

THE EXPERIENCES OF CHRISTIAN PAIDEIA AMONG GRADUATES OF CLASSICAL
CHRISTIAN TEXAS HIGH SCHOOLS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Jared L. Squires

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University

2019

THE EXPERIENCES OF CHRISTIAN PAIDEIA AMONG GRADUATES OF CLASSICAL
CHRISTIAN TEXAS HIGH SCHOOLS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by Jared L. Squires

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2019

APPROVED BY:

Dr. James Swezey, Committee Chair

Dr. Deanna Keith, Committee Member

Dr. Peter Martens, Committee Member

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to describe the essence of the shared lived experiences in a Christian paideia for classical Christian high school graduates at five different Texas schools. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory (EST) was the primary theory guiding this study. EST is significant for classical Christian educators because this theory suggests that the behavior and practices of individuals, embodied within a Christian paideia, will profoundly shape the development of students. The central question for this study was how do classical Christian high school graduates describe their lived experiences of Christian paideia? Participants described their lived experiences of Christian paideia in a profound manner. There was a distinct recognition by graduates that their entire being, including heart, soul, and mind, had been purposefully influenced to desire and pursue God's innate qualities of truth, goodness, and beauty. This study was conducted with a qualitative approach, specifically the transcendental phenomenological method. This qualitative phenomenological approach was a valid design for this study because the research problem being addressed required the understanding of common or shared experiences for a group of classical Christian high school graduates. Snowball sampling was used to select 12 graduates who were derived from those individuals that were purposefully nominated by the headmaster for each of the five respective classical Christian schools. Data collection techniques included individual face-to-face interviews, virtual focus group interviews, and document analysis. Data analysis for this study was completed using Moustakas's (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. The results of the study were six major themes that were utilized to answer this study's central research question and four sub-questions, all of which were designed to describe the essence of the shared lived experiences in a Christian paideia for classical Christian high school graduates.

Keywords: paideia, classical Christian, enculturation, virtue, liberal arts, transcendent

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to acknowledge and thank my wife, Dana, for her enduring love and support through our 27 years of marriage and my various academic and vocational pursuits. She has given me the encouragement and confidence to follow God's calling, and I am forever grateful and cognizant of the exorbitant amount of time that she had to spend alone as I worked on this dissertation. Without her optimism and consistent expression of love in our home, it would have been very difficult for me to successfully complete the doctoral program and dissertation process.

Next, I would like to thank my three children, Sydney, Carson, and Sawyer, for trusting in me as I slowly and steadily worked through the doctoral program. During a very formative part of their life, there were countless hours where I was away from home trying to focus on my studies and writing. Thankfully, there was never a point where I did not believe that my entire family was behind me for this journey. I pray that I will be able to use this degree for God's glory and impart a generational gift back to my children resulting from this valuable knowledge.

It is also important for me to thank my father, Jim Squires, for his constant interest and support of my academic and vocational endeavors. In the early years of my doctoral program, my father and step-mom made it financially feasible for me to pursue this ambitious dream. I am so thankful that they shared in my desire to become a better educator and use these skills to positively influence families.

Finally, I would like to thank my board of directors at the classical Christian school where I serve as headmaster. The tuition reimbursement program that was implemented after starting my doctoral program has enabled me to graduate debt-free. This is an enormous blessing to my family, and I hope that my continued service to the school will be equally beneficial to my board of directors and other stakeholders.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	3
Acknowledgments	4
List of Tables	10
List of Abbreviations	11
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	12
Overview	12
Background.....	13
Historical Context.....	16
Social Context	19
Theoretical Context	20
Situation to Self	21
Personal and Professional Experience.....	21
Philosophical Assumptions	21
Paradigm.....	24
Problem Statement.....	25
Purpose Statement	27
Significance of the Study.....	28
Research Questions	30
Definitions	33
Summary.....	35
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	37
Overview	37
Theoretical Framework	37

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory	38
Impact of Ecological Systems Theory	43
Vygotsky’s Social Constructivism Theory	45
Theoretical Relationship with Christian Paideia	46
Related Literature	48
Foundations for Classical Christian Schools	48
Modern Cultural and Educational Values	51
Cultivation of Virtue	54
Holistic Education	59
Enculturation and Community	61
Attainment of School Mission and Goals	63
Summary	66
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS	67
Overview	67
Design	67
Human Science and Qualitative Research	68
Phenomenology	70
Transcendental Phenomenological Research	73
Research Questions	75
Setting	76
Participants	77
Procedures	78
The Researcher's Role	79
Data Collection	80

Interviews	82
Virtual Focus Groups	86
Document Analysis	88
Data Analysis.....	90
Full Description of Personal Experiences with Christian Paideia.....	90
Textural Description Development	91
Structural Description Development	91
Development of Essence	92
Trustworthiness	92
Credibility.....	93
Dependability and Confirmability	94
Transferability	95
Ethical Considerations.....	96
Summary.....	97
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS	98
Overview	98
Participants	98
Becky – Zion Classical Academy.....	99
Evan – Corinth Classical Academy	100
Forest – Nazareth Classical Academy.....	102
Gary – Zion Classical Academy.....	103
Gwynn – Zion Classical Academy	104
Hayden – Corinth Classical Academy.....	105
Katie – Petra Classical Academy	107

Mont – Nazareth Classical Academy	108
Nathan – Mount Sinai Classical Academy	109
Roger - Mount Sinai Classical Academy	110
Sarah - Mount Sinai Classical Academy	111
Wendy – Petra Classical Academy.....	112
Results	113
Transcendental Phenomenological Study Results.....	114
Research Question Responses	155
Summary.....	167
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION	168
Overview	168
Summary of Findings	169
Discussion.....	172
Ecological Systems Theory	173
Foundations for Classical Christian Schools.....	176
Modern Cultural and Educational Values	179
Cultivation of Virtue.....	180
Holistic Education	182
Enculturation and Community	183
Attainment of School Mission and Goals.....	184
Implications	186
Theoretical Implications.....	186
Empirical Implications	189
Practical Implications	191

Delimitations and Limitations	196
Recommendations for Future Research.....	198
Summary.....	201
REFERENCES	205
APPENDICES	221

List of Tables

Table 1	123
---------------	-----

List of Abbreviations

Association of Classical Christian Schools (ACCS)

Bronfenbrenner (1979) ecological systems theory (EST)

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE)

National Defense Education Act (NDEA)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)

Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

High school graduates from member schools of the Association of Classical Christian Schools (ACCS) have scored on average in the top 5% to 10% nationally on standardized college entrance exams such as the SAT and ACT (Vaughan & Morgan, 2015). This academic success has been attributed to these schools' use of an ancient holistic instructional methodology, Christian paideia, that stresses a transcendent and broad pursuit of cultural, spiritual, and intellectual training (Vaughan & Morgan, 2015). Expounding on the purpose of a Christian paideia, ACCS (2017) explained that classical Christian schools from the first century to about the 19th century were expressly utilized to assist parents in their biblical responsibilities to support a Christian paideia for their children. In response to the perceived viability and effectiveness of today's renewal of classical Christian education, the broader political and evangelical communities have described this movement in trade publications as a precursor to a revolution, the missing element in public schools, and the restoration of the Christian paradigm of education (Miller, 2015; Strachan, 2013; Turley, 2016).

Within this chapter, a framework will be provided for a transcendental phenomenological study where the Christian paideia in classical Christian high schools was examined through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory (EST). This study focused on gaining a greater understanding and describing the essence of the shared experiences for recent classical Christian high school graduates that were immersed in the lived phenomenon of Christian paideia. The phenomenon was studied specifically within the context of classical Christian schools that purposefully seek to cultivate a Christian paideia. Chapter one of this study will outline the completed research based on the central question. The overarching central question will be followed by several sub-questions designed to identify further areas of inquiry (Creswell,

2013, p. 140). This chapter will also provide substantiation of why this study was needed, the philosophical assumptions and paradigm that guided the study, the primary problem addressed, as well as definitions of pertinent terms. The findings of this research are expected to have meaningful impact for leaders in national Christian school associations, Christian church and school administration/governance, as well as Christian parents and young adults by identifying the applicable role that each of these stakeholders play in God's plan for a Christian paideia.

Background

Over the past half century in the United States, the federal government has become increasingly involved in educational reform both through legislation and financial influence on individual states. Justification for this involvement has spanned Democrat and Republican presidencies and has included a confluence of factors directly affected by education, such as national security, economic strength, and international standing. Turgut (2013) highlighted the following major federal education initiatives over the last 50 years, which were all influenced by the justifying factors above.

First, the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) was passed in 1958 in response to the launch of Sputnik I in 1957 by the Soviet Union. This Soviet space launch served as justification for the American government to strongly advocate for reform in a multitude of areas, including education (Turgut, 2013). Next, the 1983 release of the *Nation at Risk* report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) highlighted a perceived growing level of mediocrity in America that was believed to be threatening the future continued success of the country (Turgut, 2013). The federal government's response to this alarming report included a broad sweeping set of standards, including the introduction of business leadership practices for the first time into the management of education. As the decades continued and solutions were sought to remedy America's ailing education system, President Clinton introduced the Goals

2000 initiative followed by President Bush heading the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. The Obama administration's most recent support of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and other educational reforms was motivated by unacceptable student performance on major international tests such as the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) (Turgut, 2013). The resulting educational environment stemming from these federal programs has been described as possessing an unyielding and narrow definition of success that fosters individuals who lack diverse or creative thinking (Turgut, 2013).

In response to the modern educational reform movements such as Common Core, educational researchers, as well as the broader political and evangelical communities, have evaluated the merits of the classical Christian philosophy of education as a potential solution to America's education challenges (Miller, 2015; Strachan, 2013; Turley, 2016). Although a much more detailed definition and history of classical Christian education will be provided later in this study, Clark and Jain (2013) provided the following succinct description: "Grounded in piety, Christian classical education cultivates the virtue of the student in body, heart, and mind, while nurturing a love for wisdom under the lordship of Christ" (p. 4). In contrast to modern pragmatic education that heavily emphasizes the procurement of a good job as one's end goal in life, classical Christian education focuses primarily on the formation of the whole person (Schultz, 2016). Furthermore, classical Christian education aspires to succeed in cultivating a love for truth, goodness, and beauty, all of which are encompassed within the ancient notion of a Christian paideia (Ambrose Group, 2005). Interestingly, the ideas underlying modern educational reform initiatives, such as Common Core, have been described as complete opposites of the foundational premises of classical Christian education (Schultz, 2016).

In discussing key contributors to a sustained life of spiritual faithfulness after high school, Garber (2007) explained that embracing a Christian worldview, fostering a continued relationship with a solid mentor, and remaining active in a church community were all invaluable habits for a continued and healthy Christian walk. Beyond the pursuit of academic and extracurricular excellence, most classical Christian school leadership teams strive to achieve a transcendent and comprehensive purpose and culture that provides students tools for the whole of life beyond their high school years. Wilson (2003) highlighted an all-encompassing style of education that first originated in the ancient Greek culture called *paideia*. Although originating in a pagan culture, Wilson (2003) explained,

The word *paideia* goes far beyond the scope and sequence of what we call formal education. In the ancient world, the *paideia* was all-encompassing and involved nothing less than the enculturation of the future citizens. The *paideia* extends well past the simple limits of an established curriculum; it describes an entire way of life. In short, the ancients understood that education was religious and that religious claims are total. (p. 107)

Although *paideia* is most often translated in English as education, *paideia* extends deeper to the rearing of children, as well as the cultural shaping and standard development of a civilization (Grumet, 1986; Park, 1984). The Apostle Paul took this concept and challenged parents in Ephesians 6:4 to “not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (English Standard Version). The Greek word that Paul used above for “discipline and instruction” was *paideia* and introduced the unfamiliar idea of a Christian *paideia* to a pagan culture.

Modern evangelical families have not recognized the true value and importance of providing a Christian *paideia*. Nevertheless, the underlying non-Christian agenda in modern

culture and government schools clearly recognize the impact that education has on the formation of worldviews and culture (Wilson, 1999). Clark and Jain (2013) emphasized that the value-neutral attempt at modern education is not sustainable, and education in general will fail without an emphasis on respect for God and authorities.

Although Pennings, Sikkink, Wiens, Seel, and Van Pelt (2011) conducted research on various aspects of Christian education such as leadership, spiritual formation, spiritual faithfulness, and academic achievement, no research was found that focused on understanding the essence of the student experiences from a Christian *paideia*, particularly in classical Christian high schools. Although numerous Christian schools pursue a mission that values the enduring benefits of a holistic education, few schools actually measure or assess the realization of this pursuit (LeBlanc & Slaughter, 2012). Likewise, the academic literature does not compare culture and outcomes for the various private school sectors, nor is there information related to the value or impact that private school graduates attribute to their education (Sikkink, 2012). As described further below, this transcendental phenomenological study aimed to describe the shared Christian *paideia* experiences among classical Christian high school graduates.

Historical Context

In describing the restoration of classical Christian education in America, Perrin (2004) utilized concepts from two well-respected 20th century writers and philosophers. First, “G.K. Chesterton said that every revolution is a restoration – the recapturing and re-introduction of something that once guided and inspired people in the past” (p. 5). Likewise, “C.S. Lewis says that when we have lost our way, the quickest way forward is usually to go home” (p. 5). Classical Christian education is not a modern educational reform, rather a return to a model of education that was employed for over 2,000 years.

Perrin (2004) provided the following brief history of classical education and defined this

model as “the authoritative, traditional and enduring form of education, begun by the Greeks and Romans, developed through history and now being renewed and recovered in the twenty-first century” (p. 6).

- Greeks and Romans (c. 600 B.C. to 476 A.D.) – formed the basic structure of classical education with an emphasis on the study of grammar, literature, logic, rhetoric, gymnastic, music, mathematics, and philosophy. As a component of *paideia*, the Greek form of education consistently emphasized the importance of *arête*, meaning individual excellence and achievement.
- Middle Ages (c. 500 A.D. to 1460 A.D.) – subjects and approaches utilized by the Greeks and Romans were systemized and classified as the trivium and quadrivium, forming the seven liberal arts.
- Renaissance and Reformation (c. 1350 A.D. to 1700 A.D.) – renewal of learning occurred that had declined during the early Middle Ages. Special emphasis during this time on the authority and teaching of the Bible.
- Enlightenment (c. 1700 A.D. to 1789 A.D.) – a departure from the Bible occurred and shifted to a focus on science and man’s own intellectual abilities.
- Modern period (c. 1800 A.D. – present) – first signs of erosion of classical education began and shifted fully to a progressive model of education by 1950. Horace Mann and John Dewey fought for a progressive public education system that would focus on training students for a growing industrialized economy.

As detailed by the Association of Classical Christian Schools (2017), the classical Christian education movement was recovered in the United States in 1980 when three independent schools were inspired by the discovery of Sayers’ (1947) essay on classical education. In response to this renewal, Wilson (1991) wrote a book based on the Sayer’s (1947) essay, which resulted in more

than 100 classical Christian schools to be formed within a few short years. The Association of Classical Christian Schools was formed in 1994 to meet the substantial amount of training and informational needs of new schools that were opening. By the end of the 2016 school year, membership in ACCS had grown to approximately 250 schools.

When evaluating the importance of paideia on the history of education, it is imperative to recall that both Western civilization and classical Christian education originated with the ancient Greeks (Schultz, 2016). Furthermore, Elsner (2013) reiterated this point when he explained that the concept of paideia in late antiquity was viewed as a key source of communication and power for the future rulers of the empire. The impact of cultural influences (i.e., paideia), particularly the considerable amount of time students spend in an educational environment, will be discussed more in depth later in this study as this concept is viewed through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory.

Continuing through the timeline of history, by the end of the second century A.D., the ideal of a Christian paideia had been firmly established (Lietaert Peerbolte & Groenendijk, 2016). The admonition of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:4 encouraging "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction [paideia] of the Lord" was now understood as an all-encompassing form of education. However, Lietaert Peerbolte and Groenendijk (2016) observed that this concept has been lost in translation or forgotten in today's broader Christian educational community. Therefore, as history has shown, the value of a liberal arts education, combined with the principles of Christianity, have diminished over time. Marrs (2007) highlighted the emergence of a naturalistic focus of education over the ancient classics beginning in the late 1880's and noted the ridicule that began for classic languages such as Latin and Greek. The social impact of this evolution in educational philosophy will be discussed more in depth below.

Social Context

As emphasized above in the discussion regarding the impact of paideia on the educational foundation of Western civilization, paideia was a unique element in the teaching of literature, history, and cultural development in the ancient world (Elsner, 2013). It may seem surprising that a historical concept of such magnitude could be largely forgotten in modern culture. Nevertheless, “The study of ancient Greek and Latin long ago vanished from most American classrooms, and with it has gone a special understanding of the values and virtues prized by Western civilization” (Howe, 2011, p. 31). With regard to the vanishing concept of paideia in the cultural heritage of America, Howe (2011) concluded that our country’s founding fathers would be appalled by this development due to the importance that they placed on the understanding of the democratic principles that originated in ancient Greece and Rome. As described above, numerous classical Christian schools around the country have been working for the last few decades to restore the principles of Christian paideia that the founders of the United States greatly valued and trusted in for the success of a new nation (Howe, 2011).

In response to the importance of paideia and its lack of acknowledgement in today’s societal conversation, Elsner (2013) asked “is the ubiquitous presence of paideia, and the avoidance of an interrogation of its substance in modernity, a form of contemporary response to the perceived collapse of our own systems of cultural and educational values?” (p. 152). Gruenwald’s (2016) solution to this perceived collapse was the suggested recovery of normative standards based upon a renewal of the liberal arts grounded in the classical paideia belief in holistic education (p. 1). In addition, Gruenwald (2016) elaborated further on the wider scope of benefits offered by a Christian paideia when he emphasized the importance of a focus on truth and morals over science and technology. The adage that “Better is a poor and a wise child, than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished” (Marrs, 2007, p. 54) is criticized by

proponents of modern liberalism who empower the secularization of culture by disparaging mainstream American values, which is ultimately a manifestation of a twentieth century American anti-paideia (Marrs, 2007).

Theoretical Context

From a theoretical perspective, “the Hellenistic ideal of paideia was taken over by the growing Christian movement not only for educating children, but also as the metaphor for God’s way of dealing with human beings in general” (Lietaert Peerbolte & Groenendijk, 2016, p. 148). Accordingly, Christian paideia influenced the broader cultural norms and was considered an all-encompassing idea that extended to all individuals (Gruenwald, 2016). Because the ideal of the Christian paideia was shaped by the formative aspects of the Greek model of paideia, it similarly extended well beyond career preparation, with the focus also being on the transcendent goal of individual and community development (Schultz, 2016).

Underscoring this idea of personal development through one’s surroundings, Fond-Harmant and Gavrila-Ardelean (2016) explained that Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory was based on the premise that human development and behavior resulted from persistent influences between individuals and their environment. The four primary interacting systems of EST that affect individual and collective attitudes and behaviors are detailed as follows:

- **Microsystem:** the immediate environment of the individual;
- **Mesosystem:** places where an individual lives (i.e., church, parental education, teachers, neighborhood);
- **Exosystem:** broad external social factors such as income level of parents and school initiatives;
- **Macrosystem:** social, cultural, and political values of society. (Fond-Harmant & Gavrila-

Ardelean, 2016, p.176)

The impact of EST is significant for classical Christian educators because this theory suggests that the behavior and practices of individuals will shape the development of students. Likewise, Christensen (2016) added that EST has furthered the understanding of contextual influences on individual behavior.

Situation to Self

The subject section will provide me an opportunity to articulate my personal motivation for conducting this phenomenological study. In addition, this section will also allow me to identify the philosophical assumptions brought to this research, as well as the paradigm that guided the study.

Personal and Professional Experience

As a co-founder, former board chairman, current headmaster, and faculty member of a classical Christian school, the pursuit of a Christian paideia is an instrumental part of my personal and professional experience. In addition, this study was profoundly shaped by my biblical worldview of education that has been molded by the positive impact on children that I have witnessed from classical Christian education over the last 17 years. One example of this worldview is found in Deuteronomy 6:7 which states “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” This approach to education is very holistic and encourages Christians to recognize God’s sovereignty in every aspect of life. I have a passion for researching the experiences and essence of Christian paideia that occurs with the graduates of classical Christian high schools.

Philosophical Assumptions

The subject study was guided by the following recommendation from Moustakas (1994) on the distinguishing characteristics of a phenomenological study:

The researcher following a transcendental phenomenological approach engages in disciplined and systematic efforts to set aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being investigated (known as the epoche process) in order to launch the study as far as possible free of preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of the phenomenon from prior experience and professional studies – to be completely open, receptive, and naïve in listening to and hearing research participants describe their experience of the phenomenon being investigated. (p. 22)

Ontological. The reality from the point of view of the participants was expected to be from a Christian worldview. However, the possibility of multiple realities exists, and my intent was to report these multiple realities as they were identified, if applicable. Creswell (2013) emphasized that the use of various individuals and perspectives can provide evidence of multiple realities. Some classical Christian schools may cultivate a deeper Christian paideia than others. Detailed observations from the various classical Christian school environments was expected to help clarify what the specific reality was for that school. Finally, my personal perspective on reality is also from a Christian worldview.

Epistemological. Face-to-face individual and virtual focus group interviews were utilized in an attempt to get as close as possible to the participants being studied. Based on the various individual views obtained, subjective evidence was assembled. Creswell (2013) stressed that subjective experiences provide one avenue for knowledge to be discovered. Face-to-face interview locations were ideally to be on the respective campuses of the classical Christian school graduates, where the Christian paideia was experienced, in order to gain a greater context for understanding what the participants were communicating. However, due to the vast majority

of research participants living in different cities for college than their respective high schools, it was not possible to conduct face-to-face interviews at the classical Christian schools. By identifying participants in the 18 to 22 years old age range, an attempt was made to eliminate the distance or objective separateness from the phenomenon of Christian paideia.

Classical Christian schools, and the cultivation of a Christian paideia, has been my primary personal and professional focus for the past 17 years. My personal observations of the influential effects on discipleship of young adults from a purposeful missional alignment between church, family, and school has demonstrated to me the eternal value of a Christian paideia. My personal philosophy is consistent with Schultz (2002) and Hicks (1999), both of which discuss the merits of a Christian normative education.

Rhetorical. The subject study was a transcendental phenomenological study using the structure outlined by Moustakas (1994). This research strived to discover the essence around the phenomenon of Christian paideia among classical Christian high school graduates. Consistent with qualitative research, this study is written in the first person voice. In addition, this study strived to capture the Greek idea of philosophy that was characterized by a search for wisdom (Creswell, 2013).

Axiological. As emphasized by Creswell (2013), qualitative research reveals the values of the researcher. Therefore, based on my personal and professional experiences, I place a high value on the notion of Christian paideia. I strongly believe that the Apostle Paul's directive in Ephesians 6:4 to "bring children up in the paideia of the Lord" can be beautifully accomplished through the partnership of local churches, families, and classical Christian schools. Marrs (2007) described the loss of Christian paideia in this way:

Starting sometime early in the twentieth century the role-modeling adults of modern America, our resourceful custodians of culture, began to transform 'by golly,' 'gosh' and

‘doggone’ into a unitary ‘goddamn.’ A sentimental linguist might cite this as evidence of the impoverishment of language. One suspects that ‘Homer’ today is more likely to evoke Homer Simpson than a remembrance of a scene from the *Iliad*. These changes are invidious, and the world today surely is a meaner place. (p. 52)

Paradigm

My study was guided and conducted by the constructivism paradigm. Consistent with Creswell’s (2013) recommendations, I attempted to seek an understanding of the Christian paideia that classical Christian school graduates experienced during their high school years. In this process, I developed subjective meanings of the graduate experiences. As expected, the meanings developed were varied and multiple; therefore, a complexity of views was attained, rather than a few categories of narrow ideas. A primary goal of my research was to rely on the participants’ views of Christian paideia as much as possible. A pattern of meaning was expected to be developed inductively. Ultimately, my intent was to interpret the meanings that classical Christian school graduates have about Christian paideia.

In conclusion, the philosophical assumptions and paradigm detailed above infer that as a qualitative researcher, I attempted to get as close as possible to the participants being studied, my personal values and biases were reported, and the research was shaped purposefully by the collection and analysis of the data (Creswell, 2013). In order to conduct a phenomenological study as planned, interviews at multiple classical Christian schools were necessitated. Furthermore, this research was value-laden and may show evidence of bias. Although there was a strong expectation that some research questions may change during the study in order to better address the research problem, changes were not necessary.

Problem Statement

Enrollment in classical Christian K-12 schools has increased considerably over the last two decades (Association of Classical and Christian Schools, 2016). Through the devotion to a Christian paideia, the clear majority of these schools share a common vision to graduate students that demonstrate exceptional qualities such as passion for Jesus Christ, excellence in all things, critical thinking, discernment, winsome speech, desire for lifelong learning, and a love for truth, goodness, and beauty. This education of the whole person that is accomplished through a Christian paideia “reflects the Augustinian notion that religious believers possess a dual citizenship, that they are citizens in both cities—the earthly City of Man and the eschatological City of God that is both immanent and transcendent (Speck 1996)” (Gruenwald, 2016, p. 4). Nevertheless, academic research on Christian school students’ cultural awareness and engagement is extremely limited (Van Brummelen & Koole, 2012). In short, there is an absence of research examining the long-term effects, outcomes, and particularly the lived experiences, of a classical Christian education on its graduates (Council & Cooper, 2011; Peterson, 2012). The scarcity of research related to classical Christian education has resulted in an educational concept, as inspiring as Christian paideia, to be virtually extinct in the consciousness of today’s generation of evangelical parents and many educators. As a result, there is a need to explore and understand the Christian paideia phenomenon within the context of the classical Christian high school.

In reference to the growth of the classical Christian model of education, Council and Cooper (2011) commented on the need for research on classical Christian schools due to their sustained solid growth and effective pedagogical methods that are producing stellar outcomes. Even considering the broader Christian education sector as a whole, Pennings et al. (2011) revealed that a broad study had never been conducted on the impacts and effects of Christian

schools. In response to this need, Pennings et al. (2011) conducted an ambitious survey that evaluated alignment between Christian education motivations and outcomes. Although graduate outcomes such as spiritual formation, cultural engagement, and academic development were measured for both Protestant and Catholic schools in general, specific data on outcomes for classical Christian schools was not provided. Similarly, Pennings et al. (2014) surveyed over 1,500 graduates in the United States to further assess how their experiences in high school affected different aspects of their adult life; however, specific analysis was not performed on classical Christian schools. Van Pelt, Sikkink, Pennings, and Seel (2012) also emphasized that a deeper understanding of the academic, spiritual, and cultural outcomes of Christian schools will demonstrate the level of student preparedness for societal and cultural engagement. Finally, the imperative to study graduates specifically of classical Christian schools is supported by the belief that “The efficacy of classical Christian schools is determined by their product, which is the student; determining student success during and after they leave the classical Christian school would be critical to understanding the impact of this ancient method of education” (Council & Cooper, 2011, p. 133).

Considering the synonymous nature of Christian paideia and culture, Van Pelt et al. (2012) stressed that all aspects of a student’s life must be examined in order to determine how culture, including the Christian high school, affects the formation of students. Despite the importance of paideia, Elsner (2013) found that this term and its meanings have not been extensively explored. Similarly, there is a common understanding of the cultural standards of ancient paideia; however, there has been significant difficulty in actually defining this concept (Elsner, 2013). With regard to paideia, Elsner (2013) also concluded that the concept has been discussed very little since seminal works on this topic were completed in the early twentieth

century. The aforementioned seminal works were written in the 1930's and 1940's, respectively. Therefore, Elsner (2013) concluded that the concept of paideia needed to be revisited.

As shown, there is currently no substantive research giving a voice to classical Christian high school graduates regarding their experiences of a Christian paideia. Augustine expressed the influence and necessity of paideia when he argued that Christians could not advance in their understanding of Scripture, the Christian life, culture, academic discipline, and the pursuit of truth and goodness without the integrated approach to learning that was encompassed in the Christian paideia (Kevane, 1970). Due to the major importance of this educational model in God's plan for the edification of children, the rationale for this study is the need for a much deeper understanding of the recovered Christian paideia phenomenon currently being embodied in classical Christian schools today. The problem is an absence of understanding and appreciation for the important enculturation benefits that transpire from classical Christian high school students living their life immersed in a Christian paideia.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the essence of the shared lived experiences in a Christian paideia for classical Christian high school graduates at five different Texas schools. Christian paideia was generally defined according to its biblical usage as “nurturing, chastening, and character formation, implying that persons are genuinely committed and vitally related to one another in community” (Schultz, 2016, p. 49). The theory guiding this study was Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory as it emphasized the environmental influences on the development of individual behavior (Fond-Harmant & Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2016). The phenomenon explored was the realization of, and actual experiences from, a Christian paideia as described above that was successfully implemented in the classical Christian schools studied.

Significance of the Study

The subject study was completed to provide clarity on the goals and experiences of a growing revived method of education. In addition, classical Christian school graduate feedback will provide valuable information to a vast array of pertinent stakeholders (i.e., leaders in national Christian school associations, Christian church and school administration/governance, Christian parents and young adults) that will aid in continuous improvement within America's classical Christian schools. Christian school associations are seeking ways to improve education broadly, as well as specific solutions for the schools they serve. Christian paideia is a biblically based model of education that will positively influence every aspect of a school. In addition, as discussed in more detail below, churches have a pivotal role to play in the education / Christian paideia of children. Churches have lost sight of this role as demonstrated in the general lack of support in Christian education from churches. Each of the stakeholder groups highlighted above recognize broadly the value of a Christian paideia; however, they currently lack the tangible feedback and details to truly restore and communicate widely the importance of this educational cornerstone. The anticipation was also that positive experiences shared from classical Christian school graduates may encourage more parents to invest in a classical Christian style of education.

A specific example for the need of the advancement of the Christian paideia within classical Christian schools can be found in Gruenwald's (2016) disheartening description of modern culture:

A growing consensus holds that the major postmodern challenge endangers both freedom and virtue and, thus, the realization of full human potential in community. Postmodern subjectivity undermines all objective normative standards, thus offering no stable guides for distinguishing between right and wrong, good and evil. (p. 1)

As a solution to this societal condition, Gruenwald (2016) believed that there should be a major emphasis on the liberal arts aspects of education, which focuses holistically on the heart, soul, and mind. When comparing modern educational reforms, such as Common Core, to classical Christian philosophy, Schultz (2016) stressed, “Common Core standards are designed to produce good and productive workers. The classical Christian philosophy of education seeks to produce great and holy saints. Christian schools must never lose sight of this fundamental difference in the aim of education” (p. 53). The subject research can extend knowledge in an instrumental component of classical Christian education, that being the ancient notion of Christian paideia.

While attempting to capture the depth and significance of the liberal arts style of education that is delivered through a Christian paideia, Adler (1991) explained, “It is one of the perennial practical problems which men cannot discuss without engaging in the deepest speculative considerations” (p. 296). Adler (1991) goes on to expound on the vast breadth of subject matter and ideas addressed in a liberal arts education. Examples include grammar, logic, rhetoric, psychology, metaphysics, theology, ethics, politics, economics, virtue, truth, knowledge and opinion, art and science, family, man, and God. A liberal education is vocational in the sense that it prepares students for their life’s calling (Adler, 1991). When asked about the importance of this holistic style of education, Plato quoted Socrates “If you ask what is the good in general of paideia [education], the answer is easy. Paideia makes good men, and good men act nobly” (Lockerbie, 2005, p. 4). In Jaeger’s (1939) seminal work on paideia, he declared that “Education is the process by which a community preserves and transmits its physical and intellectual character. For the individual passes away, but the type remains” (p. xiii). Marrou (1956) went as far as to claim that paideia was the foundation of Western civilization.

In order to successfully recover a Christian paideia through the classical Christian education tradition, both the cultural transmission and intellectual aspects of this notion must be

central to the task of education (Clark & Jain, 2013). This all-encompassing responsibility will incorporate not only curriculum, but also a range of intangibles including attitudes, relationships, and habits (Clark & Jain, 2013). Sadly, “At most secular educational institutions, the only bond that holds the curriculum together is its obsession with the postmodernist triad of race, class, and gender, replacing the grand and classical tradition of truth, beauty, and goodness” (Lockerbie, 2005, p. 39). Hicks (1999) stressed that the ideas of the classical paideia are found and not manufactured; rather, the independent discovery of these ideas throughout history ultimately fostered what became to be known as the Great Conversation. The subject study will strive to find the shared experiences of Christian paideia from classical Christian high school graduates.

Research Questions

In an effort to reduce this study to a central question and several sub-questions, the following questions of meaning were developed for this transcendental phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010). To sufficiently study Christian paideia, these questions were addressed in a thorough manner. Consistent with Moustakas’s (1994) methods and procedures, the primary goals for this study’s research questions included the following: (a) fully discover the essences and meanings of Christian paideia as experienced by classical Christian high school graduates; (b) reveal the qualitative, rather than quantitative, factors in the behavior and experiences of the students; (c) achieve an engagement level of research participants that results in a sustained level of personal and passionate involvement; (d) avoid the prediction or determination of causal relationships; and (e) provide vivid descriptions of the Christian paideia experience, not measurements (p. 105).

Based on the transcendental phenomenological perspective of this study, as well as its disciplinary roots in philosophy, the central question for this study was: How do classical Christian high school graduates describe their lived experiences of Christian paideia? The words

“how”, “describe”, and “experiences” were purposefully chosen for use in the central research question to engender a desired interpretive freedom of this phenomenon, as well as a wish to understand Christian paideia entirely through the comprehensive stories from everyday lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). In addition, as suggested by Creswell (2013), this question was stated as a broad meaning question, which is consistent with phenomenological studies. This central question was also informed by Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory. The formative principles of EST were based upon the belief that human development understanding required consideration of the unique interchange between individuals and several concentric/interlocked socio-cultural frameworks (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Fond-Harmant & Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2016; Mizokawa & Komiya, 2014; Poch, 2005). This view of human development was also based on the belief that regular and increasingly complex interactions, also called proximal processes, occurred between individuals and their environment and were necessary for actual development to occur (Renn & Arnold, 2003; Walls, 2016). Specifically, Bronfenbrenner (1979) introduced four layers of the environment, each based upon the proximity or distance to an individual, all of which affect and are affected by an individual (Mizokawa & Komiya, 2014). Each of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological levels will be discussed in much greater detail in the Theoretical Framework section below.

Again, with the goal of a phenomenological study in mind, the following central question and sub-questions were designed to ascertain the necessary components to arrive at the essence of the study (Creswell, 2013).

Research central question: How do classical Christian high school graduates describe their lived experiences of Christian paideia?

Research sub-question one: How do classical Christian high school graduates describe the distinguishing attributes of a Christian paideia?

Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasized that the emphasis of a research study should be on the participant's perceptions and not limited to the objective characteristics of the environment only. In short, research methods should ideally uncover phenomenological understandings and not be limited only to the observable nature of the setting (Poch, 2005, p. 252).

Research sub-question two: How do classical Christian high school graduates perceive their school's overt or covert pursuits for realizing a Christian paideia?

As emphasized in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) EST and similarly in Christian paideia, education is a lived experience that affects the multidimensional aspects of the whole person. As a result, the emotional, spiritual, and rational sides of a student must be all addressed through the process of education (Hicks, 1999). This paradigm of addressing the needs of the whole student can be accomplished partly through pedagogical methods, curriculum and lesson planning, traditions, and daily rhythms in the school (Hicks, 1999). It is also important to recognize that education is comprised not only of traditional academic subjects, but also interactions and experiences that affect a student's spiritual, emotional, and cognitive development (Powell et al., 2012, p. 177).

Research sub-question three: How has being educated in a Christian paideia been beneficial or detrimental to the adult life of classical Christian high school graduates?

Although Bronfenbrenner's (1979) EST has been applied to a vast range of educational research issues such as (a) theory of mind, (b) higher education transfer students, (c) decision making in traditional private high school students, (d) teaching and learning, (e) peer culture, (f) youth developmental activities, and (g) developmentally appropriate teaching, no specific research was found applying EST to Christian paideia in a classical Christian high school and its perceived effects on adult life (Duerden & Witt, 2010; Goldstein, 2008; Kiley & Robinson, 2016; Mizokawa & Komiya, 2014; Poch, 2005; Renn & Arnold, 2003; Walls, 2016).

As discussed further below, although many schools in America purposefully pursue goals related to the achievement of a truly holistic education that addresses the whole child, the attainment of these goals has not been broadly measured or assessed (LeBlanc & Slaughter, 2012, p. 63). Furthermore, research on the effectiveness or carry-over of a Christian high school education appears to be inconclusive at this time. Nevertheless, more than 50% of Christian students at some public universities have discarded their Christian faith by the time that they have finished their undergraduate degree (LeBlanc & Slaughter, 2012).

Research sub-question four: How do classical Christian high school graduates express their sense of obligation, if any, to uphold the standards of a Christian paideia?

If schools are viewed through the lens of the ancient paideia, education should shape and nurture students' personality and cultivate a values framework (Probuska, 2016). Gruenwald (2002) explained, "Both the classical Greek and the Christian paideias challenge postmodernity and its radical discounting of all values, virtues, objectivity, ethical norms and standards, faith, transcendence, and even reason itself" (p. 20).

Definitions

1. Paideia

- a. "The word means both the culture or civilization of its time (with a very wide technical range from literature to art, athletics, mythology and religious expertise) and it means the process of education by which a command of the culture and its tradition were acquired" (Elsner, 2013, p. 137).
- b. "Paideia is the kind of education that makes for better citizens" (Rutten & Soetaert, 2012, p. 731).

- c. Schultz (2016) found that “in its biblical usage, paideia refers to nurturing, chastening, and character formation, implying that persons are genuinely committed and vitally related to one another in community” (p. 49).
- d. “‘The rearing of a child, training and teaching, education’ and as the results of these achievements – culture and learning” (Marrs, 2007, p. 48).
- e. “The Greek word paideia has a long and complex etymology but, at root, it refers to both the concept and process of education which have as their core aims the cultivation of humanity and the refinement of culture” (Grosch, 2000, p. 229).
- f. “The rearing of a child, training, discipline” (“Paideia”, n.d.).
- g. “Discipline; training and education of children, hence: instruction; chastisement, correction” (“Paideia”, n.d.).
- h. “Instruction that trains someone to reach full development (maturity)” (“Paideia”, n.d.).
- i. “The whole training and education of children (which relates to the cultivation of mind and morals, and employs for this purpose new commands and admonitions, new reproof and punishment)” (“Paideia”, n.d.).
- j. “Whatever in adults also cultivates the soul, especially by correcting mistakes and curbing the passions; hence, instruction which aims at the increase of virtue” (“Paideia”, n.d.).
- k. “Thus from its origins in childrearing, paideia became for Homer and the poets the educational process and procedures for forming children and young people to the humanistic ideal that characterized Greek culture” (Kevane, 1970, p. 155).
- l. “Christian paideia cultivates a loving disciple through the spiritual habits of prayerfully sought after wisdom” (Carr, 2003, p. 21).

m. Paideia is like a worldview, but more than a worldview. Paideia is an ordered set of desires, a base of knowledge and beliefs, a collection of virtues, and a way of seeing the world that is cultivated into children. We absorb it more than we learn it. Ultimately, paideia translates into the way you live as an adult and is the destination of all classical education. (Goodwin, 2016)

2. Culture

- a. A society's institutional structures – political, economic, and legal – as well as its values and beliefs as reflected in art, poetry, music, literature, painting, sculpture, architecture, design, drama, speech, comedy, criticism, news, and even the more mundane production and consumption of goods and services insofar as they reflect a total way of life, knowledge, and feeling. (Gruenwald, 2016)
- b. “An ideal way to teach pupils how to revise not only speeches and texts but also attitudes and human relationships as a central aspect of rhetorical education and practice” (Rutten & Soetaert, 2012, p. 738).

