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Disturbing the data: looking into gender and family size matters with US Evangelical homeschoolers

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This qualitative study draws on the theory of feminist physicist Karen Barad to examine how gender matters in Evangelical homeschooling families of various sizes, with an emphasis on large families. The two-phase data collection includes interviews with 18 participants and observations of several participants over one year. We use a Baradian analytic process called diffractive analysis to read the messy borders between the discursive and material for mothers, fathers, daughters, sons, and elements of homeschooling environments. We find that materiality intra-acted with gender in complex and sometimes surprising ways but that gendered possibilities in homeschooling are steeped in the terrains of politics, history, culture, economics, and environment. In addition, we see possibilities for using this method of analysis as a way to more carefully and complexly read data in the micro.

Keywords: Barad; Quiverfull; Evangelical; homeschooling; gender; feminist materialism; posthuman; assemblage; geography

Introduction

Feminist scholars have long explored the realities of women's bodies and their experiences in a patriarchal world. Evangelical homeschooling is an interesting case in this regard. Through the rapid rise in homeschooling in the USA, quite little has been described regarding gender relations and the homes in question. But as Lois (2012) documents, homeschooling mothers strive to create a space in the home in which they both savor time with their children and cultivate their academics and socialization. Arguably the largest and most politically powerful group of homeschoolers in the USA is the Evangelical Christians (Kunzman 2009), the focal group for this study. In the USA, whites homeschool at higher rates than other racial groups, parents typically have at least some college education, and the vast majority has income levels above the poverty line (Noel, Stark, and Redford 2013). As homeschooling continues to grow internationally, this article is quite relevant to many in the international community for purposes of comparison.

Researchers have suggested that the trend toward Evangelical homeschooling families larger than the norm of three children may reinforce patriarchal and heteronormative structures and/or the overvaluation of genetic offspring and siblings (see Barad 1998; Harrison and Rowley 2011). We are interested in finding out more about how gender and the materiality of the home and specifically family size matter for homeschooling families. In this article, we present our research using the theory of the feminist materialist scholar Karen Barad. Specifically, we explore this question: How does gender matter in Evangelical homeschooling families of varied sizes? We offer a discussion of gender in

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the trend toward large homeschooling families, an examination of relevant ideas in the feminist and geographical literatures, an explanation of our use of Barad's theory and our associated research method, our results, and finally a discussion of implications for the field.

Biological and cultural reproduction of gender stereotypes

Gender stereotypes impact the ways in which family members interact in the homeschooling movement. Evangelical homeschooling and reproductive politics receive national attention from their association with the Duggar family, stars of the television show 19 Kids and Counting (TLC Network). Their popular website (http://www.duggarfamily.com/) links to a foundation called Life United (http://www.lifeunited.org/). Together, these sites connect homeschooling, large heterosexual families, Evangelicalism, and abortion and contraceptive politics.

Within our research, family size and gender positioning are viewed by us as central aspects within the participants' lives, and understanding them requires an understanding of Quiverfull, a movement in which the Duggars are an exemplar. The goal of Quiverfull is for women to eschew birth control in order to reproduce many children who are groomed as 'arrows' who will someday engage in the discursive and political battle for conservative Christian nationalism and globalism (Joyce 2009). In the quiverfull metaphor from the bible, it is the father who is the active archer. He is 'ideal' in his able-bodied-ness (Irigaray 1985). In this metaphor, the mother seems to embody the quiver itself, protecting the arrows until they are ready for adult trajectories.

There are a couple of tensions that are important for understanding Quiverfull as it relates to homeschooling (Harrison and Rowley 2011; Joyce 2009). First, Quiverfull co-opts the rhetoric of feminism to work within cultural norms, for example by using the popularly coined feminist alternative of 'natural motherhood' in which mothers are biologically and psychologically determined to raise the children at home (Bobel 2002). Yet while using the rhetoric of feminism, Quiverfull could also be seen as a backlash against the feminist movement, reproductive rights movements, gay marriage and early education reform. It uses modern technology such as television and the Internet to disperse ideas and challenge cultural norms by promoting conservative orientations toward gender roles and sexuality.

A second paradox is that the emphasis on the home and homeschooling frames the human citizen as a property owner and rights-holder while the home itself also enacts agency in relation to the mothers, girls, and boys housed within it (see Braidotti 2013). But there is unequal access to adequate housing and furnishings by income, race, gender, and (dis)ability status (Raymond, Wheeler, and Brown 2011). Thus, many US families do not possess some of the basic material elements associated in the literature with quality homeschooling (e.g., Kunzman 2009).

How gender matters in material feminist studies

Material feminist researchers, notably Barad (1998), have emphasized the roles of new technologies in mediating maternities. For Barad, the sonogram 'does not simply map the terrain of the body; it maps geopolitical, economic, and historical factors as well' (1998, 93). Politically, too much maternal responsibility may displace questions regarding ethics and accountability, particularly for poor and working class women and women of color who have unequal access to high-quality health care and housing. For example, the

pregnant woman is said to have full responsibility for the health of her fetus, even the factors beyond her control. 'Seeing' the fetus has shifted debates regarding life and rights, with many Evangelical organizations using ultrasound technology in Right to Life work. In this technology, the fetus is constructed as the patient, framed on the screen and given the full attention. Its gender is often discerned and named. The mother's body is screened out of the picture, and white and middle class fetuses are most often framed. The sonogram has significance in our analysis, as we relate Barad's readings of sonogram technology to our research cases.

