" and "I don't want to be seen as elitist" regarding her homeschooling choice and curricular decision making. At the same time, she "wished that *all* parents would see that they are in charge of their child's education." This desire for exuding normalcy was repeated by everyone, and Nat, Sarah, and Sonja also named all parents' responsibility as an issue. While all homeschooling mother-teachers and mother-leaders said that they shared ideas together (unlike school teachers who were "set up to compete" [Nat]), they were actually independent in choosing, developing, and carrying out education, curriculum, and instruction suited to their interests and styles. April and Janie noted difficulties in their quests to connect with other homeschooling mother-teachers around choosing and implementing education. The challenges were related in part to a lack of proximity to like-minded mother-teachers (most of the participants lived in rural areas), and in part to a belief held by some (April and Nat) that mother-teachers could often be more interested in fun and socialization than in true intellectual or artistic rigor.

A third common theme was how the mother-teachers viewed time as it related to the explicit and implicit curriculum. For the mother-teacher, the biblical imperative for parents was to educate nearly around the clock, as guided by the Bible verses in Deuteronomy 6:6–9 (NIV):

> These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

As Sonja said, "Homeschooling is life!" However, Janie did note that she had relaxed this thinking on homeschooler identity as her family grew and they needed to separate and "chill" in the evenings when her husband was home. Activities such as movies and television (April), computer software and Christian death metal music[24] (Sonja), and Christian ballet classes and Bright Lights young ladies' group (Janie) were all part and parcel of an implicit Christian curriculum designed to cultivate the children's evangelical identities.

More than any mother-teacher studied, April Greene articulated the need for a rigorous classical education and tried to carry out a coherent

classical and Christian program. April clearly discussed the many complexities of classical and Christian identity and agency, and the joys and challenges of being a mother-teacher in this program. She is, therefore, the focal case for this article. A careful examination of her educational practices reveals how classical and Christian education may unfold in the busy lives of mother-teachers who are responsible not only for education, but for the general labor of the home. The consideration of how April practices this education provides important information about her mother-teacher identity and how she enacts agency toward the development of the children, and herself.

APRIL GREENE: A CLASSICAL AND CHRISTIAN HOMESCHOOLING MOTHER-TEACHER

April and her husband always knew that they would homeschool because they believed that they were called by God to be the primary teachers of their children. Classical and Christian education made sense as the boys grew because it was the education that her respected older sister chose, and it resonated with her college liberal arts background by offering a plethora of opportunities to emphasize literature and history, her specialties. For April, there was a tension between covering the content areas required by her state, and having time for classical and Christian education. She organized her academic schedule in hopes of packing it all in. With two boys just one grade level apart, April did Bible, geography, Latin, history, and some writing and research with both sons simultaneously. Literature, math, and science were taught separately for Micah and Charlie. She generally did not buy comprehensive curriculum packages, but rather chose different programs for every subject (and sometimes different ones for each child). She started out with *The Well-Trained Mind* and modified it over time. As will become clear, as a classical and Christian mother-teacher, April added much that was Christian to the classical curriculum laid out in *The Well-Trained Mind*. April's curriculum development involved moving beyond the formal lists of that text and "folding in" (as she called it) a whole host of crucial teachings.

The family was dedicated to homeschooling, following April's sister, even in the face of significant financial burdens. April used classical and Christian education as a tool for her boys' academic development. Significantly, however, classical and Christian education appealed to April because it resonated with her desire to be fully devoted to her children. The mother-teacher role seemed to present a space in which she could live out this devotion on a daily basis. Thus, April saw that the curriculum could address both the educational needs of the boys and the needs of herself as a mother. Indeed, the identity of the evangelical mother-teacher is part of the educational goals, part of the curriculum she develops, and part of her

pedagogy and assessment. In each of these places, there are opportunities for the mother-teacher to use her own interests to design and deliver her own personal blend of classical and Christian curriculum. Through classical and Christian education, the mother-teacher may develop her identity as an intellectual and professional within the confines of her home. She may even aspire to publish and innovate like leaders Susan Wise Bauer and Leigh Bortins, thus creating a unique space to combine homeschooling skills and an income while remaining home-based and dedicated around the clock to the children, husband, and homemaking.

As I have shown, classical and Christian education relies on the construction of Christian identities. Identity is social and historical, and focused on notions of truth, goodness, and beauty that are both Western and biblically grounded. But it is also more. Scholars have linked evangelicalism with a broader project of constructing cultural, sociopolitical, and economic common sense regarding the most relevant meanings and purposes for education (Apple, 2006; Kumashiro, 2008). For example, Classical Conversations'[25] Jennifer Courtney (2013) explained to parents in her feature article in the company's catalog that "Graduates of a classical home school can use their trained minds to reclaim our culture and spread the gospel" (p. 7). This quote seems to suggest that evangelical Christians are not currently a dominant cultural force, and thus classical and Christian education is imperative as a mechanism for change. Mother-teachers using the Trivium tools may construct education that aims to contribute to a more evangelical nation and world, politically relevant as while evangelicals are diverse, most are political conservatives, particularly regarding social issues (Kunzman, 2009).

