THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN HOMESCHOOLING
FATHERS IN FULFILLING THE BIBLICAL ROLE OF DISCIPLE-MAKER: A
TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

William Robert Farrington

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experience of Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers in discipling their children. The theological framework that guided this study was that of the biblical call to discipleship by Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:18-20, and how that calling applies to parenting. The theoretical framework that guided this study was the responsible fathering theory, as it focuses on the complex relationships between the father, the mother, the children, and contextual or outside influences. The central research question of the study was: How do Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers describe the lived experience of discipling their children? This study focused on current homeschooling fathers in the Mountain West Region of the United States who self-identify as Evangelical Christians. Semi-structured interviews were the primary source of data collection for this study. The researcher also utilized a survey, and Facebook discussion group to provide a rich, thick, and deep palate of information. The interviews were all completed via Facetime, Skype, or telephone, which provided interviewees the privacy necessary to feel comfortable discussing the topics of fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship. Data was collected and analyzed simultaneously, utilizing Moustakas’ (1994) phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation. Codes were developed as they emerge from the data analysis process. The researcher looked at the data numerous times until the meaning units were coded, and then themes and subthemes were identified. Once subsequent interviews did not reveal any new codes or themes, the data collection process was concluded, as saturation was achieved. The essence of the phenomenon then was developed from the synthesis of the composite textural and composite structural descriptions, focusing on the centrality of the fathers’ faith in discipleship.

Keywords: faith, family, fatherhood, homeschooling, discipleship
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Without Your constant comfort and support, this dissertation would never have become a reality. So many times, I prayed, “Lord, I can’t do this in my own strength. If I am going to finish, Holy Spirit You will have to carry me.” Lord, You have continued to come through each time, giving me a strength I could not muster on my own. You have sent many people into my life to encourage me, and support me, not the least of which would be my wife, Katie.

Second only to the Holy Spirit, Katie has been my most loving companion and greatest supporter. You have taken on extra responsibilities, within our family of 11, freeing up my time to study, write, interview, and write some more. Mere words cannot express how much you mean to me. I love you with all my heart.

I also owe a great debt of gratitude to my children, David, Judah, Titus, Ephraim, Selah, Aurora, Tizah, Jachin, and Tobias. The prayers you have prayed for me and over me have overwhelmed me with joy. I am truly blessed to have each of you in my life.

I cannot imagine this dissertation ever coming to fruition without the continued support of my father-and mother-in-law. For all the support you provided through each phase of my dissertation, and especially being here for Katie and the kids in so many ways, David and Susan Tellin, this is yours too.

Finally, I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my mom and dad. You believed in me at times when I did not believe in myself, and you loved me unconditionally. It was not until later in life that I began to realize how special those two things really are. I am here because of you and your love for me.
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Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)

Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The importance of father involvement in the family, especially with a relatively recent emphasis on the emotionally expressive, nurturing father (Aune, 2010; Kiesling, 2017; Kim, 2014; Marsiglio & Roy, 2012), has been a hot topic in the empirical literature since Lamb (1975) stated that father involvement could have an impact on the healthy development of the child. Lamb (2004) went on to state more explicitly that the father-child relationship was, indeed, greatly influential on the healthy development of the child. These two studies, and Lamb’s seminal book, *The Role of Fathers in Child Development*, at this time in its fifth edition, laid the groundwork for many articles and studies from the 1970s, continuing into the 21st century (Jones & Mosher, 2013; Lamb, 1987; Lewis, 2011; McKinney, 2012; Ray, 2017; Snarey, 1993). Thus, the understanding of the significant issues connected with father involvement has evolved over time, to where studies have stated that a positive father-child relationship, and high levels of father involvement in general, resulted in greater cognitive and socioemotional development, increased academic successes, and a reduction in negative outcomes for children (Bureau et al., 2017; Carlson & McLanahan, 2010; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003, 2004; Jeynes, 2016; Murray & Hwang, 2015; Sarkadi, Kristiansson, Oberklaid, & Bremberg, 2008). These findings of the importance of the father in the development of their children, coupled with recent reports from the Pew Research Center that only 46% of children are living with a mother and father in their first marriage (Livingston, 2014), create a definite need for a better understanding of what is happening in our modern culture with regards to fatherhood.