Both materiality and critical questions regarding who and what matters extend to the realm of homeschooling, in which the literature provides examples of the intensive burden thrust upon parents, and especially mothers, for children's outcomes (Lois 2006, 2009). In Evangelical homeschooling, time at home may extend beyond academic curriculum to a full unofficial curriculum of socialization offering opportunities for teaching boys and girls about gender and the Evangelical norms of Biblical submission (Sherfinski 2014). This occurs in a setting in which the husband is the head of the household and his wishes should supersede those of the wife (Scanzoni and Hardesty 1992). Evangelical mothers' homeschooling work has been found to be more nurturing while the fathers are more ideological about how and why homeschooling should occur (Vigilant, Wold Trefethren, and Anderson 2013). While Barad's (1998) sonogram example shows how technology creates a lens that shifts debates about life and rights to become more narrowed on Right to Life arguments, the materiality of the home creates a similar relation. Educating in the home makes possible a less state-regulated form of education, focusing intensely on the parents' rights for educational choice and providing a private space for anti-feminist, natural feminist, and educational choice discourses.

Homeschooling geography

Of late, educational geographies have been posed as 'inward' versus 'outward' regarding foci of theoretical orientation (macro or micro) (Hanson Thiem 2009; Holloway et al. 2010; Kraftl 2012). We aim to break apart this dualism in our discussion of gendered home education, following Biehl and Locke (2010) in the notion that we can endeavor to understand the macro without inscribing the micro in tight boundaries. We begin to do this by tracing some of the early homeschooling scholarship and the geography and feminist research related to homeschooling, considering varied approaches to rights/needs, child/adult and home/school. The messy boundaries between constructs become useful for thinking through our research case.

Some of the early scholars of homeschooling and choice in education theorize strong roles for mostly white, middle class religious parents within the private domain of the home. For instance, Reich (2002) sees parents as 'tailors' personalizing their children's educations to fit, while Macedo (2000) considers contexts of rights to exit the ideologies delivered by fundamentalist parents and communities, and Merry and Howell (2009) view parents' work as a moral project justified locally in relations between homes and brick-and-mortar schools. Researchers (e.g., Kunzman 2009; Lois 2012; Lundy and Mazama 2014; Vigilant, Wold Trefethren, and Anderson 2013) are beginning to show the complexities of how some of the theoretical claims are practiced and not.

Feminist geography extends conversations of needs/rights beyond what parents necessarily 'do' to the children to an analysis of how the framing of caregiver/child has political ramifications. This provides an understanding of the micro-relations that enable and constrain voices in privatizing policy domains. While Barad has shown how the voice

of the mother is erased for political gain, the feminist geography literature has also revealed the 'impossible subjectivity' of children's voices (Ruddick 2007). Ruddick argues that 'a politics that champions both caregivers and children speaks not only to a political zeitgeist, but also the pervasiveness of liberalism's discursive divide – the either/or of choosing between subjects imagined as independent and (potentially) antagonistic' (515). Indeed, children have been politically positioned to 'speak' whence their real voices have been masked by policies ventriloquating a language representing the interests of adults and elites. In evangelical homeschooling, however, there is little ventriloquating needed as evangelical culture tends to support parents as the key decision-makers (Kunzman 2009). Evangelical homeschooling mothers have been said to take on political leadership and curriculum roles from the space of the home, dispersing ideologies associated with movement leaders from their home bases while actively engaging in family life and the world that affects it (Apple 2006).

Liberatory empirical scholarship documenting children's subjectivities (e.g., Holloway, Valentine, and Bingham 2000; Holloway and Valentine 2001) contributes to understanding voice as it is practiced in home and school spaces. This research exploring children's identity and agency in diverse education and care contexts has involved children's anthropocentric identification with technology as tools, contributing questions of what possibilities educational and more informal technology invite for a girl, a boy, a mother or a father. Holloway and Valentine document tensions among parenting, child agency and identities in homes, but these have not been explored much in evangelical homeschooling, a context in which the child/parent dynamic has been characterized as often tightly connected (e.g., Stevens 2001).

The homeschooling qualitative research has often looked at the mother as a unit of analysis because of her prime role in teaching. In recent years, meanings of the 'good' mother have tended to follow a liberal feminist standpoint, away from the traditional woman who stays at home with the children and toward one who enters the labor market and increases the family income in order to benefit the family (McDowell 2007). Homeschooling mothers can adopt this rhetoric, categorizing their practices as professional, but they also maintain their identities as natural and nourishing (Lois 2012). The nourishing mother–child space, according to some feminists, is needed as a relational category (Kristeva 1980). But in homeschooling, privileging the mother–child space may displace relations among mothers, fathers, care providers, friends, extended family and children (Longhurst 2008).

Recent research maps spatial discourses in homeschooling (Kraftl 2012). Kraftl notes a divide between the homeschool and the separate brick-and-mortar school that has not been noted strongly in the USA, where state policies often allow for blending home and school education practices, sometimes through public-supported online instruction (Apple 2006). There is ample evidence in both the UK and the USA of home educators distributing knowledge among families who network and organize to support one another formally through organizations and conferences and informally in networks, spreading educational boundaries outside of the walls of the home (Kraftl 2012; Kunzman 2009; Lois 2012).