Summary

As explained previously, the findings of this research are expected to have meaningful impact for leaders in national Christian school associations, Christian church and school administration/governance, as well as Christian parents and young adults. With the growing pursuit of Christian paideia through the increasing number of classical Christian schools, there is still significant work needed to fully understand the adaptation of paideia on a routine and practical basis (Lietaert Peerbolte & Groenendijk, 2016, p. 149).

Therefore, the subject research addressed the absence of research examining the long-term effects, outcomes, and particularly the lived experiences in a Christian paideia, of classical Christian education on its graduates. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study

was to describe the essence of the shared experiences in a Christian paideia for classical Christian high school graduates at five different Texas schools. The theory guiding this study was Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory due to its emphasis on human development occurring from influences between an individual and their environment (Fond-Harmant & Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2016, p. 174). The phenomenon to be explored was the realization of, and actual experiences from, a Christian paideia as described above that is successfully implemented in the classical Christian schools studied.

The subject study was expected to provide clarity on the goals and experiences of a growing method of education. In addition, classical Christian school graduate feedback should provide valuable information to a vast array of pertinent stakeholders that will aid in continuous improvement within America's classical Christian schools. The subject research can extend knowledge in an instrumental component of classical Christian education, that being the ancient concept of Christian paideia.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The literature review discussed below was an integral component to this qualitative study. Current peer reviewed research articles, as well as seminal studies, related to the phenomenon of Christian paideia in classical Christian schools were selected to provide a context for this research, as well as further demonstrate the importance and need for this study as evidenced through the academic literature. An in-depth discussion is provided below detailing the theoretical framework that guided this study. A description of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) EST is provided, including some additional information regarding the impact that Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism theory had on the shaping of Bronfenbrenner's worldview. This chapter revealed numerous themes surrounding the study of Christian paideia such as the foundational elements of classical Christian schools, importance of cultivating virtue, holistic education, modern cultural and educational values, enculturation and community building, the attainment of school goals and mission, and the meaningful impact of paideia on Western civilization. With regard to gaps in the research, I was able to determine that very little, if any, qualitative research has been completed on the phenomenon of Christian paideia. Furthermore, minimal qualitative research has also been completed on the various themes associated with this phenomenon. In short, this chapter has assisted me considerably by furthering my understanding of the complexities, breadth, and importance of the Christian paideia.

Theoretical Framework

A detailed discussion will be provided below regarding the theories guiding this study. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) EST will be the primary focus; however, Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism will also be addressed due to its impact on Bronfenbrenner.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

This transcendental phenomenological study of Christian paideia amongst graduates of classical Christian high schools was grounded in the theoretical literature of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) EST. Bronfenbrenner, a developmental psychologist, introduced the foundational premises of his theory in 1977 that sought to describe how the interactions that occur between an individual and one's environment affects human development (Renn & Arnold, 2003). In short, the focus of this theory was on the interactive significance both within and between the various contexts experienced in one's life (i.e., work, church, family, school, etc.), and there was no single emphasis on a specific domain of development such as social, biological, or cognitive (Darling, 2007; Duerden & Witt, 2010). The thesis of EST was based on a conviction that a person's abilities, along with their realization, was dependent largely on the broader social and institutional context of the individual's activities (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner (1979) placed a crucial importance on the environments in which individuals operate in order to "break away from particularistic descriptions and contentless processes" (p. ix). The purpose of research conducted within the EST framework should not be hypothesis testing, instead a discovery of the interdependent system properties and processes that both affect and are affected by the behavior and development of an individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner (1979) moved from a strict adherence in the rigorous belief of the laboratory and psychometric methods, to a greater understanding of the power of phenomenology and social context (p. xii).

The formative principles of EST were based upon the belief that human development understanding required consideration of the unique interchange between individuals and several concentric/interlocked socio-cultural frameworks (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Fond-Harmant & Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2016; Mizokawa & Komiya, 2014; Poch, 2005). Furthermore, this view of human development was also centered on the notion that regular and increasingly complex

interactions, also called proximal processes, occurred between individuals and their environment and were necessary for actual development to occur (Renn & Arnold, 2003; Walls, 2016). Specifically, Bronfenbrenner (1979) introduced four layers of the environment, each categorized based upon the proximity or distance to an individual, that all affect and are affected by an individual (Mizokawa & Komiya, 2014). This concentric framework of layers has also been described as an interdependent arrangement of nested boxes, similar to a set of Russian dolls, each with unique characteristics that influence the neighboring boxes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Poch, 2005). Similar to the balance found in a properly built three-legged stool, Bronfenbrenner (1979) applied this same triadic principle to the relationships between ecological settings. For example, Bronfenbrenner (1979) explained,

Thus the capacity of a setting – such as the home, school, or workplace – to function effectively as a context for development is seen to depend on the existence and nature of social interconnections between settings, including joint participation, communication, and the existence of information in each setting about the other. (pp.5-6)

When compared to most traditional psychological theories, one of the unorthodox features of EST was its conception of development. Rather than focusing on the conventional processes of perception, motivation, thinking, and learning, EST concentrated on the *content* of *what* was perceived, desired, feared, thought about, or acquired as knowledge, as well as how these aspects changed in relation to an individual's exposure and interaction with their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner (1979) believed that a clear asymmetry existed in psychological theory and research due to the primary focus being on the person, with only a rudimentary understanding and description of the actual environment in which the person lived.

The most immediate socio-cultural context or basic unit of analysis was the microsystem, which included the developing person's direct face-to-face settings and interactions of an

individual with groups such as their family or school classroom peers and teachers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Kiley & Robinson, 2016; Mizokawa & Komiya, 2014; Poch, 2005; Renn & Arnold, 2003). Specifically, “A microsystem is a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22). A complete understanding of the microsystem required one to acknowledge that all relationships were both bidirectional and reciprocal (Tissington, 2008). For example, in a school setting, principals, teachers, and peers would all impact a student’s behavior; however, the student’s unique characteristics, such as learning style, also equally impacted others (Tissington, 2008). A foundational element of the microsystem was called molar activities, which revealed the evidence of development within an individual, combined with the most influential environmental factors that prompted that development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). “A molar activity is an ongoing behavior possessing a momentum of its own and perceived as having meaning or intent by the participants in the setting” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 45).

The next concentric setting outlined by EST was the mesosystem. This setting encompassed the interrelationships between two or more contexts, or microsystems, in which an individual actively participated (Kiley & Robinson, 2016; Poch, 2005; Walls, 2016).

A mesosystem comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (such as, for a child, the relations among home, school, and neighborhood peer group; for an adult, among family, work, and social life). (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25)

Bronfenbrenner (1979) believed that these interconnections were as important for development as events taking place solely in the microsystem. Onwuegbuzie, Collins, and Frels (2013) explained, “the mesosystem refers to relations among microsystems or connections among

contexts such as the relationship between family experiences and school experiences, between school experiences and neighborhood experiences, and between family experiences and peer experiences” (p. 4). In a Christian paideia, the mesosystem would consist of the interaction and overlap between various microsystems such as home, church, and school. Similar to the influence of a Christian paideia, Bronfenbrenner (1979) believed that the developmental potential of settings in a mesosystem were heightened if a mutual trust, consensus of goals, and positive orientation between settings existed.

Since Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined the mesosystem as a set of interrelations between two or more of a developing person’s settings, he proposed four general types of interconnections. The first and most basic form of interconnection between two settings was called multi-setting participation. A minimum of one manifestation of this was required for a mesosystem and occurred when the same individual engaged in activities in more than one setting (example: home and school). Next, an indirect linkage occurred when the same person did not actively participate in both settings; however, a connection was still established between a third party intermediate link between individuals in two different settings. Third, inter-setting communications also occurred through face-to-face interactions, telephone, written correspondence, and other announcements and were intended to transmit a message from one setting to the other with the intent of providing specific information. Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) fourth type of mesosystem interconnection was inter-setting knowledge. This referred to information or experiences that existed in one setting about another and was obtained through inter-setting communications, as discussed above, or other possible sources such as books.

Third, exosystems were described as settings where an individual is not actively involved, yet the activities in this setting do substantively affect and exert influence on the individual (Poch, 2005; Renn & Arnold, 2003; Walls, 2016). “An exosystem refers to one or

more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). For example, a school administration’s policy on biblical integration in curriculum could directly affect a student even though they were not directly involved in the policy formation. Bronfenbrenner (1979) also believed that one of the most powerful influences affecting young children’s development were the conditions of their parents’ employment. In order to demonstrate an exosystem as an instrumental development context, it is required to establish a two-stage causal sequence (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). First, events in an external setting must be connected to processes that are occurring in the microsystem of a developing individual. Second, the microsystem processes affected by the external setting must be linked directly to developmental changes that are occurring with a person in that microsystem setting.

Continuing out on the concentric layers of the EST model, the macrosystem consisted of broad societal beliefs that exert influence on the individual and respective sub-systems (Poch, 2005).

The macrosystem refers to consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26)

All the above-mentioned systems of interaction are tangible expressions of the macrosystem and are also culturally unique to a specific period in history (Kiley & Robinson, 2016; Renn & Arnold, 2003). Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasized that changes that occurred at the macrosystem level were very critical due to the trickle-down effect on all the other respective levels (Tissington, 2008). For example, within a given society, the delivery of education may

vary dramatically based on the various socioeconomic, ethnic, religious, subcultural groups, and divergent belief systems and lifestyles that ultimately shape and perpetuate the diverse ecological environments that impact human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Finally, a later revision of Bronfenbrenner's human development model also consisted of the chronosystem, which factored in the impact of time both on an individual and the environment where they live (Mizokawa & Komiya, 2014). With regard to the chronosystem, a Christian paideia may impact the development of graduates due to the EST principle of, "The accumulation of life experiences over time is a lasting effect of the chronosystem on the individual, and students arrive at college with unique characteristics shaped by common social forces and by individual experiences" (Renn & Arnold, 2003, p. 273).

Impact of Ecological Systems Theory

EST was one of the most recognized development theories that emphasized a multi-dimensional ecological impact to the development of an individual (Mizokawa & Komiya, 2014). Utilizing an ecological perspective has provided a better understanding for many educational phenomenon including bullying, academic achievement, and mental health crisis (Burns & Warbold-Brann, 2015). Bronfenbrenner (1979) was credited for recognizing the detrimental scientific limitations that were present in human development research during his time.

Specifically, he argued for a broader approach to human development research that identified a balance between rigor and relevance, both of which in their extreme forms he believed were deterring genuine scientific progress (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Bronfenbrenner's (1977) well-known quote, "much of contemporary developmental psychology is the science of the strange behavior of children in strange situations with strange adults for the briefest possible periods of time" (p. 513), stemmed from his perception of rigorous experiments being

unfamiliar, artificial, and too brief, with behaviors that were difficult to generalize to outside environments. Conversely, commenting on the emphasis of some scientists' need for social relevance in research (i.e., the opposite extreme of rigor), Bronfenbrenner (1977) gave examples of scientists that had excluded themselves from the research process, as well as observation and analysis being replaced by more existential focuses such as experience and understanding.

With regard to phenomenological research, Bronfenbrenner believed that useful research methods would ideally reveal an individual's phenomenological interpretations of the setting and not just the visible attributes of the setting (Poch, 2005). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) definition of the microsystem above utilized the key term, experienced. Phenomenologically, Bronfenbrenner (1979) chose the word experienced "to indicate that the scientifically relevant features of any environment included not only its objective properties but also the way in which these properties are perceived by the persons in that environment" (p. 22). The use of Bronfenbrenner's EST in research reaffirmed the important notion that human development does not occur in isolation (Poch, 2005).

Like the emphasis in a Christian paideia of educating the whole person, EST was also a theoretical perspective that recognized the value of the totality of contextual influences on the development of an individual (Walls, 2016). As a result, the understanding of student development was advanced through the application of EST because of its all-encompassing focus on the interaction between individual characteristics and learning environments (Walls, 2016). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory was important and relevant due to the behavioral understanding that it provided of individuals in a multifaceted culture, as well as the ability that the theory offered to identify damaging human development interactions and subsequently find positive changes (Fond-Harmant & Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2016).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) reasoned for an understanding of human development that necessitated more than the direct observation of behavior of an individual in one place, rather a system of interactions between multiple people in a variety of settings that factored in the environmental influences beyond the respective settings. There were several distinctives within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) understanding of human development that are important to reemphasize. First, the developing person was certainly impacted by its environment; however, the individual was also viewed as a dynamic entity that also impacted its own social environment. Next, this mutual two-directional process of influence between an individual and their environment was viewed as reciprocity. Finally, the developmental environment was not limited to a single setting but was extended to include vital interconnections between settings, along with influences from the larger surroundings. Bronfenbrenner (1979) advocated that human environments, along with the abilities of individuals to adapt their environments, was so complex in its organization that a simple one-dimensional research model could not effectively capture the necessary ecological structure and variation.

Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory

The development of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) EST was shaped greatly by Vygotsky (1978). A Russian psychologist, Vygotsky died of tuberculosis at the early age of 38 years old while he was conducting innovative research on human cognition and language (Deulen, 2013; Parker, 1979). Bronfenbrenner shared Vygotsky's worldview where child development was driven by an interaction between the individual and the ecological environment (Mizokawa & Komiya, 2014; Parker, 1979). Parker (1979) and Estep (2002) highlighted that Vygotsky's ideas were somewhat parallel, yet also different in many ways, to the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget. Importantly, Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism was considered one of the most recognized models to explain the phenomenon of learning and has been acknowledged as having

a significant international influence in the fields of education and psychology (Deulen, 2013; Estep, 2002). In short, Vygotsky viewed the learning process as one that occurred in the context of community (Deulen, 2013).

Like Bronfenbrenner (1979), Vygotsky (1978) held the belief that children learned primarily through interactive relationships within their immediate social contexts; therefore, all learning was believed to be affected by the cultural environments in which children lived (Goldstein, 2008). Specifically, Vygotsky considered cooperative dialogues between a student and teacher, for example, as necessary for cultural development (Tissington, 2008). Furthermore, using Vygotsky's framework of three tiered zones of development, Bronfenbrenner contended that the ability of a particular setting, such as home and school, to serve as an effective developmental context was dependent upon the social interrelationships and communication between the respective settings (Deulen, 2013).

Similar to the enculturation that occurs in an authentic Christian paideia, Deulen (2013) argued that Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism aligned very well with a biblical learning approach that should occur within the context of a community of Christian believers. Hebrews 10:24-25 states, "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." With this biblical admonition in mind, Deulen (2013) explained, "We are then, as believers, to live, learn, and teach in a socio-cultural and cross-generational context" (p. 94).

Theoretical Relationship with Christian Paideia

EST has assisted educators by developing a multidimensional frame of reference that has afforded a better understanding of the thinking and actions of students (Mizokawa & Komiya, 2014). By identifying themes through a phenomenological study and aligning these themes with

the pertinent layers of the EST framework, one can develop a greater comprehension of some of the primary influencers in the decision making of students (Kiley & Robinson, 2016). Poch (2005) explained,

Bronfenbrenner believes that the phenomenological (internally interpreted or experienced) environment dominates the real environment and that only by seeking to understand the perceptions and experiences of a person can one begin to understand the influences of the environment on action (Thomas, 1992). (p. 250)

The themes identified through the subject phenomenological study were classified into a specific layer of Bronfenbrenner's sociological model. This classification assisted in the analysis of the interdependency of ecological influences on students, along with the corresponding outcomes from these influences (Kiley & Robinson, 2016). The aim of the subject study was to capture Bronfenbrenner's (1979) belief that a complete understanding of the development of a child required an examination of the total environment where the child functioned daily, including the home, school, community, and culture (Burns & Warmbold-Brann, 2015).

Particularly, with the historical and biblical importance of Christian paideia in education, as well as the lack of understanding of this far-reaching concept in modern culture, this phenomenological study of Christian paideia that was conducted through the lens of the EST framework provided valuable understanding of the essence of student experiences among graduates of classical Christian high schools. This study also revealed knowledge on the alignment and attainment of the transcendent goals desired for most graduates of classical Christian schools, as well as the impact their education has had on their young adult lives. Although EST has been applied to a vast range of educational research issues such as (a) theory of mind, (b) higher education transfer students, (c) decision making in traditional private high school students, (d) teaching and learning, (e) peer culture, (f) youth developmental activities,

and (g) developmentally appropriate teaching, no specific research was found applying EST to Christian paideia in a classical Christian high school (Duerden & Witt, 2010; Goldstein, 2008; Kiley & Robinson, 2016; Mizokawa & Komiya, 2014; Poch, 2005; Renn & Arnold, 2003; Walls, 2016).

Related Literature

The following section will provide a concise synthesis of the current knowledge on this topic and endeavor to connect this current knowledge to the completed study.

Foundations for Classical Christian Schools

The emphasis of a truly liberal education, with a holistic Christian purpose, should reflect a formidable partnership between family, church, and school that strives for a balanced achievement of faith development, academic achievement, and community engagement (Banke, Maldonado, & Lacey, 2012; Lawler, 2013; Pennings, Sikkink, Wiens, Seel, & Van Pelt, 2011). The analogy of the balance found with a three-legged stool has been used to portray the vital interrelationship needed between family, church, and school to effectually educate children (Schultz, 2002). The Christian effort to educate children has also been referred to as a cooperative alliance between parents and spiritual mentors in the school and church (Lockerbie, 2005). Unfortunately, many parents today completely abdicate their responsibilities to educate their children, both academically and spiritually, to the school and church, respectively. However, parents are called biblically to first claim God's truth for themselves, followed by a conveyance of God's knowledge, understanding, and wisdom to their children (Lockerbie, 2005). Hopefully, claiming God's truth for themselves first will call them back to the entirety of biblical responsibilities that they have for their children. The lived experience of an authentic Christian paideia beautifully realizes Deuteronomy 6:7 for parents, "You shall teach them

diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”

The classical Christian approach of a liberal education should cultivate spiritual formation, along with a Christian worldview, that significantly aids in the development of intimate relationships with peers and a deeper reliance on God (Pennings et al., 2014; Lawler, 2013; LeBlanc & Slaughter, 2012; Powell, Tisdale, Willingham, Bustrum, & Allan, 2012). Christian school educators must understand the significance and urgency of imparting the Christian worldview to students (Lockerbie, 2005). Students should be consistently encouraged, “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). In the end, this should also be accomplished in a loving and winsome manner. This priority is reflected in the Apostle Paul’s emphasis at the end of 1 Peter 3:15, “but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.”

One of the principle functions of this relational intimacy with students is to positively impact the world through the outpouring of God’s *love* and leadership demonstrated through Christian school graduates (Banke et al., 2012; Pennings et al., 2011; Van Brummelen & Koole, 2012). As exhibited in the early church fathers, this outpouring of God’s love will ultimately require students to gain a firm understanding of the best in thought across a broad array of areas, religious or not, including literature, art, and the sciences (Wilkin, 2011). This will be in direct contrast to the beliefs of anti-intellectualism. The Apostle Paul encouraged Christians, “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” If all truth is founded in God, the ultimate pursuit of education should be the

discovery of truth in every aspect of creation. Classical Christian schools have very capably navigated students and shaped their abilities to identify both the commendable and wicked ideas and actions exposed through the canon of classical literature and discussion of the great ideas through history.

Limited research has been conducted on the specifics of the requisite leadership abilities needed to deliver the classical Christian approach to education discussed above (Beckman, Drexler, & Eames, 2012; Council & Cooper, 2011). However, it is evident that leadership in these schools must embrace an educational paradigm that combines both classic and modern approaches, especially the integration of the Christian worldview into ancient curriculum (Council & Cooper, 2011). Practically speaking, schools embracing this type of educational paradigm should include courses on logical and critical thinking, discussion, and study of history's Great Books, as well as rhetorical training that equips students to communicate winsomely (Vaughan & Morgan, 2015). Again, classical Christian education aims to prepare students to "honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15).

Surprisingly, it was found that ACCS member schools were primarily led by individuals with no headmaster experience (71%) or less than seven years of experience (83%) in their current school (Council & Cooper, 2011). Due to this scarcity of experienced and trained leaders to aid in the further development of Christian paideia through classical Christian schools, along with the lack of existing research literature on this subject, the following recommendations have been made (Council & Cooper, 2011). First, qualitative research is needed to identify common success factors amongst classical Christian schools. Training organizations, such as ACCS, would be able to use this information to more effectively develop leadership programs and target

the needed training workshops for their annual national conference. Second, no research has been found addressing the efficacy of the classical Christian school product, which is ultimately the graduates. A greater understanding of the lived experiences of classical Christian school graduates provides valuable knowledge pertaining to this recovered, yet ancient method of education. This information assists faculty members in identifying key pedagogical success factors. For example, in contrast to our current individualistic culture, the lofty educational ideal established by the Greeks was based upon teachers who lived for their service to community by embodying the qualities of poet, statesman, and sage (Jaeger, 1939). Finally, a formal mentorship program is needed for classical Christian school leaders to ensure that ongoing support and resources are provided. This program could be provided through a national support association like ACCS.

Modern Cultural and Educational Values

Modern education, particularly the Common Core standards, has been characterized as pragmatic and intensely career focused (Schultz, 2016). In contrast, classical Christian education has been portrayed as vertically oriented towards God as the ultimate source of truth, and an education that seeks to form the entire human person (Schultz, 2016). This holistic formation of an individual is accomplished through the Greek communal education philosophy of paideia, which provided the framework for Christians to generationally convey their culture, traditions, and beliefs through a communal pursuit of the common good (Schultz, 2016). Authentic Christian paideia reflects,

Education as paideia is not preparation for life, for college, or for work; it is our inherited means of living fully in the present, while we grow in wisdom and in grace, in conscience and in style, entering gradually into “the good life.” (Hicks, 1999, p. 130)

Intellectual nurture, accomplishment, and a productive use of leisure (i.e., *scholē*) were also important concepts associated with *paideia* in classical Greece (D'Angour, 2013). While explaining the 20th century collapse of *paideia*, its great importance was well articulated by Kevane (1970) as, “our millennial heritage of education and culture which has been since Homer the firm roadbed upon which the mighty human caravan of Western progress in civilization has moved so far and so high” (p. 155). The Christian church’s presence in the world has been attributed to the imperative of a Christian *paideia*, one that includes a solid educational program for the formation of all members of the church, particularly leaders (Kevane, 1970, p. 178). Intriguingly, *paideia* as an ideal did not mean a preparatory education as conceived today, rather achieving the full development of the mind and what it means to be human (Marrou, 1956). *Paideia* was translated first into Latin using the word *humanitas*, meaning humanity and kindness. This historically significant educational idea evolved into an absolute that cultivated goodness in the soul and provided a firm foundation for Christian culture to flourish (Marrou, 1956).

Despite the multitude of Christian schools in America, and the fact that many schools purposefully pursue goals related to the achievement of a truly holistic education that addresses the whole child, the attainment of these goals has not been broadly measured or assessed (LeBlanc & Slaughter, 2012). Likewise, research on the effectiveness or carry-over of a Christian high school education appears to be inconclusive at this time. Sadly, however, more than 50% of Christian students at some public universities have discarded their Christian faith by the time that they have finished their undergraduate degree (LeBlanc & Slaughter, 2012). The 18-to-29 age bracket has been classified as the black hole of church attendance due to the 43 percent drop-off in church engagement that has been found between the teen and early adult years (Kinnaman, 2011). Interestingly, when differentiating Christian schools between Protestant

and Catholic, Protestant high school students perceived the purpose of their education primarily as an avenue to positively influence society, while Catholic students placed a very strong emphasis on the ability of an education to assist in one's professional development (Candal & Glenn, 2012). The subject study endeavored to reveal specifically the purpose that classical Christian school graduates find in their education.

With regard to a root cause driving the concerning number of Christian students that walk away from their faith during their college years, Gruenwald (2002) emphasized that our culture at large suffers from the lack of a transcendent moral guide. He further explained that the renewal of a liberal arts education, as pursued by classical Christian schools, will be essential for the restoration of ethical foundations. With the 20th century unwavering focus on rationality and scientific verification, the integrated vision of education, including a connection between reason and faith, that was passed down through the ages since ancient philosophers has been lost (Gruenwald, 2002). Probuska (2016) affirmed this belief by stressing that the deeper meaning of education has been lost to a mere conveyance of information. Homrighausen (1939) eloquently communicated the conviction that education should be exponentially more than a conveyance of mere information:

Knowledge without passion and action is sterile. Passion without knowledge and action is wild. Action without knowledge and passion is aimless. We need knowledge and passion and action. Christian truth and life as it is in Christ and in the Church which is his body, embraces all three. (p. 278)

Viewing schools through the lens of the ancient paideia, education was intended to shape and nurture students' personality and cultivate a values framework (Probuska, 2016). Gruenwald (2002) further elaborated, "Both the classical Greek and the Christian paideias challenge

postmodernity and its radical discounting of all values, virtues, objectivity, ethical norms and standards, faith, transcendence, and even reason itself” (p. 20).

Cultivation of Virtue

Transformation is the end objective of all education and can result in mastery of various ideals ranging from academic, to professional, to moral (Newell, 2012). Homrighausen (1953) concurred that the primary purpose of education aligns with the primary transformational aim of the human life, that being “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and will all of your soul and all of your mind” (Matthew 22:37). Christian schools, both independent and church related, hope to exert an impactful influence on their students that results in a transference of distinctly Christian values (Francis, ap Sion, & Village, 2014).

Nevertheless, Christian school attendance for all a student’s primary and secondary education may still not result in an understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the importance of the Bible (Moore, 2014). Hicks (1999) concluded that modern teaching methods have eliminated the essential relationship between knowing and doing, primarily through the removal of accepted norms and a morally transcendent purpose of education. Although few studies have been conducted to ascertain the genuine impact of a Christian education, Francis, ap Sion, and Village (2014) concluded that Christian school attendance contributed to positive attributes such as greater self-esteem, lower drug use and other illegal behaviors, diminished racism, and stronger conservative Christian principles on social issues like abortion, pre-marital sex, divorce, and homosexuality. Former students of independent Christian schools also expressed that the education they received was distinctive compared to other schools due to its holistic nature and focus on faith development (Francis et al., 2014). Christian education, particularly the liberal arts based classical Christian education movement, should make a strong case that education is not only for career enrichment, but rather is an education that is a long-

term investment in knowledge with broader moral and societal impacts (Newell, 2012). Parents of Christian school students should constantly evaluate and remind themselves of why they choose to make the sacrifice and investment in a private education. In most cases, if their only justification is academic, and no transcendent purpose is being embodied through the school, a public school or more overtly Christian school may need to be considered.

The Apostle Paul chose the Greek word *paideia* in Ephesians 6:4 when he encouraged fathers to raise their children in the *paideia* of the Lord. Researchers have asked whether this instruction to parents was a directive to provide children a distinctly Christian education; however, this question has not been answered fully in modern literature (Lietaert Peerbolte & Groenendijk, 2016). Child rearing for Christian parents has been likened to the process by which an artist sculpts a statue with great precision, and children should similarly be shaped into wondrous statues for God (Laistner, 1951). Teachers have also been described as skilled artists who are properly trained in their fields and who possess a burning zeal for social improvement (Coloma, 2013). *Paideia* has been equated to cultivation, in that children are shaped based on existing cultural standards and traditions (Biesta, 2012). Luke 6:40 also explains, “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.” This is also why “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness” (James 3:1).

An early Christian theologian in the second century, Clement of Alexandria, clarified the ideal of a Christian *paideia* when he described Jesus Christ as the consummate teacher who provided both practical knowledge and moral principles to his disciples (Lietaert Peerbolte & Groenendijk, 2016). Similarly, Clement expanded the *paideia* of God notion by taking a pagan idea and redeeming it for use in the Christian life (Jaeger, 1961). Clement applied the knowledge of *paideia* in the same manner as the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16, “All Scripture is breathed

out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for *training in righteousness*.” Philo of Alexandria, a first century Christian philosopher, also likened a Christian paideia to the multi-faceted educative process of God where parents are used as an instrument to shape the lives of children (Lietaert Peerbolte & Groenendijk, 2016). Similarly, Justin Martyr, a second century Christian apologist, shared the belief that conversion to Christianity did not require the disregard for all non-Christian philosophies. Instead, Christians should be able to speak to God’s entire cosmos of knowledge, creation, and history, which was actually comprised in the classical paideia (Gemeinhardt, 2012). Ultimately, the infinite knowledge of God is where all things originate and endure (Turley, 2009). Colossians 1:17 and Hebrews 1:3 affirm this principle that God holds all together and upholds the universe.

A primary goal of a Christian paideia in the early church was predominately the home education of children, with a concentration on the teaching of piety that was grounded in the tenets of the Bible (Lietaert Peerbolte & Groenendijk, 2016). Wayman (2016) expanded on this purpose by explaining that early church father, Basil’s, approach to education included the spiritual formation of children, both at home and the church, in order to effectively equip them for the pagan world in which they lived. The greatest of the early church fathers clearly recognized the Greek heritage of paideia was not a pagan evil; rather, it possessed an inherent quality of good that could be utilized for a Christian church that was commanded by Jesus in His Great Commission to go and teach (Kevane, 1970).

The early Christian church took the Greek ideal of paideia and adapted and redeemed it (Jaeger, 1961). This redemption was accomplished by the recognition that the ultimate source of truth was found in God’s impartation of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom (Lockerbie, 2005). The redemption of the Greek paideia also influenced one of its particulars, that being the concept of *arête* or virtue. A life that venerates and acts upon the good, that values and seeks to

produce beauty, and that pursues excellence in all things is only made attainable through the Christian life (Hicks, 1999). Through the imitation of Christ, the Christian paideia shapes children and reframes the object of learning to a focus on an incarnate God, rather than an abstract and incomplete secular tradition (Hicks, 1999).

Augustine believed that Christians could not advance in their understanding of the faith without the keeping and use of paideia (Kevane, 1970).

It is wrong, harmfully wrong, he holds, to expect an understanding of the Scriptures, an adequate grasp of Christian life and activity, without the apparatus of human learning and the achievements of human culture enshrined in the educational system. He cannot agree that the entire process is to be held separate from education, so to speak, and that religious education and biblical catechesis ought, on principle, to proceed charismatically somehow, by the divine assistance alone. (Kevane, 1970, pp. 164-165)

Likewise, the Apostle Paul's rhetorical and exegetical proficiencies were demonstrated through his sermon on Mars Hill in Acts 17, as he winsomely adapted and integrated his knowledge of pagan philosophy for God's glory (Van Hoof, 2013). This same approach to education should be recovered by the church and parents today in an attempt to foster the needed pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty (Wayman, 2016).

As discussed above, one of the most prominent influences in the spiritual formation of students are their teachers (Moore, 2014). Wayman (2016) concluded, "the educator plays a determining role in the converting power of education" (p. 265). Parents are given the primary responsibility in Deuteronomy 6:7 to train their children in the ways of God, "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." Nevertheless, Christian schools, particularly teachers, are provided a privileged opportunity to partner with parents in

this eternal responsibility to spiritually shape children (Moore, 2014). Again, the enormity of this responsibility is stressed in Matthew 18:6, “but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.” Teachers in the early Christian church understood well the capacity for influence within their positions and skillfully transformed the cultural influencing power of the Greek *paideia* into a uniquely Christian version that had a powerful transformative effect on their students (Newell, 2012). Wayman (2016) reiterated that early Christian leaders such as Basil, Clement of Alexandria, Justin Martyr, and Origen of Alexandria all advocated for a unity of truth in God, as well as a discernment of truth from falsehood within the pagan literature that was still utilized for Christian investigation.

Three primary teacher characteristics are related to intentional spiritual formation in students: Christ-like attitude, spiritual disciplines, and classroom climate (Moore, 2014). Christ-like behavior allows teachers to model moral decision making and value synthesization for students (Moore, 2014). Spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, scripture reading, and worship, aid in the development of Christ-like patterns in life (Moore, 2014). Finally, a classroom climate conducive to strong spiritual formation is one where the teacher routinely exhibits the fruits of the spirit in Galatians 5:22-23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Moore, 2014). Although the fruits of the spirit are encouraged in the classroom, a climate where students are inspired to learn for themselves is also an imperative for classical Christian education if the appreciation of truth, goodness, and beauty is to be attained (Vaughan & Morgan, 2015). Sayers (1947) eloquently affirmed the importance of students’ learning for themselves when she proclaimed,

Is not the great defect of our education today - a defect traceable through all the disquieting symptoms of trouble that I have mentioned - that although we often succeed

in teaching our pupils "subjects," we fail lamentably on the whole in teaching them how to think: they learn everything, except the art of learning. (para. 14)

Holistic Education

Consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) EST, as well as the notion of Christian paideia, education is an experience that affects the whole person. The emotional, spiritual, and rational sides of a student must be all addressed through education (Hicks, 1999). This approach of addressing the needs of the whole student can be realized partly through pedagogical methods, curriculum and lesson planning, traditions, and daily rhythms in the school (Hicks, 1999). Likewise, education is comprised not only of traditional academic subjects, but also interactions and experiences that affect a student's spiritual, emotional, and cognitive development (Powell et al., 2012). Homrighausen (1949) emphasized that doctrine and theological meaning can be implied through both overt and covert pedagogical methods such as music, parental attitudes, atmosphere of the home, and symbols and culture within the church. In essence, Homrighausen (1949) believed "Doctrine is woven into the fabric of Christian culture" (p. 363). Although limited research was found addressing specifically the benefits and outcomes of a Christian education, some evidence was discovered on the influential aspects of faith development on students. For example, the combination of a strong Christian mentoring relationship, functioning in a diverse environment where students can freely explore their beliefs, led to a strong influence on faith development (Powell et al., 2012).

Christian school leaders are expected to address all the traditional elements of operating a successful organization (i.e., finances, academics, human resources, etc.), while at the same time leading spiritual development and inspiring the school community to a greater transcendent purpose (Banke et al., 2012; Beckman et al., 2012). Although a phenomenological study was not found that sought to describe the experiences of classical Christian school graduates, the spiritual

preparation programs and experiences of Christian school leaders have been studied to identify how these leaders may become more spiritually effective and service oriented in their schools (Banke et al., 2012). Coherent with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) EST, Vygotsky's (1978) developmental theory, and the multifaceted enculturation of a Christian paideia, school administrators' ability to serve as spiritual leaders have been influenced by an array of personal experiences and contexts including (a) beliefs, (b) family, (c) prior education, (d) church life, and (e) faith disciplines such as Bible reading and prayer (Banke et al., 2012). Similar to the holistic pursuit in providing a classical Christian education to students, it is also important to focus on the holistic development of the leaders charged with accomplishing the classical Christian school mission.

Homrighausen (1945) commented prophetically on the inconsistency of shared theology in Christian education and called for a fundamental conversion of educational leadership, particularly a recovery of the Christian paideia. Homrighausen (1948) also observed that the United States was on the road toward a complete separation of religion from education and alerted churches to a religionless spirit in education that could ultimately become its own form of religion. Education today is in need of obvious reform, and a new call has been made for the restoration of the Christian paideia, which was previously the primary educational tool for the entire Western world (Carr, 2003). In fact, the Association of Classical Christian Schools titled their recent 2017 national conference, *Paideia: Cultivating Right Affections*. This is a visible example of the priority that the country's largest classical Christian school association places on the recovery of Christian paideia.

As mentioned previously, from the beginning of the Christian church, Jesus' Great Commission in Matthew 28 has called believers to make disciples and teach. Furthermore, Christian paideia was the primary spiritual nurturing or enculturation tool to fulfill the Great

Commission. Since the ancient Greeks, education in Western civilization was focused on enculturation - the generational process of transmitting an entire culture by means of paideia (Clark & Jain, 2013). “Indeed, the very root of Western education is the quest for truth, beauty, and goodness, representing the highest ideals – the highest hopes – our society can promote” (Lockerbie, 2005, p. 88).

It was not until the 20th century in America that this Christian paideia ultimately disintegrated as the church lost sight of its divine function and the totality of the Christian worldview (Homrighausen, 1945). Due to impiety in today’s culture, as well as the attempt to educate in a values-neutral fashion, the transmission of an ideal culture is problematic (Clark & Jain, 2013). In contrast, colonial American Christianity enjoyed a beautiful synergy between the home, church, K-12 school, and college, all of which were striving to raise children in the paideia of the Lord as described by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:4 (Homrighausen, 1945). Ultimately, church academies in America were primarily replaced by community-based primary and secondary schools, as well as state institutions of higher education. At this point, a lethal dichotomy emerged where the Christian church was viewed as being responsible for religious education and the community or state gained control of academics. This dichotomy between religion and education has had devastating effects on Christian culture. Homrighausen (1945) described the atomization of the Christian paideia resulting from this educational fragmentation, along with the suffering that ensued by children from this chaos. He believed that a Christian paideia could only be recovered through the proliferation of understanding and obedience for paideia by Christian leaders connected to all facets of discipleship.

Enculturation and Community

Motivated by the belief that one’s personal life story is a culmination of relationships, there is a considerable amount of developmental psychology literature and research related to the

impact that individual experiences have on the formation of identity and ideology (Kimball, Boyatzis, Cook, Leonard, & Flanagan, 2013). A strong spiritual relationship with God has been found to function as a correcting influence on other relationships that may be affected by emotionally unhealthy personal struggles such as insecurity (Kimball et al., 2013). Due to the meaningful impact that God can have on relationships, most Christian schools emphasize spiritual development in an attempt to positively influence society and culture (Van Brummelen & Koole, 2012). Nevertheless, the extent of cultural knowledge and involvement among Christian school students, along with the impact that their school's culture has on this knowledge and involvement, has not been extensively researched (Van Brummelen & Koole, 2012).

The application of key classical Christian imperatives, such as a broad liberal arts approach to learning, an importance placed on the tools of critical analysis and thinking, and the ability to observe culture through a values-based perspective, has resulted in graduates of Catholic and Evangelical Christian schools to demonstrate a greater level of tolerance and social/community involvement (Van Brummelen & Koole, 2012). The positive impact of a Christian education on all spheres of life is certainly an end goal for the realization of a Christian paideia. Though the realization of a Christian paideia is an ideal for classical Christian schools, barriers related to the lack of a unified vision within a school community, pursuit of individualistic goals, and limitations on time and resources can all severely inhibit the accomplishment of this goal (Van Brummelen & Koole, 2012).