Interestingly, as the research on father involvement began to build in the 1970s, so did the modern homeschool movement in the United States. The movement back to home-based
education followed, largely, two pivotal decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1962 and 1963: the removal of prayer and Bible reading from public schools across the entire United States (Gaither, 2008; Jeynes, 2011; Nel, 2010). In response to these events, research on father involvement in the unique and growing setting of homeschooling developed slowly, as most of the literature focused on the academic and social comparisons between public school students and homeschoolers, and the role of the primary actor in the homeschooling setting: the mother (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Lewis, 2011; Lois, 2006, 2009, 2010). However, more recently, developments in the area of father involvement in the homeschool movement have grown with Vigilant, Trefethren, and Anderson’s (2013) study on the roles of mothers and fathers in homeschooling. Vigilant, Anderson, and Trefethren’s (2014) follow-up study looked more specifically at the father’s perspective on his role in homeschooling. Vigilant et al. (2014) revealed that fathers saw their main role as the emotional manager of the home. In this role, fathers attempted to encourage the mother to continue the use of the homeschooling model by setting a vision and supporting the mother-teacher in dealing with the role strain that is well-established in the literature (Guterman & Neuman, 2017; Lois, 2006, 2009, 2010). Vigilant et al. (2013) and Vigilant et al. (2014) focused mainly on the relationship between the father and the mother. Left out of this study almost entirely was the father’s role and relationship with his children.

With all the participants in the Vigilant et al. (2013) and Vigilant et al. (2014) studies self-identifying as conservative Christians, the particulars of the relationship with the children, especially their discipleship, was notably absent from the study. Moral socialization and cultivation were significant themes in both studies, and the spiritual leadership role of the father was even stated as critical (Vigilant et al., 2014); however, the statement was not followed up
with a look at the father’s experience of discipleship in this setting. Homeschooling studies that have discussed the father’s role in discipleship are very few (Vigilant et al., 2014), and generally these studies only mentioned the area of discipleship, referring to this particular role as teacher, moral teacher, spiritual teacher, or spiritual leader (Cunningham, 2017; Oh, 2016; Raley, 2017). There were also a few studies that gave the father’s role in homeschooling varying degrees of focus, including it in the general leadership of the family, connections with spirituality, or a historical overview of fatherhood (Cunningham, 2017; Jeynes, 2011; Oh, 2016). Several studies have discussed the father’s role in discipleship (Clark, 2013; George, 2016; James, 2013; Murray & Hwang, 2015; Parnell & Strachan, 2014); however, the role of the homeschooling father in discipleship was not within the scope of these studies.

One study concerning homeschooling in Australia gave significant attention to the parents’ role as spiritual mentors in homeschooling; however, this study did not differentiate between the role of the father and mother, but instead focused on the role of both parents combined (Harding, 2011). Harding’s (2011) results gave attention to parents’ roles in homeschooling, specifically discussing the learner, partner, teacher, and pioneer roles. Significantly, each of these roles had three dimensions running through them: influence, example, and spirituality (Harding, 2011). Thus, while not focusing on the lived experience of the Christian homeschooling, father-disciple-maker, this study gave some indications of roles the father may play in varying degrees. Also giving some context to the role of the father in homeschooling, McGowin (2017) cited teachings from the Quiverful Movement as viewing the father as the priest, prophet, and king. The distinction in McGowin (2017) still does not address the lived experience of homeschooling fathers, but simply stated the expectations for fathers in the Quiverful Movement in particular. Shedding some light on the lack of empirical studies,
Kiesling (2017) stated that the father’s role as a moral teacher had lost public support, and this could be part of the reason for the dearth in the research on the lived experience of the homeschooling father-disciple-maker. In fact, Kunzman and Gaither’s (2013) review of the homeschooling literature had no mention of discipleship, or the father as moral or spiritual teacher. As Duckworth and Buzznell (2009) stated in their study on work family balance, “perhaps a subset of fathers (e.g., stay-at-home) would present researchers with a more focused sample that could provide a better sense of that particular ‘type’ of father rather than fathers in general” (p. 570). Thus, this study attempted to fill that void, investigating the lived experience of the Evangelical Christian, homeschooling father-disciple-maker.