The following two major themes—presented as brief movie scenes—illustrate how the social, political, intellectual, and religious life in which April was situated shaped her educational project. I call these themes "Classical Futures" and "The Golden Rule." The first film clip, "Classical Futures," refers to the ways in which April attempts to claim a classical education that is in line with her vision for her sons and for the world. April, as a financially pressed mother-teacher, draws on both expected and surprising sources for authority and forms her own classical and Christian program to use modern education and popular culture in shaping identities that will serve her children well in the future.

Film Clip #1: Classical Futures

April said:
"I do need an outside opinion.
I just need someone
To come in from the outside
And tell me what to do."

Then she rolled her head,
Sighed,
And asked me
(public university-based "expert")
This question:
"Am I preparing my kids?
I want to *know*." (Field notes[26])

April, in her desperation for assurance about whether her children would eventually be prepared for college, work, and Christian lives, listened to voices from outside the homeschooling community. April worked hard to choose rigorous elements for her curriculum that would prepare her sons for truth-seeking and also advanced classical studies in college.

Besides religion, the most crucial school subjects were history and language. April and each of the homeschoolers studied spoke of the authority of the founding fathers in their history instruction. As the founding fathers used the study of ancient civilizations to develop a model of the democratic republic (see Richard, 2008), she tutored her sons in how Western civilizations were built and declined. Regarding language, Micah and Charlie had studied Latin since the third grade, and had participated in national contests. Micah's competition medal, in fact, hung directly over the head of his bed, a symbol of pride. Generally speaking, Latin may enhance the status and use of English (Strawbridge, 2002) or, on the other hand, demonstrate the multiplicity of languages (Bauer & Wise, 2009). But in the Greenes' homeschool, Latin practice could be challenging:

> They do a dictation in notebooks—April reads a sentence in Latin, the boys write it in Latin, and then they translate it in English. Micah is very speedy, but some of his translations are off. For what should be, "Three men were walking with the woman," Micah writes, "Three men were walking with the woman and the wine." Both boys giggle at this and April gently places a hand on each of their heads and says, "I've got a Curly and a Larry here [from the old Three Stooges films] . . ." with an amused grin on her face.
>
> A bit later, all three Greenes become confused about the supine form in their exercise. April hurries upstairs to get her Henle Latin text, which she believes may help them solve their problem. (Field notes)

When April returned, I asked her if she had studied Latin herself, and how she keeps up with the boys' lessons. Her face turned tired-looking, and then she stated that she has been keeping up one night ahead of the boys (the same could be said for mathematics instruction). April is currently looking at a resource used by a well-off classical and Christian friend living across the country. She is investigating an online Latin school for next year for Micah (and for Charlie to sit in on for free, if possible) in order to provide structure and excellent instruction, and to ease the burden on herself. These courses are expensive—about $500 for one, the same cost as their annual materials budget for both boys.

This example of Latin instruction points to April's challenge with instructional dialogue. As discussed earlier in the description of pedagogies appropriate for the Pert stage, she was charged to guide her youth to particular conclusions, or to affirm their use of factual validation as part of a parent–child dialogue. It was very difficult for her to guide a dialogue about Latin grammar because she herself was not fluent in that language. April modeled using authoritative sources (texts) and in so doing she showed the boys how to learn. At the same time, the challenge was in how often this occurred. Her lack of classical language knowledge ebbed away at both her stamina and her authority. Shifting responsibility in the future to an online teacher could provide some respite for April and more efficient and rigorous dialogues for her sons. Delegating her role as a Latin teacher, however, could potentially diminish her status as a devoted classical mother-teacher.

While not part of the official classical and Christian curriculum, popular culture had a clear unofficial role. It helped April in navigating possible futures. She helped the boys to mete out the "beautiful" elements of culture while they engaged with the world outside of the classical homeschool. April signed the boys up for instrumental music lessons at the liberal public university nearby. There, they studied under the direction of two "cool" graduate students who joked around with the boys and apprenticed them in slang while honing their musical talents. Also, April supplanted classical knowledge with popular topics when she needed to "hook" one or both of her sons. Unfortunately, this practice was difficult to orchestrate smoothly, as shown in this writing/research example:

> Charlie asks, "Mom, could I please go to the library to do my cheetah research? Please?" April travels into the living room to check on Micah. He has started work on his daily math problems but seems distracted. He says to April, "I don't want to study the Celts!" April turns to Charlie and says, "You can go to the library but I want you to come back with the Dewey Decimal number for cheetahs. It may be the one for mammals, actually. Or do you want to look for books online?" "No, I want to ask the librarians for help . . . and take some notes on cheetahs for my report." April heads to the kitchen to hunt for the library card. Micah says, "Urrgghh . . . how come I am FORCED by her to do the Celts? Why do you get to do cheetahs? You were supposed to do Piics!" . . .
>
> When Charlie returns from the library 30 minutes later, I ask him how he came to study cheetahs. He explains that he was going to do the Piics, an ancient group his mom wanted him to study, and then he switched to aviation but there were just way, way too many books on aviation in the library so he decided to do cheetahs instead.
>
> Charlie now had a number of cheetah facts jotted in his notebook but also two *Simpsons* television comedy DVDs. April seems a bit embarrassed and explains that they just started watching *The Simpsons* as a family. She thinks that the show is hilarious. . . . The last time they watched, Marge and Homer were in bed and getting a bit more than cuddly. Her husband, Chris, looked at her and signed, "Turn it off, turn it off!" But April said that the scene affirms Marge and Homer's long-standing marriage relationship and that it's OK for the boys to see that. (Field notes)