The future success of a country is based heavily upon the cultivation of the minds and character of its children. This cultivation of children is heavily influenced today by a vastly complex set of factors such as their neighborhood or town, schools, friends, religious faith, types and themes of games, visual and print media entertainment, role models, and of course their family (Bronfenbrenner, 1978). Interestingly, Bronfenbrenner (1978) highlighted that of all these

above-mentioned factors, virtually every culture has identified one's family as the most notable influence, and this is the only social institution that has been present in every civilization throughout history. As noted, the Greeks include the concept of familial influence on the enculturation of children within the notion of *paideia*, while the Germans use the term *Erziehung*, the Russians *vospitanie*, the French *elevation*, and Americans refer to *character formation, cultural education, or upbringing* (Bronfenbrenner, 1978). The core of *paideia* was comprised of a formative process of the human personality called *morphosis* (Turley, 2009). The Apostle Paul called fathers in Ephesians 6:4 to impart a *morphosis* or transformation of their children through the imitation of Christ-like virtue (Turley, 2009). Despite the critical importance of the family on a child's academic and character development, almost every indicator reflecting family as a key social unit is weakening (rising rates of divorce, illegitimate births, desertions, decreasing leisure time with children, e.g.) (Bronfenbrenner, 1978; Haskins & Sawhill, 2016).

Attainment of School Mission and Goals

Desired outcomes in education can only be achieved through the purposeful leadership of school administration in the communication of mission and goals to all stakeholders (Allen-Collinson & Brown, 2012; Banke et al., 2012; Beckman et al., 2012; Smith, 2014). Areas of leadership focus highlighted in this study included the importance of connection, attitude, and intentional participation. Considering these three areas of focus, modern culture has somewhat negated the former high esteem of families, church, and country, which has resulted in a new relativistic norm characterized by self-absorption and a diminished passion for life (Lawler, 2013). Much of modern education can be characterized as a pursuit of power, success, and self-satisfaction (Hicks, 1999). As a result, Christian education is needed more than ever to effectively pass on religious heritage from one generation to the next, along with assisting

children in their choices of conflicting and contradictory worldviews that recognize man as children of God or evolving creatures of the world (Homrighausen, 1942). Psalm 78:4 proclaims “We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.”

Christian educational institutions have frequently emphasized the invaluable outcomes resulting from the cultivation of relationships amongst its faculty and students (Allen-Collinson & Brown, 2012; Banke et al., 2012; Candal & Glenn, 2012; Pennings et al., 2011; Pennings et al., 2014; Powell et al., 2012; Smith, 2014). These relationships include mentoring opportunities between faculty and students, student-to-student support of one another, and even the connection of students with outside members of the broader community. Despite the realization of desired goals and objectives for Christian high schools, graduates can still experience numerous challenges as they transition to the university (Allen-Collinson & Brown, 2012; Beckman et al., 2012; Pennings et al., 2011). Outcomes related to spiritual faithfulness and academic success can be mixed due to the multitude of potential influences. As a result, the successful shift from high school to the university can present a wide range of challenges and intense emotions for many students (Allen-Collinson & Brown, 2012).

Many of the proposed frameworks for 21st century educational priorities have been heavily influenced by the private sector’s economic interests in transitioning our society from an industrial to a knowledge focus (De Bruijn, 2014). Most of these frameworks promote education that is focused primarily on productivity, efficiency, and other measurable factors, which ultimately disregard important proficiencies in relationship building, moral standards, time management and self-control (De Bruijn, 2014). In contrast, Lawrence Cremin, a 20th century educator at Columbia University, offered a definition of education that included references to a deliberate, systematic, and sustained model of teaching that both transmitted and evoked the

acquiring of knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, and sensibilities (Cervera, 2014; Howe, 1982; Smylie, 1989; Wagoner, 1978). Cremin's conception of education, or purposeful transmission of culture, recognized the value of formal education, along with the immense range of other educational influences resulting from family life, church, recreational activities, vocation, and media (Howe, 1982; Wagoner, 1978). This is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological perspective of education. The antithesis of the productivity-based 21st century educational frameworks is a balanced model for empowering young people based on first century attitudes grounded in biblical values. Using the paideia concept of culture, tradition, and study, the fundamental thought is that the conveyance of knowledge and skills, or delivery of social welfare programs, should not be an end goal of education, but instead an avenue to reach one's higher transcendent calling in life through the inspiration and teaching of others (De Bruijn, 2014; Reese, 2013).

Like Bronfenbrenner, Cremin's educational paradigm included an ecological perspective that encompassed the relationship between educative institutions and the larger society, which ultimately emerged into a widely shared American Protestant paideia characterized by democratic hopes and evangelical pieties (Church, Katz, Silver, & Cremin, 1989; Wagoner, 1978). Cremin derived the American Protestant paideia notion from the ancient Greek paideia, which included integrated cultural ideals and ethics, aesthetics, and political principles (Howe, 1982). This American Protestant paideia provided a sense of national unity through the conveyance of classical Christian traditions, a shared public faith, and a coherence of the educational process (Smylie, 1989). Education was viewed as equating culture and society and did not possess the same compartmentalization as modern 21st century education (Church et al., 1989). Through the study of lived experiences, this research intended to reveal the value and need for the restoration of the unifying benefits found in a Christian paideia.

Summary

The theoretical framework for my transcendental phenomenological study was based on Bronfenbrenner's EST. As stated previously, the intention of this study was to understand, through a lived phenomenon, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) belief that a complete knowledge of child development required an examination of the total environment where the child functioned daily, including the home, school, community, and culture (Burns & Warmbold-Brann, 2015). This research intended to help answer the overarching question for this study, "How do the graduates of classical Christian high schools describe the lived experiences in a Christian paideia?" No substantive research has been completed on the concept of Christian paideia since the two seminal works on this topic were completed in the 1930's and 1940's (Elsner, 2013). The ancient meanings, purpose, and modern-day application of Christian paideia was explored in detail within this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

As the previous literature review highlights, there have been both quantitative and qualitative studies that compared long-range outcomes for graduates of Catholic, Protestant, non-religious private, and public high schools. In addition, Pennings et al. (2011) completed a benchmark comprehensive study that addressed many stereotypes regarding Christian education and provided a general overview between the motivations and outcomes of Christian schools. However, there were no studies found that specifically used the phenomenological approach to examine how classical Christian high school graduates describe their lived experiences of Christian paideia.

This chapter will provide details on the selected transcendental phenomenological research design, as well as the setting and participants for the study. In addition, this chapter will outline the necessary procedural steps used to conduct the study and clearly/thoroughly explain the researcher's role in relation to the study. Three different rigorous and varied data collection techniques will be explained: individual face-to-face interviews, virtual focus group interviews, and document analysis. Data analysis procedures will also be identified, and a concise rationale for each type of analysis will be provided. Finally, through a discussion of trustworthiness, the importance of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability will be discussed, as well as each method used to achieve each aspect of trustworthiness. Chapter Three is an important component to fully understanding how the subject research was conducted.

Design

This study was conducted with a qualitative approach, specifically the transcendental phenomenological method. As discussed in more detail below, the qualitative phenomenological approach is a valid design for this study because the research problem being addressed requires

the understanding of common or shared experiences for a group of classical Christian high school graduates. Transcendental phenomenology works well in providing an understanding of common or shared experiences because of its logical and systematic design that effectively leads to the experience of a phenomenon (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). It was essential to understand these common experiences in order to develop a deeper understanding of the essence of a Christian paideia in a classical Christian high school.

Human Science and Qualitative Research

As stated above, a useful understanding and description of the essence of the Christian paideia experience was best accomplished through a qualitative research study. The qualitative research method, including phenomenology, is classified within the field of the human sciences. To fully understand the meaning of human science, it is important to contrast it with natural science. Wilhelm Dilthey has been credited with being one of the first individuals to communicate the distinctions between human and natural science (Van Manen, 1990, p. 3). Dilthey explained that proper human science research should focus on the human world, including “mind, thoughts, consciousness, values, feelings, emotions, actions, and purposes, which find their objectifications in languages, beliefs, arts, and institutions” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 3). Moustakas (1994) also highlighted the natural sciences emphasis on the analysis of physical phenomena compared to the human sciences concentration on mental phenomena, such as perception, memory, and judgment (p. 44). The primary methods to study human science include description, interpretation, self-reflection, and critical analysis (Van Manen, 1990, p. 4). Conversely, the concentration in natural science is on the objects of nature, and the behavior of these objects, that are typically evaluated through detached observation, controlled experiments, and quantitative measurements (Van Manen, 1990).

As previously established, the under-researched phenomenon of Christian paideia among graduates of classical Christian high schools needs to be further explored. As supported by Creswell (2013), this type of qualitative research can be justified by (a) the necessity for a detailed understanding of Christian paideia provided through unencumbered direct conversations with graduates, (b) the need for a collaborative research method that results in a less formal narrative describing the essence of the phenomenon, (c) the ability to provide a greater contextual understanding of the classical Christian high school, and (d) the superiority in effectiveness that a qualitative research project can provide, compared to a quantitative statistical analysis, when attempting to capture interactions among people and their individual differences (p. 48). Consistent with the common characteristics of qualitative research outlined by Creswell (2013) and Moustakas (1994), the subject study included the following:

1. Data was collected in a natural setting. Face-to-face interaction primarily occurred as information was gathered through individual interviews with the research participants.
2. I served as the key research instrument as data was collected primarily through open-ended interview questions developed by me. Questionnaires or instruments developed by other researchers were not utilized.
3. As discussed in more detail later in this chapter, multiple forms of data were collected and reviewed, followed by a synthesis of themes developed from all data sources.
4. A collaborative inductive-deductive logic process, as well as complex reasoning skills, were utilized to establish a comprehensive set of themes based on the data collected.
5. Throughout the entire research process, a focus was kept on identifying the participants' meaning and multiple perspectives of Christian paideia, rather than my own understanding or other's views from the literature. My own personal work experiences,

cultural experiences, history, etc. are detailed in order to explain how these elements may inform the interpretation of data, as well as what prompted my interest in the study.

6. The primary goal of this research was to learn about the human experiences of Christian paideia among graduates of classical Christian high schools. Therefore, it was necessary to maintain a sense of flexibility towards change after data collection began, regarding questions asked, data collection methods, and participant selections/locations.
7. A detailed and holistic account of the experiences of Christian paideia were developed. Through the reporting of multiple perspectives and the identification of a multitude of factors, the aim was for a valuable understanding of the essence of Christian paideia to emerge.

Phenomenology

The term phenomenology was used in the field of philosophy as early as 1765; however, it was not given a well-defined meaning until 1807 when philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel referred to phenomenology as “knowledge as it appears to consciousness, the science of describing what one perceives, senses, and knows in one’s immediate awareness and experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). In its rudimentary form, Creswell (2013) designated a phenomenological study as a description of common meaning for several individuals that share lived experiences of a phenomenon. He added that the fundamental intent of phenomenology is to unite individual experiences of a phenomenon into a description of a collective essence (p. 76). Likewise, Van Manen (1990) portrayed phenomenology as a systematic process that attempts to reveal internal meaning structures and gain a deeper understanding of everyday lived experiences. Consistent with the notion of gaining a deeper understanding, the etymology of the word phenomenon is from the Greek word *phaenesthai*, which means to show itself, appear, or

bring to light (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) believed that “Phenomena are the building blocks of human science and the basis for all knowledge” (p. 26).

Van Manen considered the essence of an experience to be sufficiently described in a phenomenological study when the descriptive language showed the quality and significance of an experience in a full and deep manner. However, Van Manen also recognized that lived human experiences are more complex than a single description and an element of ineffability is always present in life. As touched on above, in contrast to natural science, where objects do not necessarily have experiences that are consciously and meaningfully lived, phenomenology is considered a human science since its research is always focused on the structures of meaning of lived human experiences (Van Manen, 1990). Ultimately, Van Manen resolved that lived experiences comprised the beginning and end of phenomenological research by the transformation of lived experiences into a textual description of essence that results in powerful meaning. However, it is vital that

the word ‘essence’ should not be mystified. By essence we do not mean some kind of mysterious entity or discovery, nor some ultimate core or residue of meaning. Rather, the term ‘essence’ may be understood as a linguistic construction, a description of a phenomenon. (Van Manen, 1990, p. 39)

Moustakas’s (1994) philosophical assumptions regarding transcendental phenomenology will be discussed in more detail below; however, Creswell (2013) highlighted the following four general philosophical perspectives that are emphasized in phenomenology:

1. Similar to a Christian *paideia*’s return to a Greek conception of education that is not defined by empirical means, phenomenology focuses on a traditional conception of philosophy as a search for wisdom.

2. As explained through Edmund Husserl's Epoche process, phenomenology should be without presuppositions and all judgments should be suspended.
3. The intentionality of consciousness will be discussed further below. However, in short, this idea is based upon the belief that consciousness is always directed towards an object. Therefore, an object's reality is correlated to one's consciousness of an object.
4. Stemming from the intentionality of consciousness notion, phenomenology must refuse the subject-object dichotomy. Instead, perception of the reality of object is only through the meaning of individual experience.

Van Manen (1990) described phenomenological research as a means to question and truly know the experiences of human beings in the world which they live. He expanded on this idea by explaining that knowing the world requires one to purposefully be involved and part of the world. The phenomenological principal where an inseparable connection to the world is created is called intentionality (Van Manen, 1990). Moustakas (1994) related the idea of intentionality to consciousness, where an internal experience or act of being conscious of something is intentionally related to the object of consciousness. Van Manen considered consciousness to be a human being's sole access to the world and that all knowing occurred first through the consciousness. As a result, the process of functioning intentionality that materializes through phenomenological research concludes in the meanings and essences of experiences being eventually revealed (Moustakas, 1994). It is important to note that Van Manen believed that phenomenological reflection was retrospective, and not introspective, because he held that it was not possible for a person to reflect on lived experiences while simultaneously living through the experiences.

The phenomenological design was appropriate for this study due to the following: (a) an analytical scientific study was not attempted where empirical generalizations were drawn from

quantitative procedures, (b) understanding of concrete lived experiences were acquired through means of language and structured reflective techniques, and (c) meaning questions were asked rather than problem solving questions that seek solutions (Van Manen, 1990). Ideally, this study “consists of reflectively bringing into nearness that which tends to be obscure, that which tends to evade the intelligibility of our natural attitude of everyday life” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 32).

Two of the major specific approaches to phenomenology are hermeneutic and transcendental. As discussed in detail below, this study utilized Moustakas’s (1994) transcendental phenomenological research method. For clarification purposes, Van Manen’s (1990) hermeneutical phenomenology focused on the interpretation of the meaning of lived experiences, while Moustakas (1994) focused more on the description of lived experiences (Creswell, 2013, pp. 79-80).

Transcendental Phenomenological Research

As explained above, transcendental phenomenology is focused on the experiences of research participants and not on the interpretations of the researcher (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, Moerer-Urdahl and Creswell (2004) explained that transcendental phenomenology at its core seeks meaning and essences of human experience. Moustakas (1994) defined transcendental phenomenology as “a scientific study of the appearance of things, of phenomena just as we see them and as they appear to us in consciousness” (p. 49). The term transcendental is used because a fresh look is utilized to examine a phenomenon through bracketing out the researcher’s own experiences and collecting data through several individuals with shared experiences (Creswell, 2013). Through a structured process, phenomenology endeavors to reach greater awareness, understanding, and knowledge in an absolute sense by eliminating all presuppositions and prejudices to ultimately arrive at vital wisdom (Moustakas, 1994).

With regard to the history and those that shaped the transcendental phenomenological research design, Moustakas (1994) stated,

I especially recognize Edmund Husserl, who stood alone, a determined self-presence, pioneering new realms of philosophy and science. He developed a philosophic system rooted in subjective openness, a radical approach to science that was criticized and laughed at; yet throughout his professional life Husserl remained strong, continuing to expand his ideas. . . Husserl himself realized that his work would be of no value to closed minds, to those who have not known the despair of ‘one who has the misfortune to be in love with philosophy.’ (p. 25)

Moustakas explained that Husserl’s chief concern related to the discovery of meanings and essences in knowledge. As mentioned briefly above regarding the subject-object dichotomy, stemming from Husserl’s philosophical assumptions, the process of ideation (i.e., transforming individual experience into insights and knowledge) occurs through the relationship and interaction between objects appearing in the conscious and the actual world (Moustakas, 1994). In fact, transcendental science was developed due to a dissatisfaction with natural science that disregarded human experiences, as well as the associations between human consciousness and the physical world (Moustakas, 1994).

Moustakas (1994) recognized three essential core processes in transcendental phenomenology that facilitated the furthering of knowledge. First, “Epoche is a Greek word meaning to refrain from judgment, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things” (Moustakas, 1994). Using the epoche, Moustakas (1994) indicated that phenomena can be studied in a fresh sense from the perspective of a pure transcendental ego. The next essential process was transcendental-phenomenological reduction, where transcendental referred to a fresh perception, phenomenological was the classification of

experiences into phenomena, and reduction was based on the Latin word *reducere*, which referred to the source of meaning (Moustakas, 1994). The end result of transcendental-phenomenological reduction was the construction of a textural description of the meanings and essences of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The third essential core process defined by Moustakas was imaginative variation. “From this process a structural description of the essences of the experience is derived, presenting a picture of the conditions that precipitate an experience and connect with it” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 35). Moustakas recommended that the textural and structural descriptions described above are integrated in order to form a textural-structural synthesis of meanings and essences for the particular phenomenon being studied.

The subject transcendental phenomenological study demonstrated the following key principles, processes, and methods that were recognized by Moustakas (1994) as core facets of human science research. First, Christian *paideia* was studied and described from a fresh perspective that is void of any preconceived notions or biases. Second, this phenomenon was studied from as many perspectives as reasonably possible in order to achieve a unified vision of the essence. Third, meanings and essence were sought from reflection on conscious acts of human experiences. Fourth, rather than providing explanations or analyses, descriptions of experiences were provided that retain as much as possible the actual nature of the phenomenon. Fifth, this study was founded on questions that give a direction and focus to the meaning of Christian *paideia*, combined with an awakening of interest in this topic that will be on-going and sustainable. Lastly, intersubjective reality, through empathy and analogy, were part of my research process; however, it was important that every perception began with my own sense of the meaning of experiences.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this transcendental phenomenological study.

Research central question: How do classical Christian high school graduates describe their lived experiences of Christian paideia?

Research sub-question one: How do classical Christian high school graduates describe the distinguishing attributes of a Christian paideia?

Research sub-question two: How do classical Christian high school graduates perceive their school's overt or covert pursuits for realizing a Christian paideia?

Research sub-question three: How has being educated in a Christian paideia been beneficial or detrimental to the adult life of classical Christian high school graduates?

Research sub-question four: How do classical Christian high school graduates express their sense of obligation, if any, to uphold the standards of a Christian paideia?

Setting

It was vitally important in this study to identify research participants who have all experienced the phenomenon of Christian paideia in their respective Texas high schools and be able to effectively communicate the overall essence of their shared lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). Due to the recognition of value and importance that the Association of Classical Christian Schools places on Christian paideia, the president of this national association and accrediting body, David Goodwin, was utilized to help assist in identifying five different schools that share a common understanding and goal to impart a Christian paideia to their graduates. Mr. Goodwin possesses a much greater knowledge regarding the culture of each classical Christian school being considered. It was imperative to identify schools with a common culture. This was necessary because a broad cultural diversity amongst the schools, in relation to its delivery of an authentic Christian paideia, would make it much more difficult to identify common experiences, themes, and the overall essence of Christian paideia for all the participants (Creswell, 2013).

The schools selected are accredited by a nationally recognized body, graduated at least four high school classes in their history, governed by a board of directors that endorses a protestant statement of faith, and led by a headmaster with a purposeful desire to pursue Christian paideia. Individual face-to-face interviews were ideally to be conducted at each respective school campus to hopefully obtain a more vivid recollection of the Christian paideia experience from research participants. Christian paideia focuses on the ancient triad of truth, goodness, and beauty, all of which are faithfully reflected on the campus of a classical Christian school through its holistic educational model. However, interviews on the classical Christian high school campuses were not possible due to the students primarily living in other cities to attend college.

Participants

Data saturation was reached after a total of 12 research participants were interviewed from the five classical Christian schools selected. Snowball sampling was used to select graduates who were derived from those individuals that were initially purposefully nominated by the headmaster for each of the respective classical Christian schools. Purposeful sampling was utilized in order to select research participants and classical Christian schools that could purposefully offer a greater understanding of Christian paideia (Creswell, 2013). Likewise, snowball sampling was employed due to its ability to identify “cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich” (Creswell, 2013, p. 158). As discussed below, criterion sampling was also utilized to ensure that all participants shared a common set of needed standards, as well as ensure quality assurance (Creswell, 2013).

Based on Moustakas’s (1994) essential criteria for locating and selecting research participants, the following characteristics were present for all selected individuals: (a) graduates attended their respective high schools for at least four years in order to have fully experienced

Christian paideia, (b) a passionate and sincere interest in gaining further understanding regarding the nature and meanings of Christian paideia was present, (c) willingness to participate in a lengthy interview and multiple if needed, and (d) permission was granted to audio and video record interviews, as well as publish the research in a dissertation and possibly other academic literature (p. 107). In addition, research participants consisted of both male and female classical Christian school graduates ranging in age from 18 to 22 years old. It was originally anticipated that approximately 20 participants would need to be recruited in order to end with the desired goal of 10 to 15 individuals. Consequently, 19 participants were actually recruited in order to end with the final total of 12 individuals.

Procedures

This section will outline the necessary procedural steps utilized to conduct this transcendental phenomenological study. First, a passing grade was received on the research prospectus, including Chapters One, Two, and Three of the dissertation, developed in EDUC 980. Next, in conjunction with my committee chairperson, a dissertation proposal was developed in EDUC 989. Once the proposal was reviewed and accepted by my chair, committee, and research consultant, a proposal defense was scheduled. After successfully defending my proposal, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was sought, which consisted of the submission of an IRB application and ancillary materials within approximately 10 days of my approved proposal defense. After the IRB approval letter was received, I was then able to proceed with the execution of my planned research, including data collection and analysis. Additional details for the research execution will be discussed below. After the planned research was complete, a final dissertation manuscript was prepared, reviewed, edited, and ultimately submitted for defense. Once a successful defense was complete, my dissertation was submitted for publication.

This study was conducted using Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological model. The model includes several processes such as epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of composite textural and composite structural descriptions. As explained previously, epoche is the process of setting aside any preconceptions in order to enter the research interviews unbiased (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological reduction involves the culmination of research elements and themes into a composite textural description (Moustakas, 1994). Likewise, from the textural description, imaginative variation aims to describe the essential structures of a phenomenon or how a phenomenon was experienced (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, the textural and structural descriptions are synthesized to arrive at the composite meanings and essences of the Christian paideia phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Continuing with Moustakas's (1994) methodology, participants were selected based on the criteria outlined above. Informed consent was obtained (see Appendix B and D) from each respective classical Christian school and research participant. Furthermore, consent for recording and publication was also received. Next, questions for the phenomenological research interview were finalized and were broad in nature to facilitate descriptions of the Christian paideia experience that are rich, vital, and substantive (Moustakas, 1994). Data was collected using primarily face-to-face individual and virtual focus group interviews, as well as document analysis from each classical Christian school. The data was analyzed using Moustakas's modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. Finally, implications and outcomes were discussed and a summary prepared.

The Researcher's Role

Classical Christian education has been an influential part of my life since my wife and I founded a PreK-12 school in 2002. As a result, I am passionate about researching and sharing the benefits of this historical and revived form of education. As the key research instrument in this

study, my primary job was to collect data through interviews, analyze the data and develop textural and structural descriptions, and finally write a description of the phenomenon.

With regard to any biases or assumptions that I brought to this study, I have been involved with the founding and administration of a classical Christian school for the past 17 years. During the first seven years of the school, I served primarily as the board chairman. Over the last nine years, I have served as the school's headmaster. My work experience prior to becoming the school's headmaster was outside the field of education, for the most part in the finance and operational areas of hospitals. As a classical Christian school founder and parent of three adult children who attended a classical Christian high school, I am very interested in learning more about the lived experiences of Christian paideia. However, none of the interviews or other research were conducted at the school where I serve as headmaster. Furthermore, I have no relationship with the selected research participants, and the research sites were selected through the process discussed above. Using a determined application of the epoche process, as described by Moustakas (1994), my hope was to reveal the actual nature and essence of Christian paideia more fully, ultimately leading to a greater level of knowledge and understanding of the Christian life.

Data Collection

In an effort to provide corroborating evidence and validity to the findings (Creswell, 2013), multiple methods were utilized to collect triangulated data after receiving IRB approval from Liberty University. The term triangulation is in reference to the research procedure that utilizes multiple/varied sources and methods of data collection to arrive at corroborating evidence and increased credibility (Bowen, 2009; Creswell, 2013). Triangulation helped to negate claims that research findings were based solely on a single method or source, as well as a single researcher's bias (Bowen, 2009). Data collection for phenomenological research should be

directed towards obtaining information on lived experiences and the nature of a phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990). Specifically,

The point of phenomenological research is to ‘borrow’ other people’s experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience, in the context of the whole of human experience. (Van Manen, 1990, p. 62)

The data collection methods discussed below were utilized to construct the deeper meaning and significance of Christian paideia. In the end, these data collection methods served to effectively answer the primary research question for this study related to how classical Christian high school graduates describe their lived experiences of Christian paideia.

Data saturation was reached after a total of 12 research participants were interviewed from the five classical Christian schools selected. Morse (1995) explained that data saturation is operationalized by collecting data up to the point that new information is not being obtained. O’Reilly and Parker (2012) also described saturation as “the point at which there are fewer surprises and there are no more emergent patterns in the data (Gaskell, 2000)” (p. 192). Although there is no universally accepted method to reach data saturation, Fusch and Ness (2015) also added that data saturation is reached when further coding is not feasible. Unlike quantitative research where statistical significance and frequency is a focus, qualitative analysis emphasizes the importance of data richness and does not depend on the quantity of data to reach saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Morse, 1995; O’Reilly & Parker, 2012). Rather than striving to reach a fixed number of research participants, qualitative methods seek to obtain a necessary depth of information to wholly describe the phenomenon that is being studied (Hancock, Amankwaa, Revell, & Mueller, 2016; O’Reilly & Parker, 2012). The interview questions discussed further

below were asked of all participants in an attempt to eliminate the possibility of a moving target and ultimately reach data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Interviews

Interviewing is one of the foremost data collection methods for phenomenological research (Bevan, 2014). This technique exposes the human part of a story, which is at the heart of qualitative research (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Moustakas (1994) explained that the long, or in-depth, interview is the typical data collection method for phenomenological investigation. The fundamental outcome from interviews should be a description of meaning, about the phenomenon being studied, from a small group of individuals with shared lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). In conducting phenomenological interviews, it was essential to ask appropriate questions and demonstrate patience as participants discussed their experiences and meaning of Christian paideia (Creswell, 2013). Appropriate questions often begin with the word how, such as “How did the experience affect the individual or others in your life?” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 116). It was also important to ask questions regarding Christian paideia that were in the vocabulary and language of the research participants (Bevan, 2014). While still maintaining deep emotional engagement and level of listening to the participants’ experiences, an analytic perspective on the notion of Christian paideia was also necessary to conduct the research in a balanced fashion (Hoskins & White, 2012).

The subject study capitalized on guidance from the Rubin and Rubin (2012) responsive interviewing model. The questions were framed as open-ended, general, and focused specifically on understanding the central phenomenon of the study, Christian paideia (Creswell, 2013). Likewise, the interview questions were further refined for clarity through pilot testing (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Questions were also directly related to the research questions and worded in an easily understandable manner for the participants (Creswell, 2013). Audio and video recorded

interviews were conducted with the research participants identified through purposeful criterion and snowball sampling. Systematic interviewing of multiple individuals provided a range of perspectives on how Christian paideia is experienced and limited the likelihood of an incomplete analysis (Bevan, 2014). Multiple interviews were planned, if needed, to capture both the past shared experiences of the phenomenon, as well as its current impact. However, this was not necessary. Interviews were transcribed once completed, and backup copies were made and kept in a locked location. Furthermore, backup copies were also made for all audio and video recordings.

All participants were asked the open-ended/general research questions detailed below. Although the research questions were prepared in advance, the possibility existed that the questions could be changed or not utilized at all once the participant shared their full experience of Christian paideia (Moustakas, 1994). “Emergent design (Creswell, 2007) is one of the hallmarks of qualitative research and sticking to your interview protocol exactly does not allow for the design to emerge naturally as you conduct research” (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012, p. 5). It was also my responsibility to create an atmosphere where the research participant felt comfortable and would respond genuinely and comprehensively (Moustakas, 1994). As stated previously, interviews were ideally to be conducted at each respective school campus to hopefully obtain a more vivid recollection of the Christian paideia experience from research participants. However, this was not possible due to the majority of participants living in other cities to attend college. Prior to beginning the interviews, it was vital to engage in the epoche process to set aside any past associations, understanding, and biases that may have directly influenced the interview (Moustakas, 1994). The aim was to obtain a description of Christian paideia that was free of any research biases stemming from interpretation of past experiences (Gall et al., 2007). A thick and rich description of the Christian paideia experience was the

hopeful outcome stemming from the relational manner in which the interviews were conducted (Hoskins & White, 2012).

The following questions were utilized to guide the face-to-face interviews:

1. Please introduce yourself to me, as if we just met one another.
2. How old are you?
3. When did you graduate from your classical Christian high school?
4. What is your current vocation?
5. Please tell me a little background information about you and your family.
6. What are some of your interests and hobbies?
7. What's your favorite memory from high school?
8. Why did you or your parents choose your classical Christian high school?

Questions one through eight were designed to begin the interview conversation with a social and reflective climate intended to create a relaxed and trusting atmosphere (Moustakas, 1994). The objective was for the research participant to feel comfortable enough to provide honest and comprehensive feedback. These initial basic background questions were intended to serve as a warm-up for the research participant and build a solid level of trust that would contribute to the level of needed detail later in the interview (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

9. What is your understanding of your classical Christian high school's pursuit of a Christian paideia and its associated primary objectives? (Allen-Collinson & Brown, 2012; Beckman et al., 2012; Pennings et al., 2011)
10. What dimensions, incidents, and people intimately connected with the Christian paideia experience stand out for you? (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)
11. How did the Christian paideia experience affect you? What changes do you associate with the Christian paideia experience? (Council & Cooper, 2011; Peterson, 2012)

12. What changes resulting from a Christian paideia were you actually aware of during high school? (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2016)
13. How would you describe the overall authenticity of the classical Christian school where you graduated? (Gruenwald, 2016; Van Brummelen & Koole, 2012)
14. How did the Christian paideia experience affect significant others in your life?
(Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Darling, 2007; Duerden & Witt, 2010)
15. What feelings were generated by the Christian paideia experience?
(Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990)

Questions nine through 15 above were structured broadly to facilitate descriptive responses of the Christian paideia experience that were rich, vital, and substantive (Moustakas, 1994). These questions were also intended to encourage the participant to contemplate specifically on their Christian paideia experience, particularly on moments of substantial impact (Moustakas, 1994). These questions were intended to provide a description of the research participants' personal experiences, and not necessarily from a theoretical perspective (Bevan, 2014). Furthermore, the research participants' context of Christian paideia were made explicit through these questions, which allowed for the explanation of detailed descriptions of events, actions, and activities (Bevan, 2014).

16. Tell me about a recent situation in your life where knowledge and wisdom was drawn from something that you learned in high school. (Carr, 2003; Clark & Jain, 2013; Hicks, 1999; Lockerbie, 2005)
17. How did your classical Christian high school prepare you for college and adult life?
(Duerden & Witt, 2010; Goldstein, 2008; Gruenwald, 2002; Homrighausen, 1939; Kiley & Robinson, 2016; Mizokawa & Komiya, 2014; Poch, 2005; Probucka, 2016; Renn & Arnold, 2003; Walls, 2016)

18. What is the greatest contribution that your classical Christian school has had on your life?
(Adler, 1991; Garber, 2007; Schultz, 2016; Van Pelt, 2012)
19. What other factors or dynamics influenced your life significantly in high school?
(Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Fond-Harmant & Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2016; Mizokawa & Komiya, 2014; Poch, 2005)
20. Have you shared all that is significant regarding the Christian paideia experience in your classical Christian high school? Is there anything else important for me to know about the experience of Christian paideia?

Questions 16 through 20 recognize the complexity of human life, where real individuals, who are active and interpreting, find meaning in the experience of Christian paideia (Bevan, 2014). Likewise, these questions provided greater clarity and understanding to the multifaceted aspects of Christian paideia through these descriptive and structural questions (Bevan, 2014). The phrase “tell me about” used in question 15 provided an invitation for the research participant to tell a story and take their response in a variety of different directions (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

Virtual Focus Groups

The two focus groups, with three students in each group, provided an excellent opportunity to interact with multiple research participants at the same time. The use of focus groups in qualitative research has grown in recent years due to “the interactions among the participants stimulate them to state feelings, perceptions, and beliefs that they would not express if interviewed individually” (Gall et al., 2007). Likewise, focus groups also provide a greater understanding of the phenomenon by stimulating further discussion and bringing new perspectives to light (Bradbury-Jones, Sambrook, & Irvine, 2009). However, it was imperative to ensure that all participants were able to talk and not let dominant individuals control the conversation (Creswell, 2013).

Audio and video recorded focus groups were conducted for the various groups of students from each respective classical Christian school studied. For clarification purposes, these students were groups of three graduates from two classical Christian Texas high schools. Questions asked were aimed at encouraging different opinions and points of view regarding the Christian paideia experience. All focus group interviews were transcribed following completion.

Unlike the individual interviews that were primarily conducted in person, focus group interviews were conducted virtually through the internet, which is an increasingly common format of qualitative research data collection (Creswell, 2013; Rupert, D.J., Poehlman, J.A., Hayes, J.J., Ray, S.E., & Moultrie, R.R., 2017). This type of online data collection for qualitative research provided significant cost and time advantages for the researcher, as well as greater flexibility and a more comfortable environment for participants. For example, with a substantial reduction in travel time, the virtual focus groups require much less time to conduct and allow data to be collected from multiple geographic locations within a single day (Rupert et al., 2017). Furthermore, in comparison to in-person focus groups, the virtual method has been found to reduce the logistical burden on participants, as well as noticeably decrease preparation time (Rupert et al., 2017).

The following questions were utilized to guide the focus group interviews:

1. What do you think are the key benefits and take-away for life that you gained from the Christian paideia in your classical Christian high school?
2. Tell me about any struggles you've experienced since graduating from your classical Christian high school.
3. What suggestions do you have about knowledge/skills that current classical Christian high school students should focus on more intently?

4. Given what you know now, what would you have done differently to capitalize on your classical Christian high school experience?
5. How was the financial investment made by your parents for a classical Christian education worth it?
6. What specific evidence of your faculty and administration faithfully living the values of the school did you see in high school?
7. Based on personal experiences, what were the actual perceived goals of your high school?
8. How do you define Christian paideia?
9. How might your classical Christian high school develop/strengthen its ability to effectively accomplish a Christian paideia?

The focus group questions were intended to stimulate needed interaction between the participants that allowed them to hear other ideas, elaborate on their own views, as well as check for understanding (Bradbury-Jones, 2009).

Document Analysis

As a methodology for qualitative research data collection and triangulation, the utilization of a systematic procedure of evaluating and analyzing printed and electronic institutional documents has increased (Bowen, 2009). This increase in the use of document analysis has been driven by the time efficiency of this method, public availability of many documents, cost effectiveness, and the broad coverage available related to time, events, and settings (Bowen, 2009). Shenton (2004) suggested, “Where possible, supporting data may be obtained from documents to provide a background to and help explain the attitudes and behavior of those in the group under scrutiny, as well as to verify particular details that participants have supplied” (pp. 65-66).

Potential documents relevant to analyze in a school include advertisements, handbooks, brochures, event programs, letters, newspaper articles, organizational reports, survey data, and yearbooks. For the subject research, each respective classical Christian school's pertinent documents were examined to better understand each school's primary key objectives, while also developing a set of shared themes and culture. Likewise, analyzing documents from each school aided in revealing a deeper meaning and understanding with regard to the research problem for this study (Bowen, 2009).

Bowen (2009) examined the following five specific functions that documentary material can serve as part of a research project.

1. School documents, like the aforementioned examples, provide valuable data related to the context in which graduates experienced while attending their classical Christian school. Data that expands the understanding of the heritage and culture of a school contributes greatly to the overall knowledge of the phenomena being studied.
2. Imperative interview questions that need to be addressed with research participants emerge from the analysis of documents.
3. Documents provide treasures of supplementary research data that may have never been discovered through interviews and contribute greatly to the phenomenon's overall knowledge base.
4. A means of evaluating organizational developments and changes over time is provided through the examination of documents.
5. Conclusions drawn from interviews are corroborated through document analysis. This convergence of information from various data sources enhances the credibility of the findings.

Although there are many advantages and vital purposes served through document analysis, it was necessary to remember that school documents alone typically do not provide sufficient detail to answer a research question, some requested documentation may not be accessible, and may be biased or inaccurate based upon the organizational department or individual that prepared the document (Bowen, 2009).

Based on Bowen's (2009) recommendation, the document analysis process consisted of a preliminary superficial examination of various materials where pertinent information was identified, followed by a more thorough reading and analysis, and concluded by an interpretive phase where themes related to the phenomenon were developed. It was essential that objectivity was demonstrated to ensure a fair representation of the materials examined. Likewise, an increased amount of sensitivity, with regard to understated signs to meaning, was necessary as documents were selected and analyzed (Bowen, 2009). Labuschagne (2003) emphasized that document analysis requires considerably more work than a simple reading of materials. In the end, useful and credible data was only realized through a disciplined pursuit of knowledge and experience using this data collection technique (Labuschagne, 2003).

Data Analysis

As described in detail below, data analysis for this study was completed using Moustakas's (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. NVivo qualitative data analysis software was also utilized to complete this study.

Full Description of Personal Experiences with Christian Paideia

A comprehensive description of my own experiences of Christian paideia, as a founder and headmaster of a classical Christian school, was provided. This description was important in order to focus primarily on the experiences of the participants and bracketing out my own understandings of the phenomenon. Rather than simply trying to forget or ignore one's past

experiences with a phenomenon, Van Manen (1990) suggested that understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, presuppositions, and theories are explicitly stated in order to purposefully hold them at bay.

Textural Description Development

Utilizing the verbatim transcripts from the individual and focus group interviews, as well as documents provided by the respective schools, each statement was considered with respect to its significance for description of the Christian paideia experience. All relevant statements were recorded, and subsequently a list was made of all non-repetitive and non-overlapping statements. Creswell (2013) explained that this process of aggregating information into smaller categories is called coding. Moustakas (1994) classified these non-repetitive and non-overlapping statements as the “invariant horizons or meaning units of the experience” (p. 122) and emphasized the significance of giving equal value to every statement shared regarding a participant’s experience of the phenomenon. Each horizon that emerges from the research interview can add meaning and provide increased clarity to the phenomenon being studied (Moustakas, 1994). Next, the meaning units from all data sources were related and clustered into specific themes, or thematic portrayals, that were then synthesized into a textural description, including verbatim examples that illuminated *what happened* with the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013). Moustakas emphasized that textural descriptions should provide a clear image of what is taking place with a phenomenon, such as thoughts, feelings, and even struggles.