Having identified the purpose of the study, throughout this chapter the researcher will attempt to create a convincing argument to establish the importance of the role of the homeschooling father in discipleship, with the background section giving greater context to the issue. Of significant importance is the description of the connection of this study to myself. As this is a transcendental phenomenological study, it is important to identify my personal experiences in homeschooling, as they will need to be bracketed-out as much as is possible in order to present the results in the words of the participants (Creswell, 2013, Moustakas, 1994). Also within this chapter will be a clear statement of the problem and purpose of this study with supporting details. The chapter will come to a close with the significance of this study, research questions, definitions, and, finally, the summary, wrapping up the chapter’s most important points.

**Background**

This study is the result of the convergence of three main themes: father involvement, homeschooling, and discipleship. Each of these has a significant history and different path from
the beginning of the modern concept of each, to the present day postmodern, secular humanistic culture in the United States (Aberg, Ekman, & Rodin, 2017; Schaeffer, 2005; Wyatt, 1999). Each theme has also impacted, and been impacted by, the social, theological, and theoretical contexts in which it has developed. With these multiple contexts in mind, each of the themes (father involvement, homeschooling, and discipleship) will be addressed in their historical, social, theological, and theoretical contexts, to give the reader a better understanding of why this study is important and necessary to fill the gap in the literature and give voice to the unique population of Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-makers.

**Historical Context**

Tracing the history of each of the themes (father involvement, homeschooling, and discipleship) through the empirical literature will yield a picture of the development of the concepts. It is an incomplete one, as each of these themes have been evident in cultural writings and artifacts since the beginning of mankind, as recorded in Genesis 1:26 (King James Version). This background section will not attempt a treatise on these three themes tracing them back to Creation, as there have been volumes upon volumes written about each theme individually, yet in all fairness, will give an overview of each and include the history of these themes back farther than the empirical literature as necessary.

**Father involvement.** In the empirical literature for the past four decades, the issue of father involvement has been deeply researched with consistent results: father involvement is highly predictive of student performance, disciplinary issues, and both positive and negative outcomes for children (Allen, Daly, & Ball, 2012; Coltrane, 1996; Goldstein, 1982; Gottfried, Gottfried, & Bathurst, 1988; Lamb, 1975, 1987; Lamb & LeMonda, 2004; Lewis, 2011; Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000; Pedersen, Anderson, & Kain, 1980; Pedersen,
Rubinstein, & Yarrow, 1979; Radin, 1982; Sarkadi et al., 2008). These studies began with the seminal work by Lamb (1975). Lamb (1975) stated that the father is of critical importance to the development of his children, and this began a surge in research into the topic of the effects of father involvement (Marsiglio et al., 2000; Sarkadi et al., 2008). The studies that followed in the 1980s developed this idea of the significance of the father’s level of involvement, taking father involvement study into the academic, social, and emotional domains (Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984; Goldstein, 1982; Gottfried et al., 1988; Lamb 1987; Radin, 1982). Time and again these studies showed that the higher the level of father involvement, the better the children did in all the areas studied, which led to the development of several father involvement and self-efficacy quantitative measures in the 1990s and up to the present (Hawkins et al., 2002; Hawkins & Palkovitz, 1999; Nugent, 1991; Sevigny, Loutzenhiser, & McAuslan, 2016). These measures attempted to capture the level of father involvement, and fathers’ beliefs on how well they were fathering their children (self-efficacy), in order to better understand the studies that were produced in the 1970s and 1980s. This effort greatly strengthened the quantitative base of the empirical literature.

The impacts of this research have been far and wide, resulting in the development of the National Fatherhood Initiative, a non-profit organization with the goal of “creating a world in which every child has a 24/7 Dad” (“National Fatherhood Initiative,” 2016, para. 1), as well as engendering studies on the father’s role in their children’s educational performance (Jones & Mosher, 2013; Lamb, 2004; Lamb & LeMonda, 2004; Lewis, 2011; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Sarkadi et al., 2008). In each study, the role of the father in his children’s educational career was significant. Increased father involvement in rearing the child yielded complex layers of benefits, of which increased academic performance was just one (Sarkadi et al., 2008). However, to
attribute all of these benefits of involved fathering merely to the empirical literature, would be naïve at best, and at worst purely dishonest because these studies often did not affect father involvement so much as they attempted to measure it. In addition, underlying these studies and their resounding affirmations of the benefits of involved fatherhood is a theological framework, based on the Bible, that will be discussed in more detail in the theological context section.