Across all of the relevant literature, the discursive elements of rights/needs, child/adult and home/school are privileged, which is somewhat surprising given the connectedness between homeschooling and materiality. There are no specifically posthumanist analyses of gender and family size in homeschools, a gap that we address by looking closely at how important factors, both material and discursive, relate with our data. We theorize this through Barad's feminist materialism, which we explain next.

Feminist materialism

Barad's (2007) theoretical groundwork in feminist materialism explores the interaction of culture, history, discourse, technology, biology, and 'the environment' without privileging any one element. This ethos is called assemblage. While the assemblage theorists Deleuze, Guattari, and Latour are well known in the field of geography, Barad and other scholars (e.g., Braidotti 2013; Grosz 2008; Haraway 1991) have been active in developing assemblage theory to address feminism. We see important applications for Barad's theory in the field of feminist geography and for this research on Evangelical homeschooling specifically.

The concept of the assemblage generally reflects how things are put together in fragile composites while retaining their heterogeneous parts (Anderson and McFarlane 2011). Assemblages ground forces and signs so that they might intertwine relations, mixing things up without one force determining another (Deleuze and Guattari 1987).

Barad (1998) is unique in her application of the physicist Niels Bohr to assemblage theory. Bohr is non-Newtonian in that he sees no differentiation between the object of analysis and 'agencies of observation' (95). His epistemological stance provides an understanding of both human and nonhuman forces in knowledge production and a focus on how matter comes to matter through material dimensions of agency, material constraints, and material regulation. Nature is more than a passive social construction, but rather an agentic force that interacts with and changes the other elements in the mix, including the human. The body and lived experiences are the basis through which the discursive is woven (Orr 2002). Feminist materialism has used assemblages to de-privilege the body itself because it 'does not end at the skin' (Puar 2012, 57), as its traces transfer to objects in the home. The home, conversely, is an actor with humans. Its contents, configuration, and history are characters in the assemblage.

The distinction between discursive and posthumanist analyses is important because, as in Barad's sonogram example noted in the introduction to this article, the reality is much more complex than the framing of one body to the exclusion of another. This is because 'the liminality of bodily matter cannot be captured by intersectional subject positioning' (Puar 2012, 56). Intersectionality theories fall short of capturing the messiness of multiple categories as embodied configurations. It has been argued that assemblage theory should be used to compare the consequences of the different frames to the same reality in order to serve as an 'antidote to closing questions, issues, interventions and politics by seeing the world in more inventive and experimental ways' (Dewsbury 2011, 149). Following Barad, however, it is important to recognize that although everything is connected, it does not mean that everything is within human power to change (Hird 2009).

Next, we explain how we came to select these assemblages through our data collections and analyses.

Layered research methods

The data collection included interviews with 18 participants from 12 families and observations of homeschooling practices in one community. We used pseudonyms and masked other characteristics for privacy. The collection was divided into two phases. Phase one involved a year-long case study of Evangelical homeschooling mothers' experiences and practices in one Midwestern US community that used both in-depth interviews and a year's worth of observations across varied settings (homes, churches, and/or homeschooling community activities with five families). In phase one, we learned that a small family did not preclude a Quiverfull identity. Sonja (mother of three), for example, reconceptualized the family's own quiver as small, designed to snugly hold a few

arrows. Sampling Evangelical mothers with varied family sizes taught us about the reproductive politics ascribed to large families. But our interest in learning more about large families' lives also grew, which led to phase two of the study.

The second phase expanded the original data-set to include in-depth interviews of more large families (defined as four or more children) as well as more voices of fathers and youth, and greater variation within the Evangelical religious orientation. We chose four children as the large family minimum because it was above the relatively high homeschooling average of three children (Murphy 2012). This phase expanded the data-set to include all major regions of the USA (West, South, Midwest and East).

Sampling in both phases was done through snowballing initiated through discussions with friends and acquaintances of the first author. Table 1 presents basic information about the participants providing the interview data on homeschooling life analyzed in the study. Given our research question of how gender matters in Evangelical homeschooling families of varied sizes, families from both phases are included in this study, because participants in both phases discussed materiality in relation to their and/or others' family sizes. We found that the participants' reason(s) for homeschooling were connected to the ways in which materialities were discussed and occurred in homes. Therefore, we describe participants' motivations in Table 1. Ideological motivations are religious and moral defenses of homeschooling, pedagogical reasoning refers to concerns about specific teaching methods, and pragmatic reasoning reflects a 'what works' justification.

Participants

All of the families were white and middle class, and all those included had homeschooled for many years (a minimum of six). While all five phase one families homeschooled for primarily religious and moral reasons (although there were sometimes secondary reasons named), phase two participants included seven large families, of which four homeschooled for primarily moral and religious reasons and three homeschooled for mostly academic reasons. Two of the academically oriented families (the Blake's and Gross's) attended Evangelical churches and the Jamison's sometimes attended church but identified as not especially religious. This sample provided us with a range of homeschooling families intersecting around the factors of family size, Evangelical belief, and ideological motivations.

Data collection

The first author conducted the data collection for both phases. Each in-depth interview for both phase one and phase two generally lasted from 45 minutes to 1.5 hours. Most of these were done in person but due to distance, three of the phase two interviews were done over the telephone. All of the interviews were recorded and professionally transcribed verbatim. The mothers' semi-structured interview questions in phase one included information about gender roles, space, place, and educational practices. The phase two questions for large family members focused directly on the affordances and constraints of family size in homeschooling. In phase one, observations of homeschooling-related practices over a year yielded more than 500 pages of field notes and memos.