Structural Description Development

After reflection on the textural description, a description of the structures of experiences was composed using imaginative variation. Moustakas (1994) emphasized, “uncovering of the essences, the focusing on pure possibilities, is central in the Imaginative Variation process. In this phase of the process the structures of experience were revealed; these are the conditions that

must exist for something to appear” (p. 98). The structural description provided detailed information related to the dynamics of the Christian paideia experience, specifically the themes and qualities that account for *how* feelings and thoughts related to this phenomenon are produced (Moustakas, 1994).

Development of Essence

After completing the textural and structural descriptions for all the data analyzed, these descriptions were integrated to form a collective description of the meanings and essences of the Christian paideia experience for the group as a whole. Moerer-Urdahl and Creswell (2004) emphasized, “A thread needs to flow between the significant statements, the meaning units, and the essence descriptions with the researcher building a composite description of increasingly general meaning” (p. 24). This final step required an integration of the textural and structural descriptions, which ultimately provided a fusion of the meanings and essences of the Christian paideia experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Trustworthiness

This section will discuss the importance of, and define, the various aspects of research trustworthiness (i.e., credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability), as well as identify the various methods that were utilized in this study to achieve each aspect of a certain trustworthiness framework. “The most common criteria used to evaluate qualitative research are those purported by Lincoln and Guba (1985). To develop trustworthiness in qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) initially presented four criteria: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability” (Cope, 2014, p. 89). The level of confidence in a research project’s data, interpretation, and quality methods is referred to as rigor or trustworthiness (Connelly, 2016). Amankwaa (2016) justified the establishment of research trustworthiness or

rigor by explaining that the lack of this attribute in qualitative research results in a perception of low value, unreliability, and invalidity.

Credibility

Research credibility derives from the perceived truth that emerges from confidence in data, participant views, and research findings (Amankwaa, 2016; Cope, 2014). Confidence in the truth of a study and its corresponding findings has been described as one of the most important criterion in establishing trustworthiness, similar to internal validity in quantitative research (Connelly, 2016; Shenton, 2004). In essence, credibility reflects whether a true picture of the phenomenon being studied has been presented (Shenton, 2004). Techniques such as prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field, triangulation of data sources, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, referential adequacy, reflective journaling, and member checks are all suggested to establish credibility (Amankwaa, 2016; Connelly, 2016; Creswell, 2013; Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 2007).

Other than spending meaningful time learning about the culture of each respective classical Christian school through document analysis and informal conversations with administration, prolonged engagement and persistent observation at each school was difficult. As a result, one of the primary means for accomplishing credibility was through the triangulation of data sources. As mentioned previously, face-to-face individual and virtual focus group interviews were utilized, as well as document analysis, to corroborate revealed themes from multiple and different sources of data. This triangulation technique helped to ensure that the data collected was rich, robust, comprehensive, and well-developed (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation [RWJF], 2008).

Member checking is an additional critical technique that was utilized to establish credibility. This process "...involves taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back

to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account” (Creswell, 2013, p. 253). For example, to further enhance credibility, respondent reactions was solicited on the final case report from a representative sample of stakeholders (Schwandt et al., 2007). This procedure increased the reliability of the study by giving the participants a major role in the results of the research (Creswell, 2013). Amankwaa (2016) and Shenton (2004) highlighted that member checking is one of the most important techniques for the establishment of credibility.

The following steps were utilized for member checks (Amankwaa, 2016):

1. Communication with participants occurred after all significant research activities such as interviews and data analysis.
2. Ideally, within two weeks of the completion of an interview, a transcribed copy of the interview was sent to the respective participant for verification of accuracy and reflection of their actual words.
3. Likewise, within two weeks of the completion of data analysis, participants received a copy to review final themes.
4. All member check feedback was recorded electronically.

Credibility was also enhanced by the utilization of research methods that are well established for qualitative investigation (Shenton, 2004). For example, the style of questions utilized and methods of data analysis were all derived from Moustakas’s (1994) proven research method. In addition, credibility was also strengthened by the development of a strong cultural knowledge of the classical Christian schools studied prior to data collection occurring (Shenton, 2004). Frequent debriefing sessions between the researcher and dissertation committee members also provided a means to identify potential methodological flaws, test developing ideas and interpretations, as well as recognize any personal biases (Shenton, 2004).

Dependability and Confirmability

In order to confirm that findings were consistent and could be repeated, as well as neutrality and the absence of bias are present, dependability and confirmability were realized through the research process being externally audited, which required the formation of an audit trail and completion of an audit (Amankwaa, 2016; Creswell, 2013; Schwandt et al., 2007). “An audit trail is a transparent description of the research steps taken from the start of a research project to the development and reporting of findings. These are records that are kept regarding what was done in an investigation” (RWJF, 2008, para. 1). This audit process involved an external consultant, with no connection to the study, determining whether the conclusions of the study were supported by the data. Furthermore, academic colleagues were utilized to serve as peer reviewers that “...asks hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). This method provided honest feedback from knowledgeable individuals that had the researcher’s best interest in mind (Creswell, 2013).

Similar to reliability in quantitative research, dependability evaluates data stability over time and over the study conditions (Connelly, 2016). Likewise, comparable to objectivity in quantitative research, confirmability refers to the neutrality or level of consistency and repeatability of findings (Connelly, 2016). Specifically, a dependability judgment was obtained by the auditing of processes, through the maintenance of a process log, and peer-debriefings, while the data analysis and methods audit resulted in a confirmability judgment (Connelly, 2016; Schwandt et al., 2007). Dependability and confirmability have been characterized as having very close ties and are often mutually achieved through overlapping methods such as individual interviews and focus groups (Shenton, 2004).

Transferability

The criterion of transferability is emphasized to evaluate whether the research findings may have applicability or usefulness within other contexts (Amankwaa, 2016; Connelly, 2016).

This criterion is normally met when research results provide meaning and personal association to individuals who were not involved in the study (Cope, 2014). A rich, thick description is needed to ensure that the transferability of findings to other settings may be considered (Creswell, 2013), as well as a means for achieving external validity (Amankwaa, 2016). “Thick description refers to the detailed account of field experiences in which the researcher makes explicit the patterns of cultural and social relationships and puts them in context (Holloway, 1997)” (RWJF, 2008, para. 3). Schwandt, Lincoln, and Guba (2007) explained that narrative developed through thick descriptive data will allow for judgments to be made by others regarding the applicability of findings elsewhere (p. 19). This tool for trustworthiness involves providing details regarding the participants and setting, as well as for the various themes identified. Creswell (2013) explained that detail can be provided through physical description, movement description, and activity description.

In short, when ample details are given for a specific phenomenon, the extent of the transferability of conclusions to other time periods, settings, and people can be appropriately evaluated (Amankwaa, 2016). Examples of these necessary details include “the location setting, atmosphere, climate, participants present, attitudes of the participants involved, reactions observed that may not be captured on audio recording, bonds established between participants, and feelings of the investigator” (Amankwaa, 2016, p. 122). It was imperative through the interviewing process to (a) prepare open-ended questions that implored detailed and clear responses, (b) ensure that consistency was shown for all interviews, questions, and sub-questions, and (c) document participant responses of the phenomena in a rich, thick manner (Amankwaa, 2016).

Ethical Considerations

The following ethical considerations were evaluated (Creswell, 2013):

1. Liberty University IRB approval was obtained prior to the commencement of research.
2. Permission was obtained from the classical Christian schools first where the participants graduated from high school.
3. The purpose of the study was clearly disclosed to the participants, and the voluntary nature of the study was explained, as well as the fact that participants had the right to withdraw at any time.
4. All data collected was backed up and stored in a locked location.
5. Negative participant feedback regarding their experiences at their respective classical Christian school could affect them adversely. This issue was remedied through ensuring confidentiality and the use of pseudonyms for all participants and identifiable names.
6. Themes developed and essence of experiences may not be representative of the general consensus of participants. Participant involvement in all stages of the research aided in resolving this ethical concern.
7. Personal experiences of researcher shared with participants were limited in order to maximize the purpose of protection of the data.

Moustakas (1994) also suggested that ethical standards can be maintained by establishing a clear agreement with all participants, placing a high value on confidentiality and informed consent, and ensuring full disclosure of the purpose and requirements of the research project.

Summary

The research design for this qualitative study has been identified as transcendental phenomenological, and justification for this type of study has been provided. The sites and participants for this study have also been detailed. As discussed above, data was collected and analyzed from three different sources for the study. The procedures to help strengthen the trustworthiness of the study, along with the ethical considerations, have also been discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the essence of the shared lived experiences in a Christian paideia for classical Christian high school graduates at five different Texas schools. Using pseudonyms for both students and schools, this chapter provides a rich portrait of each graduate who participated in the study. Snowball sampling was used to select graduates who were derived from those individuals that were initially purposefully nominated by the headmaster for each of the respective classical Christian schools. The purpose of this chapter is also to present the clustered themes and meanings, along with the resulting synthesized textural, structural, and composite textural-structural descriptions meant to reflect the essence of the Christian paideia experience. These results were developed through the analysis of data collected from one-on-one interviews, focus group interviews, as well as official school documents such as advertisements, handbooks, brochures, event programs, and magazine articles. This chapter concludes with narrative answers to each of the study's research questions utilizing the data collected and corresponding themes that were developed.

Participants

This study on the shared lived experiences in a Christian paideia collected data from 12 classical Christian Texas high school graduates. The participants for this study comprised seven male and five female graduates ranging in age from 18 to 22 years old. In order to join in this study, participants were required to sign a consent form acknowledging that they met the essential criteria for selection, in addition to understanding the pertinent details of the study and having any outstanding questions or concerns addressed. In addition, participants attended classical Christian schools for all four years of high school and attested that they possessed a

passionate and sincere interest in gaining further understanding regarding the nature and meanings of Christian paideia. From the 12 participants who contributed to this study, six of the participants were from three different classical Christian schools (i.e., two from each school), while the remaining six participants were from two different classical Christian schools and also joined in a three-person focus group from their respective school.

As required by IRB guidelines, pseudonyms were given to each of the participants and their respective schools in order to protect their privacy and confidentiality. During the spring of 2018, all 12 of the participants were involved in one-on-one interviews, and six of these same participants also assisted with focus group interviews. Immediately following the receipt of each transcribed interview, participants received an electronic copy of the transcript in order to verify the accuracy of the information. Likewise, this same process was followed after themes were developed from the collected data. Please find below rich descriptions of the participants listed in alphabetical order. As mentioned above, pseudonyms were used for the participants and schools in the study to ensure that privacy and confidentiality were maintained for each individual and institution.

Becky – Zion Classical Academy

At the time of our interview, Becky was 22-years-old and had recently graduated with an English degree from a distinguished liberal arts university. She was working as a homeschool tutor and applying to be a faculty member at a local classical Christian school. Due to her geographic distance, we chose to meet via Skype. During her full K-12 experience, she had the opportunity to attend two different quality classical Christian schools, each of which had a solid focus on the cultivation of a Christian paideia. Classical homeschooling was also part of Becky's K-12 experience during her grammar school years, which led to a natural transition to her

classical Christian secondary schools. Interestingly, Becky shared that she met her husband at her classical Christian school and formed a lasting bond with him early in life.

Becky believed very strongly in the impact that her classical Christian school had on shaping her life. She shared, “I’m very much the person I am today because of the phrase, ‘All truth is God’s truth.’ And that’s something that I learned and really heard for the first time in that classical school setting.” Despite the level of her school’s rigor, Becky genuinely believed in the efficacy of the classical learning model and expressed thankfulness for her parents remaining steadfast in their decision to equip her with a classical Christian education. However, this decision was not easy when many of Becky’s peers were leaving her school to attend public high schools that offered a broader array of extracurricular activities. Becky also voiced gratitude for her teachers who sacrificed their time and energy to provide a high-quality education and form a true bond with the students. Since Becky is also pursuing a career in education, she indicated that her high school teachers are now serving as professional mentors for her as she transitions from student to faculty member. Ultimately, Becky concluded, “Christian Paideia, I think, that we have experienced is almost a living, breathing thing. . . . it’s influenced the way that we live our lives and that we walk out our faith in our jobs and different areas.” As shown, the impact of her classical Christian education extended well beyond the timeframe of her high school years and substantially past the delivery of academic subjects alone.

Evan – Corinth Classical Academy

Evan was a 20-year-old sophomore college student with a diverse triple major in accounting, archaeology, and religion. The location of our face-to-face interview was in the beautiful new business school at his university. Current vocational interests in college included serving as a DJ for weddings and parties, launching an entrepreneurial board game project, as well as planning for a summer archaeology internship. Evan commented that his diversity of

interests was modeled and encouraged by one of his high school teachers and was still present in his life. He explained,

But this idea of being passionate and interested in rock climbing, and ceramics, and nerdy board games, and movies, and music, and that idea of engaging a whole bunch of different areas as opposed to just being really primarily interested in one thing, that stuck with me.

Furthermore, Evan attributed his continued breadth of interests to the Christian paideia experience that he had at his classical Christian high school. He expressed that he could not envision an academic experience that did not include a substantial interdisciplinary component. In fact, his decision to attend the college honors program that he selected was heavily influenced by this desire to study multiple fields. Evan's college of choice was also affected by his desire to admire his college professors beyond just being morally good people but also experience a deeper connection that can only exist between brothers and sisters in Christ.

Evan spoke very favorably of his mom and brother, both of whom would bring engaging cultural and worldview discussions into their home. He voiced his enjoyment of sharing in similar captivating conversations in the classroom at school and dinner table at home. These discussions, often consisting of two opposing ideas that may or may not have ended in resolution, facilitated Evan's ability to grow beyond his conflict avoidance comfort zone. Describing these conversations, he explained, "Oh, this is actually not uncomfortable but this is . . . fills you with life. This is something that you want to press hard into and challenge yourself with." This growth was explicitly associated with his educational background and Christian paideia experience. Evan elaborated further about this experience through his depiction of the comprehensive and interconnected relational Christian discipleship that he received through his church pastors, parents, and school teachers. He remarked that the moral alignment of his church,

home, and school communities was a learning experience for him that instilled a set of shared values related to discipline, wisdom, purity, faithfulness, and applicability of the Bible.

Forest – Nazareth Classical Academy

Forest was a 20-year-old sophomore college student involved in a highly competitive honors program at a major Texas university. Our face-to-face interview was conducted at the university library. The honors program was comprised of a core liberal arts component and also allowed Forest to study business marketing. His future plans are to follow in his father's footsteps into the legal profession. One of Forest's key formative activities in high school, that also contributed to his interest in law, was his involvement in mock trial. Regarding his school's approach to mock trial, Forest shared, "we approached it from a different perspective . . . we really did have an advantage . . . we all were taught to think and approach problem solving and having a lot of experience in speaking and presenting." Forest also remarked on the enduring impact that his high school philosophy of religion class had on him. He continued to appreciate the study of philosophy into college and credited his high school course for bridging the gap between philosophical ideas and his own personal beliefs. Specific vocational pursuits for Forest during college included serving as a standardized test prep tutor, as well as completing an internship for an HR software company.

Alluding to his high school's focus on the preeminence of Christ and the teaching of all subjects through the lens of the Christian worldview, Forest recognized this as an essential component of a Christian paideia. However, he also emphasized the importance in Christian education of not always blindly accepting the truth claims of the faith. Rather, he advocated for an approach where various explanations for the immeasurable facets of God's creation are explored and potentially left unanswered, if needed. Forest clarified, "I think it's a Protestant urge that we have. Or I guess, it's a hold-over from Catholic, they're going to answer all the

questions when I think that there is some value to admitting mystery in certain cases.”

Nevertheless, Forest did acknowledge that viewing the particulars of the world through one central Christian lens, built on fundamental truths, helped him to have a strong foundation to build upon. For example, he described recent metaphysical discussions in his philosophy class where arguments for the existence of God were being presented. Forest believed that he possessed an advantage over his college peers because they were considering these arguments for the very first time, while he had already thought through and discussed these ideas in high school. Ultimately, Forest viewed his Christian paideia experience as a fostering of intellectual curiosity, combined with a reverence for the all-encompassing nature of God’s presence in daily life.

Gary – Zion Classical Academy

Gary was a 20-year-old media studies major at a small liberal arts college. Our face-to-face interview was conducted at the university library. He began his college career as a student athlete, but due to injury, he was now focusing solely on his studies and working part-time as a waiter in a local restaurant. Long-term, he would like to be a movie director or screenwriter and jokingly commented that he currently spent more time on screenwriting than his college homework. Gary grew up in a military family, so he moved to multiple states and schools before settling down in Texas for his middle and high school years. Regarding his classical Christian high school, Gary was very proud of the quality of his alma mater. For example, he shared, “in terms of academics and just the way it's set up, it has an advantage. And I definitely have seen that in my life I think, especially now in college, getting into the broader aspects of life.” With the very painful divorce of his parents, Gary mentioned two men at his high school, in particular, that had significant personal impact on his life serving as mentors and father figures. Two

specific qualities that he learned from them was a biblical approach to mental and physical toughness, both of which he appreciated in his current life as a college student.

Regarding Gary's Christian paideia experience, he emphasized the fact that his school utilized education to foster the character development of students. Elaborating further, he explained, "we learned about all this stuff, about cells and biology and rhetoric . . . always came down to character, was a big thing they just emphasized all the time. Character and leadership, and these life skills." A certain school retreat had a big impact on Gary and left a lasting message in his memory. The virtues of Christian manhood were discussed, and tangible representations of lessons taught at school were visibly expressed through the retreat experience. Gary viewed his faculty and coaches at his high school as sincerely authentic and personable individuals desiring to achieve the school's Christian mission and ultimately help students become respectable adults.

Gwynn – Zion Classical Academy

Gwynn was a 20-year-old female who was in her sophomore year in college and graduated valedictorian of her high school. Due to her geographic distance, we chose to conduct our interview through Skype. She attended her alma mater from PreK through 12th grade. With regard to her K-12 education, Gwynn expressed that her parents desired a quality education for her that included biblical training, as well as attributes of a classical education such as memorization, logic, and rhetoric. Both of her parents did not advance in their own education past a two-year community college. As expressed by Gwynn, her parent's lack of advanced education resulted in them having to work more entry-level type jobs for most of their career. Gwynn elaborated, "They just wanted better for me. They wanted me to have a better faith education and be better prepared for college and life and career in general, because they're hardworking and they're great." Aside from her current responsibilities as a full-time student,

Gwynn shared that she also serves as a coordinator for a volunteer student organization that provides disaster relief in various parts of the country.

From a big picture perspective, Gwynn considered one of the greatest impacts from her Christian paideia experience to be the personal equipping and inspiration that she received to pursue passions and connect those passions with her faith. Alluding to the diversity of thoughts and ideas present in the university setting, Gwynn said,

I feel like I was really prepped for that, and for being a strong person and an impactful person in my future career, and living with a sense of conviction, and just being ready to impact my community and the world.

Despite the daily busyness of most school teachers and administrators, Gwynn appreciated the support and sincere interest in her personal development that was demonstrated in her classical Christian school. She shared her belief that the Christian paideia environment surpassed many other traditional education settings that successfully focused on the impartation of knowledge, yet failed to describe the importance of how to use this knowledge wisely and achieve true human flourishing. Gwynn explained that she was encouraged to actively pursue and seek out the ancient transcendentals of truth, goodness, and beauty in our culture at large. In short, she considered herself to be well equipped to think well both critically and independently, make wise decisions based upon a solid foundation of faith, and find truth, goodness and beauty in the world.

Hayden – Corinth Classical Academy

Hayden and I met in the business school at his university. At the time of our interview, he was a 20-year-old college sophomore majoring in mechanical engineering. In addition to his academic pursuits, he was also finalizing the start-up of a new manufacturing business, which he indicated was quite an adventurous learning experience. Although specializing in a particular

engineering field, Hayden possessed a profound inquisitiveness for a variety of subjects and interests. He winsomely explained,

Here I am, a mechanical engineering major who has a deep appreciation for sports, drama, philosophy, books, and all that. You don't get that most of the time, and how did I get that? Because my school offered things. They encouraged you to, frankly, do everything.

Hayden shared that his headmaster in high school encouraged students to fail spectacularly. Although failure was not truly the chief pursuit, Hayden was coached to confidently give his absolute best, for the glory of God, at whatever new endeavor was attempted, without the fear or restraint of potential disappointment.

Hayden's Christian paideia experience in high school cultivated a gratitude and respect for morally astute educators who could shape both the mind and soul. He reflected on a number of his former teachers who aligned their academic passions with their Christian walks and effectively modeled the crucial balance between love and discipline required of a good authority figure. Along with these mentors, Hayden also commented on the value he recognized from the community of like-minded friends from high school that held him accountable to the things that he was learning and challenged him to grow as a follower of Christ. Commenting that it was essential to a Christian paideia, Hayden stressed, "You need friends of *arête* or virtue. Friends who see the virtue in you and want to build it up more. They say, 'This in you is good, and I want there to be more of it.'" Likewise, Hayden also was significantly influenced in high school by great historical thinkers and writers such as Augustine, C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Nevertheless, as influential as these men were on Hayden, he still emphasized that their writings must be viewed through the divine light of the Holy Spirit.

Through Hayden's Christian paideia experience, he concluded that he had "learned to love what

was right. We learned to yearn after the good and the true and the beautiful.” He was inspired by experiencing a genuine communal love for God, that he credited to allowing him to ultimately come to know God personally.

Katie – Petra Classical Academy

Katie was interviewed through Skype due to her attending college at an out-of-state school. At the time of the interview, she was a 19-year-old freshman general music major at a small liberal arts university. In addition to her work study program on campus, she mentioned that her summer jobs consisted of serving as a nanny and piano tutor. Katie’s K-12 education was comprised of public and private schools, as well as homeschool and online education. However, all four years of high school were spent in an educational setting that met the requirements for this study. Katie’s main interests included music, theater, and fictional writing. Interestingly, she has been able to incorporate these passions into many dimensions of her life, including her college major and minor.

Katie expressed that she truly felt called to her classical Christian high school in order to be challenged academically, as well as experience an educational environment where spiritual growth was a primary pursuit. Describing this balanced pursuit of academics and spirituality by her teachers, she underscored her feeling, “encouraged me not only to grow academically, but they encouraged me that this calling that God gave me had inherent value. . . . It was something that God had specifically designed for my life personally.” Likewise, Katie shared that her theater and music directors, as well as her principal, cultivated leadership qualities within her that have proven essential to her individual identity development as a college freshman. She believed that invaluable benefits were gained in high school from being challenged to think independently, confidently present ideas, and accept critiques without compromising her own values.

Katie attributed her Christian paideia experience to forming an appetite for learning that she did not possess before high school. “It developed a curiosity in me to where no matter what kind of subject I'm given, even if it's not something I'm necessarily interested in, I will always have a healthy element of curiosity.” From this experience, she also recognized the importance of utilizing her new gained knowledge and wisdom to cultivate deeper connections and love for people that influenced all aspects of life.

Mont – Nazareth Classical Academy

Mont was a 20-year-old sophomore business honors and finance major at a large Texas university. Our face-to-face interview was originally scheduled at his local church; however, this was changed at the last minute to a Starbucks nearby. Due to the relatively busy setting in the coffee shop, we did not spend a lot of time on personal questions and proceeded fairly quickly with the questions related to the study. Nevertheless, Mont was very open about various personal issues in his life and incorporated this information throughout our discussion. For example, he shared that his father had passed away the prior summer, and this had been a very hard experience in his life. Through this hardship, Mont matured in his level of compassion and understanding for other people, while also expressing that a foundation for these virtues were originally cultivated at his classical Christian school.

Mont discussed a number of faculty members from his high school who were hugely impactful in his life. Reflecting on this influence, Mont shared, “The relationships that I had with people were huge. Teachers that cared about me, that was really impactful, and it's not that way at all in college.” Two of these teachers, in particular, challenged him to complete the journey of discovering why he believed what he believed, along with reaching his highest standard of personal excellence. These teachers recognized Mont’s potential and would hold him to a higher standard, at times, than many of his peers. This level of accountability was frustrating for Mont

during high school; however, he now recognized that not giving his very best was equivalent to not fully utilizing and appreciating his God given gifts.

A major commendation shared by Mont about his classical Christian high school was his perception of the successful formation of Godly character in his classmates. He remarked, “every student I've graduated with and known . . . they are people of high character. People who do take their faith very seriously. . . . They're not shy about their faith, it's not a cultural Christianity.” Again, he attributed this genuine faith development to the teaching received from his classical Christian high school. Furthermore, despite the exceptional credentials held by his high school teachers, Mont appreciated the fact that teachers at his school were pursuing a calling of student discipleship and could have enjoyed greater financial rewards in other educational settings or schools.

Nathan – Mount Sinai Classical Academy

Nathan was an 18-year-old freshman mechanical engineering student. Our face-to-face interview was conducted in the student life center at his university. At the time of the interview, Nathan did not work outside of being a student. He shared that he enjoyed playing intramural sports, as well as singing in his college choir. Nathan attended his classical Christian school from first grade through 12th grade and indicated that he had known most of the 60 other kids in his graduating class for the majority of that time. Describing his Christian paideia experience, Nathan described the cultivation of well-rounded students by intimately involved teachers who cared about the wellbeing and development of each individual.

A distinguishing factor in Nathan’s mind regarding his high school experience was the number of extracurricular options that were made available to him. He explained, “I think I did just about everything I possibly could have. I played baseball and soccer and ran cross country and played in the band.” He didn’t believe that this freedom of options would have been

available to him in a public education setting and was thankful for the ability to develop as a well-rounded student. He also viewed the amount of parental involvement in his school as a unique factor that pushed him to offer his very best effort across all aspects of his life.

Nathan left his high school Christian paideia experience with independent and critical thinking abilities, as well as the recognition of the importance of doing Christ's work across all vocations. He depicted this priority as, "Being the hands and feet of Christ as engineers, businessmen, teachers, artists, singers, wherever that may be, their goal was well-rounded servants of Christ." Compared to his engineering peers in college, Nathan considered himself to be more well-rounded as a result of his classical Christian training in the liberal arts. He viewed this as an important part of life due to the necessity to communicate well, both written and orally, and ultimately view reality through a biblical lens.

Roger - Mount Sinai Classical Academy

Roger was a 19-year-old college freshman studying aviation. Having grown up around planes with his pilot father, he decided to pursue a similar vocation. At the time of our face-to-face interview in his school's student life center, he was working in his school's admissions office guiding tours for prospective students. In addition to tinkering with planes, Roger also enjoyed playing basketball, working out, and playing the guitar, violin, and saxophone. He attended his classical Christian school all the way from kindergarten through 12th grade and considered his school to possess some unique qualities unlike other traditional educational settings. While competing on the debate team against large public high schools, he recognized some valuable ingrained habits that had been formed in him with regard to rhetoric, delivery of an argument, professionalism, and more importantly, Christ-like virtue.

One of Roger's greatest influences in high school was his headmaster, who also taught him a number of classes. He provided a very admiring portrayal of his headmaster.

He's just a guy that I would want to be, honestly. He was a really good model of just a really good Christian guy. . . . He was strong in what he knew. He was strong, but he wasn't too strong. When he spoke, people paid attention, people respected him.

The school's impact by strong leadership was also reflected in their emphasis on being a Christian classical school, rather than a classical Christian school as most institutions choose to classify themselves. Roger emphasized that his school was Christian first in order of importance, followed by a classical style of education that guided their curriculum and pedagogical methods. This purposeful ordering of objectives was made clear to the student body directly through an address by administration.

Roger expressed that his Christian paideia in high school provided a good balance between a safe environment to learn, while also being mindful and made aware of the secular culture that surrounded students. He appreciated the opportunity that was given by his classical Christian school to explore alternate worldviews and how these compared to Christianity. This steady discussion of ideas helped to strengthen Roger's Christian faith. For example, he shared, "Most everyday it seemed like you were learning a little bit more about the faith and what that means to be a Christian, whether or not that was specifically what was being taught or not." Growing up in a Christian paideia allowed Roger to witness how to respond to daily challenges, such as conflict, in an honorable manner. He experienced a living example of biblical integration through the Christian role models at his school.

Sarah - Mount Sinai Classical Academy

Sarah was a 20-year-old college junior that was planning on pursuing law school after she finished her undergraduate in a year. She enjoyed her campus job as a residence hall community advisor because it allowed her to develop skills in conflict resolution that may prove beneficial for her as an attorney one day. Hobbies that Sarah shared with me included reading, playing

tennis, and spending time with friends and family. The classic, *Jane Eyre*, by Charlotte Bronte is a book that Sarah enjoys reading every year.

Two primary influences in Sarah's life during high school were her parents and headmaster. She expressed that her parents consistently prayed for her and supported her through any type of challenge. Describing her headmaster, Sarah stated, "He not only helped me become a better student, a better writer, but he also will continually point students back to God and show them the way that God can help us through our lives." Sarah portrayed the level of support and deep care that she received at her classical Christian high school as "incredible".

Next, Sarah explained that the level of academic rigor that she encountered in her high school logic and rhetoric courses forced her to develop time management skills and ultimately shaped her whole work ethic that carried over to her college academic career. She believed that these two courses also set her on a trajectory for pursuit of acceptance to law school. As shown below, reflecting on high school, Sarah also recognized the value that she received with regard to her Christian faith formation.

When I came to college, I saw just how beneficial that education was, not only in that I knew the Bible, and I knew my faith, and I knew how to defend it. Talking to other Christians, they didn't know some of the stuff that I knew or they didn't know why they believed it, they just did. But I had reasons behind why I believe what I believe, which is extremely valuable in this age.

She expressed that her well-rounded education cultivated a myriad of virtues that became second nature for her and allowed her to do very well in college from a holistic perspective. Because of this, she experienced a strong sense of gratitude after entering college for the opportunities that she was given by God, her parents, and her classical Christian school.

Wendy – Petra Classical Academy

Wendy was a 19-year-old college freshman majoring in international studies. Hobbies included reading, playing tennis, and playing the French horn. She attended her classical Christian school from first through 12th grade. Due to the small size of her school, students across grades (i.e., freshman to seniors) were combined in the extracurricular activities, which had an impact on Wendy in her early high school years seeing seniors serve as excellent role models.

Wendy remarked on the commendable level of education held by the faculty at her classical Christian high school. She observed, “They really wanted to be there. They were very educated and obviously Christian. They really invested in the students. That was something that I really appreciated. The teachers, they knew you well, so they knew when to push you.” Wendy mentioned that her teachers “embedded in you” the ability to view all of life through the Christian worldview and persistently consider similarities and differences with various aspects of culture. Likewise, she was very mindful of the fact that her classical Christian school taught beyond merely vocational skills and equipped students with essential thinking tools that would benefit them regardless of their specialized career pursuits.

Results

As stated above, the purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the essence of the shared lived experiences in a Christian paideia for classical Christian high school graduates at five different Texas schools. The goal of providing this essence description was to address the absence of understanding and appreciation for the valuable enculturation benefits that occur from classical Christian high school students living their life immersed in a Christian paideia. To accomplish this goal, a phenomenological approach was used that involved the in-depth examination of a small group of former classical Christian students regarding their specific life experiences during high school. Triangulated data for this

study was collected from 12 one-on-one interviews, two focus group interviews, and analysis of multiple documents submitted by each school. All interview transcripts and school documents were loaded into NVivo software to facilitate the efficiency of the data analysis and theme development process. Utilizing participant quotes and document excerpts, this chapter discusses the analysis and theme development from all data collected, as well as the textural, structural, and composite descriptions that were formed from this process. In addition, narrative answers are also provided for each of the research questions in this study using themes developed and data collected.

Transcendental Phenomenological Study Results

Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological method recognized the occurrence of a phenomenon from one's consciousness as a building block of human science and ultimately the basis for all knowledge. Transcendental phenomenology is considered a scientific study of the manifestation of how things are actually seen and appear in the consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). "The phenomenon is perceived and described in its totality, in a fresh and open way. A complete description is given of its essential constituents, variations of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, sounds, colors, and shapes" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). Based on this viewpoint, it is crucial that the examination of a phenomenon must occur from many perspectives in order for a unified vision or essence of an experience to be achieved.

As stated, data analysis for this study was completed using Moustakas's (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method, which required effective listening, refrained prejudgment when interviewing, describing experiences rather than explaining, and an in-depth exploration of the commonplace workings of the human experience of Christian paideia. This analysis also required significant repetition of review and reflection of the triangulated data collected. The goal from each review was to identify fresh awareness, new connections, varied

perspectives and relationships, and a greater amount of clarity from the repeated examination (Moustakas, 1994).

Epoche. Consistent with a transcendental phenomenological approach, this study included disciplined and systematic efforts, called epoche, intended to begin the study free of preconceptions, knowledge, or prior experiences with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Described as bracketing, Creswell (2013) also explained epoche as the identification of personal understandings and setting them aside in order to focus research specifically on participant experiences. Tufford and Newman (2010) added that bracketing is used in qualitative research to help diminish the damaging effects that preconceptions can have on research activity. This process was needed in order to keep my focus on identifying the participants' meaning and multiple perspectives of Christian paideia, rather than my own past associations, understandings, and biases. Moustakas (1994) encouraged researchers to be completely open to new perceptions and understandings and describe what is observed from a fresh awareness. My personal and cultural experiences related to Christian paideia are detailed below in order to purposefully hold them at bay and obtain a description of Christian paideia that is free from any of my own research biases. The goal was to derive new knowledge of the Christian paideia experience from participants as if this was the first time that I had discussed this phenomenon.

The following epoche activity was conducted using Moustakas's (1994) recommended steps for completing this process. First, it was necessary for me to find a quiet place where I could purposefully review my thoughts and feelings regarding Christian paideia. Next, prior to both the interviews and analysis process, I proactively attempted to set aside biases and preconceptions and strived to approach each research phase with a readiness to evaluate with fresh perspective. Tufford and Newman (2010) emphasized that bracketing is not just a one-time occurrence but requires a continued process of self-discovery where hidden emotions and

experiences can effectively surface. As continued reflection exposed prejudgments, I would capture these thoughts on paper. Lastly, this process was continued until an internal readiness was achieved that allowed me to receive information from my participant interviews and documents reviewed as unique encounters.

Prior to the one-on-one and focus group interviews, the epoche process brought the following thoughts and necessary actions to light:

- Existing prejudgments
 - All Christians are interested in paideia.
 - Paideia has been life changing for all classical Christian students.
 - Every quality classical Christian school is in pursuit of paideia.
 - Paideia results in this ideal, almost fairy tale, culture and environment.
- Real biases were present related to Christian paideia as a result of being a classical Christian school founder and headmaster, interested researcher, belief in the notion as a Christian husband and father, and Christian school association leader.
- Similar to the experience of Christianity around the world, it is important to realize that paideia could look different at each school.
- Imperative to abstain from the belief that millennials see the world differently from me, and it is okay if their ideas regarding Christian paideia are different than mine.
- Proactively listen to the tangible experiences and feedback of Christian paideia from those participants that actually lived in this culture for a minimum of four years.
- As a classical Christian school founder and headmaster, I must strive to remove the bias of desiring paideia to be authentic and successful.
- Essential to make a concerted attempt to start fresh leaving prior ideas of Christian paideia behind.

- If presented, be willing to embrace a new vision of paideia and expand my own understanding.
- Consciously attempt to not steer interview conversation or questions based on prior understandings of paideia.
- Vital to not let nostalgia of Greek paideia and arête color current viewpoints and learning.
- Strive to listen to interview responses, rather than thinking about next question or preconceived notions.
- Be prepared to accept both a positive or negative reality of Christian paideia.

Following the interviews and prior to the data analysis, the epoche process brought forth the following requisites:

- Key to not read interview transcripts with an excessive amount of admiration for students' high schools and colleges.
- Strive to eliminate *Pollyanna* viewpoint of how brilliant or unflawed the students are based on individual interviews.
- Work hard to not just interpret what I desire to hear.
- Set aside paideia hopes for my own classical Christian school.
- Be open to unexpected or disparaging themes related to Christian paideia.
- Listen to the true reality of Christian paideia.
- Eliminate hopes of idealistic culture of paideia.

Beginning the second round of data analysis, the epoche process brought forth these final thoughts:

- I returned recently from two national classical Christian school conferences with a head full of knowledge on classical Christian education and its priorities. Referring again to

Moustakas (1994), it will be important to set aside the everyday understandings and judgments and revisit paideia freshly, naively, and in a wide-open sense.

- Strive to return to a fresh vision and treat every quality as having equal value.
- Again, set aside all excitement and ideal thoughts regarding schools that embrace Christian paideia.
- As emphasized in past epoche exercises, important to start this round of analysis with a fresh vision that includes a clearing of my mind, and a renewed intention to evaluate Christian paideia with receptive eyes and ears.
- Purposefully examine what emerges from the data, not what I hope to find in the data.

One-on-one interviews. In the spring of 2018, 12 participants, from five different classical Christian high schools in Texas, were interviewed both in a face-to-face and Skype virtual format. Due to the significant geographical distance from my hometown, three of the individual interviews were conducted via Skype. Of the remaining nine interviews, one was conducted in my school office, one interview was conducted in a coffee shop in the participant's hometown, and the remaining seven interviews were conducted on the participants' respective college campuses. Despite not being able to conduct the interviews on the classical Christian high school campuses as originally planned due to logistical reasons (i.e., students attending a vast array of colleges away from their hometowns), all of the interviews still went extremely well, and the various environments had no detrimental effects on the communication of the Christian paideia experience.

The subject study capitalized on guidance from the Rubin and Rubin (2012) responsive interviewing model. From an overall perspective, this type of interviewing required the ability to listen intently, maintain an inquisitiveness about the participants' perspectives and experiences, as well as asking any necessary follow-up questions to provide further clarification (Rubin &

Rubin, 2012). Similar to Moustakas's (1994) *epoche*, Rubin and Rubin (2012) emphasized the necessity of the researcher to exercise caution to not impose personal expectations on the participants and recognize how expectations could affect the discovery of a phenomenon's essence. In order to obtain rich and detailed information from the participants, it was important to ask open ended questions that were seeking experiences and personal stories from the participants. It was also necessary to vary the question order and change the wording of questions, when needed, to accommodate the unique personalities and attributes of the various participants. Due to my background in classical Christian education, a strong sense of relational trust was sensed between myself and the participants, which facilitated the realization of this important collaborative attribute of qualitative interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

In order to improve the quality of my interviews by practicing the flow of questioning and receiving feedback, pilot testing was utilized on a sample member of the target population (Griffiee, 2013). A goal for the interview simulation was also to obtain a sense of the projected time to conduct an interview in realistic conditions (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). For the pilot interview, the same planned procedure was utilized, and the purpose was to attempt to identify whether the actual participants would clearly understand the meaning of the questions, particularly in the sense of not interpreting any questions as intimidating in any way (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Kelley, Clark, Brown, & Sitzia, 2003). The pilot interview explored what was thought about the questions, anything unusual that stood out, any questions that should be added or eliminated, as well as changes that could be made for improvement (Bowden, Fox-Rushby, Nyandieka, & Wanjau, 2002). A number of clarifying and follow-up questions were added as a result of the pilot testing that was completed.