While April saw positive elements in certain popular media, it was not uncommon for Micah or Charlie to slip into the character of Bart Simpson and annoyingly repeat the iconic phrase, "Doh!" throughout lessons. While on one hand, she used popular culture tactically to develop complex identities, April was on the other hand genuinely anxious about the boys' behavior that came from imitating it, mainly because of the time that redirection took from academic tasks. Quite interestingly, Sayers's lens seems as though it could quell such worries because the "high nuisance value," as Sayers named it, *should* characterize Perts like Micah and Charlie. Sayers would likely see their behavior as normal for their age, and serving an evolutionary purpose. Viewed somewhat differently, the boys' resistance shows them thinking and acting on their own (even though they were oftentimes silly), rather than simply following lockstep along with their mother-teacher's leading.

The boys were beginning to build on the many bits of knowledge learned in their early education and to question the world around them (e.g., "How can we impeach Barack Obama?", "If three-dimensional maps are more accurate, why don't we carry around small blow-up globes rather than flat maps?", "If we home-church [do church at home, with the father acting as a pastor], are we exempt from property taxes like regular churches?" are a few sincere questions from my notes). April underlined this point when she said:

> I want them to love learning, to be creative critical thinkers, to not just believe something because it's written down but to actually be able to think it through. And to be able to articulate what they think. . . . They are engaged and they're asking questions: "Like what about that?" "You know, is that still the case?" "Whatever happened to that?"

Her concern was for the boys' development as intellectuals and inquirers. She emphasized this value when she said:

> Whatever they do, I really don't care if they're plumbers or if they are in a trade, great. I want them to be the most educated . . . and not be just interested in one thing but interested in everything and still be curious when they're 35 and still be learning. . . .

This is not to say, however, that preparing for and attending an acceptable college was not a pressing concern for her. Relative to the ever-intensifying accountability context of U.S. public schools, April questioned the boys' preparation. She worried about the level of competition that her sons would face in college admissions.[27] Her sons took the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) to confirm their progress, and in most areas they performed well relative to students across the nation. She aimed for Micah to take the American College Test (ACT)[28] as an eighth grader so that he could see "how far he had to go" to obtain target scores.

As secondary school approached, April doubted whether she had the skills to teach the full range of subjects. She attributed this problem to, at least in part, the lack of rigor in her own academic preparation in the U.S. public schools. She became anxious thinking forward to high school and the levels of science and advanced mathematics instruction required. She believed that Micah should learn Greek, but she had already tried briefly and given up. This was not because Micah did not have an affinity for the language (he did), but because learning so many new and challenging elements was unthinkable for April. She often commented that she did not want to be a "lazy" mother-teacher, as she believed that was her natural tendency. For April, trying to be classical *and* Christian was emotionally exhausting, as summed up by April's comment that I recorded in the field: "She said that come 3:00 she doesn't want to be a mom or a teacher, she wants to curl up in bed with a book because she is exhausted and she simply wants to be herself."

Constructing classical futures was a project that tapped April to the core and riddled her with anxiety. The expected rigor of the classical model forced her to move beyond her "slothful" nature (as she saw it, not I) and to work harder so that her sons might achieve. While she found this personally exhausting, she was motivated for two reasons: (1) she saw that she and her sons needed to compete with neoliberal models of brick-and-mortar schooling, and (2) even though this curriculum was exhausting, she appreciated the challenge, the choices, and the time to enjoy moments with her children, even the time that took away from educational efficiency and rigor.

The next film clip, entitled "The Golden Rule," shows how applying the Christian theological imperative to love one's neighbors as oneself comes into tension with the rigor of classical demands.

Film Clip #2: The Golden Rule

One crisp March morning, at 8:30 a.m., April and the boys sprawled on one oversized sofa, discussing the book of Thessalonians in the Bible.
"What makes an idol?" (said April)
"Idols are like when you think that if you have something,
If only you get that thing,
Your life will be so much better . . ." (said Micah)
And so April told her boys more:
"We might think that this Healthcare Bill ['Obamacare'] passed and that's going to mess everything up.
Or some people think it's going to fix everything and make everything better
But then something will come along
And it won't be better."

And April continued on . . .

"So Paul said that the people in Thessalonica were suffering
And we know when Paul said suffering,
He meant really intense suffering.
Thessalonians were strangers
But Paul went to them,
And ministered to them,
Showing them Truth.
Paul loved them enough to become friends with them,
And did not keep them at arm's length.
This is *God's economy*:
You give encouragement
And it gets returned." (Field notes)

This theme of loving one's neighbor speaks to Christian character formation. Teaching about the practices of missionaries through the lives of biblical figures like Paul was a commonplace strategy for helping Micah and Charlie to develop classical and Christian dispositions.