Analysis

The data-set was de-identified by the first author and coded through multiple stages. The second author read many of the de-identified phase two interview transcripts and memos

Table 1. Study participants.

Phase	Pseudonym	Role in family	No. of children in family	Region	Church background	Reason(s) for homeschooling (from interviews)
1	Sarah Andrews	Mother	3	Midwest	Evangelical	Ideological
1	Janie Barrett	Mother	11	Midwest	Evangelical	Ideological and pragmatic
1	Sonja Davidson	Mother	3	Midwest	Evangelical	Ideological, pragmatic, and pedagogical
1	April Greene	Mother	2	Midwest	Evangelical	Ideological and pedagogical
1	Chris Greene	Father	2	Midwest	Evangelical	Ideological and pedagogical
1	Nat Weston	Mother	3	Midwest	Evangelical	Ideological and pedagogical
1	Jack Weston	Father	3	Midwest	Evangelical	Ideological and pedagogical
1	Kamilah Weston	Daughter (18)	3	Midwest	Evangelical	Ideological and pedagogical
2	Ruby Blake	Mother	5	East	Evangelical	Pedagogical
2	Tom Blake	Father	5	East	Evangelical	Pedagogical
2	Lou Blake	Son (18)	5	East	Evangelical	Pedagogical
2	Kyla Gross	Daughter (21)	7	East, South	Evangelical	Pedagogical and pragmatic
2	Irene Jamison	Mother	4	East	Christian (less religious)	Pedagogical
2	Sam Jamison	Son (18)	4	East	Christian (less religious)	Pedagogical
2	Eileen Merit	Daughter (22)	4	West, East	Evangelical and Mainline	Ideological
2	Kip Preston	Father	4	Midwest	Evangelical	Ideological
2	Leelah Smith	Mother	6	South	Mainline	Ideological and pedagogical
2	Rosanna Weeks (2nd Generation Homeschooler)	Mother	4	Midwest	Evangelical	Ideological
		Daughter (early 30s)	9			Ideological

and independently coded these. Then both authors engaged in a process of 'thinking with theory' (Jackson and Mazzei 2012) described at the end of this section. We 'plugged' Barad's (1998, 2007, 2008) theory into the data as we read through it, and also 'plugged' the data into our readings of Barad's theory so that there was not simply a one-way theoretical lens forcing us to read the data as an object of Barad's framework. We 'installed' ourselves as 'becoming with' the data, sensing the intertwined relationship between researchers and data rather than uncovering a phenomenon (Hultman and Lenz Taguchi 2010). We analyzed how gender matters through the intra-action of discourse and the material. Intra-actions refer to entanglements around human and nonhuman boundaries such that 'a differential sense of being is enacted in an ongoing ebb and flow of agency' (Barad 2008, 135). This is different from coding for us in that we were not simply looking for somewhat standard analytic categories describing the environment and other themes 'bubbling up' in the data. Instead, we aimed to stay very close to both the data and theory in our thinking, gaining new insights directly related to the texts at hand.

The analytic process involved looking for the moments that Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010, 535) have termed 'diffractive interference'. Diffractive interfering encounters are conflicts of meaning among the material and the discursive that successively (though not linearly) evoke transformation. This is an approach that disrupts interpretivist readings of data. It breaks away from the logic of negativity or a center on lack (Braidotti 2013). Lenz Taguchi (2012) provides an excellent example of reading interviews diffractively. She explains that the researcher uses her 'bodymind' to explore *becomings-with*, to 'register smell, touch, level, pressure, tension and force in the interconnections emerging in between different matter, matter and discourse, in the event of engagement with data' (Lenz Taguchi 2012, 267). The researcher *disturbs* the data in this approach. For example in physics, Barad (2007) explains that diffraction is a process of waves overlapping, changing in their intra-action with obstacles and accumulating matter from one another. Diffraction effects happen due to this interference, and the original wave remains partly with the new one, evoking transformation.

Ultimately, the analysis was designed to show how gender mattered in Evangelical homeschooling in different ways and to different degrees. We analyze some of the many micro-level transformative encounters that happened in daily life.

Results

The mothers were the entry point into this research, as in all families they were the primary organizers of homeschooling, the main curriculum developers and those responsible for the home while the husband worked outside of it. We first briefly describe the general themes that we identified through the open coding process that was integrated with 'thinking with theory'. We then emphasize three cases that fit within these general themes in order to explore the themes in greater depth.

General findings on gender and family size

The participants univocally named biblical imperatives as a reason for why homeschooling families were often large. Although they rarely claimed the label Quiverfull, families by and large supported the idea that God is in control of reproduction in homeschooling families. But to trouble matters, Leelah, Ruby, and Irene (the most socially liberal mothers in the group) as well as a daughter named Kyla worried that large

family sizes could, and sometimes did, lead to educational irresponsibility. As Leelah explained it:

> There's almost a trend that I disagree with in large families that I see in some of our friends, and it's almost like hyper-spiritualizing . . . conception . . . like there's sort of a wrong sort of a pride in it sometimes. . . . I'm super-encouraged when I'm around large families that are really doing it well. And I see the strong relationship between the parents and the children and the siblings. And then sometimes I'm like, OK, you need to be able to provide for all of them. I think it can be . . . irresponsible sounds harsh, but I think sometimes it can be. (Leelah Smith)

Regarding the perceived reasons for homeschooling and large families co-occurring, there were two additional points that align with this theme. First, some participants worried about the plight of girls in large families. Related were concerns that the parents worked hard, that the father support the mother, and that they take the academic part seriously (Barrett, Blake, Greene, Gross, Smith). Second, while the unease was generally that girls would have diminished opportunities, one father (Weston) who had strong ideological as well as pedagogical views worried that under-prepared girls may not be able to eventually teach their own children at home adequately through high school.