Focus group interviews. Two separate virtual focus groups were conducted in spring 2018 consisting of three students each from two different schools. All students involved in the

focus groups also participated in the one-on-one individual interviews. Conducting the interviews virtually through Skype was required due to the geographic diversity of the students. Consistent with recommendations from Rubin and Rubin (2012), I served as the facilitator for the focus group interviews by asking questions for group discussion and helping to sustain the conversation amongst the students. The participants responded very well to each other's various comments and would agree or disagree and build upon the points that were made. Similar to the one-on-one interviews, the focus group questions were prepared in advance and were designed to be open ended, to again seek experiences and personal stories from the participants.

Document analysis. The third data collection method, document analysis, was utilized for the purpose of triangulation. As stated above, triangulation is in reference to the research procedure that utilizes multiple/varied sources and methods of data collection to arrive at corroborating evidence and increased credibility (Bowen, 2009; Creswell, 2013). Headmasters from each respective school submitted a variety of documents for examination such as school profiles, orientation materials, handbooks, promotional resources, newsletters/magazines, websites, fundraising plans, and faculty/parent training materials. Similar to interview transcripts, as a qualitative researcher, I recognized that school provided documents were still based on the interpretation of people (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The authors of these documents could possess a bias towards making the school look exceptionally good or potential exaggerate the importance of certain events. Nevertheless, as Rubin and Rubin (2012) highlighted, combining documentary analysis along with in-depth interviewing can improve the quality of a research study in a multitude of ways. Consistency in themes can be identified, student participants are more at ease when a researcher is knowledgeable about their school, and organizational specific terminology and culture can be learned.

Horizontalization. Moustakas (1994) explained that the process of providing a clear portrait, or essence, of a phenomenon required the repetitive task of looking and describing in order to gain continued new awareness and perspectives. The horizontalization dimension of phenomenological reduction necessitated the understanding that horizons were unlimited, and the experience of things could never be exhausted regardless of how many times they were reconsidered or viewed (Moustakas, 1994). The following steps detailed by Moustakas were employed to horizontalize the three forms of data collected: (a) all statements reviewed were treated with equal value, (b) all relevant statements that were significant for the description of the experience were recorded, (c) repetitive and overlapping statements were deleted to arrive at the invariant horizons or meaning units of the Christian paideia experience, and (d) horizons were clustered to arrive at themes. It was important to be receptive to every statement made by the participants and strive to find the unique qualities that stood out as significant, relevant, and provided a living description of the Christian paideia experience (Moustakas, 1994). The invariant horizons, or meaning units, were clustered into the major themes detailed below.

Theme development. Through the process of horizontalization described above, six major themes emerged from the thorough analysis of individual and focus group interviews, as well as documents submitted by each school. In addition, three of the major themes also included sub-themes which provided greater illumination for these respective categories. As stressed by Moustakas (1994), it was imperative during this analysis to purposefully consider a vast array of dimensions embedded within the data such as perceptions, senses, descriptions, qualities, experiences, thoughts, feelings, and examples. “Reflection becomes more exact and fuller with continuing attention and perception, with continued looking, with the adding of new perspectives. . . . Things become clearer as they are considered again and again” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 93). This level of awareness and detail recognition was only possible through repeated

readings of the transcripts and documents. The six major themes, detailed in Table 1 below, were utilized to answer this study's central research question and four sub-questions, all of which were designed to describe the essence of the shared lived experiences in a Christian paideia for classical Christian high school graduates.

Table 1 also associates the themes identified through this phenomenological study with a specific layer of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) EST sociological model. As highlighted previously, the impact of EST is meaningful for classical Christian educators because this theory suggests that the behavior and practices of individuals, embodied within a Christian paideia, will profoundly shape the development of students. It is important to note that all four of the primary interacting systems of EST that affect individual and collective attitudes and behaviors were identified within the various themes of this study.

Table 1

Christian Paideia Themes

Major Theme	Sub-Theme	EST Layer	Research Question Addressed
Brothers and Sisters in Christ	Iron Sharpening Iron	Microsystem	How do classical Christian high school graduates describe the distinguishing attributes of a Christian paideia?
	Relational Intimacy		
Generational Faithfulness	Faculty and Administration Discipleship	Mesosystem	How do classical Christian high school graduates perceive their school's overt or covert pursuits for realizing a Christian paideia?
	Parental Impact		
Transcendent Benefits and Tools	Balance	Exosystem	How has being educated in a Christian paideia been beneficial or detrimental to the adult life of classical Christian high school graduates?
	Christ-Centered Worldview		
	Life Preparation		
	Prepared to Give an Answer		
	Taking Thoughts Captive		
School Pride and Thankfulness	None	Exosystem	How do classical Christian high school graduates express their sense of obligation, if any, to uphold the standards of a Christian paideia?
Taking Thoughts Captive	None	Microsystem	How do classical Christian high school graduates describe the distinguishing attributes of a Christian paideia?
Virtue – Rightly Ordered Loves	None	Macrosystem	How do classical Christian high school graduates describe their lived experiences of Christian paideia?

Brothers and sisters in Christ. A major theme that surfaced from participants discussing the distinguishing attributes of a Christian paideia was the strong sense of family present within their schools and considering their peers and faculty/administration to be brothers and sisters in Christ. This discussion was indicative of the Apostle Paul’s observations of Christian community in Romans 12:4-5, “For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.” Despite a diversity of personalities and interests embodied within each classical Christian school, a strong sense of enduring love and commitment was shared by the students. Roger captured these feelings by explaining,

There was just a really good sense of family. . . . that kind of family relationship is something that's emphasized in scripture. . . . we're all one unified body together, so we need to show each other love like that. And we're brothers and sisters in Christ through our faith.

Through joys and hardships, as well as the natural relational bonding that occurred through the passage of time, students developed deep and abiding friendships that were centered on a common belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ. This connection extended also beyond their peers to faculty and administration as well. Evan remarked, “This idea of admiring your faculty and your professors, not just because they are morally good people, but because you believe you have a connection to them that would only exist between a brother and a sister in Christ.” As discussed below, two significant sub-themes, or features related to the brothers and sisters in Christ paradigm, materialized from the dialogue on the distinguishing attributes of a Christian paideia.

Iron sharpening iron. The means of Christians mutually edifying one another is illustrated in Proverbs 27:17, “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.” Through the family type school community experienced, participants appeared to mature over time and

encourage one another regarding the importance of mutual edification. A student from the Zion focus group shared, “I only really realized when I was a senior that I wanted to be able to mentor, or befriend, or help the younger students or lift them up. . . . kind of almost a ministry role, tutoring role.” This was the revelation of an eternal and rewarding experience that could be gained from capitalizing on the opportunities that were present on a daily basis where students spent the vast majority of their time.

This significant amount of time spent in school would be classified as the microsystem in Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) EST. As explained previously, the microsystem was considered the most immediate socio-cultural context, which included direct interactions between groups such as school peers and faculty. The necessity of these educational interactions was accentuated by Hayden as, “The education of Christians is not just in what to know and in how to think . . . You also need, as part of your education, to develop strong friendships that will guide you along the way.” There was a sense that the Christian paideia high school experience was a journey with friends that was rooted in a historical tradition that resulted in forging of strong character. Hayden elaborated, “The friends you really need in order to have a proper education are the friendships of *arête*, as Aristotle would say.” Again, the Greek form of paideia education consistently emphasized the importance of *arête*, meaning individual excellence, achievement, and virtue. Aristotle’s articulation of virtue was “. . . those internal habits of character or excellences (*arête*) that enable human beings to flourish (*eudemonia*) and support civic life” (Wong, Baker, & Franz, 2015, p. 8). Incarnationally, *arête* was witnessed by Hayden as, “Friends who see the virtue in you and want to build it up more. They say, ‘This in you is good and I want there to be more of it’.” This was an excellent description of the practical application of the iron sharpening iron biblical principle.

Although this environment of mutual edification could be perceived as impractical in today's individualistic culture, Becky described her classical Christian high school as, "A place where you're free to talk about the hard issues and debate it out and bring Christianity and the Gospel and scripture into the talk without feeling awkward or like you're going to be persecuted for it." This atmosphere of freedom was consistent with the priorities for the liberal arts, as well as the freedom that Christians' experience through the pursuit of truth (i.e., John 8:32). Likewise, Katie portrayed how an individual could flourish through an educational environment comprised of like-minded Christians:

The greatest contribution that my classical school has given in my life personally was the security of my identity. I'm very much affected by my community, and by those who mean the most to me. And the Christian environment gave me professors and fellow students who had that same hunger to learn and same hunger to grow in Christ.

This contribution was something that Katie still recognized and valued as she approached college graduation.

The guiding influence for the environment described in these classical Christian schools was a code of conduct or honor code agreed upon by all stakeholders. For example, the document analysis for Petra Classical (personal communication) revealed, "This Honor Code is not an oath to never commit sin. It is a chance for you to express your desire to take seriously the moral teachings of the Christian faith and our call to continually live in repentance." This statement conveyed the reality of the benefits gained when individuals recognize their innate transgressions, along with the necessity of Hebrews 10:25 to "not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." A strong sense of mutual encouragement was expressed by all of the participants

interviewed and was profoundly influenced by the next sub-theme of brothers and sisters in Christ discussed below.

Relational intimacy. A recurring feeling of communal intimacy was shared by participants. With the average graduating class size of less than 60 students at all schools interviewed, the ability to nurture deep relationships with a small group of people was very attainable. Forest reflected on this sentiment, “For me it was the small community, it was huge. . . . So it was really like a family to me. . . . A lot of our parents were friends outside of even just school.” Again, a regular mention of a strong sense of family was shared by participants that also extended beyond the boundaries of the traditional school setting. Roger provided a vivid description of this experience when he shared, “First thing that comes to my mind is a feeling of togetherness, I guess, and camaraderie. And I think most people would attest to the fact that it felt very much like a family.” It appeared that the leadership of these classical Christian schools had done a superb job of cultivating a unified vision that students deemed worthy of pursuing and living as a community. Furthermore, the passion and feelings expressed for this unified vision were moving. Hayden explained,

Every time I go back, I see these people who genuinely love God. It actually upon one occasion brought tears to my eyes. . . . I came to know my true friends there, and it was through these true friends that I came to truly know God.

This was a testament to the eternal purposes that were being successfully accomplished at these high schools.

One avenue utilized by all five schools studied to achieve even greater relational intimacy was the traditional European house system. The Mount Sinai document analysis revealed that all high school students and faculty were divided into one of four houses named after individuals who had a meaningful influence on the advancement of classical Christian education. Mount

Sinai's goals for their house system included the nurturing of relationships, leadership development, opportunities for service, competition, mentorship, and relational development between faculty and students. Regarding the house system at her school, Gwynn shared, "I really enjoyed having a house system because that gave us small groups and that let us lead and interact with other students and just strengthen that mentorship. . . . It gave me students to look up to." In addition to the goals mentioned above, Corinth Classical Academy's house system also sought to diminish the impact of cliques, provide all students an immediate sense of belonging, and foster a reward system for students honoring school guidelines and rules.

Generational faithfulness. The analysis of classical Christian high school graduates' perception of their school's overt or covert pursuits of a Christian paideia revealed the next major theme of generational faithfulness. As highlighted previously, Psalm 78:4 declared "We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done." The notion of a generational duty to continue the Christian tradition can be faithfully accomplished through a paideia educational structure that recognizes the synergistic value of a family, church, and school partnership in pursuit of this common purpose. As reviewed further in the theoretical discussion portion of this study, this paideia educational structure would be classified as the mesosystem within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) framework, which also consisted of the cogent interaction and overlap between various microsystems such as home, church, and school. Again, as understood by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and experienced by the participants in this study, the developmental potential of settings in a mesosystem were intensified if a mutual trust, consensus of goals, and positive orientation between settings existed. Substantiating the fulfillment of the above-mentioned triune goals, Zion Classical's documents (personal communication) explained, "Passing down a culture is a central aspect of education at Zion Classical Academy, and our

school's culture – its habits, traditions, and attitudes – is as much a teacher as our curriculum.” As discussed in more detail below, generational faithfulness was purposefully sought at the schools studied through the faculty and administration's discipleship of students, as well as the impact of supportive parents who equally aspired to see the divine and holistic mission of their respective schools realized.

Faculty and administration discipleship. Luke 6:40 avowed, “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.” This verse was affirmed through hearing about the momentous impact that the administrators and teachers, at the five classical Christian schools studied, had on the overall character formation of the participants. These formative benefits were conveyed by these individuals in authority through a sincere pursuit of lifelong learning, a coherent modeling of the daily Christian life, an imparting of sacrificial love, and sharing wise counsel combined with thought inspiration.

Lifelong learning, as a priority for teachers, was clearly evident to the students. Zion's focus group revealed, “The teachers themselves were being taught and continuing to learn . . . so that was really kind of a testimony. They're still learning, too, and they're trying to instill that in us, as well.” The term lifelong learning was considered more than a cliché educational phrase and was viewed as a motivational influence. Likewise, a belief was held that this process was ultimately a flow of knowledge and wisdom humbly imparted from one generation to the next. Hayden explained, “They're teaching you things that they know. They admit when they don't know. That is a sign of authenticity, is when somebody admits, ‘I don't know this, but I'll try to learn it, or I will look it up’.” Similarly, there was an awareness that a quality education extended well beyond the confines of the school campus and was not restricted to the delivery of mere information aimed at future college or career success. Becky shared, “I got the impression from my teachers . . . learning wasn't just for the classroom. . . . Learning was everything that

happened inside the classroom, outside the classroom . . . in every aspect of life.” This holistic conviction of a genuine Christian education demonstrated by these faculty members was reflective of the Deuteronomy 6 imperative for Christians to recognize God’s influence on all of life.

Faculty and administration were also able to disciple students well through the coherent modeling of the daily Christian life. In describing her high school Bible teachers, Gwynn described, “Wasn't just telling you to do this or do that . . . It was like talking about your ways of thinking, connecting the Bible to living a more productive life, and really making that compatible with your lifestyle.” The formative relationships that were developed between faculty members and students created an environment where more engaging and thought-provoking conversations could occur that led to the practical life application of Godly knowledge. This wisdom was also shared in a manner that was genuine and palatable, which prompted students to accept this counsel more readily.

In describing his faculty mentor, Gary shared, “He was just honestly trying to help us become better people, and he was just very open and personable and everything. And I think that represents more than anything the mission and the authenticity of Zion Classical Academy.” Gary recognized that his faculty mentor’s adeptness at modeling the authentic Christian life was manifesting the very mission that his school was striving to impart. Gary also shared that his faculty mentor supported him greatly while facing the immense personal difficulties suffered from the divorce of his parents during junior high. He considered him to be a down-to-earth father type figure that provided very sensible counsel.

Likewise, students from Mount Sinai Classical Academy spoke especially favorable about one of their school administrators. In particular, Roger his heartfelt thoughts about this administrator as follows:

He's just a guy that I would want to be, honestly. He was a really good model of just a really good Christian guy. . . . When he spoke, people paid attention, people respected him. And seeing other people respect someone, it kind of makes you respect them more. It's kind of a snowball effect. Good sense of humor, but when he was serious everyone knew it was time to be serious. . . . His image was just that he was a strong guy, but you could really tell that he cared about everyone there. He was a good balance of a lot of qualities that a lot of people don't have in balance.

The Luke 6:40 conviction of students becoming like their teachers was once again affirmed through the aforementioned testimony. Roger's administrator accomplished this principle by living according to the standard of Colossians 3:17, "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Students desired to emulate the actions of this leader because of the respect that he had earned through his joyful persona and balanced use of discipline and love.

The recurring feeling and theme of love was voiced repeatedly by participants. This was promising since Jesus's greatest commandment, and the first fruit of the Spirit, related to this attribute. Continuing with the discussion of formative discipleship benefits conveyed by faculty and administration, sacrificial love was distinctly evident and cherished by the students. For example, Becky expressed, "They're not passive teachers, and because they pour so much time and energy and wisdom apart from their curriculum, just from their life. . . . you really form a bond and a connection that can be picked up later." There seemed to be a deliberate and planned effort by the faculty members to use the valuable time that they were given with students to impart lasting wisdom and cultivate enduring relationships.

The sincerity expressed with regard to the recognition of this sacrificial love was also noteworthy. Mont shared the following sentiment:

I don't know what the teachers at our school were paid, but I know they could have been making a lot more money elsewhere. . . . seeing them want to be at our school and have a desire to know us as students and really to care about our lives and not just our studies. . . . It has spoken volumes to me as to the authenticity of why they were there . . . that's what these people felt called to, and that's why they were there.

As mentioned previously, a liberal education is vocational in the sense that it prepares students for their life's calling (Adler, 1991). Mont's statement above was reflective of the understanding that teachers were sacrificially pursuing their own life's calling while simultaneously instructing students to pursue this same ideal. Sarah summarized this impression as, "The teachers really cared about you as an individual. And they cared deeply about our walk with God as well." Consistent with 1 John 4:21, "And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother", there was a perception by students that the teachers at their classical Christian high schools possessed a fervent love both for God and them.

The final formative discipleship benefit imparted from faculty and administration was through the sharing of wise counsel combined with thought inspiration. In describing the impact that her school's headmaster had on her life, Sarah shared, "He not only helped me become a better student, a better writer, but he also continually pointed students back to God and showed them the way that God can help us through our lives and hold us accountable." This administrator's influence was consistent with the previously discussed holistic emphasis of a classical paideia education on the heart, soul, and mind of students. For students, he skillfully connected the ancient transcendentals of truth, goodness, and beauty back to their ultimate source in God.

Similarly, Becky reflected on this notion of the divine gift of counsel and knowledge from faculty when she stated, "I especially noticed the teachers and how much life and advice

and love they poured into their students. And most of that I experienced was apart from the academic side . . . we were bonding in different ways.” As reflected by her success and graduation from a prestigious liberal arts university, Becky certainly experienced no academic deficiencies from the high school education that she received; however, as stated, her greatest high school experiences and influences were found in the tangential learning that she gained from her teachers. Moreover, Katie also discovered that her Christian paideia experience extended beyond a traditional academic education. She described this thought as, “Encouraged me not only to grow academically, but they encouraged me that this calling that God gave me had inherent value. . . . It was something that God had specifically designed for my life.” Katie elaborated that her teachers and principal came alongside her in high school to nurture valuable qualities that were necessitated as a college student.

Parental impact. In addition to the discipleship of students that occurred from faculty and administration, generational faithfulness was also intentionally pursued at the schools studied through the impact of supportive parents. The biblical admonition for parents to raise their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (i.e., Ephesians 6:4) was shared by parents and institutions alike for the schools studied. For example, Mount Sinai’s document analysis (personal communication) found, “Parents carry the God-given responsibility for educating their children. Enrolling their children in Mount Sinai Classical Academy does not release parents from this responsibility. The school serves as a means to assist parents in their life-long duty of instruction.” This statement echoed a Christian paideia belief that parents and schools should partner in a holistic education, or enculturation, of children that does not end at high school graduation. Petra Classical Academy (personal communication) also acknowledged the importance of this belief when stating, “Parent collaboration is essential at Petra Classical

Academy. Teachers and parents must work together to meet the educational needs of the student.”

Interestingly, Becky did not grasp the significance of her parent’s involvement in her educational planning until she had reached a greater level of maturity. She emphasized, “Very thankful to my parents who made that decision before I could really chime in . . . glad they didn’t ask for my opinion, because I probably would’ve wanted to be like everybody else when I was younger.” Furthermore, many of the students agreed that there was a strong propensity by their peers to leave the smaller classical Christian schools in this study for larger public schools that offered a much greater diversity of extracurricular activities. Nevertheless, students also perceived the unparalleled worth that was present in their small classical Christian schools that were striving to cultivate a Christian paideia. Nathan explained, “Parental involvement is a big thing. . . . a big difference in a lot of public schools, parents aren’t as involved in their student’s education, but my parents were. . . . they were involved in my life.”

Despite all of the participants in this study being young adults, there was a strong sense of gratitude and acknowledgement that something distinctive had been received through their education. Sarah elaborated on this distinction, “Didn’t even realize just how much I had learned from my parents and school about our faith and the Bible . . . Then I realized just how much I knew and how strongly I believed it.” As shown, the parent/school collaboration proved to be a key factor in the critical facets of development for the participants.

Transcendent benefits and tools. The next major theme discovered emerged from questioning how being educated in a Christian paideia had been beneficial or detrimental to the adult life of classical Christian high school graduates. This analysis revealed an abundance of transcendent benefits and tools identified by students resulting from their educational experiences. These benefits and tools included a balanced and well-rounded education, Christ-

centered worldview instruction, practical life preparation, training to answer questions regarding faith, ability to discern secular philosophy, and a robust enthusiasm for learning.

The ability to receive these transcendent benefits and tools aligned with the explanation of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) exosystem. As highlighted previously, "An exosystem refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). With this definition in mind, an example of an exosystem impact could be a school's adoption of a curriculum publisher with a solid Christian worldview emphasis. This purposeful choice could affect a student even though they were not directly involved in the curriculum selection. Likewise, broad external social factors, such as income level of parents, are instrumental in making it possible for a student to attend a private Christian school that requires tuition to sustainably operate.

Balance. All of the participants were either attending college or recently graduated and believed that they were very well prepared, from a multitude of perspectives, for higher education. Becky (explained, "I went to a very rigorous college . . . But, it would've been much worse coming from a public school with almost no homework. And I wouldn't have learned time management skills in the same way." Although she indicated that her highly ranked liberal arts university was a step-up in academic rigor from high school, she nevertheless considered her secondary education to be an excellent foundation for college.

In addition to solely academic pursuits in high school, Nathan described strategic goals for his school as, "They were trying to make well-rounded people who could do Christ's work wherever he placed them in the world. . . . Being the hands and feet of Christ . . . their goal was well-rounded servants of Christ." This idea exemplified the notion of a redemptive perspective of career preparation similar to the directive in 1 Corinthians 10:31, ". . . whatever you do, do all to

the glory of God.” Students gained skills from their classical Christian schools, such as communicating winsomely and thinking critically, that could be viewed as material for personal success. However, these students perceived their abilities as gifts that could be used for God’s purposes.

Contrary to a modern educational culture that favors specialization, participants described their high school experience much differently. Evan shared, “The fact that I’m studying the breadth of majors that I am, I think is a product of Christian paideia. . . . couldn’t even imagine an academic experience that wasn’t intensely interdisciplinary, where the subjects weren’t in conversation.” The importance of the interrelationship of ideas across subjects and time had been effectively communicated to these students resulting in an affection for a diverse multitude of subjects, not a single pursuit of study that may culminate in a future high-income job. One example of this curricular emphasis included the following statement: “Zion Classical Academy offers the highest quality academic training in the liberal arts and sciences and deep exposure to fine arts and athletics aimed at producing students who are healthy, literate, knowledgeable, artistic, and wise” (Zion Classical Academy, personal communication). The above statement exemplified the balance that was sought regarding academic excellence, subject diversity, and the benefits enjoyed from this style of education.

Christ-centered worldview. The transference of a Christ-centered worldview was a key desired initiative for classical Christian schools in their pursuit of paideia. Forest explained, “Our school motto was, ‘In all things Christ preeminent’. Which seems to fit pretty well with this concept of paideia . . . In all of our classes . . . that was the lens.” Wendy (personal communication, February 1, 2018) also shared about her school’s priorities,

I think one of their biggest goals, as far as academics, was to present everything through a Christian worldview. And it wasn’t exclusive, it wasn’t like we didn’t learn about

Hinduism, or we didn't learn about things that didn't match up with Christianity, but they taught with that worldview.

Nevertheless, the degree of adoption of this worldview by students can often be arduous for schools. As mentioned previously, although the reality from the point of view of the participants was expected to be from a Christian worldview, the possibility of multiple realities remained, and my intent was to report these multiple realities as they were identified, if applicable.

The Zion Classical Academy focus group revealed a solid understanding of the fundamental objective for adopting an all-encompassing Christian worldview. “A goal is incorporating our spiritual life into the rest of the other aspects of our life, our social life, our dating lives, our careers, who we are and as students” (Zion Classical Academy, personal communication, April 5, 2018). These students recognized the significance of not pursuing the cultural norm, which divides life into distinct sacred and secular components. Furthermore, these students understood that the Bible has applicability to all of life, not just those aspects relegated specifically to faith.

Gary described the process of embracing a Christ-centered worldview as, “One of the things Zion really focused on, was not just feeling good about Jesus and Christianity, it was really thinking about it and questioning it, but coming to your own conclusion and really believing it.” This was an important step in personally espousing a faith that had been transferred from his parents and school. Likewise, Evan portrayed this faith transference as, “Christian paideia is giving us a toolset. You come equipped with a worldview that's taught to you by family and by your church. . . . taught elements of those worldview through things like the leadership classes, through chapel.” As detailed, a Christ-centered worldview was being revealed to these students through multiple dimensions of their life. The purpose of this equipping was

founded in Ephesians 4:12, “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”

Life preparation. Resulting from a Christian paideia education, the next transcendent benefit and tool that was helpful in the adult life of participants was a practical preparation for the broad spectrum of challenges encountered in life. The Zion focus group revealed this sentiment, “I felt prepared to face whatever I needed to face and be able to become a part of any kind of community . . . but not be influenced by it. So, I felt real good about that.” Students possessed the self-confidence and training to leave the protective bubble, often associated with Christian schools, and successfully acclimate to any environment without being negatively influenced. This wide-reaching benefit to their adult lives was supported by the principle of Apostle Paul’s teaching in Romans 12:2, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Gwynn expressed a similar experience of principled grounded preparation, “My school focused on just equipping us for life in general, equipping us for going out to the world and being confronted with different opinions and new knowledge . . . you're just exposed to so much in college.” In summary, a number of common ideas resonated with these statements regarding life preparation in a Christian paideia. Students described an all-encompassing training that would prepare them to winsomely engage with their communities and successfully face the challenges that they were sure to encounter.

Prepared to give an answer. An additional benefit and tool that emerged from the analysis of the Christian paideia phenomenon was the ability for students to respond to questions and cultural issues in a biblical fashion. 1 Peter 3:15 encouraged Christians, “but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you

for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.” Becky shared, “I genuinely believe that the classical model is the better way to learn. And especially in the high school years when you're learning rhetoric . . . and how to stand up and defend your opinion against people.” All participants shared this perception that their classical Christian school had endowed them with a unique ability to properly defend and communicate the Christian perspective against secular attacks.

For many of the students that were involved in mock trial competitions in high school, they even expressed the feeling that they possessed a significant advantage over their public-school competitors due to their exclusive training in logic and classical rhetoric. Specifically, Wendy explained, “We learned of logic, and rhetoric, and how to debate, and there was an emphasis on the ethics . . . that's probably something that's stayed with me, is just learning how to ethically use what you've learned.” Zion’s document analysis also revealed the chief end of this training that was beyond the conventional core academic subjects. “This tradition of education is to cultivate those unique human powers of reasoning, speaking, writing, questioning, observing, appreciating and creating that reflect the image of God in us and enable us to fulfill our unique human destiny” (Zion Classical Academy, personal communication). This imago Dei paradigm detailed above highlighted a belief that God gave humans innate qualities to recognize, comprehend, enjoy, and share the truth, goodness, and beauty of His creation and glory.

Taking thoughts captive. Similar to the Christian apologetics training received by participants that equipped them to appropriately respond with biblical answers, they also talked about their cultivated skills to ultimately “. . . take every thought captive to obey Christ” as commanded in 2 Corinthians 10:5. With regard to these skills, Nazareth Classical Academy (personal communication) quoted from the pagan Aristotle as follows to state their school’s

imperative for biblical critical thinking: “Reason wisely – ‘It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it’.” Concerning the value and redemption of pagan literature and thought, all of the participants interviewed received an education that involved the reading and discussion of the classics of Western civilization. This canon of literature provided the substance for students to apply the biblical thinking skills that were taught by their respective classical Christian schools.

Detailing this training process further, Forest explained, “I’m better equipped to go from big picture to small picture and switch back and forth . . . idea of looking at a lot of different things through one lens and having fundamental truths that are your foundation.” Students were not only well-appointed with a vast amount of knowledge, but also directed towards the understanding and wisdom of this knowledge, which transpired into a set of transcendent benefits and tools that were advantageous to all of life. Reflecting on this unified vision of a Christian paideia education, Gwynn stressed, “The strongest education for high school is the one that teaches students how to think for themselves and gives them foundations . . . teaches them how to find truth, knowledge, goodness, beauty in the world.” In short, students were entrusted with a set of generational learning tools that allowed them to confidently pursue the interests and vocational desires that God had given them.

Voracious appetite for learning. The final transcendent benefit and tool identified by students resulting from their educational experiences was a particularly robust enthusiasm for learning. Katie (communicated this theme well, “It grew within me a very deep hunger to learn . . . I will always have a healthy element of curiosity, and a healthy element of wanting to become a better person through what I have to learn.” Katie’s statement reflected a process that had been cultivated and developed over a period of time. Furthermore, this quality was regarded by the participant as beneficial, as well as clearly aligned with her overall purposes for life.

As shown by the following document analysis reference, this identified trait was also consistent with the outcome that schools were eager to realize. “Love learning – A classical education captures the attention and imagination of students in developmentally appropriate ways, inspiring them and equipping them for a lifetime of learning” (Nazareth Classical Academy, personal communication). The desire to pursue a lifetime of learning was found to have evolved from a culmination of the other benefits and tools pertaining to this major theme. For example, the Mount Sinai focus group voiced, “Christian worldview has a very strong learning or educational component. . . . those two things kind of run parallel . . . strive to be better intellectually also carries over to your spiritual life and vice versa.” Participants recognized the synergy produced from the convergence of a balanced liberal arts education that was centered on Christ and purposefully devised to equip them for the communication of redeemed ideas. Hayden described his revelation of this notion as, “I can appreciate just about every single subject because I was taught to love all these things by this very classical model. As for the Christian part, I look to find a way to glorify God through all things.” In brief, participants showed a distinctive sense of discovery, where learning afforded them the opportunity to enjoy the endless pursuit of God’s truth in His created order.

School pride and thankfulness. The next major theme to surface from the horizontalization process was the notable amount of school pride and thankfulness expressed by the participants. This theme was discovered through the interview dialogue about the sense of obligation, if any, held by graduates to uphold the standards of a Christian paideia. Similar to the transcendent benefits and tools major theme detailed above, school pride and thankfulness also aligned with Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) exosystem, which was comprised of broad external social factors such as income level of parents and school initiatives. Participants attributed the larger objectives pursued in their classical Christian schools, in conjunction with decisions made by

their parents, to substantively affecting and exerting significant influence on their individual lives.

One of the most profound statements regarding school pride and thankfulness was made in Zion Classical Academy's focus group interview. The participant shared, "Christian Paideia, I think, that we have experienced is almost a living, breathing thing. . . . it's influenced the way that we live our lives and the way that we walk out our faith and in our jobs" (Zion Classical Academy, personal communication, April 5, 2018). This feeling of Christian paideia being a living/breathing thing aligned beautifully with the Apostle Paul's use of Greek poetry and philosophy to describe God to the Areopagus in Athens. In Acts 17:27b-28, Paul clarified, "Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.'" The participant expressed the paideia experience much like the indwelling power and impact of the Holy Spirit on the lives of Christians.

There were a number of contributing aspects to the school pride and thankfulness theme communicated by participants. First, there was an appreciation for the gift of an exceptional education that was jointly provided in a relationally supportive manner. Becky expressed this twofold sense of appreciation as, "Definitely for me, feelings of thankfulness and gratitude, just for the high-quality education that I received. And especially thankfulness to the teachers who poured so much of their time into students." As discussed previously, students perceived their education as a transference of knowledge from loving faculty members, who also viewed learning as a lifelong journey that did not end with the awarding of a diploma.

Next, participants believed that they had acquired a distinct set of practical learning tools that was unlike many of their peers in other school settings. Mont described this sentiment, "I think that, not in a bragging way, but I think that coming up through Nazareth has really made

me question things and be able to think and reason to a higher degree than a lot of my peers.” Humility was characteristic of all the participants interviewed; however, there was a unified belief expressed that the Christian paideia experience at their classical Christian schools had given them something distinctly superior to most of their colleagues at the university. This intangible quality allowed these students to engage in and sustain the Great Conversation of Western civilization. Evan elaborated on this understanding, “I come from such a rich academic background that not only am I prepared by facts and intellectually in comprehension to engage this text, but I derive meaning from it and I derive deeper lessons that lay underneath.” An impressive amount of reverence was held by these participants for their lived experiences in a Christian paideia.

Taking thoughts captive. The next major theme identified was a consistent belief that there was a diversity of thoughts and ideas present and valued within the classical Christian high schools studied, yet these thoughts and ideas were carefully considered from a biblical perspective. The contemplative approach evidenced in these classical Christian schools was coherent with the Apostle Paul’s directive in 2 Corinthians 10:5, “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.” This theme was discovered through participant descriptions of various Christian paideia distinguishing attributes. In particular, participants from the Zion focus group described the diverse culture that they experienced as, “Environment where we could confront other world views and other cultures and other mindsets and work through it with kind of mentors or our teachers.” Similar to the other major themes discussed, this examination of thoughts and ideas was experienced in a close-knit community and was a deliberate and ongoing process. For example, Gwynn explained,

The world is secular, and we talk about that, but there are good things within our culture, and there are changes, but there are other things that come disguised and deceit, and that's supposed to be beauty, or it's supposed to be goodness, but is not, and I feel like I have been equipped to find those things.

Likewise, analogous to the brothers and sisters in Christ theme, the requisite skills to effectively take thoughts captive for Christ were refined within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) microsystem, which included the students' direct face-to-face settings and interactions with their peers and teachers as described above.

Unlike a relativistic culture where a variety of thoughts and ideas can diminish objective truth and theistic beliefs, participants depicted a strengthening of their Christian faith resulting from broader discussions. As shared by Gwynn, "We looked at every view . . . we all believe in God, and we believe He created the world, but my science teacher let us look at the different theories and beliefs and kinda make our own decision." With a shared belief that all truth is God's truth, students were equipped with the ability to confidently explore a vast array of ideas without fear that God would somehow be refuted through the process.

Mount Sinai's focus group reiterated this impression. "One of the things that Mount Sinai did really well was introducing secular topics in a Christian worldview. . . . wasn't an impenetrable bubble because we were made aware of outside world views and secular ideas and theories." This statement repudiated the commonly held belief that Christian schools may hinder a student's capacity to thrive in an increasingly secular college setting. Roger once again affirmed this perception when he shared, "Good balance of a safe space to learn . . . we had a worldview analysis class where we would just go and look at all these different schools of thoughts, religions, philosophies that didn't align with our own." Roger's portrayal of a balanced

atmosphere of in-depth learning provided an excellent summation of a particularly important quality of the Christian paideia phenomenon.

Virtue – rightly ordered loves. Stemming from the examination of how classical Christian high school graduates describe their lived experiences of Christian paideia, the final major theme that emerged derived from the participants' recognition of the valuable integration of their faith and learning in high school with regard to virtue development. This theme aligned with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) principles on the trickle-down effects resulting from influences in the macrosystem. As explained above, the macrosystem consisted of broad societal beliefs that exert influence on the individual and respective sub-systems (Poch, 2005). Bronfenbrenner (1979) explained that the delivery of education may vary dramatically based on the various socioeconomic, ethnic, religious, subcultural groups, and divergent belief systems and lifestyles that shape and perpetuate the various ecological environments that impact human development.

As discussed in this study's literature review, Augustine believed that Christians could not advance in their understanding of the faith without the keeping and use of paideia (Kevane, 1970). Through participants' own Christian paideia experience, they appeared to have embraced Augustine's understanding of virtue as rightly ordered love, as well as his belief that character formation was the end purpose of education (Wong, Baker, & Franz, 2015). Hayden (personal communication, April 18, 2018) expressed this Augustinian doctrine well, "My mentors taught me how to think and what to love. There was a huge emphasis on having the rightly ordered loves." His fondness for his teachers and recognition of them as mentors was again reflected in this statement, as well as the suggestion that the classical Christian pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty resulted in a cultivation of God centered affections.

The reality of this holistic learning was portrayed by the Mount Sinai focus group (personal communication, April 7, 2018) as, "It's like whole person education. And so, it's not

just textbook learning . . . it's the development of every aspect of the student . . . it's kind of whole person education according to a Christian worldview.” These students recognized that strong academic tutelage alone would not suffice to fully endow them with a complete education according to the historic Christian tradition. Forest conveyed his sense of admiration for his virtue filled education as, “In a lot of things, it did promote a reverence. Because those things weren't separate, the what we're learning about school and my own religious beliefs. You do gain a reverence when you see beautiful things.” Again, their education embodied within the Christian paideia allowed students to associate learning and discovery with the beauty present in God’s creation of all things.

Lastly, the illumination of this Christian paideia educational experience personified the Apostle Paul’s teaching on the preeminence of Christ in Colossians 1:16, “For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.” Furthermore, Nazareth’s document analysis captured the essence of this major theme dealing with virtue and rightly ordered loves as follows: “Embody virtue in the classroom, on the field, at the playground, in the community; in all things Christ preeminent.” The discovery of this major theme, which was focused on virtue, revealed the espousal by these schools of a biblical anthropology that viewed their students as much more than cognitive individuals alone. Specifically, Corinth Classical Academy explained, “Because God created, sustains, and will consummate all things through His Son, Jesus Christ, we believe that facts, whether mathematical, historical, scientific, or otherwise, can only represent truth if they are taught in the context of a Christian worldview.” As shown, these classical Christian schools sought to deliver an education that cultivated affections for virtue that would result in character-driven behavior unified with God’s ultimate purposes (Wong, Baker, & Franz, 2015).

Textural description. Following Moustakas's (1994) phenomenological reduction process, the final step for this portion of the study was the descriptive textural integration of the six major themes discussed above that were developed from the participant interviews (one-on-one and focus group) and document analysis. A crucial objective in this process was to describe the key phenomenological components and meanings to arrive at a greater understanding of the essence of the shared lived experiences in a Christian paideia. Moustakas (1994) emphasized the importance of describing experiences, not necessarily explaining or analyzing them, in order to retain original textures, qualities, and material properties. This was accomplished through effective listening, impartial sensing, experiential descriptions, focusing on the core research questions, and a thorough consideration of the everyday details of participant experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The textural description was intended to provide a clear representation of what ideas, feelings, perspectives, qualities, and situations comprised the Christian paideia experience. Moustakas (1994) highlighted that the use of synthesized invariant meaning units and themes, including verbatim examples, would convey ". . . living descriptions or highlights of the experience" (p. 130). Again, the use of Moustakas's (1994) method was intended to provide fresh knowledge and discovery of the meanings and essences of the Christian paideia experience.