Classical and Christian curriculum is, unsurprisingly, a male-dominated curriculum.[29] Ongoing lessons from the Bible and other sources such as *The Story of the World: History for the Classical Child* (Bauer, 2006) and *The Greenleaf Guide to Famous Men of Greece* (Shearer, 1989) showed White men, like Paul, sacrificing personally to give "true knowledge" to strangers, among many other moral tales, most with male heroes. These narratives constructed caring as a personal gift enacted through prayer and through discipleship in the privileged ideology. These cultural narratives served, in part, to paint meanings of care as private and religious as opposed to public and/or secular. April also used a world missions-oriented book called *Operation World: When We Pray God Works* (Johnstone & Mandrake, 2001) depicting poverty, a multiplicity of faiths, and different governments around the world. She paired *Operation World* with *Material World: A Global Family Portrait* (Menzel, 1994), a photographic album of families around the world and their possessions. April designed this pedagogy to show her sons "how good they have it in the U.S."

Comparative studies of religions afforded additional opportunities to discuss Christianity relative to other religions. As April explained:

> You know, one of the exciting things [that came up] when we studied historically the spread of Islam: immediately it becomes clear and it's indisputable that Islam spread through warfare. . . . It was with the sword. It came to your village and if you didn't convert, you were slaughtered. It was a "takeover" mentality. And of course Christianity had its moments, like the Crusades, but that's not how the early church spread. You know, into the Middle Ages, it was word of mouth. It was testimony, it was not by force, people were persecuted if they believed. So those kinds of contrasts come up all the time.

This example shows April's limitations for addressing the golden rule. In her curriculum, constantly comparing cultures, religions, and belief systems to her own was crucial. It was an opportunity to examine truth, goodness, and beauty. Whether the interpretation promoted democratic or socially just outcomes or was supported by research were not the key questions for April. Instead, in the logic stage, interpretations were made through a lens that compared the Christian and Muslim contexts through "the most basic questions about them: What do these religions say about the nature of man? the nature of God? the purpose of living?" (Bauer & Wise, 2009, p. 427). In practice, the Greenes' inquiry was limited to privilege Christianity, rather than to understand the variation in Muslims' contexts, inclusion/exclusion via religion, and the intertwining of Christian and Muslim pasts, presents, and futures. Dialogue for understanding was a method that shaped yet limited the consideration of a wider range of perspectives, which seems to be a challenge of this education.

April lived the golden rule as she understood it, and taught her boys to do the same. For example, she agreed to be on constant call for her neighbor who had physical and emotional disabilities. April took the boys to help at their neighbor's home. But doing their Christian part by loving their neighbor, April explained, meant that the boys lost out on the classical part—crucial academic time. She believed that by embodying the golden rule, her own sons were, in some ways, compromised. In this context, living out a classical *and* Christian mother-teacher identity was not always possible in practice.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

I have shown two examples of how April used classical tools to educate her sons for (1) classical futures and (2) Christian purposes. Here I elaborate more pointedly on why and how April used these tools, offering insights into her practices that may resonate with other evangelical homeschooling mother-teachers.

Why and How Does an Evangelical Homeschooling Mother-Teacher Use Classical and Christian Tools?

April was keen on this curriculum because she genuinely wanted to discern truth, goodness, and beauty and teach her sons the same. She also had more instrumental reasons for classical education. Pressed economically, she linked cultural capital (education) rather than economic capital with the goal of contemplation, defining success by educational attainment, not white-collar professionalism. She believed that the Trivium had the potential to help her accomplish these goals. She was also aware of ideas and experiences outside the curriculum that could supply access to

multiple discursive worlds (Holland et al., 1998). Going beyond the typical classical and Christian program was a way of reconciling her anxieties about "fitting in" with the wider world, meeting Christian responsibilities, and serving the academic and social needs of each son. In this retooling, April used online resources, the public university, and television to support her children's engagement with the wider world. In so doing, she pushed the question of whose knowledge, understandings, and wisdom are of the most worth and at least partially resisted the classical and Christian warning regarding the dangers of media influences.

In this education, April took up the Trivium tools in complicated ways. Using the tool of dialogue with her Pert boys was one way in which April acted as a curriculum developer and pedagogue, shaping knowledge, understandings, and rhetoric for the future. The dialogues stretched across classical academic subjects, religious studies, and the presentation of gender in the curriculum.

Regarding her use of academic dialogues, in the Latin practice example presented, April wanted the boys to master grammatical forms. This goal was thwarted because of the Greenes' unfamiliarity with Latin and the fact that April did appreciate her sons being childlike at times, even though it could be disruptive. Traditional developmental theory assumes a forward-moving trajectory, and an increased productive potential in line with capitalism, placing a particular "natural" order on the unnaturalness of clock time (Burman, 1994). But as a mother-teacher, April was torn between the seriousness of creating classical scholars and the desire to provide a space in which preteenagers could still be kids.[30] In April's situation, using the Trivium tools was complicated by the boys' hesitancy to take responsibility for their learning. She wanted her sons to own their learning, but she still found herself needing to spend time teaching basic skills and factual knowledge. April tried to hook the boys in a number of ways, but Micah and Charlie could repel classical topics, as evidenced by the "cheetahs and Celts" scenario. While the boys were curious about many things (recall their creative questions expressed about economics, politics, and religion), guiding dialogue productively could be difficult. The boys' horizons were expanded as April helped bring together knowledge from multiple sources; however, sometimes this exposure detracted from their educational progress as they spent time playing with the novelty of popular discourse.