In our analysis, we were careful because as liberal feminists and public school advocates, we could be seen as simply replicating the stories that we want to tell. Therefore, we thought it important to use the lens of diffractive analysis to read the data in multiple ways and to be sure that we are not simply looking for patterns of 'lack' (for example a lack of quality home education because the mother is stretched thin with many children) but are instead showing some of the complex patterns that zig-zag among homeschooling realities. Next, we work closely with the data, connecting it with Barad's posthumanist theory.

Thinking with theory

In this section, we describe a few of the assemblages from the research to show our process of using diffractive readings. The above-mentioned ideas are examined through diffractive readings of micro cases that exemplify them. We do diffractive analyses of three homes/families that espoused connections to the popular large family discourse (Janie and Sonja) and also resisted it in some ways (Ruby). Through diffraction, we show some examples of how gender matters in Evangelical homeschooling. To do this, we discuss gendered materialities, spacings, embodiments, and temporal events that are objects of analysis in the field of geography and that marked the gendered shifts observed and discussed in our research. In each of the three cases, like Barad's (1998) sonogram example presented earlier, nonhuman materials shifted the ways in which women's and children's/youth's bodies were portrayed and contested and these interacted unevenly with their rights.

Janie, a new baby, five homeschooled daughters and one computer

Janie Barrett gave birth to Maxwell, her 11th child, part way through the study. Meanwhile, she continued to homeschool five young daughters of the ages 6–13 at home. Her husband, Grant, insisted that the older children attend brick-and-mortar high school because he did not fully believe that homeschooling 'worked', and he wanted to protect his wife from too much strain. Because Janie had so many children and garnered the resources to educate so many children quite well, she reported that she was regarded as a 'supermom,' a kind of human goddess by her peers in the Evangelical homeschooling community.

Baby Maxwell's arrival stimulated waves of joy and a multitude of emotions amongst family members. But before his birth, Janie was in a 'desperate' physical and mental state that caused her to rely more on God. She mentioned that she hoped the children would one day have more balance in home/work roles than she or her husband experienced. The stress of her pregnancy, teaching five daughters at home, her husband Grant's long hours at work, and multiple personal and family health crises wore on her. But the physicality of the home also became useful in managing education at this intense time.

Janie separated her eldest at home, Rhianna (13), from the younger children, providing her the special opportunity to use logic software privately upstairs on the only home computer, in the parents' bedroom. Meanwhile, Janie could remain in the basement schoolroom with the youngest children to provide intensive direct instruction. But after Rhianna struggled and became unmotivated, Janie shifted her concerns from the younger girls to the elder:

> I wasn't seeing Rhianna as a person … sitting down with her and figuring out what's distracting her … she's anxious … just like me at times, and you need to just say, "We'll try again tomorrow," and just let this slide…. In my heart I would love to be able to just check off the list and say, "Yeah, we've got this lesson, we're right on target, but I am flexible about what is really happening versus … what I was hoping." (Janie Barrett)

We first read this data as becoming-with-Janie. We considered the mother–daughter relationship in teaching. Janie responded to Rhianna who was struggling with computer-based instruction, reading Rhianna's emotional state through a refracted view of her own anxieties. In this view, both Rhianna and Janie were 'lacking' – Rhianna was missing the mark as an online student and Janie saw herself as an imperfect teacher.

Re-reading this scenario as becoming-with-the data, we can see that this was not simply the numbers on the screen telling Janie how 'low' her daughter scored or how behind she was becoming. The focus shifted from the computer data branding Rhianna as deficient and toward the importance of mother–daughter and teacher–student relations in the context of a baby being born recently into a family of 13. Janie could not be everywhere in the home at one time but she saw that deferring instruction to Rhianna and the computer was not working. She saw a 'line of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) emerge, an opening toward learning. Janie was committed to Rhianna learning difficult logic but could have easily given up with her large family and Rhianna's frustrations. She slowed instruction down and explained the underlying purposes of the assignments to open up future opportunities for learning difficult material that her daughter might be a part of. But Janie's intervention was not a simple solution. Janie had noticed Rhianna's challenges just weeks before summer vacation and unlike a couple mothers with smaller families (Blake and Greene) she did not have the energy to extend schooling into the summer months. So while Janie did scaffold Rhianna even with many other children's needs to satisfy, it was unclear as to how the context of large family homeschooling would ultimately affect Rhianna's progress in logic given the gap in instructional time.

Relating to Barad's (1998) example of the sonogram as an apparatus that can be tweaked and changed to work for a particular purpose, Janie looked toward the computer as a partner in monitoring her daughter. She re-calibrated her practices in response, negotiating the difficult challenges of homeschooling many children of different ages at the same time. That the family owned a computer and had a separate, quiet workspace for Rhianna amidst many children homeschooling was useful, but Janie's and the children's needs for rest potentially interfered with Rhianna's potential for mastery. We could read through the materiality of this family's home and computer because these nonhuman materials were present.