An overarching textural descriptor was a coherent feeling of intimate friendship between the stakeholders in the schools. The family atmosphere nurtured an ideal environment for mutual encouragement and edification to flourish. Strong friendships were established that guided the participants well through the important developmental years of high school and into college. Hayden (captured the essence of these relationships by explaining, "I'm not sure how to teach this. I'm not an educator but to encourage these deep friendships, these friendships of virtue is, I think, an essential part of proper education." Likewise, there was a general atmosphere of freedom that existed in the educational culture that bolstered the students' sense of identity and

security, which allowed students to freely discuss and debate foundational topics required for a true understanding of the Christian worldview. In brief, feelings of communal intimacy, unity of purpose, and belonging guided students towards experiencing a genuine love for God and neighbor.

Another essential constituent of the Christian paideia was the practical conveyance of biblical knowledge, understanding, and wisdom from one generation to the next. This eternal responsibility was brought to fruition largely through the focused preparations and actions of faculty members and administrators. Specifically, the Mount Sinai focus group expressed, “Our principal set a great example in the way that he approached everything from disciplinary action to just his day to day conversations . . . it was sort of just an infection that spread through the whole school.” The considerable trickle-down impact that this administrator had on the entire school was similar to Jesus’s comparison of the kingdom of God with the remarkable long-term growth of a tiny mustard seed. The broad array of educational and life gifts imparted to these students was invaluable. Hayden articulated the meaningful impact of his classical Christian education as follows:

This has possibly been the greatest contribution that Corinth Classical Academy has made to me. It is giving me the opportunity, by educating these other people in the proper way and educating me in the proper way, to grow in a deeper friendship with them and to see God in ways I never saw Him and to know Him and to love Him and to serve Him.

From an experiential context, the Christian life was modeled for students in a realistic and steady manner that resulted in a willingness to embrace the wise counsel offered, explanations of truth, and inspiration to accept God’s promises.

Another general feature of the Christian paideia was the equipping of participants with a host of transcendent benefits and tools. For example, when reflecting upon their experience, all

students shared that they were very well prepared academically for college, in addition to far-reaching preparatory competencies intended to position them for God's eventual vocational callings on their lives. This broader vision for education was embodied by Corinth Classical Academy as, "Partnering with Christian parents to provide for their children a classical education founded upon a Biblical worldview so that these children may commence a lifelong pursuit of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding in their purposeful and passionate service of Jesus." As shown, there was a deeper meaning sought, beyond college or career prep alone, that involved faithful Christians guiding children towards increased clarity on the most eternally gratifying pursuits in life.

Through the Christian paideia, participants were familiarized with a redemptive paradigm of viewing reality that encompassed the correlation of ideas across a varied continuum of topics and activities. Mont described this comprehensive schooling as, "Being trained on how to think, and how to think in a bigger perspective than just the question being asked, or the topic being discussed. I think that's where the classical school graduate shines." This aforementioned testimony communicated the underlying belief shared by participants that they had been given a unique set of tools to more effectively confront life's challenges with confidence, while also simultaneously finding joy in the midst of all circumstances.

Similarly, reflecting on the core nature and focus of the Christian paideia experience, Gwynn shared, "Equipped to be open minded. And I know the idea of open-minded sometimes has liberal connotation . . . mean open minded in the way of being open to new ideas and knowing how to find truth, goodness, beauty." As shown, an indispensable rhythm and experiential quality of this phenomenon was the aptitude developed in students to pursue and appreciate the enduring value and mutually beneficial attributes found in the tripartite notion of the ancient transcendentals. Furthermore, there was a genuine appreciation and thankfulness by

participants for this rhythm and experiential quality that was fostered at their classical Christian high schools. Hayden explained, “It was through Corinth and through that small classroom where we learned to love what was right. We learned to yearn after the good and the true and the beautiful.” The essential nature of this phenomenon depicted by participants was a shared thankfulness for an intimate Christian setting that was simultaneously sanctifying and joyful.

Structural description. The next step in Moustakas’s (1994) transcendental phenomenological method was the imaginative variation process, which was intended to capture the structural essences of the Christian paideia experience. This process concluded with a structural description of the requisite conditions and factors that revealed how the Christian paideia phenomenon was successfully manifested as explained in the above textural description. Through the reflective phase of imaginative variation, conceivable structures of time, space, materiality, causality, and relationship were considered (Moustakas, 1994). This reflection and analysis helped to uncover the underlying dynamics of this phenomenon and how the participant thoughts and feelings shared were awakened.

To begin, an essential structural determinant for the peer-to-peer mentorship, role modeling, and interaction between high school grade levels that occurred was made possible because of the small community environment present with all the schools in this study. This intimate atmosphere enabled students and faculty to form deep relationships that resulted in a greater degree of accountability, affirmative identity formation, and personification of authentic brotherly and sisterly love. Accountability was rooted in agreed upon honor codes where actions were considered both on and off school campuses. Due to the communal nature of the Christian faith, a praiseworthy testimony was desired at all times. This standard was founded on Philippians 1:27, “Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit.”

In order to promote a culture of lifelong learning and pursue classical Christian imperatives, structured training programs in the schools were needed for faculty to grow in their Christian paideia understanding. Becky discussed this necessity as follows:

We have a lot of grammar school teachers and even high school teachers. . . . who came from the public school and needed to be retrained in how they taught . . . They were gifted teachers, but they didn't know exactly how to incorporate the aspects of paideia Christian classical meshing together, because they had been in such a different environment.

Likewise, Corinth Classical Academy demonstrated a very proactive example of training through their annual Paideia Conference hosted at their school for faculty and families. This was a free continuing education opportunity that included keynote addresses from nationally recognized speakers, as well as various subject specific breakout sessions. The combination of consistent training, along with well-thought-out hiring practices, crafted an ideal atmosphere for faculty and administration to effectually model the Christian life, impart sacrificial love, and offer wise counsel and thought inspiration.

Nazareth Classical Academy's document analysis also revealed an important structural determinant that was necessary for the Christian paideia phenomenon to be experienced. Commenting on a poem about the planting of seeds and its relationship with education, Nazareth's headmaster expressed the significance of this understanding, "We are planting seeds every day. Teachers deposit their wisdom, love and knowledge into the hearts and lives of our students. It is often messy, but inevitably we see the life and fruit that careful cultivation yields" (Nazareth Classical Academy, personal communication). As demonstrated by the multiple comments from participants regarding their belief that talented faculty and administrators could earn more lucrative compensation elsewhere, these Christian educators appeared to truly believe

in the vision and mission of the schools where they served and recognized the importance of their work.

Next, two relevant conditions that helped to evoke Christian paideia in the classical Christian schools studied were an educational setting characterized by student involvement in a diverse set of academic and extracurricular activities, partnered with a strong desire for excellence and noble work ethic while involved in these endeavors. Nathan described the emphasis of a liberal education as, “Almost every question I've referenced that well-roundedness . . . being able to write essays and talk to people and do the math and know the biblical stuff. It's all a big part of life.” As an engineering major in college, Nathan expressed that the diversity of his pursuits in high school, both academically and extracurricular, gave him a valuable range of background knowledge and experience that surpassed his college peers. Describing the standard of excellence and work ethic at her classical Christian high school, Sarah shared, “Pushed me hard and made sure that they were setting the bar high. Which made me reach farther and push myself harder than I thought possible. Which then carries over into college because I realize I can do more.” The structural emphasis on a well-rounded and disciplined educational framework afforded students the opportunity to fail or succeed in a supportive environment, explore and refine their diversity of interests, and grasp the significance of interdisciplinary dialogue (i.e., integrate the historical study of fine arts, literature, history, government, theology, science, and philosophy).

A final structural essence that surfaced from analysis of the multitude of interviews and documents was a foundational sentiment prevailing in the schools that inspired a sincere passion for the discovery of truth and continued learning in life. This condition was indicative of Jesus's remarks in John 8:31-32, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” An intellectual curiosity was engrained in the

students through the schools' ethos that skillfully linked day-to-day Christian living with learning. Hayden provided the following insightful explanation of God's intimate design for man's distinctive desire for learning:

It is something that my 10th grade teacher called deep joy, which is more technically termed the transcendental experience of beauty. Encouraging students to pursue wonder. God put beauty in creation for a reason. . . . there is this overwhelming pain we feel at times. It's not a sharp pain, but it's just this ache we feel for something greater and grand. And we sometimes feel it momentarily soothed by things of great beauty, but ultimately it is just the heart longing for God. . . . once we can acknowledge that the cry of our hearts truly is for the one who made all these beautiful things, then all of our education can come into its focus and have its reason.

This divine understanding of education allowed students to enjoy a greater appreciation for the knowledge gained in all subjects and give God the glory due for His immeasurable creation. In retrospect, participants viewed their education as an incredibly formative and value-driven experience that shaped their identity as young adults and encouraged them to live a life of wisdom and virtue.

Composite description. The culminating step in Moustakas's (1994) phenomenological research process was the integration of the textural and structural descriptions. This synthesis resulted in a unified statement of the essences of the Christian paideia experience as a whole. In reference to Edmund Husserl's notion of essence, Moustakas (1994) described this concept as, "that which is common or universal, the condition or quality without which a thing would not be what it is" (p. 100). It was important to recognize that Moustakas (1994) also emphasized that the essences of any phenomenological experience could never be entirely classified. This is due

to the fact that essences derived from textural-structural synthesis are confined to particular times and places viewed from the perspective of a single researcher.

A prevailing thread, or essence of the Christian paideia experience, that emerged from the analysis of significant statements, themes, and textural and structural descriptions was the collective presence of an intimate school community. This small community was comprised of a close partnership between Christian parents and devoted educators in a classical Christian school. The intimate community shared a unified vision and purpose that was centered on the gospel of Jesus Christ, as well as a clarity of expectations for the liberal arts education being conveyed. The relational intimacy fostered an environment where there was a strong sense of belonging and freedom to fail, even fail spectacularly as one participant remarked. The relationships formed within the school, along with the accompanying positive impacts, extended well beyond the classroom and graduation. The outgrowth of this valued relational experience was the expression by participants of thankfulness, reverence, respect, love, joy, and self-sacrifice.

The next common quality of the Christian paideia experience was the keen awareness by all stakeholders that the classical Christian education being provided sought to achieve a much greater purpose than career preparation alone. This educational endeavor was viewed as a generational duty to provide guidance, accountability, and support that would lead to deep-rooted identity development resulting in human flourishing. There was a long-term/enduring focus that prioritized a diffusion of Christian culture, character formation, provision of transcendent benefits and tools, and the cultivation of Godly affections. Participants acknowledged a tangible conveyance of the Christian worldview that led them to a deeper personal espousal of their faith.

The final Christian paideia essence, resulting from the synthesis of qualities and meanings, was the standard of excellence evident within the classical Christian schools studied.

Colossians 3:23-24 stated, “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.” This biblical standard was engrained in these schools as shown by their commitment to faculty lifelong learning, inspiration for holistic Christian living, and deliberate planning for all facets of the school. The aspiration was a well-rounded education, characterized by a distinctive richness, that empowered students with a redemptive view of the world. The expectations were lofty; however, there was an understanding amongst all stakeholders that effective biblical thinking and communication skills could not be attained without diligent effort.

Research Question Responses

In order to respond to this study’s central research question and four sub-questions, narrative answers were provided below using the data collected, specifically the application of the six triangulated themes. Furthermore, significant participant quotes that aligned with the triangulated themes and research questions were also utilized to assist in fully discovering the essences and meanings of Christian paideia as experienced by classical Christian high school graduates. Through the execution of Moustakas’s (1994) phenomenological reduction process, the resulting triangulated themes from the study were brothers and sisters in Christ, generational faithfulness, transcendent benefits and tools, school pride and thankfulness, taking thoughts captive, and virtue – rightly ordered loves.

Research central question. How do classical Christian high school graduates describe their lived experiences of Christian paideia?

The theme examining virtue – rightly ordered love supported the conclusions detailed in this section. First, a predominant experience of the Christian paideia was a purposeful shaping of participants’ hearts, souls, and minds to seek out and defend God’s absolute truth, never-ending goodness, and ever-present beauty. This ageless orthodoxy, reflected in the triune structure of the

ancient transcendentals, derived from an education focused on the cultivation of wisdom and virtue, of which possessed a genesis in the nourishment of the soul on truth, goodness, and beauty (“What to Teach”, 2018). Reflecting on her lived experiences of Christian paideia, Gwynn avowed the concept of a resolute education that overtly sought out virtue. She explained, “I was raised more to pursue truth and beauty and goodness and fight for it and find it in the world and look at culture that way.” The specific words that were used by Gwynn revealed a number of deeper meanings underlying the Christian paideia experience. The reference to being raised to pursue something reflected a gradual process of instruction, with a definite purpose, that occurred over a long period of time. The admonition to fight for it exemplified that the quest for anything worthwhile would not come without challenge. Likewise, the personal knowledge of truth, goodness, and beauty would only be discovered through a dynamic pursuit that was accompanied with a profound sense of awareness regarding its benefits.

Next, the lived experiences of Christian paideia were also shown to be the confident and thoughtful engagement in a host of activities meant to bring joy, arouse wonder, present beneficial struggles, and build community. Corinth Classical Academy (personal communication) portrayed this desire for its students as, “Loves God, loves others, loves learning, loves truth, and loves life. . . . joy in the process of becoming more valiant. . . . we grow in wisdom and virtue through the ordering of our loves, we flourish.” Evan explained how these pursuits triggered a constructive succession from discipline, to wisdom, to gentleness, to purity, to faithfulness, and finally towards a deeper relationship with God. He elaborated on this progression by adding, “All of those were instilled in me based on the community that I was being raised in. My home community, church community, and the community at Corinth. That was sort of a learning experience for me.” As shown, the education imparted was a collaborative and all-encompassing effort to provide both practical knowledge and timeless wisdom. Zion

Classical Academy (personal communication) encapsulated the ideal of the Christian paideia experience as follows: “Grounded in piety, classical Christian education cultivates the virtues of students in body, heart, and mind, while nurturing a love for wisdom under the lordship of Christ.” In brief, the Christian paideia experience was consummated, in part, through a well-thought-out educational endeavor that was fulfilled by schools that comprehended the importance of their divine missions.

Research sub-question one. How do classical Christian high school graduates describe the distinguishing attributes of a Christian paideia?

The themes evaluating brothers and sisters in Christ and taking thoughts captive were the primary ideas used to answer this study’s first sub-question. To begin, a number of distinguishing attributes were embodied within the common belief amongst participants that their peers were regarded as brothers and sisters in Christ. The intimate setting created by the smaller enrollment levels of the schools studied allowed students to form lasting bonds and friendships. Mont expressed the substance of this environment as, “I think that size uniquely enables you to form incredibly deep relationships with the people around you and that’s something I didn’t really appreciate until I got to college.” As noted by Mont and other participants, the enduring value of the Christian paideia experience was often not recognized real-time in the busyness of everyday high school activities. However, upon reflection and subsequent life events, the importance of their edifying upbringing was brought to the forefront of their hearts and minds.

Katie explained how this relational development transpired, as well as its broad reaching applicability as follows: “It gave me a platform with which to cultivate a deeper connection with other people. . . . So, it helped me to create . . . just a genuine love for other people no matter who they are.” In short, there was a shared sense of learning, commitment, and vision that stemmed from the Christian paideia relational experiences. The participants described a

maturation process that evolved from constructively imitating both peers and school leaders. For example, Wendy commented, “I really enjoyed that it was a smaller school, because that way I got to know people from all different grades. . . . see the upper classmen being role models and getting to see the things they did.” Again, the distinguishing attribute of an intimate environment allowed students to beneficially engage with the stakeholders in their educational setting. Roger encapsulated this quality by revealing, “I’m thinking of my relationships with my friends, just the way that we interact. We try to mirror our Christian mentors and just be good brothers and sisters in Christ to one another.” There was a steadfast commitment to relational development that was being shaped by Christian educators and was intended to benefit the lives of students with their immediate concerns in high school, as well as future pursuits.

Another distinguishing attribute of a Christian paideia described by classical Christian high school graduates was the academic environment that was characterized by the ability to take thoughts and ideas captive for Jesus Christ. In particular, Mount Sinai focus group participants explained, “Christian paideia school in general is the perfect place to just discuss as much as you can . . . and how does it fit in with Christianity and how does it interact with the Christian worldview.” Unlike modern society’s unbounded perception of diversity, the Christian paideia facilitated discussions of secular worldviews and convictions within the framework of objective truth that was founded upon biblical theology. Regarding today’s predominant cultural understanding of diversity, Zion’s focus group conversation revealed, “I do believe in tolerance and letting people believe what they choose to believe, but there’s this permeating idea on college campuses of, to each his own . . . but I’ve felt very confident and very well equipped.” The premise of this statement was based on the observation that many college students avoid difficult or controversial discussions due to a deficiency in apologetics training, or the belief that embracing absolute truth would threaten the imperative for absolute tolerance. Nevertheless,

participants communicated that they felt very well prepared to winsomely defend the Christian worldview and not apologize for the totality of their professed faith on daily life. For example, commenting on perceptions from his fellow college philosophy course students, Forest shared, “They really admire how the things I say in philosophy class are, they're not just academically, it's not like I segment my academic beliefs from my personal beliefs, that I can defend the existence of God and arguments.” There was a mindfulness amongst participants that academic knowledge and Christian beliefs did not have to be mutually exclusive.

Research sub-question two. How do classical Christian high school graduates perceive their school’s overt or covert pursuits for realizing a Christian paideia?

The theme related to the responsibility for generational faithfulness, particularly faculty and administration discipleship duties and parental involvement, answered how classical Christian high school graduates perceived their school’s pursuits for realizing a Christian paideia. First, the commitment to lifelong learning by faculty members provided a tangible representation of pursuing a Christian paideia. Emphasizing his respect for a group of faculty members that created a podcast to increase knowledge of classical education principles, Hayden shared, “They are so authentic in their drive . . . for no monetary incentive, just because they enjoyed doing it and they enjoyed each other's company and they wanted more people to appreciate a good Christian classical education.” Central to this statement was the emphasis that financial enticements, or lack thereof, were not a driving force behind the realization of a Christian paideia. Faculty and administrators were motivated by a larger purpose that extended beyond a formal job description or conventional understanding of their educational role. Evan remarked on the impact of one devoted faculty member, “She's a powerhouse intellectual. . . . this idea of having the discussion keep going and not letting it end with the textbook, or the classroom . . . living that conversation that you're having in the classroom.” The faithful

embodiment of declared priorities by school leaders had a considerable impact on participants' confidence in a genuine pursuit of Christian paideia.

Likewise, the successful modeling of the Christian life by school leaders provided solid evidence for realizing a Christian paideia. Alluding to his school's consistency and intentionality of hiring, Nathan recognized, "I think definitely with the teachers, all of the teachers, at Mount Sinai, were intimate Christians. I don't think there was a single one of them that I could say, wasn't living as Christ would have called them to do." This authentic demonstration of the Christian life was crucial for the attainment of a Christian paideia because students would not embrace the avowed vision if they were not consistently experiencing the fruit that accompanies this learning ideal. Furthermore, Roger accentuated the fact that modeling the Christian life can also occur subtly. He emphasized, "It kind of goes back to just looking at good Christian role models. And I think that Christian role models don't have to be explicitly talking about Christianity to give you an influence on what that looks like." This statement echoed the point that a holistic education should extend beyond specified academic objectives and its sphere of influence encompasses more than the school campus.

Continuing with the discussion of graduate perceptions of school pursuits to realize a Christian paideia, sacrificial love was a discernible attribute experienced by participants. Specifically, Gwynn remarked about her faculty, "They were super busy, but they were always able to make time for that, and they were always really supportive of the growth of their students." This level of commitment to students was evident as a common characteristic in faculty members, as well as a key understanding expressed by schools. As shown below, Nazareth Classical Academy vividly illustrated the essence of this notion by comparing the arduous process of gardening to the joy of Christian education.

Planting seeds changes everything. It makes the mess and muck of a muddy rain the beginning of a bright and living hope. At Covenant we are planting seeds every day. Teachers deposit their wisdom, love and knowledge into the hearts and lives of our students. It is often messy, but inevitably we see the life and fruit that careful cultivation yields. (Nazareth Classical Academy, personal communication).

The adoption of this transformative paradigm emboldened faculty members to impart the sacrificial love that was relished by students and indispensable to the cultivation of a Christian paideia.

Next, wise counsel and thought inspiration by school leaders was another distinguishable pursuit for realizing a Christian paideia. Participants repeatedly expressed the positive impact that the faculty and administrators from their classical Christian schools had on their lives. Regarding his appreciation and respect for one faculty member in particular, Gary shared, “Talked to him a lot about everything . . . he was a really good counselor. . . . offered a lot of good guidance. He'd always tie it back to the stuff that he would talk about in class.” The indication that practical counsel was connected back to formal teaching in the classroom demonstrated the relevancy of Godly wisdom to all aspects of living. In addition, teachers demonstrated a desire to ensure the application of foundational knowledge beyond an intellectual understanding only. Specifically, Mont attributed substantive transformation in his life to one of his foreign language teachers. He explained, “One was my Greek teacher in high school . . . really started to have a deep impact on me and started challenging me to know why I believed what I believed.” Again, there was clear evidence revealed by the interviews and document analysis that the classical Christian schools studied sought to deliver an educational product with a wealth of transcendent benefits.

Finally, the classical Christian schools' pursuits for realizing a Christian paideia were only possible through the support of committed parents that shared a common vision. Without the tuition funding provided by parents, along with the conviction that this financial investment was worthwhile, the pursuit of a Christian paideia in these classical Christian schools would not have been conceivable. Commenting on the meaningful impact of her parents, Sarah shared, "They continually pointed me back to God and prayed for me and supported me through everything." There were repeated responses related to the desires of parents for their children to receive a vibrant Christ-centered education. Likewise, the classical Christian schools also recognized the vital importance of their relationship with parents. Corinth Classical Academy confirmed this crucial partnership, "We affirm that parents are a child's first and best teachers. Parents are the single most influential factor in a child's educational performance, as well as in the emotional, social, and spiritual development." This statement echoed the biblical admonition in both the Old and New Testaments that parents are fully accountable for the Godly education of their children.

Research sub-question three. How has being educated in a Christian paideia been beneficial or detrimental to the adult life of classical Christian high school graduates?

A Christian paideia education provided graduates a valuable assortment of transcendent benefits and tools that were beneficial in their adult life. First, participants described a balanced education that focused on a wide range of subjects and ideas, as well as forward-looking goals related to the applicability of their education. Describing this balance, the Mount Sinai focus group highlighted, "Really it's just the general well-roundedness of Christian schools. They typically don't focus on one thing except making a person who's prepared for the world. In that sense, Christian schools help make people who will succeed wherever they go." The core principle behind this educational philosophy was similar to the basis of the Chinese proverb that

spoke of a man who was given fish would only eat for a day, while a man that was taught to fish would eat for a lifetime. The subjects studied, and ideas discussed, in the Christian paideia education were utilized to accomplish a greater set of preparatory life purposes and were engrained in students through sustained teaching and discipleship. As explained by Sarah, “Things that were second nature to me because of my foundation in high school, my peers struggled with. So, I'm able to do very well in college because of my foundation in the classical education.” Participants all conveyed a confidence related to their abilities to flourish in college and life that was attributed to the education received at their classical Christian high schools. Corinth Classical recapped the balance and pursuits of a Christian paideia education as, “Desire to see our students love well. . . . They must love God. Out of this flows a love of others. The final three are the love of truth, the love of learning, and the love of life.” This multidimensional approach to learning and living equipped students with the requisite abilities to consistently glorify God and faithfully enjoy His blessings.

An additional transcendent benefit and tool that was advantageous in the adult life of participants was the impartation of a Christ-centered worldview. Alluding to the ideal partnership that should occur in a Christian paideia between church, family, and school, Roger commented, “My Christian faith is probably quite a bit stronger than it would be if the only religious influence that I got was church or my parents. . . . Most every day it seemed like you were learning.” Generally, the amount of daily face-to-face interactive time spent at school for participants far exceeded the amount of contact with parents or church leaders. Due to participants’ demanding high school schedules with academics and extracurriculars, the Christian worldview training received at school was an invaluable contribution to their overall character development. Forest explained as follows how his Christian worldview training was assimilated into various aspects of his life: “The more you can kind of break down those walls

between things that you believe about what's true, and right and wrong into your academics, I think that's what Nazareth did for me and that's been the biggest effect.” Unlike secular culture’s conviction that faith and academics can be completely disconnected, participants suggested that they received an unwavering Christ-centered message from the multitude of influences in their lives (e.g., parents, pastors, teachers, coaches, administrators, etc.).

Education conveyed in a Christian paideia was also beneficial to the adult life of classical Christian high school graduates because of the practical life application skills that were received. As an example, Katie shared, “I would say that the classical Christian experience taught me how God designed me, not necessarily what my personality is, I already knew that, but why I am specifically designed this way. How to approach my vocation with confidence.” Commonly, young adults experience a strong sense of uncertainty regarding an explicit calling for their life, as well as a lack of recognition regarding the efficacy of the skills gained through their secondary and higher educations. However, participants in this study revealed an uncharacteristic level of clarity related to the value gained from their formal education and how the accompanying tools of learning could be applied to their lives after college. Zion Classical Academy reiterated this emphasis as, “School of Rhetoric students move beyond the all too common mind-numbing, teach to the test, ‘cram, pass, forget’ cycle to a real passion for learning that prepares them for the rigors of college and life beyond.” There was a focused attempt, by all schools studied, to maximize the time, talent, and resources they were given to awaken in students a sense of purpose and wonder.

Similarly, in a time of growing ambiguity concerning personal beliefs and enduring values, the Christian paideia prepared graduates to give thoughtful answers for questions related to their religious positions. Corinth Classical Academy articulated this particular purpose as, “With minds full of knowledge and the ability to logically organize that knowledge into

meaningful arguments, students in the rhetoric stage of classical education are prepared to focus on winsome and effective expression, both in written and spoken form.” As described below, Katie affirmed this benefit when she shared a recent experience while attending school at an out-of-state Christian university.

I see my high school come through my character quite frequently actually. The most recent event was one of my closest friends on campus who has confessed to not being a Christian . . . some of the questions he had about his faith . . . I was able to answer with the knowledge and the apologetics that I gained from my theology class. And not in an academic way, but in way that truly answered his questions without being churchy in the response.

Similar to other recollections shared, this testimony echoed the belief that fruitful confirmation from the Christian paideia was demonstrated regularly, had a meaningful impact on the lives of others, and reflected the aptness necessary for substantive change.

A contributing factor to participants being able to invoke substantive change was their ability to submit all learning to the lordship of Christ. Becky highlighted this important notion when she explained, “I’m very much the person I am today because of the phrase, ‘All truth is God’s truth.’ And that’s something that I learned and really heard for the first time in that classical school setting.” This unique understanding permitted students to study a diverse group of subjects and distinguish the attributes of God, or conversely the elements of sin, that were present in the academic materials. Furthermore, participants displayed a promising attribute of sincerely desiring to pursue the varied educational efforts described above. For instance, Evan depicted his passion for learning as, “There was always this idea of Christian paideia being about toolsets and preparing a mind that can continue to learn, longevity. . . . For me, that worked. I really love learning.” Although lifelong learning is an ambition for most schools, both public and

private, the five Texas classical Christian schools studied appeared to have accomplished this goal with their students. This was validated by the multitude of tangible benefits shared by the participants, as well as the passion for learning that emanated from their interview testimonies.

Research sub-question four. How do classical Christian high school graduates express their sense of obligation, if any, to uphold the standards of a Christian paideia?

The final sub-question, related to the presence of any sense of obligation to uphold Christian paideia standards, was answered through the theme of school pride and thankfulness. Participants categorically voiced a sense of thankfulness and veneration for the classical Christian education that was selected for them by their parents. The following statement from Gwynn embodied many of the realities and impacts that participants used to portray the essence of the shared lived experiences in a Christian paideia. “Having the ideas of truth, goodness, and beauty in my life . . . proud of the fact that I've studied logic and rhetoric . . . able to look at the Bible in such a deep meaningful way.” First, participants’ opportunity to steadfastly pursue truth, convey and receive goodness, combined with an explicit cultivation of affections for beauty resulted in an acknowledged sense of experiential delight from the Christian paideia in high school. Likewise, the development of distinctive intellectual skills in areas such as logic and rhetoric equipped graduates with a perceived advantage over many of their peers in college. Nevertheless, this advantage was considered a gift by participants to be used wisely and was not seen as a means for self-promotion. Also, the approach to studying and applying the bible in high school resulted in an authentic Christianity. This personal espousal of the Christian faith was employed by participants in college to negate the common temptations that frequently caused students to stray from their faith. Nathan expressed the genuineness of his faith development in high school as, “I saw just how beneficial that education was . . . I knew my faith, and I knew how to defend it . . . I had reasons behind why I believe what I believe.” The schools studied had

effectually used their time to impart a well-rounded college preparatory education; however, more importantly, students' hearts were shaped to desire eternal purposes. In conclusion, classical Christian high school graduates expressed a strong sense of desire to uphold the standards of a Christian paideia.

Summary

This chapter detailed the procedures and findings for the subject transcendental phenomenological study. As described in this chapter, pseudonyms were used for both students and schools to provide a rich portrait of each participant. This chapter also presented the clustered themes and meanings, along with the resulting synthesized textural, structural, and composite textural-structural descriptions that reflected the essence of the Christian paideia experience. Six major themes emerged from the thorough analysis of individual and focus group interviews, as well as documents submitted by each school. In addition, three of the major themes also included sub-themes which provided additional clarification for these respective categories. Utilizing the data collected and corresponding themes that were developed, this chapter concluded with narrative answers to this study's central research question and four sub-questions.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

As previously stated, the purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the essence of the shared lived experiences in a Christian paideia for classical Christian high school graduates at five different Texas schools. Using my own interpretations and ideas, the concluding chapter of this study speaks to five remaining key sections. First, a concise summary of the study findings is provided through a succinct answer to each research question. Second, in relationship to the empirical and theoretical literature reviewed in Chapter Two, this study's findings are examined to ascertain the corroboration, divergence, or extension of previous research, any novel contributions this study added to the field of education, and how this study extended or shed new light on theory informing this topic. Third, the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of this study are addressed. Furthermore, within this section, specific recommendations, or action items, are offered for various stakeholders related to classical Christian schools. Fourth, the purposeful decisions that were made to limit or define the boundaries of the study (i.e., delimitations) are described, in conjunction with the rationale behind these decisions. Likewise, potential weaknesses of the study that could not be controlled (i.e., limitations) are also reviewed. Fifth, with consideration given to the findings, limitations, and delimitations placed on the study, multiple recommendations and directions for future research are provided. An argument is included for what topics and populations should be studied, along with specific types of designs that should be employed. Finally, based on the results and implications of this study, an overall summary is provided that reiterates what I consider to be the most important take-aways for this research.

Summary of Findings

By briefly answering each research question, this section provides a concise summary of the study findings discussed in Chapter Four. Based on this study's central research question and four sub-questions, there are five summaries included below that address each respective enquiry. Again, a major objective for conveying this essence description was to lessen the lack of understanding for the valuable enculturation benefits that occur from classical Christian high school students living their life immersed in a Christian paideia.

Research central question: How do classical Christian high school graduates describe their lived experiences of Christian paideia?

Participants described their lived experiences of Christian paideia in a profound and moving manner. There was a distinct recognition by graduates that their entire being, including heart, soul, and mind, had been purposefully influenced to desire and pursue God's innate qualities of truth, goodness, and beauty. Viewing all of life through a Christ-centered lens equipped students to acknowledge a greater purpose in their daily activities, along with a deeper level of satisfaction and joy from hard work and challenges. A standard of virtue was imparted through the collective and aligned efforts of Christian families, churches, and schools. The Christian paideia was understood by all stakeholders to be a divine pursuit that fulfilled a generational responsibility necessitated by God. Likewise, this educational model bestowed students with a potent set of useful learning tools and enduring knowledge that was already paying dividends during their college years.

Research sub-question one: How do classical Christian high school graduates describe the distinguishing attributes of a Christian paideia?

There were a number of important distinctive attributes of a Christian paideia described by the classical Christian high school graduates that participated in this study. For example,

participants repeatedly depicted school cultures that were relationally intimate and nurtured a genuine family of God atmosphere. Although it was acknowledged that the student bodies were still comprised of sinners and a utopia was not attained, there was pervasive evidence that love and kindness was the expected norm rather than the exception. This standard of virtue was fostered by faculty and administrators whom students grew to respect through personal experiences over a period of years. The realization of the value gained from the above-mentioned uplifting environment was not fully realized by most participants until more thoughtful reflection occurred in their college years.

Likewise, the supportive environment described above also encouraged an academic setting where students were confident in sharing their thoughts and ideas. A vast array of issues would be discussed in the classical Christian classrooms, both historical and modern, and biblical theology was the instrument used to navigate students towards objective truth. This rhetorical exercise practiced in high school prepared students exceptionally well for the arguments against Christianity that many participants encountered from their college professors and peers. The union of head knowledge and heart knowledge received in high school also allowed participants to lovingly embody the joy of the Christian gospel to their secular colleagues at the university.

Research sub-question two: How do classical Christian high school graduates perceive their school's overt or covert pursuits for realizing a Christian paideia?

The classical Christian high school graduates interviewed were very perceptive of the focused pursuits made by their respective schools to realize a Christian paideia. In particular, faculty members capably modeled the indispensable characteristics that lifelong learners should possess. Without the presence of monetary incentives or self-promotion, faculty members furthered their knowledge creatively, passionately, and consistently, all of which contributed to participant confidence in their schools' desire to realize a Christian paideia. Similarly, faculty

members and school leaders capitalized on their knowledge by not only imparting new information to students but also visibly demonstrating the fruitful effects from the successful application of knowledge.

One discernible attribute of the Christian paideia voiced by participants was the evidence of sacrificial love by their teachers and administrators. Despite the weighty amount of responsibilities placed on educators, students expressed that they were cared for as individuals well beyond the confines of classroom teaching only. For example, wise counsel was offered to students by school leaders that was relevant to tragic challenges faced in life such as divorce or death of a parent. The extension of biblical teachings from the classroom to the realities of everyday life profoundly impacted participants and allowed them to solidify their belief in the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

Research sub-question three: How has being educated in a Christian paideia been beneficial or detrimental to the adult life of classical Christian high school graduates?

The adult lives of classical Christian high school graduates flourished greatly from a Christian paideia education. The well-rounded emphasis of their high school instruction equipped students with the tools and skills necessary to confidently approach different fields of knowledge, as well as the accompanying challenges that were inevitable with new endeavors. Notwithstanding the practical benefits from the aforementioned tools and skills, students were also introduced to a paradigm of thinking that shifted their long-term ambitions from career success to a vocational calling that was influenced by their unique gifts and Godly design. This paradigm was brought to fruition through the instilled paideia conviction that the Christian worldview should pertain to every dimension of life. Ideas formed through the Christian worldview were expected to translate into actions that wholly affected connections such as school, work, family, friends, church, etc. Based on the multitude of various other tangible

benefits shared by participants, along with the continued visible passion for learning that was evident from the interview conversations, it was apparent that the classical Christian schools studied had fulfilled the Christian paideia aspirations outlined within their respective mission/vision statements.

Research sub-question four: How do classical Christian high school graduates express their sense of obligation, if any, to uphold the standards of a Christian paideia?

There was a prevailing sentiment of thankfulness and admiration by participants for the Christian paideia experience. Students were appreciative of the unique and beneficial subjects that they were offered such as logic and rhetoric. The skills gained from these courses were acknowledged as a distinct advantage for participants in college. Furthermore, a collective gratefulness was also expressed for being introduced to timeless ideas such as truth, goodness, and beauty. The intimate knowledge of this ancient triad bestowed on participants the ability to enjoy their academic studies and extracurricular activities from a redeemed perspective. Most importantly, the authenticity of each participant's sustained personal relationship with the Lord was a testament to the Christian foundation that had been laid for students at their classical Christian high schools. In short, there was a manifest desire revealed by the study participants to uphold the standards of a Christian paideia.

Discussion

The purpose of the discussion below is to examine the subject study's findings in relationship to the theoretical and empirical literature that was previously reviewed in Chapter Two. With respect to theoretical framework, this discussion explains how this study extends and sheds new light on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. In addition, regarding the empirical literature, the following discussion describes how this study largely supports and

extends previous research, and what novel contributions this study adds to the field of Christian education.

Ecological Systems Theory

As previously discussed, this transcendental phenomenological study of Christian paideia amongst graduates of classical Christian high schools was grounded in the theoretical literature of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) EST. This study extended the research on this theory because no specific research was found applying EST to Christian paideia. Consistent with the foundational premises of EST, this study described and authenticated how the interactions that occurred, both within and between various contexts experienced in participants' lives, significantly impacted their human development. Furthermore, related with the EST conception of development, the Christian paideia schools studied also focused on how environmental interactions shaped what was perceived of learning content and how knowledge was acquired by students.

Coherent with EST's convictional notion that the fulfillment of an individual's greatest abilities is largely affected by broader social and institutional contexts that are interdependent, this phenomenological study revealed the routine and increasingly complex developmental interchanges (i.e., proximal processes) that occurred between students and several concentric/interlocked socio-cultural frameworks. Bronfenbrenner (1979) described this concentric framework through the following four layers of the environment, each with their own unique influencing characteristics: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. Employing the key themes identified in this study, the discussion below elaborates on how these themes extend or shed new light on EST's four socio-cultural contexts. The identification of themes through this phenomenological study, combined with the alignment of these themes with the related layers of the EST framework, provided for a better understanding of the main compelling dynamics for participants.

Microsystem. Participant face-to-face interactions and settings with their family and classical Christian school peers and faculty are examples of the microsystem for this study. There were a number of reciprocal interactions identified in this study that revealed the foundational microsystem element referred to as molar activities. As clarified earlier, molar activities show the evidence of development within an individual, combined with the most influential environmental factors that prompted that development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The strong sense of family present in the schools, conveyed through the perception that peers and faculty were cherished as brothers and sisters in Christ, advanced a healthy culture of unity, commitment, respect, purpose, and love. Beyond the pragmatic benefits of education, the immense amount of time invested daily and weekly in academic and extracurricular school activities was astutely viewed by participants as an occasion to be mentored by esteemed faculty members and renewed by the mutual edification of classmates. This process was described as a journey in pursuit of human flourishing, where enduring guidance from sincere friendships cultivated excellence, virtue, accountability, encouragement, and personal identity solidification.

One of the most influential environmental factors that prompted personal development was the relational/communal intimacy experienced by participants. Consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) understanding of the interactive significance between various contextual experiences, participants shared that the deep relational formation and nurturing at school also continued beyond the campus boundaries to personal family activities and religious life. In short, this level of determined relational cultivation led to a fervent and cohesive pursuit of God, which correspondingly evoked the gratification found from a sense of belonging, service to others, growing as a leader, and benefits of mentorship.