In religious instruction, April specifically compared the history of Christianity to the history of Islam in order to portray Christianity as a more peaceful and preferable worldview, brushing over the colonizing history of Christian missionaries in the process. In that example, April and her sons missed out on certain interpretations of past and present events.

Concerning gender, by using Paul—a male—as the model for caring, she feminized a curriculum that was dominated in the formal academic

lessons by male references. This practice could be seen as a way of broadening representations of Christian men, or even a means of showing her sons how to change the gendered context of homeschooling in the next generation by encouraging more active caring behaviors among males.

In sum, April passionately taught her sons using the Trivium tools and supplementary resources for complex purposes. Next, I map—somewhat tentatively—the possibilities and challenges of her classical and Christian practices. I then end by offering some final reflections on how doing this curriculum may shape the identity and agency of the evangelical homeschooling mother-teacher.

What Are the Possibilities and Challenges of Classical and Christian Homeschooling for an Evangelical Mother-Teacher?

Possibilities. Classical and Christian education promised a number of possibilities for April as a mother-teacher:

1. Curriculum: Classical content and languages promoted a challenging curriculum. The curriculum coupled what April believed were the highest order of intellectual and spiritual traditions. She found a wealth of classical and Christian materials available, as well as some free chat rooms and vendor websites to support her curriculum.
2. Pedagogy: In April's mind, mother-teacher and child dialogues can contribute to a rigorous education. Given April's motivation of personally educating her children to biblical principles, this pedagogical tool made good sense. This pedagogy also was strong, she believed, in its potential to provoke questioning and curiosity, which her children did demonstrate.
3. Identity: Classical and Christian education promised a space for April to appropriate professionalism, intellectualism, and virtue. She conscientiously kept up on the latest developments in classical and Christian education and tailored them for her sons. Through voracious study, she became increasingly adept across a range of subjects. And, she acted in line with the image of the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 in the Bible, "more precious than rubies" as a hard worker who maintained the home and performed a plethora of duties as a mother-teacher.

As should be clear from this case, April experienced some encouraging possibilities for her children and herself by using this curriculum. Her identity as a "good" mother seemed to be strengthened, as she was fortified by the elements listed above. But there are limits to the possibilities that classical and Christian homeschooling can provide.

Challenges. The following challenges are not often described in the formal guides to classical and Christian education, but were nonetheless those that April experienced in her role as a homeschooling mother-teacher:

1. Cost: This curriculum may have hidden costs that increase over time. Buying curricular resources stretched the Greene family to their limits, especially when unexpected medical bills came to bear on their budget.
2. Time: The amount of time involved in learning unfamiliar content was a nagging burden for April. April expended significant time preparing lessons and in actually doing direct instruction when she would have instead liked to engage more in productive dialogue.
3. Child agency: As shown in the results, there may be limited opportunities to deeply pursue individual interests (at least at Micah's and Charlie's ages) given the requirements of the curriculum.
4. Perspective taking: As suggested in the religious studies example, April's sons lost out on the fullest range of critical perspectives and knowledge. While this curriculum relies on a particular worldview, there are limits to constructing ideas from any viewpoint.
5. Isolation: As described in the introduction to her case, April lived in a rural area and missed the support of a classically focused mother-teachers' group. Her strength in being a mother-teacher of challenging curriculum was limited, perhaps, because she lacked this face-to-face support. Furthermore, while her more privileged friends tapped into the "global village" of Internet-based resources (see McLuhan, 1962/2011; also McLuhan, 1942/2006 is of interest), April could not link to her most desired classical virtual resource of online Latin instruction because of the high costs involved.
6. Gender burden: April did nearly all of the labor related to homeschooling through this intensive curriculum, while her husband did little.

In light of these possibilities and challenges, April's mother-teacher identity and agency were crucial elements in her classical and Christian educational practices. I showed how April engaged her mother-teacher identity in order to participate as an active agent in the development of her children and herself. This was a difficult task of developing Christ-centered and intellectually oriented identities. Classical and Christian curriculum itself engaged her. It was interesting and challenging enough to be quite a positive thing for April, who spent nearly every waking hour cultivating her preadolescents. In complex and dynamic ways, she took up popular culture alongside the Trivium tools of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. In so doing, she accommodated a broader view of what is needed to engage in useful conversations. At times, however, April's identity as a mother-teacher

became destabilized because in order to participate in the Christian dialogue of loving one's neighbor, her sons' formal classical curriculum needed to be set temporarily on the back burner.

Largely, April's agency resembled the bricoleur—a meaning maker of the type the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966) described in his book, *The Savage Mind*. Her agency was propelled because she recognized the value in sampling from a buffet of education-related tactics in order to accomplish her goals to the greatest extent possible. But even with her savvy, using Trivium tools and creatively supplementing them was an intense struggle for April because of the costs, time, and commitments involved.