Sonja, one son and the stairs

Sonja Davidson, the mother of one teenager still at home, saw the end of homeschooling through the twin metaphors of birthing and archery:

> . . . it is kind of like a delivery . . . . The arrow has to be . . . flung from the bow . . . . Hopefully the arrow is well formed, straight and true, and hopefully it will hit the mark for which the Lord wants . . . . You aim it as high as you possibly can, and it will go somewhere, it will hopefully go where it's supposed to. So we have hopefully formed strong, straight, true arrows in our quiver. (Sonja Davidson)

In her words, the quiver was 'ours' or a joint endeavor between Sonja and her husband Terry. This is because Terry 'delegated' the educational and disciplinary roles to Sonja as he worked full time and trusted her to do a better job than he could.

Sixteen-year-old Jeff's 'man cave' was the space in which he did homeschooling quite independently downstairs in a basement with the aid of several computer software packages. Jeff's subterranean education extended to writing Christian Death Metal music as a way to witness to his peers.

In becoming-with-Sonja, we can read the separation that Sonja and Terry (her husband) set up in Jeff's special man cave as a socializing tool to produce a son able to live within and evangelize the world outside. The masculine associations of the 'cave' trouble common ideas about Evangelicals who 'conceive God as the light-bringer and Christ as the "light of the world"' (Edensor 2013, 449).

Reading the data as becoming-with-stairs, the stairs to and from the man cave were umbilical and they were liminal. The stairs connected yet separated mother and son and foreshadowed their imminent separation for college. They were steep – Sonja's elder son had rode a tricycle down them years ago and crashed, staining them with blood. Their physicality split Jeff downstairs from the light-filled kitchen, where his mother prepared for a career after homeschooling. The stairs vibrated most often now with Jeff's plodding, as he emerged for meals or to head to his part-time job. Less often, they thumped softly under Sonja, following her 'mom radar' downward to check her son's academic progress and engagement with technology and music. Even more rarely, they creaked under Terry, heading down to configure Jeff's computer system. Reading the data through the stairs shows the rhythms of human and nonhuman mattering that bring complexity to doing 'quiverfull' with a small quiver. While instruction and surveillance may be simpler for homeschooling parents with just one child, there was a tension around doing enough but not doing too much in order to produce an Evangelical man.

The stairs provided a force of their own. They played a part in constructing a separate and masculine environment requiring some parental surveillance; they helped the parents to 'loosen the reins' as Jeff matured. As is true for medical technicians operating sonogram technology, it was impossible for Sonja and Terry to discern every aspect of their son's doing (Barad 1998). The mother and father had different reasons for using the stairs in homeschooling and parenting. The family home afforded space that allowed for stairs as a physical separator and connector. Without the materiality of the stairs, we could not read the gendered tensions of this case in the same way. Furthermore, for many families who live in trailers, single-level apartments, or shelters, or who use ramps, gender socialization would need to be done differently.

Ruby's large brood and a needle and thread

Actively breaking down stereotypes, particularly gender stereotypes, was a part of the Blake's homeschooling project, whether it be through Tom taking over the homeschooling

so that Ruby could pursue doctoral studies in science or the boys studying tap dancing while their sister chose not to. The gender relations in this family had some influence on how the next generation may choose to educate their children. For example, anticipating his marriage to a woman who aspired to be a college professor, Ruby's eldest son Lou said that he imagined himself to be the one to stay home and educate his own children in the future.

The family dining table/homeschooling space was surrounded by 'eight or nine' bookshelves, which Ruby would pull curriculum material from as needed while she and the children sat around the table working on individual lessons in a content area, sometimes while simultaneously 'wearing' her youngest baby in a sling. But meeting all of the educational needs was most tricky because her only daughter Corrie had interests that Ruby felt unequipped to handle:

> Actually she was about seven years old when she came to me and said, "Mommy will you please teach me how to sew or knit or crochet?" … I started to cry and I said, "Are you sure you don't want to learn physics?" (Ruby Blake)

Ruby was able to find a friend to cultivate Corrie's talents in handicrafts, and Corrie had finished her first curtains by the time of the interview.

Becoming-with-Ruby, these data show Ruby as a many-armed goddess reaching out to her children in a subject she was an expert on (mathematics), but panicking around unfamiliar topics such as knitting. Her resistance to gender norms was quite atypical in a field where families sometimes sacrificed rigorous curriculum for girls' development in homemaking. In re-reading the data as becoming-with-needle-and-thread, the 'pop' of the needle piercing cloth, the thread slithering through fabric, and the occasional sharp prick of metal were overseen by another woman, complicating and expanding conceptions of homeschooling and mothering (see Longhurst 2008).

In becoming-with-the dining room, the table and conveniently placed books and resources provided opportunities for learning. Like sonographers with their somewhat limited lens, we as researchers are positioned to read the affordances for the children without seeing the effects on families with fewer resources. As in Janie's case, there were many material resources available to this family that would not be available in other homes. In becoming with needle-and-thread, a 'myriad of material configurations and discursive configurations' (Barad, 1998, 103) were revealed. Becoming-with-the needle-and-thread expanded knowledge about the circumstances of 'fixing' gender in evangelical homeschooling. At the same time, focusing too strongly on this instance shifts the lens away from the many other homeschooled girls who may have far less opportunity than Corrie to learn rigorous mathematics.