Mesosystem. Next, the mesosystem consisted of the interrelationships between participant microsystems such as home, church, and school. Consistent with Bronfenbrenner's

(1979) principles related to the intensification of developmental potential within the mesosystem, the Christian paideia education studied benefitted greatly from the communal trust, consensus of goals, and positive orientation between parents and schools. Mutually, the aforementioned stakeholders desired a divine purpose for students that was accomplished through an aligned school/home culture, which included routines, traditions, attitudes, and thoughtful instruction. Although parents were typically not involved with school life on a daily basis or conversely faculty/administrators with home life, mesosystem interconnectivity was still successfully maintained due to students' multi-setting participation and healthy inter-setting communications between parents and the schools. Since raising children in a complete protective bubble was an impossibility for parents, the Christian paideia core Ephesians 6:4 necessity of rearing children in the training and instruction of the Lord was realized through mesosystem interconnections.

Exosystem. The developmental effects from exosystem activities derived from distinct settings where participants were not actively involved; however, the decisions made in these settings significantly influenced the participants. Specifically, the extensive collection of transcendent benefits and tools gained by students from their Christian paideia education experience were all facilitated through purposeful decisions and actions within settings where they did not have direct involvement. For example, many of the participants pursued interdisciplinary college honors programs that were knowingly designed to complement the well-rounded academic experiences received from their classical Christian high schools. Similarly, the typical pursuits of secular academic culture, that are explicitly antithetical to the Christian worldview, produced a critical demand for students to attain the requisite skills necessary to defend biblical truth against secular falsehoods. Far-reaching strategic objectives pursued by classical Christian schools, as well as a variety of influences that impacted parental decision

making, were all exosystem factors that directly influenced participant development despite their lack of explicit involvement with these factors.

Macrosystem. The broad societal beliefs and cultural conditions that exerted influence on the Christian paideia (i.e., macrosystem effects) were shaped by historical priorities and modern emphases related to the continuation of the classical Christian education tradition. For example, participants in this study revealed the enduring Augustinian trickle down influence on thought where character formation was held to be the chief end of education. An important macrosystem ideology underlying this emphasis on virtue was the notion that the classical Christian journey in search of truth, goodness, and beauty nurtured God centered affections. Holistic learning, well-regarded by participants, was credited as a developmental foundation that affected every aspect of their lives and elevated their identity to a divine purpose beyond cognitive pragmatism alone.

Foundations for Classical Christian Schools

The literature review for this study underscored the importance of a Christian liberal arts education reflecting a healthy partnership between parents and school (Banke, Maldonado, & Lacey, 2012; Lawler, 2013; Pennings, Sikkink, Wiens, Seel, & Van Pelt, 2011). In particular, the attainment of a holistic education, including faith development, academic achievement, and community engagement, was connected to the successful formation of a cooperative alliance between parents and school faculty/administration. The relinquishment of duties to the school for children's academic and spiritual development would hinder parents' biblical responsibility to convey God's knowledge, understanding, and wisdom to their children (Lockerbie, 2005). The participant schools in this study embraced the Latin notion of *in loco parentis*, which means in the place of the parents. Although this Latin phrase may be mistakenly perceived as schools asserting their exclusive right to educate children, this study revealed the exact opposite of this

assertion. For example, the document analysis revealed, “Parents carry the God-given responsibility for educating their children. . . . The school serves as a means to assist parents in their life-long duty of instruction. . . . Authority over students is understood as delegated authority” (Mount Sinai Classical Academy, personal communication). The enduring influence from these classical Christian schools could only be sustained through the persistent and deliberate interactions between parents and children. Despite the growing independence of high school students as they progressed through each year of their education, parents were still encouraged to engage in thoughtful conversations with their children to help process what they were learning, as well as influence their growth in wisdom and virtue (Corinth Classical Academy, personal communication).

Next, the classical Christian approach to education was envisioned to foster spiritual formation that would result in the nurturing of intimate peer relationships that led to a richer faith in God (Pennings et al., 2014; Lawler, 2013; LeBlanc & Slaughter, 2012; Powell, Tisdale, Willingham, Bustrum, & Allan, 2012). This ideal was recognized in this study through the major theme that developed from the identification of distinguishing attributes of a Christian paideia, particularly the strong sense of family and considering peers and faculty/administration to be brothers and sisters in Christ. Likewise, the revealing and embodiment of a Christian worldview through the relational paideia experience inspired participants to not only lovingly encourage one another but also utilize the gifts and tools received in high school to positively impact their colleagues at the university (Banke et al., 2012; Pennings et al., 2011; Van Brummelen & Koole, 2012). Participants understood that their high school instruction in logical and critical thinking, discussion, rhetorical training, and exposure to the Great Books equipped them to apply and winsomely defend their Christian faith in all facets of higher learning and diverse realities of young adult daily life (Vaughan & Morgan, 2015).

With regard to how this study extended on previous research related to the foundations for classical Christian schools, it was notable to discover the breadth of abiding blessings that transpired from a Christian paideia education. In addition to the previously discussed themes addressing the valued aspects of generational faithfulness and brothers and sisters in Christ, this study also expounded on a diverse range of transcendent benefits and tools conveyed to participants. Furthermore, there was also an extensive amount communicated in this study about school pride and thankfulness, nurturing ethos that promoted varied discussions, and the cultivation of rightly ordered loves. Although excellent college and vocational preparation was a basic essential for classical Christian school stakeholders, there was a clear understanding shared that the Christian paideia education received sought to accomplish a far greater purpose than worldly achievement alone. Instead, this educational endeavor strived to fuel human flourishing through the manifestation of authentic Christian culture, character formation, personal espousal of faith, commitment to lifelong learning, and high regard for diligent effort.

Lastly, novel contributions this study added to the research on foundations for classical Christian schools were the identification of a number of common success factors (Council & Cooper, 2011). One success factor shared by all classical Christian schools studied was the ability of faculty and administration to vitally impact the overall character formation of students. Repeated testimonies were shared by participants about being influenced by faculty and administrators through visible demonstration of lifelong learning, consistent modeling of living the Christian life, kindly imparting sacrificial love, and wisely sharing needed counsel and thought inspiration. An additional success factor was the subtle skillfulness displayed by the schools to invoke a sense of school pride and thankfulness in their graduates. Resulting from the overall Christian paideia experience, participants shared that their education possessed an enduring quality, much like the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, that continued to positively

affect their lives in college. Participants were also thankful for the rigorous education that was provided in a relationally engaging manner, distinct set of practical learning tools that were conveyed, and opportunity to routinely engage in the historical dialectical tradition of the Great Conversation of Western civilization.

Modern Cultural and Educational Values

As discussed earlier, in contrast to the vertical orientation towards God and holistic focus of a classical Christian education, modern schooling has been largely defined by its particular emphasis on career success and pragmatism (Schultz, 2016). This study corroborated previous research that discussed the adeptness of the Greek communal education philosophy of paideia to holistically form an individual. The schools studied demonstrated a framework that allowed Christians to generationally convey desired culture, traditions, and beliefs through a faith community. As Hicks (1999) detailed and this study confirmed, Christian paideia prepared students to receive an inherited gift that inspired them to live fully in the present, grow in wisdom and grace, and ultimately experience the fullness of life intended by God. Although participants were well prepared in the Christian paideia for the academic rigors of higher education, the greater achievement revealed in this study was their appreciation for God's humanity, and the recognition that the cultivation of goodness laid a solid foundation for human flourishing.

As highlighted in this study's review of the research literature, the attainment of goals related to the achievement of a truly holistic education has not been widely evaluated. Furthermore, research is also limited on the lasting moral efficacy of a Christian high school education. Promisingly, however, based on the interviews conducted for this study, all participants displayed robust confirmation for a continued healthy relationship and pursuit of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, this study revealed that classical Christian high school graduates

viewed the purpose of their education distinctly as an indispensable transcendent moral guide where God's sovereignty was acknowledged across every academic subject, extracurricular activity, and facet of life. Consistent with Homrighausen's (1939) conviction that education should be exponentially more than a conveyance of mere information, participants reflected the necessary knowledge, passion, and action to grasp the compelling, well-ordered, and purposeful virtues of biblical truth.

Cultivation of Virtue

A number of confirmations were identified in this study related to previous research on the cultivation of virtue emphasis of Christian education. For example, the transformative end-objective of mastering a multifaceted range of ideals, along with the successful transference of distinctly Christian values, was evident in all schools studied. A clear understanding of the Christian gospel and significance of biblical authority was also communicated by participants, which supported their conviction in the morally transcendent purpose of their classical Christian education. Likewise, Francis, ap Sion, and Village's (2014) findings were strongly confirmed that graduates of independent Christian schools voiced that their high school education was distinctive compared to other schools due to its holistic nature and faith development focus. Participants were very mindful of the sacrifice and investment that their parents had made to provide for them such a unique and valuable classical Christian education.

As discussed previously, the Apostle Paul encouraged parents in Ephesians 6:4 to raise their children in the paideia of the Lord. However, the literature review did not identify a definitive answer as to whether the Apostle Paul's appeal for paideia was a directive for parents to provide a distinctly Christian education. Nevertheless, when considering that paideia has been equated to cultivation and that children are shaped based on existing cultural standards and tradition (Biesta, 2012), this study's discussion of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) EST alignment with

the educational process revealed the array of consequential interactions that students experienced within their educational circles of influence. As detailed through the themes of iron sharpening iron, relational intimacy, faculty/administration discipleship, Christ-centered worldview, life preparation, and rightly ordered loves, students were purposefully shaped and prepared through the practical knowledge imparted and moral principles embraced within a Christian paideia. Participants were equipped to successfully speak to both Christian and non-Christian beliefs and trusted in biblical truth concerning God creating and upholding the universe through His infinite knowledge and dominion.

Through the experiences and school rhythms revealed by participants, this study exemplified God's continued redemptive purpose to seek out the inherent quality of good in all things, secular or Christian, and employ newfound knowledge, understanding, and wisdom for divine pursuits. Likewise, the paideia ingredient of *arête*, or virtue, was portrayed by students through this study. As explained by Hicks (1999) and substantiated by participants, an authentic life of *arête* reflected a veneration for and acting upon of goodness, an aspiration to pursue and create beauty, and endeavoring to reach excellence in everything. Coherent with Augustine's belief in the Christian imperative of paideia (Kevane, 1970), participants shared that the Christian paideia enriched their understanding of the Scriptures, visibly showed in what ways to live the Christian life, and that the entire process of education should be inclusive of religious learning. The aforementioned objectives were only possible through dedicated faculty who exhibited the following fundamental characteristics for intentional spiritual formation in students: Christ-like attitude, spiritual disciplines, and conducive classroom climate (Moore, 2014). Participants described an admirable job from their faculty of modeling moral decision making and values synthesization, as well as fostering a balanced learning climate where students were loved yet challenged.

Holistic Education

The notion that education is an experience that affects the whole person, including the emotional, spiritual, and rational sides of students (Hicks, 1999), was corroborated with this research. In addition to traditional academic subjects, this holistic educational experience was also accomplished in the participant schools through a wide variety of extracurricular activities and relational interactions that were deeply impactful and lasting for students. In particular, research on the effect of a strong Christian mentor relationship, that functioned in a diverse environment where beliefs could be freely explored (Powell et al., 2012), was clearly confirmed through the participant testimonies related to their faith development. Although participants were attentive to the multitude of challenges that school administrators faced to maintain long-term success in their schools, they unquestionably held to the belief that spiritual development was of central importance to administrators, and leaders were determined to inspire the school community to a much greater transcendent purpose.

Although Homrighausen (1945) concluded that the Christian paideia ultimately disintegrated in the 20th century as the church lost focus on its divine function and the importance of the Christian worldview, the participants in this study described a values-driven education that was sincerely focused on the redemption of piety. Similar to Christianity experienced in colonial America, the Christian paideia reflected in the schools studied flourished because of the strong relationship and shared vision particularly between the home and school. Each respective entity reinforced the totality of the Christian message to students during the invaluable time that they were given for discipleship. In short, the participant classical Christian schools diligently sought to eliminate the modern dichotomy between religion and education.

Homrighausen (1949) emphasized that theological meaning could be understood both through explicit and obscure pedagogical methods that ultimately unite to form the fabric of

culture. With this conception in mind, participants detailed a varied collection of elements that shaped their Christian paideia experience. For example, faculty/administrator mindsets and perceptions of life greatly impacted the formation of students. As highlighted previously, a profound illustration of this impact was shared by one participant. “There’s this little secret that I was let in on . . . essential to the joy of life. . . . my 10th grade teacher called deep joy, which is more technically termed the transcendental experience of beauty.” The illumination of this one idea literally changed the trajectory of how this student perceived and experienced education. Participants also shared examples of personal growth through diversified activities such as film club, mock trial, athletics, theater, house system, current event discussions, and travel. A common thread interwoven amongst all these activities was a tight knit community of Christians that encouraged, challenged, and enjoyed one another. Intriguingly, the wisdom gained through these intimate relationships and experiences was bridged with a corresponding relational growth with God that was followed by a greater understanding of His eternal purposes.

Enculturation and Community

Many of the major themes identified in this study, such as brothers and sisters in Christ, generational faithfulness, and transcendent benefits and tools, corroborated previous research pertaining to the impact that individual experiences have on the formation of identity and ideology. Specifically concerning identity formation, one participant again shared, “The greatest contribution that my classical school has given in my life personally was the security of my identity.” This contribution was realized through the cultivation of a safe environment where an identity founded in Christ could be secured, and relationships with peers and faculty, who shared the same hunger for learning and growth in Christ, could be nurtured. Previous research related to the emphasis of many Christian schools bolstering spiritual development efforts in order to positively influence society and culture was distinctly confirmed by this study. Participants were

also very aware of the extent and level of positive impact that their respective classical Christian schools had on furthering their cultural knowledge and involvement.

As discussed previously, the realization of a Christian paideia was found to be closely tied with the application of Christian learning to all spheres of life. Nevertheless, Van Brummelen and Koole (2012) identified the following barriers that classical Christian schools faced that could severely inhibit the realization of a Christian paideia: lack of a unified vision within a school community, pursuit of individualistic goals, and limitations on time and resources. The three aforementioned barriers were not noticeably perceived in the five Texas schools studied, and it appeared that the envisioned application of Christian principles to all realms of students' lives was visibly evident.

If the future success of a country is believed to be heavily based upon the cultivation of the minds and character of children, the participants in this study offered an encouraging example of the positive impact from affirmative relational influences. The worldviews and consequent actions of participants were profoundly shaped by an array of fruitful relationships with siblings, parents, friends, teachers, coaches, administrators, and church leaders. Within each relationship, a steady transformation was happening within the life of the student as a result of the mirroring of Christ-like virtue from the various personal connections. Although students expressed having to face the unfortunate challenges that are inevitable in a fallen world (e.g., divorce, relational conflict, death, etc.), they followed-up these testimonies with details on how their Christian paideia education had increased their self-confidence and effectively prepared them to overcome adversities and lovingly engage with diverse communities.

Attainment of School Mission and Goals

Lastly, this study confirmed previous research that stressed the importance of purposeful leadership from school administration to achieve desired outcomes in education. A significant

priority from leadership recognized by participants was the clear communication of a school's mission/vision and strategic objectives to all stakeholders, as well as the execution of these goals. Furthermore, this clarity of direction was also evident from the review and analysis of various school documents that clearly affirmed the strategic priorities for each respective school. Likewise, participants unequivocally shared the deep level of connection, encouraging attitudes, and joyful involvement shown by the faculty and administrators in their schools. These educators were unquestionably imparting their personal passions to students through sacrificial love, diligent study and preparation, and inspiration from their Christian faith. One of the greatest enduring contributions provided by these educators was the cultivated skill of students to distinguish, examine, and converse about the fundamental differences between the secular and Christian worldviews.

Despite the wide range of challenges and emotions, both spiritually and academically, faced by students as they transitioned from high school to the university, this study exemplified the attainable positive results arising from strong faculty and student mentorships, peer support of one another, and the divine relational guidance that flows from unified spiritual faithfulness. Contrary to many 21st century educational proposals and frameworks that focused predominately on the delivery of information and measurable productivity and efficiency factors, the classical Christian schools studied demonstrated a commitment to lifelong relationship building, growth in moral maturity, and the mastering of imperative skills necessary for personal development. This model of education was reflective of Lawrence Cremin's ideal for teaching that imagined a purposeful transmission of culture through the transference of knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, and sensibilities (Cervera, 2014; Howe, 1982; Smylie, 1989; Wagoner, 1978). Akin to Christian paideia, this transference was only achievable through both formal education and supporting influences such as family, friends, church, recreational activities, and vocation. As

envisioned, the lived experiences of Christian paideia described in this study revealed the value and need for the restoration of the unifying and impactful benefits found in this biblical form of education.

Implications

The results of this transcendental phenomenological study, that sought to describe the essence of the shared lived experiences in a Christian paideia for classical Christian high school graduates, revealed key theoretical, empirical, and practical implications and recommendations for all individuals desiring to contribute to the rearing of children by means of biblical training and instruction. The specific purpose of this section is to discuss the aforementioned central implications, along with particular recommendations, applicable to various educational stakeholders such as students, parents, faculty, Christian school and church administration/governance, and leaders in national Christian school associations.

Theoretical Implications

Similar to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) change from a devoted belief in traditional lab based and psychometric research methods to a greater understanding of the power of phenomenology and social context, Christian parents and church leaders, who are accountable for the provision of a holistic biblical education, must also recognize that this undertaking cannot be solely accomplished through the limited hours available at home and church. Corresponding with the basic principles of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) EST, this study revealed a purposefully designed group of interdependent people and processes that were reciprocally affected by the behavior and development of classical Christian high school students. The participants studied were impacted by the multidimensional features of the environment that comprised their respective paideia; however, these individuals were similarly responsible for the beneficial influence on their own social environment. Although the notion may appear rudimentary that a Christian student's ideal

developmental environment should not involve limited settings, but rather vital interconnections and aligned influences between contexts and larger surroundings, it does not appear that many parents and church leaders appreciate the influential nature of a Christian paideia education. With approximately 90% of children in the United States attending public schools, it is evident that the benefits gained from a private Christian education are not necessarily deemed worthy of significant sacrifice or importance (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Although it is essential to acknowledge that the costs of a private Christian education are prohibitive for many families, income demographics would be expected to reveal a significant number of families in the United States that could feasibly afford a private education but do not consciously value or recognize the lasting benefits identified in this research.

As reflected in the classical Christian schools studied, examining the Christian paideia through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) EST helped to bridge a gap between theory and research. As explained in Chapter Two, the above-mentioned gap evolved due to the primary developmental focus being on the individual, rather than a greater understanding of the actual environment in which the individual lived and operated. While differentiated learning initiatives certainly have merit in education, it is important for teachers and school administrators to also recognize the value of the totality of contextual influences on the development of an individual (Walls, 2016).

Specifically, Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasized that the realization of a person's abilities was dependent largely on the broader social and institutional context of individual activities. This wider influence impacting the realization of personal potential was clearly expressed by one participant as follows, "Had I not had that safe community, that was willing to challenge me, that cared enough about my vocation, then I would've probably given up on myself and not had this strong identity that I have today." Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner (1979)

stressed that developmental potential heightened from mutual trust, consensus of goals, and positive orientation between settings such as home and school. These specific setting attributes were clearly revealed by graduates when describing the essence of the shared lived experiences in a Christian paideia. As a result, a better understanding and awareness of these attributes would also greatly benefit all Christian high school students and parents seeking to gain the greatest potential from their education, as well as national Christian school associations who are advocating broadly for this style of schooling.

Ultimately, mutual trust, consensus of goals, and positive orientation between settings should become key strategic priorities for all Christian education stakeholders. Nevertheless, it is vital to recognize that these strategic priorities also require the assistance of time (i.e., chronosystem) to fully develop. Renn and Arnold (2003) clarified, “The accumulation of life experiences over time is a lasting effect of the chronosystem on the individual, and students arrive at college with unique characteristics shaped by common social forces and by individual experiences” (p. 273). In short, the Christian paideias studied confirmed the enduring developmental value resulting from the collective efforts of a commonly aligned community whose main purposes extend well-beyond high school or college graduation. Therefore, I would recommend the following:

- Christian parents and church leaders, who are ultimately responsible for the transference of biblical wisdom to children, must recognize the weight of this responsibility and realize that this duty cannot be solely fulfilled through the limited hours available at home and church. Pastors must not be fearful of encouraging the 90% of public school parents, on average, in their congregations to consider the value and ultimate necessity of a Christian paideia education. Furthermore, parents that are sincerely called to action by

this pastoral encouragement regarding education must be prepared to make financial sacrifices, if needed, to make a Christian paideia education realistic for their family.

- Christian schools and national Christian education associations should carefully evaluate and consider the themes discussed and experiences shared within this study. Following this evaluation, I would recommend that strategic marketing plans be amended or developed by these organizations, in order to incorporate the vital justifications revealed in this study for an authentic Christian paideia education.

Empirical Implications

A key empirical implication that emerged from this study's literature review and corresponding research findings was the crucial need for the advancement of a Christian paideia education to counter the rhetoric and pervasive influences of secular humanism. Specifically, Gruenwald (2016) explained that postmodernism was challenging full human potential in community due to its inherent challenges of freedom and virtue, particularly with objective normative standards being undermined and distinctions between good and evil being clouded. The detrimental ramifications from an indiscriminate adoption of a postmodern worldview affect every educational stakeholder addressed in this study. As shown, the antidote to a worldview that ultimately thwarts full human potential is the holistic heart, soul, and mind centered Christian paideia education that rightly focuses on human flourishing. Educational stakeholders should realize that a thriving Christian culture is possible, akin to the participant experiences detailed, through determined efforts to cultivate virtue/character formation, accountability, encouragement, personal espousal of faith, excellence/work ethic, and commitment to lifelong learning. In contrast to Lockerbie's (2005) findings in most secular education institutions, the classical Christian schools studied had not replaced the grand tradition of truth, goodness, and beauty with postmodern obsessions.

As highlighted by Schultz (2016) and Adler (1991), there was a distinct difference between the mainstream public school focus on making good and productive workers, and the contrasting classical Christian school focus, where the importance was on yielding virtuous leaders and preparing them for their life's vocational calling through the impartation of a liberal education. The realization of a more transcendent education, as described above, has unfortunately not been fully comprehended by most educational leaders. However, there have been select Christian educators that have understood that the central task of education was a process by which communities generationally convey their cultural intellect and character through a range of intangibles such as Christ-like attitudes, enduring relationships, and sound habits (Clark & Jain, 2013; Jaeger, 1939). Broadly speaking, educational stakeholders, including students, parents, faculty, Christian school and church administration/governance, as well as leaders in national Christian school associations, will ideally recover the understanding that the notion and experience of classical Christian paideia is ultimately found, not engineered, through the independent discovery of ideas that lead to the historical continuation of the Great Conversation (Hicks, 1999). Most likely, this recovery is only probable through a trickle-down effect stemming from the initial far reaching and concentrated efforts of national Christian school associations and churches who have the ability and respect to meaningfully impact schools and families at the local level. Therefore, I would strongly recommend that local churches and national organizations, such as the Association of Classical Christian Schools and the Society for Classical Learning, purposefully invite well-versed Christian paideia speakers to teach at parenting workshops, leadership training sessions, conferences, etc. This sustained grass roots effort will ultimately generate the momentum necessary to foster substantive enrichments within the field of Christian education. The process of informing parents, pastors, and educators

of the benefits and necessity of a Christian paideia education will also make their respective callings more rewarding.

Practical Implications

There are numerous stakeholder groups discussed below that are impacted by the practical implications of this research. As clarified above, this study highlighted a collection of interdependent people and processes at each school that were mutually affected by the multidimensional features of the Christian paideia environment and experiences.

Students. The millennial generation appears to place a greater importance on the experiential qualities of all life activities, including their education. Furthermore, as students progress in their K-12 education and begin to form stronger opinions regarding educational options/offerings, parents tend to gradually relinquish decision making control and resolute schooling preferences. This scenario was confirmed by the participants in this study as they described the fact that many of their peers left their small classical Christian high schools for larger public schools that offered a greater amount of perceived opportunities. As alluded to previously, while reflecting on the unfortunate departure of peers from her classical Christian school, Becky (personal communication, February 14, 2018) explained,

I also felt like they were leaving behind such a strong community of like-minded thinkers, and a place where you're free to talk about the hard issues and debate it out and bring Christianity and the Gospel and scripture into the talk without feeling awkward or like you're going to be persecuted for it.

As students in small classical Christian schools are approaching high school and begin to consider their forthcoming choices and aspirations, it is essential that the benefits and vision for a complete Christian paideia education through graduation are engagingly communicated to them.

Regarding a Christian paideia education, the degree of relational depth, lasting impact, real-

world benefits, and experiential joy expressed by participants in this study would greatly benefit middle school students who are considering a change to a larger public or private high school that offer a wider array of curricular and extracurricular choices. The lasting benefits and skills that students acquire from a paideia experience at a classical Christian school may far outweigh the short-term enjoyment received from a school with a variety of disparate offerings.

Parents. The sub-theme of parental impact, under the generational faithfulness discussion in this study, should reawaken and encourage parents regarding the influential role that they play in the decisions and day-to-day involvement of their children's education. As emphasized previously, the imperative of a Christian paideia education for children was clearly necessitated by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:4. Likewise, the responsibility for parents to sustain Christendom was communicated in verses such as Psalm 145:4, "One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts." Participant interviews and school documents analyzed for this study distinctly emphasized the point that parents do not have to abdicate the biblical education of their children to the church or school. Parents, schools, and churches are mutually accountable for the creation of a holistic educational partnership that will enculturate children and fulfill God's calling for generational faithfulness.

Similar to the above-mentioned need for students to possess a greater understanding of the Christian paideia experience, parents should also capitalize on the valuable feedback from classical Christian school graduates in this study. The tangible feedback and details from this study will equip parents to support the effective recovery of the Christian paideia notion and fully comprehend, as well as communicate, the enduring qualities of this educational cornerstone. In addition, the findings from this study will also confirm for parents that the financial sacrifices made to provide their children a classical Christian education are well worth the investment. Although many students do not understand and appreciate the lifelong gift of a

Christian paideia education while in high school, parents should be uplifted by the depth of participant gratitude expressed in this study for the distinct instruction and mentorship received from their classical Christian schools.

Faculty. Comparable to the awakening that this study should stimulate in parents, faculty members of classical Christian schools should equally benefit from this study's discourse on the momentous impact that they have on the overall character formation of students. Teachers should be inspired to bolster their passions and pursuits for lifelong learning even further, continue to authentically and joyfully model the Christian life, and remain faithful to the imparting of sacrificial love and the sharing of wise counsel filled with inspiring thought. Interestingly, through this study's theoretical perspective and phenomenological focus, the significance and intrinsic structure of God's plan for the generational conveyance of God's essential knowledge was wonderfully revealed. Participants recognized that their teachers sharing of knowledge stemmed from the overflow of their heart and devoted academic and biblical training. This insight was consistent with the principle found in Luke 6:45, "The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." As teachers reflect on this study's findings, it will be important for them to also remember that a vibrant and complete education must extend beyond a particular subject, logical ambition, such as college or career success, and even the time and physical constraints imposed by traditional education. The faculty members discussed by participants in this study revealed a paradigm of learning that encompassed a holistic conviction for Christian education that influenced every aspect of life, both inside and outside the classroom.

The ability for teachers to faithfully model the Christian life is paramount to fulfilling the major purpose of Christian paideia. This modeling process is fundamentally accomplished

through the ability of teachers to not merely deliver information, rather the enduring impact will result from them equipping students with the unique skills necessary to practically connect the Bible with everyday living. Likewise, in the midst of this equipping process, formative relationships between teachers and students should develop that foster an environment where deeper conversations occur, and constructive levels of accountability and encouragement are experienced. The very act of teaching and observing students achieve genuine understanding is rewarding in itself. However, the eternal purposes, that are conceivable through the sacrificial love and wise counsel conveyed from teacher to student in a Christian paideia, should motivate educators to wholly embrace and delight in their vocation as a divine calling.

Christian school leaders. Administrators, board members, and leaders in national school associations, such as the Society for Classical Learning and the Association of Classical Christian Schools, are tirelessly seeking ideas to aid in the continuous improvement and purposeful expansion of the classical Christian school movement. By describing the essence of the shared lived experiences in a Christian paideia for graduates at five different Texas high schools, this study provides these influential stakeholders definitive feedback to support the promotion and targeted improvement of schools. Although most schools desire enrollment growth for financial reasons, the participants in this study described remarkable personal experiences resulting from the quaint environments of their schools. In many respects, students were able to be involved in more activities than their public school peers due to the actual necessity for participation within each extracurricular event. This unique context nurtured the environment that allowed for the very impactful relational intimacy and discipleship of students that was highlighted in this study. As a result, school leaders should not be disconcerted about the relatively small enrollment levels of most classical Christian schools. As Zechariah 4:10 encouraged, small beginnings should not be despised.

This study clearly revealed how five small schools had a considerable impact on 12 different students in a multitude of ways. For specific improvement and marketing strategies, school leaders could unpack each of the six sub-themes related to the transcendent benefits and tools detailed in this study. In particular, the balance of academic rigor, subject diversity, service focus, rhetorical development, extracurricular pursuits, and biblical training portrayed an educational option that was clearly superior to most alternatives. Likewise, the advantageous life preparation described by participants prepared them to winsomely engage their communities and successfully face the challenges of college and adult life. Lastly, the common aspiration for all educators is to cultivate a robust enthusiasm for learning within all students. Christian school leaders can benefit from the orthodoxy and orthopraxy revealed by participants, concerning their Christian paideia experience, and how this can fuel passion for learning. The resounding sense of discovery and desire for God's truth echoed by participants should serve as the rallying cry for school leaders as they strive to advance the principal mission of classical Christian education, which is ultimately encompassed within the Christian paideia vision.

Church pastors. As highlighted previously, embracing a Christian worldview, fostering a continued relationship with a solid mentor, and remaining active in a church community have all been found to be important practices to sustain the Christian way of life (Garber, 2007). Furthermore, consistent with the testimonies and findings of this study, the Christian paideia experience is an exceptional means to realize the aforementioned sustaining practices. With pastors having the biblical responsibility to shepherd those individuals within their care towards a continued engagement with the gospel, a greater emphasis by pastors should be placed on ensuring that their congregants are well-informed of the significance and benefits to children resulting from a Christian paideia education. As discussed within this study, churches have a central role to fulfill in the education and support of a Christian paideia for children but have

unfortunately lost sight of this role as demonstrated in the general lack of support for Christian education. Specifically, Church pastors should value the depictions given in this study of the broad and unified relational Christian discipleship that students received through a partnership of pastors, parents, and school teachers. In summary, one participant concluded that the moral alignment of his church, home, and school communities was a learning experience for him that instilled a set of shared values related to discipline, wisdom, purity, faithfulness, and applicability of the Bible (Evan, personal communication, April 18, 2018). Again, churches have the ability and respect to meaningfully impact schools and families at the local level in support of a vibrant recovery of Christian paideia.

Delimitations and Limitations

The following section details the purposeful decisions, or delimitations, that were made to define the scope and focus of this study, in conjunction with the rationale behind these decisions. Overall, these delimiting decisions were intended to assist in the more effective answering of the proposed research questions. Furthermore, limitations, or potential weaknesses, of the study that could not be controlled are also discussed below.

First, the transcendental phenomenological approach was specifically chosen because of its emphasis on understanding the meanings and essence of an experience, as well as how participants make sense of the experience (Grbich, 2013). As explained by Grbich (2013), capturing the essence of an experience, such as Christian paideia, could be successfully accomplished using phenomenology due to its primary focus on describing the everyday, first-hand, happenings of participants. Using Moustakas's (1994) phenomenological approach, the exploration of life experiences from 12 classical Christian high school graduates yielded a rich description of Christian paideia.

Next, participants in this study were delimited to five Texas high schools. This decision was made due to my preference to conduct the individual interviews using primarily a face-to-face format. With a desired maximum driving distance of eight hours from my hometown of Lubbock, Texas, I was able to conduct nine of the 12 interviews predominantly on the respective Texas college campuses of the participants. Due to geographic constraints, the remaining three individual interviews, and both focus group interviews, were completed successfully using Skype.

Additionally, from the various educational models offered within the independent school realm, classical Christian high schools were selected due to the fact that they characteristically possess a greater familiarity with the notion of Christian paideia. Prior to contacting the headmasters for approval at the five participating classical Christian schools, an external examination was performed to ensure that the central tenets of Christian paideia were publicly emphasized by each school. Similarly, participants were limited to classical Christian school graduates who had experienced Christian paideia over their four years of high school and ideally studied under the tutelage of faculty and administrators that embraced Christian paideia imperatives. In order to have a fresh recollection of their experience, participants were limited in age from 18 to 22 years old. Finally, participants were also asked to acknowledge a passionate and sincere interest in gaining further understanding regarding the nature and meanings of Christian paideia through this research. The intent of this last delimitation was to hopefully identify participants who appreciated the benefits gained from lifelong learning and would reveal a contemplative nature that would be truly valuable to this study.

It is also important to note that this study had limitations, or potential weaknesses, that could not be completely controlled. For example, as underscored by Creswell (2013), participants in a phenomenological study must be attentively chosen to ensure that they have all

experienced the phenomenon being studied. This is necessary in order for the researcher to strive for a common understanding or essence at the conclusion of the study. Due to geographic constraints and needed philosophical understandings by the schools, participants were again restricted to five Texas classical Christian schools. Participants living in other regions of the United States may have a different perspective of Christian paideia based on the various cultural effects that influence the array of stakeholders in schools.

Another limitation to this study was the fact that 11 of the 12 participants were Caucasian. One participant was from Lebanese descent. Although the perceived lack of ethnic variety was never a focal point of discussion with the participants, it would be thought-provoking to explore if race would affect the perception of the Christian paideia experience in any significant ways. Due to the sampling procedure chosen for this study, race was not a specific consideration for selecting participants.

The final likely limitation would be my personal involvement with Christian paideia. As highlighted previously, as a co-founder, former board chairman, current headmaster, and faculty member of a classical Christian school, the pursuit of a Christian paideia has been an instrumental part of my personal and professional experience. Due to the potential incorporation of assumptions into the analysis of data, Creswell (2013) emphasized that the bracketing of personal experiences may be problematic for a researcher who is directly involved with a phenomenon. However, a systematic and ongoing process of epoche was utilized for this study, and Creswell's (2013) novel understanding of bracketing, as a suspension of personal thoughts to reflectively cultivate curiosity, was also utilized to strengthen this research.

Recommendations for Future Research

In light of this study's findings, limitations, and delimitations placed on the study, there are a number of recommendations and directions for future research outlined below. To begin,

there are two suggested qualitative research designs that could advance and corroborate the existing research on Christian paideia. First, a classical ethnographic study could provide a more detailed description and validation of the culture, values, and behaviors portrayed by the 12 participants in this study regarding their classical Christian schools. Consistent with the theoretical foundation of this study, which was based on Bronfenbrenner's EST, classical ethnography's theoretical emphasis on structural functionalism and interactive social networks could provide an ideal opportunity to consider the distinguishable contributions and interactions of key stakeholders regarding the realization of a Christian paideia (Grbich, 2013). In addition, the ethnographic design would allow for an extended observational study within a specific school that would result in a description of the whole culture, broader elaboration of key stakeholder opinions, careful documentation of visual observations, and the opportunity to ask more specific questions related to the Christian paideia experience (Grbich, 2013). Although the 12 participants in this study revealed a consistent set of shared beliefs and acceptance of the Christian worldview, an ethnographic analysis could offer a greater understanding of how a shared culture works, specifically what participants in this culture need to know and do for it to function effectively (Creswell, 2013).

A second qualitative design that could further the understanding of Christian paideia would be a case study on a particular influential faculty member or administrator. Based on this study's testimonies, these two groups of educators played a meaningful role in the discipleship of students. A case study could reveal definitive guidance and understanding for faculty and administrators to authentically and consistently deliver a Christian paideia. In contrast to the ethnographic study's pursuit of how an overall culture works, a case study would provide for a more in-depth understanding, including an exploration of particular individual challenges, for two of the key stakeholder groups within a Christian paideia (Creswell, 2013).

Next, there are a number of additional populations that should be studied to further the knowledge and understanding of Christian paideia. As discussed above, due to geographic constraints and needed philosophical understandings by the schools, participants were limited to five Texas classical Christian schools. However, the varied cultural influences on education that exist in the diverse regions of the United States could noticeably alter the key themes and essence of Christian paideia revealed through a study. Political, economic, ethnic, religious, and familial dynamics can all diverge by geographic region and could result in a differing description of Christian paideia than what was revealed in this study.

Furthermore, although classical Christian schools possess some unique attributes that facilitate the successful delivery of a Christian paideia, it would be beneficial to consider this study's research questions in relation to other educational settings (e.g., traditional public school, charter school, traditional private Christian school, independent private school, and homeschool). Christian educators are called to work in all of the aforementioned school settings and are also biblically accountable to partner with parents to raise children in a Christian paideia. These various school settings offer a diverse range of cultural differences and challenges from the classical Christian schools studied and would expand the realm of understanding pertaining to perception and conveyance of a Christian paideia education.

Lastly, participants in this study were limited to classical Christian high school graduates ages 18 to 22 years old. Each of these students possessed a fresh recollection of their Christian paideia experience; however, it would be very insightful to complete a similar study for graduates that were 10 and 20 years from their high school graduation. Many of the themes identified in this study related to enduring qualities and benefits that were attributed to their Christian paideia education. Related to this study's research questions, a future study, comprised of participants with a greater amount of elapsed time from their high school graduations, could

assess the Christian paideia's continuing vitality of distinguishing attributes, lasting quality of schools' overt or covert pursuits, powerful effects on adult life, remaining sense of obligation to uphold standards, and remembrance of the overall experience.

Summary

The results of this research have effectively addressed the problem and purpose statements discussed in Chapter One of this study and also warrant the emphasizing of a number of important take-aways at the conclusion of this dissertation for continued reflection by educational stakeholders. With regard to the problem addressed by this research, the detailed findings have hopefully alleviated the general absence of understanding and appreciation for the immeasurable and indispensable enculturation benefits that transpire from classical Christian high school students living their life immersed in a Christian paideia. Furthermore, the purpose of this study has been successfully realized through the phenomenological analysis process that resulted in a rich description of the essence of the shared lived experiences in a Christian paideia for classical Christian high school graduates at five different Texas schools. One participant eloquently portrayed this essence as, "Christian Paideia, I think, that we have experienced is almost a living, breathing thing. . . . it's influenced the way that we live our lives and that we walk out our faith in our jobs and different areas." The take-aways detailed below embody the cornerstones of the Christian paideia experience.