From the beginning, becoming the sole teacher of her own sons meant devoting herself to the development of her children and herself. In doing this, she highlighted her individual work as social. The unique meanings and acts that April had pieced together imbibed the experiences and intentions of others—for example, Bauer and Wise were especially persuasive, as was April's sister. But the social was also individual in that April responded to her position of being a White, middle-class evangelical mother through her choice to devote herself through classical and Christian homeschooling. Doing the labor-intensive classical and Christian curriculum prevented April from taking on roles in addition to those of mother and teacher. She could, for example, no longer "go and make disciples" as a global missionary. Instead, her goal had shifted to making young disciples at home, an act perhaps even more demanding than her past missionary work because of the multiple and competing expectations she now perceived from a range of audiences. Specifically, I touched on expectations evinced through other mothers, college admissions, her sons, and herself. These relations have added to the intricate drama of April's daily life as an evangelical homeschooling mother-teacher.

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NOTES

1. Evangelicals are strongly represented in the homeschooling movement—both in numbers and in their political clout (Kunzman, 2009).

2. All participant names are pseudonyms, and some participant characteristics nonessential for this analysis have been masked for confidentiality purposes.

3. Generally speaking, homeschoolers are White and middle-class (NCES, 2009), and so we might assume that most classical and Christian homeschoolers also fit this demographic.

4. Evangelical homeschoolers regularly use technology for investigating and purchasing curriculum and related texts and materials (Kunzman, 2009).

5. The topic is certainly not straightforward. It is important to point out here, for example, that while Susan Wise Bauer and Jessie Wise are brilliant Christian women and their evangelical worldviews seep through in their writing, they are careful to invite readers of various faiths to explore classical education. Bauer and Wise call their program classical rather than classical and Christian.

6. Classical and Christian education is not a "package" curriculum or textbook series. Generally speaking, supportive guides by authors such as Bauer and Wise (2009) provide a philosophical background for mother-teachers. Additional texts are then brought in to support the aims. There are even guides that help mother-teachers remediate any perceived deficits in their own educational background through individual studies of classical history and literature. One such important guide has been Susan Wise Bauer's (2003) *The Well-Educated Mind: A Guide to the Classical Education You Never Had.*

7. It is important for understanding the significance of mother-teachers' roles in curriculum development to establish the incidence of homeschooling in the United States. The most recent data are from the 2007 National Household Education Survey (NHES) and show that an estimated 1.5 million students (1,508,000) were homeschooled in the United States in 2007 (NCES, 2009). This shows an increase in U.S. homeschooling from 2.2% of students in 2003 to 2.9% in 2007. The data from the 1999 NHES reported 850,000 homeschooled students, approximately 1.7%. The rise in homeschooling over the 8-year period from 1999 to 2007 represents a 74% relative increase (NCES, 2009).

8. On this insight, Kunzman (2010) expands: "By virtue of their freedom to shape their child's education in almost any way they choose, homeschoolers [whether religious] are pushed to grapple with several vital and profound questions: What are the central purposes of education? What kind of person do I want my child to become? How can I make their learning experience the best it can be?" (p. 26). In this project, evangelicals must consider their religious principles and their pedagogy.

9. The gendered difference in authors' voices is perhaps best seen in the contrast between Douglas Wilson on one hand and Susan Wise Bauer and Jessie Wise on the other. Wilson has made polemical arguments against public education:

   > In the nineteenth century, our nation established a socialistic system of education, telling parents that they did not have to exercise the same degree of responsibility for their children that they used to. Lo and behold, over time parents began to relinquish their parental duties, assuming that "they" out there somewhere would pick up the slack. Children became increasingly unloved, uncared for, undisciplined. . . . One of the means that our modern technocratic society discovered was the ability to hit kids on the head with a chemical rock. (Wilson, 2003, p. 17)

Bauer and Wise, meanwhile, have proclaimed the limits of the schools in a gentler, more personal voice: "I [Jessie Wise] made it through public school at the top of my class because my guardians taught me from what they had learned. But sooner or later, the capital gets used up. . . . My own children were faced with teachers who brought them down to the level of the class . . . they were surrounded by peers who considered anyone good at learning to be a geek" (Bauer & Wise, 2009, pp. 8–9).

10. There is some variation in what is considered most crucial in classical and Christian homeschooling. A good example is Leigh Bortins's Classical Conversations project (www.classicalconversations.com). Through this Web site and additional information presented in a comprehensive catalog (www.stallionpublishers.com/publication.aspx?pid=1203&pkey=idvoxdeus), subject areas are deemphasized as parents work together in supportive communities. In this program, classical and Christian education is a mission, a model, and a method. The catalog presents the mission as using academic skills and rhetoric to know God and make Him known to others, the model as combining the biblical worldview with the tools of the Trivium, and the method as equipping parents to encourage their children. A few parents are trained as directors and tutors who then support cooperative groups of parents and children (co-ops) that meet 1 day per week, modeling the Trivium tools for other parents and children, with classes available to accommodate all of the Trivium stages.