In the discussion section that follows, we consider several implications of reading the data in assemblage form and through a Baradian lens.

Discussion and conclusion

In this research, we were transformed by a far more realistic picture of Evangelical homeschooling than the Duggar's have reflected on television. There are a number of considerations that should be useful to other feminist researchers. These focus on conceptual and methodological issues.

Conceptual issues

Homeschooling is often conceived of as an item of school choice, but the real choice of women to perform the labor (both reproductive and the physical labor of the home) is at

stake here. The inherent tensions in this issue were illuminated by Leelah, who spoke to her concerns about friends with large families glorifying conception as God's blessing while not recognizing the challenges and implications. In this system, women are typically positioned to reproduce a culture. This research used a specific analytic strategy, a Baradian posthumanist lens. This allowed for a close look at multiple intra-actions between discourses and nature that may perpetuate this system as well as offer lines of flight. The intra-actions that we felt as we worked with the data and theory that have helped us to think through the complexities of gender in home education have centered around: flexible interpretations of the quiver, divisions and debates around reproductive control, the role of the home and the family in producing gendered educational intra-actions, and potential material/discursive changes in the future of gender and homeschooling.

We showed that mothers of large families are sometimes esteemed from within homeschooling circles by other mothers whose families are not so sizeable. This fits with ancient traditions that saw mothers as goddesses because they could do what man could not (Scanzoni and Hardesty 1992). The logic of spreading Christianity through reproduction is widely dispersed and supported amongst the more ideological Evangelical homeschoolers we spoke with, regardless of their family size. This indicates that the ideas may retain widespread support within Evangelicalism whether or not large families are a spreading reality.

The ideological families were also likely to view the absence of the father's consent to homeschool as a reason to refrain from the practice. But there is also a critical contingent among the more educated Evangelicals worried about homeschooling in large families when there are not circumstances and capable husbands in place to support them. These findings suggest that there are competing concerns coming from homeschooling families about the causes of unsuccessful homeschooling. Another is the idea that wives are responsible for following the husband's judgment regarding the best plan for the children's schooling. In that view, homeschooling difficulties could be seen as a wife's failure to submit to her husband's wisdom. These tensions may mitigate the idealization of large families, especially if home education becomes more regulated in the future.

Across the assemblages presented, the mothers often became entangled with cyborgian production. The technology used to enhance their capabilities as homeschooling mothers and teachers could not scaffold women above and beyond their entanglements with nature (Alaimo 2008). Janie and Sonja, for example, experienced personal and teaching challenges even with the expectation that the computer could deliver a good bit of instruction for their teenagers. This analysis diffracts the image of the home educating 'supermoms' as mothers' and children's homeschooling lives were constrained by the limits of their bodies, their children's bodies, and the spaces and materials of their homes. Even in Ruby's case, we saw that the supermom ideal was not always present.

Using diffractive analysis showed possibilities for Evangelical homeschooled girls and homeschooling motherhood. Ironically, Corrie Blake took on traditional domestic chores in a household that was less gender conforming than most, and this occurred in a way that distributed mothers' expertise among families. The distribution literally and figuratively broadened slightly the idea of parents tailoring education for their individual children in the privacy of the home and stretched traditional conceptions of mothering. Another girl, Rhianna Barrett, experienced troubles with the difficult logic program. Her mother Janie's careful reading of the whole situation allowed a potential space for somewhat different instructional possibilities even in the midst of a new baby and many children to be attended to. Whereas the miseducation of girls in large ideological homeschooling

families was a serious concern of both ideologues and pedagogues, there were a range of possible outcomes.

Among ideological and pedagogical homeschoolers alike, there was indication by mothers that the children experience more balanced gender roles than the divisions modeled by homeschooling mothers and fathers. Janie, for example, stated that she wanted the children to have more gender balance when they grew up than their parents. Lou Blake at 18 expressed the most dramatic expression of gender role shifting. For Lou, it was natural for the parent who wanted to have a more integrated life and who was less likely to want a career to stay home with the children. Between his fiancée and himself, the role of home educator fit him. His reasoning was also expressed by April Greene, whose husband was a trained teacher who preferred business: the qualified spouse, whether father or mother, should homeschool. In invoking this logic, Lou interrupted the discourse of natural feminism and reconfigured the family unit as a functioning group of people who could make decisions without the constrictions of pre-defined gender roles.

Irigaray (1985) brings up the fluidity and 'messiness' associated with the female in Western thought – menstrual cycles and birthing blood, milk, etc. The male, in contrast, is 'solid' and associated with science, technology and linear conceptions of movement and progress. This research examines the material role of the home itself in constructing gender, and new questions that come with it. For example, with the messiness of homeschooling itself and a father in charge, how might conceptions of masculinity shift toward what is now often considered 'feminine'? Moreover, how widespread might such a gender shift become? Rosanna Weeks, a '2nd Generation' young mother of four children who was homeschooled herself in a very conservative situation shared ideas with her own mother and in many ways seemed to replicate the gendered context of her upbringing. With concerns about young homeschooled girls having no real choice except to live the lives of their mothers, it is important not to become too hopeful about the kind of shifts Lou proposes.