First, the mutual amount of love and affection between students and teachers/administrators revealed in this study was moving. Although these relationships were initially formed through schools with traditional academic purposes, participants described how school leaders would sacrificially pour their lives and wisdom into students, which resulted in unique bonding experiences that extended well beyond academics. This discipleship was not solely about the pragmatic results of a rigorous education, instead character, leadership, and

cultivation of life skills formed the basis of instruction. Participants expressed a genuine feeling of being cared for and loved by both the words and actions of their high school teachers and administrators. Likewise, the counsel offered was intended to shape the thinking of students towards a realistic connection to authentically live out the Christian way of life. Although love and support were generously shown, participants also shared how their school leaders challenged them to live up to their full potential and capitalize on their God-given gifts. Interestingly, the utilization of God-given gifts was tangibly demonstrated to students through the passionate deployment of their school leaders' own skills and abilities. One participant affectionately described his love and admiration for his headmaster/teacher as, "He's just a guy that I would want to be, honestly. He was a really good model of just a really good Christian guy. . . . When he spoke, people paid attention, people respected him" (Roger, personal communication, March 2, 2018). Again, the depth and richness of love described by participants should inspire all educators to constantly be reminded of the momentous impact of their calling.

Next, the participants in this study possessed a remarkable level of intellectual curiosity and passion for learning. Consistent with the impact of school leaders detailed above, participants suggested that their passion for lifelong learning was cultivated by educators who avowed that learning was not limited to particular subjects or the classroom, rather the pursuit of truth was applicable to every aspect of life. This paradigm of learning also encouraged students to confidently pursue a vast array of interests and topics, which ultimately fostered an intrinsic desire within most of the participants to prefer interdisciplinary studies in higher education. Furthermore, participants expressed the sentiment that their Christian paideia education had equipped them with an advantageous set of learning tools related to their critical thinking abilities, problem solving, and rhetorical competency. This distinct set of tools wisely revealed the transcendental value present in these gifts, which was the capacity to find truth, goodness,

and beauty in the world. Hayden articulated, “It was through Corinth and through that small classroom where we learned to love what was right. We learned to yearn after the good and the true and the beautiful.” Students were trained to appreciate that a deep hunger for learning and curiosity was a redemptive pursuit that led to a greater appreciation for, and desire to worship, God.

The nurturing and beneficial educational pursuits described above occurred in a distinctively quaint community comprised of like-minded Christian peers and mentors. The relationships formed in this community allowed students to experience mutual edification, joy of friendship, and the discovery of rightly ordered loves. The considerable impact of this educational environment was portrayed by Hayden as, “I came to know my true friends there, and it was through these true friends that I came to truly know God.” The formational efficacy of the Christian paideia community stemmed from an alignment of vision between home, school, and church. Students received coherent instruction from mentors from all the various contexts in their lives. The outcomes from this coherent instruction were a sense of security and togetherness found from a family of Christian brothers and sisters, personal growth, along with a clarity and confidence of identity and vocational calling.

In conclusion, one of the most notable and inspiring take-aways from this study was the deep level of thankfulness and reverence expressed by participants for the Christian paideia education that they had received in high school. It was both substantiation, and a healthy reminder, to follow the Apostle Paul’s encouragement in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” Feelings of gratitude were repeatedly expressed by participants for the high-quality education that was received, particularly the relational investment that was made apart from the formal curriculum. Ongoing friendships between peers and school leaders from

high school were still bearing fruit through college, and many participants shared their desire to offer the unique gifts that they had received to others. For example, Evan explained, “I feel like spiritually and academically I’ve been given a huge gift, and so I want to serve students in return and pour back into the same system that produced me now.”

A major gift recognized by participants was their ability to bridge the gap between personal and academic beliefs. Contrary to culture at large, they were taught to not compartmentalize personal beliefs from academics or other aspects of life. Moreover, they were encouraged to eliminate barriers between various settings and apply beliefs concerning truths and falsehoods comprehensively. Similarly, thankfulness was also expressed for the time spent on apologetics and argumentation during high school. Students felt very equipped with the ability to compassionately conduct an argument that reflected understanding, commonality, and an absence of irrelevant fallacies. In short, affirmative words such as fortunate, blessed, and very thankful were used by participants to articulate how they felt about their Christian paideia experience. Reflecting on the divine outcomes from the Christian paideia education received through her classical Christian high school, Sarah shared, “My overall feeling is just a feeling of gratitude towards Mount Sinai Classical Academy and my parents and God for giving me that opportunity to go there.” As a researcher, I am also equally thankful for the opportunity to explore the biblical calling to impart a Christian paideia to all children.

REFERENCES

- Adler, M.J. (1982). *The paideia proposal: An educational manifesto*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Adler, M.J. (Ed.). (1991). *Great books of the western world. The syntopicon: An index to the great ideas* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica.
- Algera, H.F., & Sink, C.A. (2002). Another look at character education in Christian schools. *Journal of Research on Christian Education, 11*(2), 161-181.
doi:10.1080/10656210209484937
- Allen-Collinson, J., & Brown, R. (2012). I'm a reddie and a Christian! Identity negotiations amongst first-year university students. *Studies in Higher Education, 37*(4), 497-511.
doi:10.1080/03075079.2010.527327
- Amankwaa, L. (2016). Creating protocols for trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Cultural Diversity, 23*(3), 121-127.
- Ambrose Group. (2005). *Discover classical Christian education: The essential guide for parents* (4th ed.). Eagle, ID: Ambrose Group.
- Association of Classical and Christian Schools. (2016). [Bar Graph illustrating the growth in Association of Classical and Christian Schools members from 1993 to 2015.] Retrieved from www.accsedu.org/what-is-cce/statistics_at_a_glance
- Association of Classical and Christian Schools. (2017). *What is classical Christian education?* Retrieved from <https://classicalchristian.org/what-is-cce/>
- Banke, S., Maldonado, N., & Lacey, C.H. (2012). Christian school leaders and spirituality. *Journal of Research on Christian Education, 21*(3), 235-264.
doi:10.1080/10656219.2012.732806

- Beckman, J. E., Drexler, J. L., & Eames, K. J. (2012). "Faithful presence": The Christian school head, personhood, relationships, and outcomes. *Journal of School Choice*, 6(1), 104-127. doi:10.1080/15582159.2012.650096
- Bevan, M.T. (2014). A method of phenomenological interviewing. *Qualitative Health Research*, 24(1), 136-144. doi:10.1177/1049732313519710
- Biesta, G. (2012). Becoming world-wise: An educational perspective on the rhetorical curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 44(6), 815-826. doi:10.1080/002202272.730285
- Bowden, A., Fox-Rushby, J.A., Nyandieka, L., & Wanjau, J. (2002). Methods for pre-testing and piloting survey questions: Illustrations from the KENQOL survey of health-related quality of life. *Health Policy and Planning*, 17(3), 322-330.
- Bowen, G.A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27-40. doi:10.3316/QRJ0902027
- Bradbury-Jones, C., & Sambrook, S., & Irvine, F. (2009). The phenomenological focus group: An oxymoron? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 65(3), 663-671. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2648.2008.04922.x
- Bradfield, G. (2014). Growing disciples inventory (GDI) for self-assessment of Christian spiritual development. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 23(2), 130-153. doi:10.1080/10656219.2014.899478
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist*, 32(7), 513-531. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.32.7.513
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1978). The disturbing changes in the American family. *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, 4(2), 55-65.

- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Burns, M.K., & Warmbold-Brann, K. (2015). Ecological systems theory in school psychology review. *School Psychology Review, 44*(3), 249-261.
- Candal, C. S., & Glenn, C. L. (2012). Race relations in an Evangelical and a Catholic urban high school. *Journal of School Choice, 6*(1), 82-103. doi:10.1080/15582159.2012.650091
- Carr, N.D. (2003). *Classical and Christian paideia according to Saint Chrysostom, Saint Basil, and Saint Augustine* (Master's thesis). Retrieved from https://www.rts.edu/sharedresources/documents/global/Student_Theses/Carr%20-%20Paideia.pdf
- Castillo-Montoya, M. (2016). Preparing for interview research: The interview protocol refinement framework. *The Qualitative Report, 21*(5), 811-831.
- Cervera, Y.L. (2014). Negotiating the history of education: How the histories of indigenous education expand the field. *History of Education Quarterly, 54*(3), 362-383.
- Christensen, J. (2016). A critical reflection of Bronfenbrenner's development ecology model. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century, 69*, 22-28.
- Church, R.L., Katz, M.B., Silver, H., & Cremin, L.A. (1989). The metropolitan experience in American education. *History of Education Quarterly, 29*(3), 419-446.
- Clark, K. & Jain, R.S. (2013). *The liberal arts tradition: A philosophy of Christian classical education*. Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press.
- Coloma, R.S. (2013). Empire: An analytical category for educational research. *Educational Theory, 63*(6), 639-657.
- Connelly, L.M. (2016). Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *MedSurg Nursing, 25*(6), 435-436.

- Cope, D.G. (2014). Methods and meanings: Credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41(1), 89-91.
- Council, E.J., & Cooper, B.S. (2011). Leading classical Christian schools: An exploratory study of headmasters. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 20(2), 117-137.
doi:10.1080/10656219.2011.590708
- Cox, W.F. (2012). A Psalm 78 perspective on education. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 21(2), 174-187. doi:10.1080/10656219.2011.601648
- Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- D'Angour, A. (2013). Plato and play: Taking education seriously in ancient Greece. *American Journal of Play*, 5(3), 293-307.
- Darling, N. (2007). Ecological systems theory: The person in the center of the circles. *Research in human development*, 4(4), 203-217.
- Dawson, C. (1989). *The crisis of western education*. Steubenville, Ohio: Franciscan University Press.
- De Bruijn, S.M. (2014). Challenge for 21st century educators: Build a 1st century attitude. *Argumentor*, 3, 289-299.
- Deulen, A.A. (2013). Social constructivism and online learning environments: Toward a theological model for Christian educators. *Christian Education Journal*, 10(1), 90-98.
- Duerden, M.D., & Witt, P.A. (2010). An ecological systems theory perspective on youth programming. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 28(2), 108-120.
- Elsner, J. (2013). Paideia: Ancient concept and modern reception. *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 20(4), 136-152. doi:10.1007/s12138-013-0332-9

- Estep, J.R., Jr. (2002). Spiritual formation as social: Toward a Vygotskyan developmental perspective. *Religious Education, 97*(1), 141-163. doi:10.1080/00344080290060914
- Ferrari, M., & Okamoto, C.M. (2003). Moral development as the personal education of feeling and reason: From James to Piaget. *Journal of Moral Education, 32*(4), 341-355. doi:10.10800305724032000161???
- Fond-Harmant, L., & Gavrilă-Ardelean, M. (2016). The contribution of the human development theory for the education and mental health of the child. *Journal Plus Education, 14*, 174-181.
- Fowler, J.W. (2004). Faith development at 30: Naming the challenges of faith in a new millennium. *Religious Education, 99*(4), 405-421. doi:10.1080/00344080490513036
- Francis, L.J., ap Sion, T., & Village, A. (2014). Measuring the contribution of independent Christian secondary schools to students' religious, personal, and social values. *Journal of Research on Christian Education, 23*(1), 29-55. doi:10.1080/10656219.2014.882723
- Fusch, P.I., & Ness, L.R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report, 20*(9), 1408-1416.
- Gall, M.D., Gall, J.P., & Borg, W.R. (2007). *Educational research: An introduction* (8th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Gall, M.D., Gall, J.P., & Borg, W.R. (2010). *Applying educational research* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Garber, S. (2007). *The fabric of faithfulness: Weaving together belief and behavior*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Gemeinhardt, P. (2012). In search of Christian paideia education and conversion in early Christian biography. *Journal of Ancient Christianity, 16*(1), 88-98. doi:10.1515/zac-2012-0008

- Goldstein, L. (2008). Teaching the standards is developmentally appropriate practice: Strategies for incorporating the sociopolitical dimension of DAP in early childhood teaching. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 36(3), 253-260. doi:10.1007/s10643-008-0268-x
- Goodwin, D. (2016). Classical Christian schools. What happens when Christianity is silenced? *The Classical Difference*, 2(4), 18-23.
- Grbich, C. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Griffee, D.T. (2005). Research tips: Interview data collection. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 28(3), 36-37.
- Grosch, P. (2000). Paideia: Philosophy educating humanity through spirituality. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 5(2), 229-238.
- Gruenwald, O. (2002). Renewing the liberal arts: C.S. Lewis' essential Christianity. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 14(1/2), 1-24.
- Gruenwald, O. (2016). The postmodern challenge: In search of normative standards. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 28(1/2), 1-18.
- Grumet, M.R. (1986). The paideia proposal: A thankless child replies. *Curriculum inquiry*, 16(3), 335-344.
- Hancock, M.E., Amankwaa, L., Revell, M.A., & Mueller, D. (2016). Focus group data saturation: A new approach to data analysis. *The Qualitative Report*, 21(11), 2124-2130.
- Haskins, R., & Sawhill, I.V. (2016). The decline of the American family: Can anything be done to stop the damage? *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 667(1), 8-34.
- Hicks, D.V. (1999). *Norms & nobility: A treatise on education*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

- Homrighausen, E.G. (1939). Evangelism and Christian nurture. *The Christian Review*, 8(4), 271-278.
- Homrighausen, E. G. (1942). The new emphasis in Christian education. *Christendom*, 7(1), 81-89.
- Homrighausen, E.G. (1945). Wanted: The recovery of the Christian paideia. *Religion in Life*, 15(1), 126-136.
- Homrighausen, E.G. (1948). The Christian education problem today. *Christianity and Crisis*, 8(17), 130-132.
- Homrighausen, E.G. (1949). Christian theology and Christian education. *Religious Education*, 44, 353-363.
- Homrighausen, E.G. (1953). Theology and Christian education. *Religious Education*, 48(6), 415-421.
- Hoskins, M.L., & White, J. (2012). Relational inquiries and the research interview: Mentoring future researchers. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 19(3), 179-188. doi:10.1177/1077800412466224
- Howe, D.W. (1982, Summer). The history of education as cultural history. [Review of the book *American education: The national experience, 1783-1876*, by L.A. Cremin]. *History of Education Quarterly*, 22(2), 205-214.
- Howe, D.W. (2011). Classical education in America. *Wilson Quarterly*, 35(2), 31-36.
- Jacob, S.A., & Furgerson, S.P. (2012). Writing interview protocols and conducting interviews: Tips for students new to the field of qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 17, 1-10.
- Jaeger, W. (1939-1944). *Paideia: The ideals of Greek culture* (Vols. 1-3). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

- Jaeger, W. (1961). *Early Christianity and Greek paideia*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Jeynes, W.H. (2012). A meta-analysis on the effects and contributions of public, public charter, and religious schools on student outcomes. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 87(3), 305-335. doi:10.1080/0161956X.2012.679542
- Kay, W.K. (1996). Bringing child psychology to religious curricula: The cautionary tale of Goldman and Piaget. *Educational Review*, 48(3), 205-215.
doi:10.1080/0013191960480301
- Kelley, K., Clark, B., Brown, V., & Sitzia, J. (2003). Good practice in the conduct and reporting of survey research. *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*, 15(3), 261-266.
- Kennedy, R. (2012). Educating bees: Humility as a craft in classical and Christian liberal arts. *Christian Scholar's Review*, 42(1), 29-42.
- Kevane, E. (1970). Paideia and anti-paideia: The 'prooemium' of St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*. *Augustinian Studies*, 1, 153-180.
- Kiley, J., & Robinson, D.B. (2016). Exploring the factors that influence female students' decision to (not) enroll in elective physical education: A private school case study. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 62(1), 19-38.
- Kimball, C.N., Boyatzis, C.J., Cook, K.V., Leonard, K.C., & Flanagan, K.S. (2013). Attachment to God: A qualitative exploration of emerging adults' spiritual relationship with God. *Journal of Psychology & Theology*, 41(3), 175-188.
- Kinnaman, D. (2011). *You lost me: Why young Christians are leaving church...and rethinking faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Labuschagne, A. (2003). Qualitative research – Airy fairy or fundamental? *The Qualitative Report*, 8(1), 100-103.

- Laistner, M.L. (1951). *Christianity and pagan culture in the later Roman empire, with a translation of John Chrysostom's address on vainglory and the right way for parents to bring up their children*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Lawler, P. A. (2013). The place of liberal education in America. *Perspectives on Political Science*, 42(4), 226-232. doi:10.1080/10457097.2013.830903
- Lawrence, T.A. (2007). Philosophy, religion, and education American style: A literature review. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 16(2), 243-267.
doi:10.1080/10656210701650377
- LeBlanc, P., & Slaughter, P. (2012). Growing thinking Christians: An investigation of the outcomes of Christian education. *Journal of School Choice*, 6(1), 62-81.
doi:10.1080/15582159.2012.650087
- Lietaert Peerbolte, B.J., & Groenendijk, L. (2016). Family discourse, identity formation, and the education of children in earliest Christianity. *Annali Di Storia Dell'esegesi*, 33(1), 129-149.
- Littlejohn, R., & Evans, C.T. (2006). *Wisdom and eloquence: A Christian paradigm for classical learning*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.
- Lockerbie, D.B. (2005). *A Christian paideia: The habitual vision of greatness*. Colorado Springs, CO: Purposeful Design.
- Maddix, M.A. (2011). Unite the pair so long disjointed: Justice and empathy in moral development theory. *Christian Education Journal*, 8(1), 46-63.
- Marrou, H.I. (1956). *A history of education in antiquity*. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.

- Marrs, C. (2007). Paideia in America: Ragged Dick, George Babbitt, and the problem of a modern classical education. *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics*, 15(2), 39-56. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29737343>
- Miller, J.J. (2015, October). Back to basics: The resurgence of classical education. *National Review*. Retrieved from www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/inacademic
- Mitchell, M.B. (2015). *Spiritual nurture in developing the faith of Christian high school students: A phenomenological study* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/1131/>.
- Mizokawa, A., & Komiya, A. (2014). Social ecology and theory of mind. *Psychologia*, 57(2), 133-151. doi.org/10.2117/psysoc.2014.133
- Moerer-Urdahl, T., & Creswell, J.W. (2004). Using transcendental phenomenology to explore the “ripple effect” in a leadership mentoring program. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 3(2), 19-35.
- Moore, D. (2014). Most common teacher characteristics related to intentionality in student spiritual formation. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 23(3), 255-270. doi:10.1080/10656219.2014.963269
- Morse, J.M. (1995). The significance of saturation. *Qualitative Health Research*, 5(2), 147-149. doi:10.1177/104973239500500201
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2018). *Fast facts: Back to school statistics*. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372>
- Newell, T. (2012). Selling students on the character of liberal arts: A benefit of worldview awareness in education? *The Journal of General Education*, 61(3), 294-304.

- Onwuegbuzie, A.J., Collins, K.T., & Frels, R.K. (2013). Using Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to frame quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research. *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches*, 7(1), 2-8.
- O'Reilly, M., & Parker, N. (2012). Unsatisfactory saturation: A critical exploration of the notion of saturated sample sizes in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 13(2), 190-197.
doi:10.1177/1468794112446106
- Paideia. (n.d.). In *Biblehub Online*, Retrieved April 5, 2017, from <http://biblehub.com/greek/3809.htm>.
- Park, C.C. (1984). A reconsideration: Werner Jaeger's paideia. *Modern Age*, 28(2), 152-155.
- Parker, S.T. (1979, December). [Review of the book *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*, by L.S. Vygotsky]. *American Anthropologist*, 81(4), 956-957.
- Parker, S. (2006). Measuring faith development. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 34(4), 337-348.
- Pennings, R., Sikkink, D., Wiens, K., Seel, J., & Van Pelt, D. A. (2011). *Cardus Education Study: Do motivations for private religious Catholic and Protestant schooling align with graduate outcomes?* Hamilton, Canada: Cardus. Retrieved from https://www.cardus.ca/research/education/survey_schedule/
- Pennings, R., Sikkink, D., Berner, A., Smith, C., Berends, M., Dallavis, J., & Skiles, S. (2014). *Cardus Education Study: Private schools for the public good*. Hamilton, Canada: Cardus. Retrieved from https://www.cardus.ca/research/education/survey_schedule/
- Perrin, C.A. (2004). *An introduction to classical education: A guide for parents*. Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press.

- Peterson, D.C. (2012). *A comparative analysis of the integration of faith and learning between ACSI and ACCS accredited schools* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED549042>.
- Poch, S. (2005). Higher education in a box. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 19(3), 246-258. doi:10.1108/09513540510591020
- Powell, E.S., Tisdale, T., Willingham, M., Bustrum, J., & Allan, C. (2012). Faith development in graduating Christian college seniors. *Christian Higher Education*, 11(3), 177-191. doi:10.1080/15363759.2010.515475
- Probuska, D. (2016). Against relativism. The importance of truth in the ethics of St. John Paul II. *The Person and the Challenges*, 6(1), 29-38. doi:10.15633/pch.1655
- Reese, W.J. (2013). In search of American progressives and teachers. *History of Education*, 42(3), 320-334. doi:10.1080/0046760X.2013.795616
- Renn, K.A., & Arnold, K.D. (2003). Reconceptualizing research on college student peer culture. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 74(3), 261-291.
- Rennick, L.A., Smedley, C.T., Fisher, D., Wallace, E., & Kim, Y.K. (2013). The effects of spiritual/religious engagement on college students' affective outcomes: Differences by gender and race. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 22(3), 301-322. doi:10.1080/10656219.2013.850996
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2008). *Lincoln and Guba's evaluative criteria*. Retrieved from <http://www.qualres.org/HomeLinc-3684.html>
- Rubin, H.J., & Rubin, I.S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Rupert, D.J., Poehlman, J.A., Hayes, J.J., Ray, S.E., & Moultrie, R.R. (2017). Virtual versus in-person focus groups: Comparison of costs, recruitment, and participant logistics. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, *19*(3), 1. doi:10.2196/jmir.6980
- Rutten, K., & Soetaert, R. (2012). Revisiting the rhetorical curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *44*(6), 727-743. doi:10.1080/00220272.2012.730280
- Sayers, D.L. (1947). The lost tools of learning. *National Review*, *7*(1), 237-244. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=f5h&AN=6069548&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Schreiner, L.A., & Kim, Y.K. (2011). Outcomes of a Christian college education: A comparison of CCCU students' gains to the national aggregate. *Christian Higher Education*, *10*(3), 324-352. doi:10.1080/15363759.2011.577714
- Schultz, G. (2002). *Kingdom education: God's plan for educating future generations* (2nd ed.). Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press.
- Schultz, S. (2016). Common core or Christian core? *Catholic Social Science Review*, *21*, 45-54.
- Schwandit, T.A., Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (2007). Judging interpretations: But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation*, *114*, 11-25. doi:10.1002/ev.223
- Shelley, B.L. (2008). *Church history in plain language* (3rd ed.). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.
- Shenton, A.K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, *22*(2), 63-75.
- Sikkink, D. (2012). Religious school differences in school climate and academic mission: A descriptive overview of school organization and student outcomes. *Journal of School Choice*, *6*(1), 20-39. doi:10.1080/15582159.2012.651394

- Smith, A. (2014). Cultural confluence: Challenges for a Christian college desiring to work cross-culturally. *Christian Higher Education*, 13(4), 266-280.
doi:10.1080/15363759.2014.924767
- Smylie, J.H. (1989). Essay review. [Review of the books *American education: The national experience, 1783-1876*. *American education: The metropolitan experience, 1876-1980*, by L.A. Cremin]. *Religious Education*, 84, 620-624.
- Strachan, O. (2013, November). Why classical schools just might save America. *The American Spectator*. Retrieved from www.spectator.org/56336_why-classical-schools-just-might-save-america
- Tissington, L.D. (2008). A Bronfenbrenner ecological perspective on the transition to teaching for alternative certification. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 35(1), 106-110.
- Tufford, L., & Newman, P. (2010). Bracketing in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work*, 11(1), 80-96. doi:10.1177/1473325010368316
- Turgut, G. (2013). International tests and the U.S. educational reforms: Can success be replicated? *Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 86(2), 64-73. doi:10.1080/00098655.2012.748640
- Turley, S. (2009). Paideia kyriou: Biblical and patristic models for an integrated Christian curriculum. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 18(2), 125-139.
doi:10.1080/10656210903046382
- Turley, S. (2016, September). Is classical education revitalizing Christian culture? *The Imaginative Conservative*. Retrieved from <http://www.theimaginativeconservative.org/2016/09/classical-education-revitalizing-christian-culture-turley.html>

- Van Brummelen, H., & Koole, R. (2012). "Have they learned to swim around in the big puddle?": Cultural awareness and engagement of Christian high school students. *Journal of School Choice*, 6(1), 40-61. doi:10.1080/15582159.2012.650084
- Van Hoof, L. (2013). Performing paideia: Greek culture as an instrument for social promotion in the fourth century. *Classical Quarterly*, 63(1), 387-406.
doi:10.1017/S0009838812000833
- Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press.
- Van Pelt, D. N., Sikkink, D., Pennings, R., & Seel, J. (2012). Private religious Protestant and Catholic schools in the United States and Canada: Introduction, overview, and policy implications. *Journal of School Choice*, 6(1), 1-19. doi:10.1080/15582159.2012.650083
- Vaughan, C.A., & Morgan, K.C. (2015). Gifts from the classical Christian method to improve service for students who are gifted. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 24(1), 52-62. doi:10.1080/10656219.2015.1008082
- Veith, G.E., & Kern, A. (2001). *Classical education: The movement sweeping America*. Washington, D.C.: Capital Research Center.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wagoner, J.L., Jr. (1978, Summer). Historical revisionism, educational theory, and an American paideia. [Review of the book *Public education*, L.A. Cremin]. *History of Education Quarterly*, 18(2), 201-210.
- Walls, J.K. (2016). A theoretically grounded framework for integrating the scholarship of teaching and learning. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 16(2), 39-49. doi:10.14434/josotl.v16i2.19217

- Wayman, B.D. (2016). Julian against Christian educators: Julian and Basil on a proper education. *Christian Scholar's Review*, 45(3), 249-267.
- What to teach. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.circeinstitute.org/resources-what-classical-education/what-teach>
- Wilkin, R.L. (2011). Culture and the light of faith: Robert Louis Wilkin explores how Christianity embraced and transformed classical culture. *First Things*, (210), 31-36.
- Wilson, D. (1991). *Recovering the lost tools of learning: An approach to distinctively Christian education*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.
- Wilson, D. (1999). *The paideia of God and others essays on education*. Moscow, ID: Canon Press.
- Wilson, D. (2003). *The case for classical Christian education*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.
- Wong, K., Baker, B., & Franz, R. (2015). Reimagining business education as character formation. *Christian Scholar's Review*, 45(1), 5-24.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 12, 2018

Jared Squires

IRB Approval 3086.011218: The Experiences of Christian Paideia among Graduates of Classical Christian Texas High Schools: A Phenomenological Study

Dear Jared Squires,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

LIBERTY
UNIVERSITY.
Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971

Appendix B: Permission Request Letter

September 9, 2017

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Company]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[Address 3]

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree, with an emphasis in Educational Leadership. The title of my research project is *The Experiences of Christian Paideia Among Graduates of Classical Christian Texas High Schools: A Phenomenological Study*. The purpose of this research is to describe the essence of the shared lived experiences in a Christian paideia for classical Christian high school graduates at five different Texas schools.

I am writing to request your permission to contact graduates of your classical Christian school to invite them to participate in my research study. Three different rigorous and varied data collection techniques will be utilized: individual face-to-face interviews and virtual focus group interviews with graduates, as well as document analysis. Potential documents from your school that may be relevant to analyze for my research include advertisements, handbooks, brochures, event programs, letters, newspaper articles, organizational reports, survey data, and yearbooks.

Snowball sampling will be used to select graduates who are derived from those individuals that are initially purposefully nominated by the headmaster from each of the respective classical Christian schools contacted. Participants will be asked to contact me to schedule an interview. Participants will also be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Please find below a few pertinent details related to my study.

- The expected duration of the co-researcher's participation and description of the study procedures are shown below.
 - Participants will be asked to meet at an agreed upon location, preferably at their classical Christian school where they graduated, for an initial face-to-face interview of 1 to 2 hours. Some participants may also be asked for an additional 1 to 2 hour face-to-face follow-up interview, if necessary, or virtual focus group interview.
 - A transcript of their interview will be sent to them. They will be asked to please review the entire document and be sure to ask themselves if the interview fully captured their experience of Christian paideia. If after reviewing the transcript of

their interview, they realize that an important experience(s) was neglected. They will be asked to please feel free to add comments, with a provided red pen, that would further elaborate their experience(s). If preferred, a meeting will be arranged to record their additions or corrections.

- The potential risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks one would encounter in everyday life. Since the potential risks are minimal, no statement or plan is necessary regarding compensation and treatment in event of injury. The risks and benefits are believed to be adequately identified, evaluated, and described. The potential risks are also believed to be reasonable in relation to the benefits and importance of the knowledge to be gained.
- Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

However, benefits to society, particularly the classical Christian school movement, include the expectation of clarity to be provided on the goals and experiences of a growing revived method of education. In addition, classical Christian school graduate feedback should provide valuable information to a vast array of pertinent stakeholders (i.e., leaders in national Christian school associations, Christian church and school administration/governance, Christian parents and young adults) that will aid in continuous improvement within America's classical Christian schools.

Christian school associations are seeking ways to improve education broadly, as well as specific solutions for the schools they serve. Christian paideia is a biblically based model of education that will positively influence every aspect of a school. In addition, churches have a pivotal role to play in the education / Christian paideia of children. Churches have lost sight of this role as demonstrated in the general lack of support in Christian education from churches. Each of the stakeholder groups highlighted above recognize broadly the value of a Christian paideia; however, they currently lack the tangible feedback and details to truly restore and communicate widely the importance of this educational cornerstone. The anticipation is also that positive experiences shared from classical Christian school graduates may encourage more parents to invest in a classical Christian style of education.

- The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect, I will remove any information that could identify participants, if applicable, before I share the data.
 - All participants will be assigned a pseudonym. I will also conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
 - Data will be stored on a password locked computer or locked cabinet. Data may also be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic or paper records will be deleted.
 - Interviews will be audio/video recorded and transcribed for use in the subject doctoral dissertation and potential future academic publications. Recordings will

be stored on a password locked computer or locked cabinet for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

- I cannot assure participants that other members of the virtual focus group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.
- Participation in this study is voluntary. Decisions whether to participate will not affect current or future relations with Liberty University or the classical Christian school where participant's graduated. If they decide to participate, they are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

If participants choose to withdraw from the study, the researcher at the email address/phone number included below will be contacted. Should they choose to withdraw, data collected, apart from applicable focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. If applicable, focus group data will not be destroyed, but contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if a participant chooses to withdraw.

- Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. After the face-to-face interview, participants will receive a \$25 gift card. If a participant does not finish the study (i.e. review the interview transcript), compensation will not be pro-rated.
- There will be two to three research participants from each of the five classical Christian schools selected, resulting in 10 to 15 total individuals being studied.

Thank you for considering my request. If you have any further questions before providing the requested signed statement, I can be reached at **806-549-3645** or **jsquires@liberty.edu**.

If you choose to grant permission, please provide a **signed statement on official school letterhead** indicating your approval.

Sincerely,

Jared L. Squires
Researcher

Appendix C: Recruitment Letter

Recruitment Letter

Month XX, 2017

[Recipient]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree, with an emphasis in Educational Leadership. The title of my research project is *The Experiences of Christian Paideia among Graduates of Classical Christian Texas High Schools: A Phenomenological Study*. The purpose of this research is to describe the essence of the shared lived experiences in a Christian paideia for classical Christian high school graduates at five different Texas schools. Having been nominated by your classical Christian school's headmaster, you are formally invited to participate in my study.

If you are a classical Christian school graduate ranging in age from 18 to 22 years old, if you attended your respective high school for at least four years, if you possess a passionate and sincere interest in gaining further understanding regarding the nature and meanings of Christian paideia, and if you have a willingness to participate, I would love to have you join this study.

Participants will be asked to meet at an agreed upon location, preferably at their classical Christian high school, for an initial face-to-face interview of 1 to 2 hours. The interview will be both audio and video recorded. In addition, some participants may also be asked for an additional 1 to 2 hour face-to-face follow-up interview, if necessary. Please know that any follow-up questions needed will be driven by a review and analysis of responses from our initial face-to-face interview. Some participants may also be asked to partake in a 1 to 2 hour virtual focus group interview, which will also be audio and video recorded. Finally, potential documents that may be relevant to analyze such as advertisements, handbooks, brochures, event programs, letters, newspaper articles, organizational reports, survey data, and yearbooks will be submitted by your high school. Although your school will be providing these documents, you will have the opportunity to be involved in this research step since the graduates of the classical Christian high schools are the primary focus of the study and documentation.

Please know that your name and/or other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain completely confidential.

To participate, please review and sign the attached “Consent Form” and contact me at your earliest convenience to schedule an interview or ask any additional questions (Phone: 806-549-3645 or Email: jsquires@liberty.edu).

If you choose to participate, I would like to show my great appreciation with a \$25 gift card to the restaurant of your choice. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Jared L. Squires
Researcher

Appendix D: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

The Experiences of Christian Paideia Among Graduates of Classical Christian Texas High Schools: A Phenomenological Study

Jared L. Squires
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study on the experience of Christian paideia in a classical Christian school. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a classical Christian school graduate ranging in age from 18 to 22 years old, you attended your respective high school for at least four years, you possess a passionate and sincere interest in gaining further understanding regarding the nature and meanings of Christian paideia, and you have expressed a willingness to participate. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Jared Squires, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to describe the essence of the shared lived experiences in a Christian paideia for classical Christian high school graduates at five different Texas schools. The central question for this study is the following: how do classical Christian high school graduates describe their lived experiences of Christian paideia?

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Participants will be asked to meet at an agreed upon location, preferably at their classical Christian high school, for an initial face-to-face interview of 1 to 2 hours. The interview will be both audio and video recorded. In addition, some participants may also be asked for an additional 1 to 2 hour face-to-face follow-up interview, if necessary. Please know that any follow-up questions needed will be driven by a review and analysis of responses from our initial face-to-face interview.
A transcript of your interview(s) will be sent to you. Please review the entire document and be sure to ask yourself if this interview has fully captured your experience of Christian paideia. After reviewing the transcript of the interview, you may realize that an important experience(s) was neglected. Please feel free to add comments, with a provided red pen, that would further elaborate your experience(s). If you prefer, a meeting can be arranged to record your additions or corrections.
2. Some participants may also be asked to partake in a 1 to 2 hour virtual focus group interview, which will also be audio and video recorded.
3. Potential documents that may be relevant to analyze such as advertisements, handbooks, brochures, event programs, letters, newspaper articles, organizational reports, survey data, and yearbooks will be submitted by your high school. Although your school will be providing these documents, you will have the opportunity to be involved in this research step since the graduates of the classical Christian high schools are the primary focus of the study and documentation.

Risks: The potential risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

However, benefits to society, particularly the classical Christian school movement, include the expectation of clarity to be provided on the goals and experiences of a growing revived method of education. In addition, classical Christian school graduate feedback should provide valuable information to a vast array of pertinent stakeholders (i.e., leaders in national Christian school associations, Christian church and school administration/governance, Christian parents and young adults) that will aid in continuous improvement within America's classical Christian schools.

Christian school associations are seeking ways to improve education broadly, as well as in specific solutions for the schools they serve. Christian paideia is a biblically based model of education that will positively influence every aspect of a school. In addition, churches have a pivotal role to play in the education / Christian paideia of children. Churches have lost sight of this role as demonstrated in the general lack of support in Christian education from churches. Each of the stakeholder groups highlighted above recognize broadly the value of a Christian paideia; however, they currently lack the tangible feedback and details to truly restore and communicate widely the importance of this educational cornerstone. The anticipation is also that positive experiences shared from classical Christian school graduates may encourage more parents to invest in a classical Christian style of education.

Compensation: Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. After the face-to-face interview, participants will receive a \$25 gift card.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you, if applicable, before I share the data.

- All participants will be assigned a pseudonym. I will also conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password locked computer or locked cabinet. Data may also be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic or paper records will be deleted/destroyed.
- Interviews will be audio/video recorded and transcribed for use in the subject doctoral dissertation and potential future academic publications. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer or locked cabinet for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- I cannot assure participants that other members of the virtual focus group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the

classical Christian school where you graduated. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from applicable focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. If applicable, focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Jared Squires. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at 806-549-3645 and/or jsquires@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. James Swezey, at jaswezey@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix E: Thank You Letter to Co-Researchers

October 21, 2017

Dear _____,

Thank you for meeting with me in an extended interview and sharing your experience of Christian paideia. I appreciate your willingness to share your unique and personal thoughts, feelings, events, and situations.

I have enclosed a transcript of your interview. Would you please review the entire document? Be sure to ask yourself if this interview has fully captured your experience of Christian paideia. After reviewing the transcript of the interview, you may realize that an important experience(s) was neglected. Please feel free to add comments, with the enclosed red pen, that would further elaborate your experience(s), or if you prefer we can arrange to meet again and record your additions or corrections. Please do not edit for grammatical corrections. The way you told your story is what is critical.

When you have reviewed the verbatim transcript and have had an opportunity to make changes and additions, please return the transcript in the stamped, addressed envelope.

I have greatly valued your participation in this research study and your willingness to share your experience. If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to call me.

With warm regards,

Jared Squires

Appendix F: Face-to-Face Interview Questions

Research central question: How do classical Christian high school graduates describe their lived experiences of Christian paideia?

Warm-up questions:

- Please introduce yourself to me, as if we just met one another.
- How old are you?
- When did you graduate from your classical Christian high school?
- What is your current vocation?
- Please tell me a little background information about you and your family.
- What are some of your interests and hobbies?
- What's your favorite memory from high school?
- Why did you or your parents choose your classical Christian high school?

Research sub-question one: How do classical Christian high school graduates describe the distinguishing attributes of a Christian paideia?

- What dimensions, incidents, and people intimately connected with the Christian paideia experience stand out for you?
- What other factors or dynamics influenced your life significantly in high school?

Research sub-question two: How do classical Christian high school graduates perceive their school's overt or covert pursuits for realizing a Christian paideia?

- What is your understanding of your classical Christian high school's pursuit of a Christian paideia and its associated primary objectives?
- What changes resulting from a Christian paideia were you actually aware of during high school?

- How would you describe the overall authenticity of the classical Christian school where you graduated?

Research sub-question three: How has being educated in a Christian paideia been beneficial or detrimental to the adult life of classical Christian high school graduates?

- How did the Christian paideia experience affect you? What changes do you associate with the Christian paideia experience?
- How did the Christian paideia experience affect significant others in your life?
- Tell me about a recent situation in your life where knowledge and wisdom was drawn from something that you learned in high school.
- How did your classical Christian high school prepare you for college and adult life?

Research sub-question four: How do classical Christian high school graduates express their sense of obligation, if any, to uphold the standards of a Christian paideia?

- What feelings were generated by the Christian paideia experience?
- What is the greatest contribution that your classical Christian school has had on your life?

Wrap-Up Question:

- Have you shared all that is significant regarding the Christian paideia experience in your classical Christian high school? Is there anything else important for me to know about the experience of Christian paideia?
- As explained in the consent form, some participants may also be asked for an additional 1 to 2 hour face-to-face follow-up interview, if necessary. Please know that any follow-up questions will be driven by a review and analysis of responses from our initial face-to-face interview.