11. According to H. I. Marrou (1956), in ancient times, individuals studied the Trivium as children and youth as well as the Quadrivium during university education at around the age of 16. Together, the Trivium and Quadrivium formed the seven liberal arts. The earlier arts were preparation for the later arts and sciences, with knowledge building in a sequential fashion. The Trivium provided the language, metaphor, and analogy important for subsequent learning about numeracy and physical space and time, which then prepared students for higher-level studies in the sciences, ethics, philosophy, and theology.

12. Classical and Christian educators have explained their cultural-historical identity in the following manner: "Classical and Christian parents who impart this [Western] knowledge to their children are not being xenophobic, or hostile to other cultures. As Christianity permeates the Far East, for example, its cultural impact will certainly be glorious—and quite different from what we have seen in the history of our civilization. But we do not honor another culture by disparaging the achievements of our own culture" (Callihan et al., 2001, p. 14).

13. Classical and Christian leaders often position their education against progressivism. The argument against progressive education has tended to assume that public schools are necessarily progressive in their aims when this argument is limited. While public schools in the United States have been characterized as widely reflecting progressive philosophies (Ravitch, 2001), in reality public schools are not especially progressive and often rely on a basic skills approach (Kliebard, 2004), what Paulo Freire (2000) termed "banking education" which is a metaphor to illuminate the idea of deposits being made by teachers into the brains of passive students. The first stage of the Trivium (the Poll-Parrot stage, to be discussed later in detail), taken on its own, reflects such a banking approach.

14. Remarkably, Dorothy Sayers was a single mother who, in the 1920s, hid the existence of her son (her father was a distinguished member of the Anglican clergy). While working as a writer of jingles and mystery novels to support her child financially, he was raised by a relative (Reynolds, 1993). Sayers was well known within the church, and had a broad network of friends and some influence. For example, one friend, the theologian C. S. Lewis, once urged her to speak out against a controversial Anglican movement in the 1940s: the ordination of women. Her personal history is ironic, fascinating, and important to consider in relation to evangelical homeschooling gender and motherhood.

15. Because of my focus on homeschooling, I use the moniker "classical and Christian" not to discuss ACCS schools (and homeschools) necessarily, but to describe more broadly Christians who espouse a classical approach. Unfortunately, because of inconsistent and insufficient reporting requirements across states, there is no information on the real number of homeschoolers using a classical curriculum. But it is safe to say that there are many more classical and Christian adherents than the ACCS has documented. And homeschoolers purchase the bulk of classical and Christian materials, indicating that they outnumber the brick-and-mortar population (Perrin, 2004).

16. Classical and Christian scholars Littlejohn and Evans (2006) have reconceptualized Sayers's use of "tools." Instead of seeing the tools as the Trivium itself, they regard tools as the skill set the classically educated child acquires and can then use in the world. The specific tools that these authors see as relevant are "memory, penmanship, phonetic decoding, reading comprehension, computation, critical thinking, analysis, problem solving, research, synthesis, effective writing, public speaking, and sound moral judgment, to name a few" (p. 39). They see these skills overlapping across time.

17. Bauer and Wise (2009) offer a curricular sequence built of 4-year cycles of history with lists of recommended texts, literature, and supplementary resources. The following schedule is for seventh graders, students at the same grade level as April Greene's eldest son:

    Logic: 3 hours per week.
    Spelling and word study: 45 minutes day one. Do review 5 minutes other days.
    Grammar: 40–60 minutes.
    Structured reading: 40–60 minutes. Late Renaissance through early modern literature, memorize and recite poems and passages.
    Free reading: 60 minutes.
    Writing: 30–60 minutes, 2–3 days per week. Do formal writing, craft letters for friends at least twice monthly.
    History: 60 minutes 3 days per week or 90 minutes twice weekly. Late Renaissance–Early Modern History (1600–1850). Activities include reading core texts, listing facts, creating a time line, outlining, reading primary sources and critical thinking resources, map work, writing one composition per week.
    Latin: 3 or more hours per week.
    Religion: 10–15 minutes per day. Basics of personal faith and world religion study through history.
    Science: 90 minutes, 2 days per week. Do chemistry experiment day one, write a report on day two.
    Mathematics: 50–60 minutes per day of pre-algebra.

Art and Music: Twice per week, 90–120 minutes per session. Do art projects and listen to music from the Renaissance through early modern period, make biographical pages on artists and musicians, and enter the dates on a time line.

18. There is debate within classical and Christian scholarship as to how flexible pedagogy should be in relation to developmental stages. Overlap among knowledge, understanding, and wisdom is sometimes suggested across the range of development.