In this research, some of the more pedagogical families expressed at least some degree of openness toward the idea of multiple sexual orientations (Blake, Jamison, Smith, and Weston). But generally this was an area silenced or condemned by other participants. The 'home' orientation of homeschooling lends itself to a division of labor such that even when led by the father-at-home, clearly differentiated gender roles carry it through. Future research could explore specifically the role of heteronormativity in homeschooling practices.

Methodological implications

This research represents an attempt to engage with a particular kind of micro-analysis, Baradian diffractive analysis as articulated and practiced by others (e.g., Jackson and Mazzei 2012; Lenz Taguchi 2012). For feminist geography, this method has some important uses because it specifically addresses the dualisms of mind/body and nature/culture that plague us. This research shifts away from only human interpretations toward reading with nonhuman forms. These readings provide alternatives for researchers and for Evangelical women, girls, and families who do homeschooling.

The research took a particular stance on the geographical debates about macro–micro framings set forth by Hanson Thiem (2009) and Holloway et al. (2010). Especially in homeschooling research that has been quite politicized in the past, researchers from outside of the homeschooling movement may be thought to carry static and biased views about issues such as gender. We wanted to carefully consider the criticism that using

macro-oriented codes may replicate what the researcher knows about the broader world. This study shows what new knowledge can unfold in a micro, diffractive analysis (Mazzei 2014). We believe that working together as a research team with different lenses (the first author is a public school advocate who has an Evangelical background while the second author has an academic background in gender and Women's Studies) challenged us to confront our individual biases in reading the data.

In reading in the micro, we tried to not become too micro. By this, we mean that we want to be clear about the differences in privilege among the families in our study, and relative to other families. To this end, it was important to keep each home with its families and nonhuman objects together in the analysis. For example, although the symbolic of the 'staircase' came up in multiple interviews and in the observational data (not only Sonja, but also Janie and April), we hesitated to lump the 'staircase' narratives from different homes together because we did not want to lose what else was becoming-with each staircase. We chose to discuss the staircase with Sonja's family and analyze it in her context. We had similar and vital concerns about configurations of 'the body.' We framed our analyses to recognize the linkages among the body's parts that are concrete and tangible (Moss and Kwan 2004). We also sought to keep families together in the analyses as this is such a crucial category to the homeschoolers themselves.

We are heartened by the opportunities for future research that we see coming from this study. There is currently an emerging literature on homeschooling fatherhood that paints fathers as very ideological. But we have found that this is not always true, that there is more complexity among these men than may be currently recognized in the field. There is no research on homeschooling fathers from a geographical perspective. Feminist geography research could support this area greatly. Regarding the complicated nature of Evangelicalism and homeschooling, we have found very interesting the shifting ideological borders of these movements. Future research could map the complexities that exist at the point of departure toward more openness in gender roles, orientations, and practices. We hope that this research encourages feminist geographers to expand their thinking regarding the possibilities and challenges of using Baradian theoretical and methodological orientations in their own work. We also hope that some will consider the possibilities of exploring intra-actions around homeschooling and gender.

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ABSTRACT TRANSLATIONS

Perturbando los datos: investigando los temas del género y el tamaño familiar con los niñxs evangélicxs escolarizaxs en el hogar en EE.UU.

Este estudio cualitativo se basa en la teoría de la física feminista Karen Barad para examinar cómo el género importa en la escolarización en el hogar (*homeschooling*) en familias evangélicas de varios tamaños, con énfasis en familias numerosas. La toma de datos en dos fases incluye entrevistas con 18 participantes y observaciones de varixs participantes a lo largo de un año. Utiliza un proceso analítico baradiano llamado análisis difractivo para leer las fronteras confusas entre lo discursivo y lo material para las madres, padres, hijas, hijos, y elementos de los entornos de la escolarización en el hogar. Encontramos que la materialidad intra-actúa con el género en formas complejas y a veces sorprendentes pero que las posibilidades generizadas en la escolarización en el hogar están inmersas en los terrenos de la política, la historia, la cultura, la economía y el ambiente. Además, vemos posibilidades para utilizar este método de análisis como forma de leer la información en lo micro de una manera más cuidadosa y compleja.

Palabras claves: Palabras claves: Barad; Quiverfull; evangélico; escolarización en el hogar; género; materialismo feminista; posthumano; recopilación; geografía

扰乱数据：探究美国福音教派在家教育者的性别与家庭规模之事

此一质化研究，运用女性主义物理学家凯伦．巴拉德（Karen Barad）的理论，检视性别在各种不同规模的福音教派在家教育的家庭中如何具有意义，并特别强调大型家庭。两阶段的数据蒐集，包含访谈十八位参与者，以及对数位参与者进行为期一年的观察。我们运用名为“绕射分析”的巴拉德式分析过程，解读母亲、父亲、女儿、儿子和在家教育环境的元素之论述和物质之间混杂的界限。我们发现，物质性与性别之间，以复杂且有时令人惊讶的方式在内部互动，但在家教育的性别化可能，则在政治、历史、文化、经济及环境的领域中受到深化。此外，我们视此分析方法之运用，作为更加谨慎且复杂地阅读微观数据的方式之可能。

关键词：关键词：巴拉德；Quiverfull原教旨主义；福音教派；在家教育；性别；女性主义唯物论；后人类；凑组；地理