19. Dialogues in classical and Christian education differ from the dialogues described in progressive education in terms of (1) the framing of knowledge construction, (2) the purposes of the dialogue, (3) ideas about when children become ready to engage in dialogue, and (4) the precise actors. Classical and Christian authors present dialogue as "a conversation in which you [the parent] guide her toward the correct conclusions, while permitting her to find her own way. You'll allow the child to disagree with your conclusions, if she can support her points with the facts" (Bauer & Wise, 2009, p. 234). This classical and Christian definition of dialogue is a technique between the parent and child to help individual students understand the content and the structure of subject matter, usually following the principles of formal logic. Critical praxis-oriented education, in contrast, is a relationship that seeks to reveal and change unjust power dynamics that exist in the world. In the critical frame, "dialogue is a way of knowing and should never be viewed as a mere tactic to involve students in a particular task. . . . I engage in dialogue because I recognize the social and not merely the individualistic character of the process of knowing" (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 379). Wilson (1991) goes further to describe the nature of classical and Christian dialogue between the teacher and the Pert:

    It is possible to believe in ultimate truth and pass that truth on to students without propagandizing them. One of the best ways to do this is to utilize the "pertness" of each student. If they are going to question, then teach them how to question. Teach them to recognize a fallacious argument, and they will not just hold the rest of the world to that standard, they will hold *you* to it. (p. 95)

    In classical and Christian education, dialogue does not become a primary tool until the Pert stage (approximately ages 11–14). This is very different from, for example, the progressive Reggio Emilia early childhood education, in which preschoolers powerfully seek completeness in themselves and others through dialogues they co-create not simply between mother-teacher and child, but among peers, teachers, and parents (Filippini, 2001). In the Reggio Emilia philosophy the purpose is not surveillance, accountability, and correctness, but rather the construction of knowledge and critical transformation.

20. I followed traditional data-gathering techniques. Once approved by my institution's institutional review board (IRB), I observed the primary mother-teachers and talked with them formally and informally about their homeschooling practices after gaining their consent. When I returned home from each observation, I wrote up thick field notes of the full action (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Reconstructing the setting and dialogue on paper was a time-consuming task taking many hours. Regarding interviews, I drew on Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) general principles of qualitative interviewing.

21. In Kunzman's (2009) case example of a mother-teacher who was planning to implement a classical and Christian program, he noted that they spent "about three-quarters of their homeschooling time actually at home, and the rest in co-op activities or other community learning experiences" (p. 194). With this and past knowledge of other homeschoolers in mind, I sampled practices both inside and outside the home.

22. The questions that elicited important data for this analysis were as follows:
    1) What long-term goals do you have for each of your kids? Who do you see them each becoming someday?
    2) What curriculum(s) do you use and why/how did you choose them? What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of the different curricula? Who makes curricular decisions? How?
    3) Tell me about how you approach teaching religion? How about teaching other content? How are they the same/different?
    4) How do you plan lessons and how do you decide how closely to follow the plans?
    5) How do you learn to homeschool? What are you most excited about in your teaching? What parts do you worry about?
    6) Who or what are your three best homeschooling supports? How does each one help you?
    7) How are being a mom and teacher the same and different? How do you balance the two? What could make homeschooling easier?

23. This is not to say that a classical and Christian program could not be adapted for children with learning disabilities. The program is reading heavy, however, and Sarah's eldest son was 6 years behind grade level in his reading skills. I have found little in the way of formal classical and Christian material providing elaborated suggestions for addressing the needs of students with disabilities.

24. Christian death metal music is heavy metal band music with Christian lyrics. The band members are professed Christians and the music may be evangelical or intended for believers.

25. As described in endnote 10, Classical Conversations is a company run by Leigh Bortins which offers materials and social networks to support classical and Christian homeschooling families.

26. Unless otherwise noted, participant quotations are responses from interviews.

27. She had targeted at least tentatively a competitive classical private college, Hillsdale, so the boys could move forward with the Quadrivium. It was one of the few U.S. colleges that do not accept federal funding. By not accepting federal funding, a college may promote separation between education and government. This is a radical form of privatization that is rare among private colleges in the United States. A major implication of a strict no-government-funding policy is that U.S. students and families cannot receive government-sponsored grants and student or parent loans to pay for their college expenses. Thus, April's children would need substantial private scholarships to attend, which increased performance pressures.

28. The American College Test (ACT) is the most popular standardized test for U.S. college admissions (see www.ACT.org). It consists of four required

parts: English, reading, mathematics, and science, and an optional writing assessment.

29. As evidence for the claim that this curriculum is male dominated in its content and scope, consider this list of suggested authors in the Pert stage literature sequence (Bauer & Wise, 2009): For fifth grade (Ancients), only two of twenty-eight texts centered on women (the books of Esther and Ruth in the Bible). In sixth grade (Medieval–Early Renaissance), one female author was listed (Rosemary Sutcliff who composed a text on King Arthur). For the seventh grade (Late Renaissance–Early Modern), just four of twenty-two recommended authors are women (these are Jane Austen, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, and Mary Shelley). And in the eighth-grade Modern curriculum, less than one-third of the authors listed are women.

30. April's stance is a bit surprising given that outward signs of inner virtue have historically been important evidence of a classical education. These were cultivated, for example, in the classical Medieval cathedral schools through behavioral modeling in which the students followed the teachers (Jaeger, 1994). But April stated, to the contrary, that she did not see the disciplined body as a mirror for the soul. She eschewed the public school classroom as too controlled, and tried to mitigate the pressures of classical and Christian homeschooling with humor and a relaxed atmosphere. The Trivium supported her stance at this stage. Pert children were by definition argumentative and at times a bit unruly.

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