**Homeschooling.** The homeschooling movement is another important area of father involvement study (Lewis, 2011; Vigilant et al., 2014; Vigilant et al., 2013). In the 1970s, as Lamb (1975) was focusing heavily on the impact of father involvement, another movement was resurfacing: homeschooling. Throughout much of history, home education has been a normal part of family life, especially with children apprenticing and learning about faith under their father and/or mother (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Jeynes, 2011; Proverbs 22:6, Raley, 2017; 2 Timothy 3:15). In the beginning of the homeschool movement, much of the empirical study was on the impacts homeschooling had on students academically and socially (Frost & Morris, 1988; Ray, 1990, 1994, 1997a, 1997b, 2004a, 2010; Ray & Wartes, 1991; Rudner, 1999; Shyers, 1992), eventually including the emotional impact as well (Merry & Howell, 2009). From a parental standpoint, the homeschooling movement has been mainly studied from the perspective and role of the mother, as the mother is most often the primary teacher in the homeschooling of the children (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Lewis, 2011; Lois, 2006, 2009, 2010; Morton, 2010; Vigilant et al., 2013). Vigilant et al. (2013) was one of the first studies to look more specifically at the role of fathers in homeschooling; however, this study mainly focused on why fathers choose homeschooling and their place in the political debate surrounding homeschooling. The Vigilant et al. (2014) follow-up study revealed a different side of the role of the father: the emotional manager. In this study, the researchers discovered what a group of 21 Christian
homeschooling fathers felt that their role was in the homeschooling family unit. The fathers in this study stated that they were emotional managers, attempting to prolong the homeschooling practice of the family unit (Vigilant et al., 2014). This study mainly focused on the relationship of the father to the mother in the alleviation of the role strain so common among mother-teachers (Lois, 2006, 2009, 2010). The connection between the homeschooling father’s role and the discipleship of his children was missing to a large degree in the discussion, with only minor points made of the father being the teacher, or spiritual leader of the family (Vigilant et al., 2014).

Discipleship. This lack of focus on discipleship in Vigilant et al. (2014), and the void in the literature in general with respect to Christian homeschooling fathers, leads to the final theme that ties this study together, and that is of Christian discipleship. How do Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers describe their role as father-disciple-maker? Discipleship itself appears to go all the way back to the first human couple, Adam and Eve (Kiesling, 2017). These two, the first parents, raised one son who was godly, and one who wound up being a murderer (Genesis 4:1-8). Thus, a form of discipleship, or leading one’s children to follow their religious beliefs (Hattingh et al., 2016), was formed in the beginning of humanity. With the birth of a new son, Seth, it appears that discipleship took a positive turn as men began to seek after God (Genesis 4:25-26).

The biblical text continues to give examples of good and bad parents throughout the Old Testament (with this study focusing on the fathers), but the true foundation for our modern understanding of Christian discipleship came in the person of Jesus Christ. Taylor (2013) stated that a Christian disciple is someone who follows Christ with the goal to learn from Him, begin to live like Him, and to grow more like Him each day. This emphasis on being like Jesus Christ
has taken form front-and-center in Christian circles, especially those of the self-identified conservative Christians featured in Vigilant et al.’s (2014) study. One of Christ’s last recorded commands on earth before ascending into heaven was for his followers to go in His power and authority and make more disciples (Matthew 28:18-20). For the Christian homeschooling father, this command to make disciples must have some bearing on his relationship with his children; thus the emphasis of this study on understanding this dynamic from the perspective of the fathers themselves.

**Social Context**

The social implications of this study are significant, as the increased attention given to father involvement, homeschooling, and discipleship in our modern context has created changes that are impacting the culture in the United States. With many organizations forming over the past two to three decades to champion the benefits of involved fathers, this movement has made a solid stake in the empirical literature and continues to grow as new measures of father involvement are still being developed (Sevigny et al., 2016). Homeschooling has also impacted our modern culture with estimates of two million plus students homeschooling in the United States alone (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013, Ray, 2017; Vigilant et al., 2014, Vigilant et al., 2013). In addition to these two powerful forces on culture and society, discipleship in the name of Jesus Christ has truly changed the world and continues to impact nations the world over. Thus, the social implications of the study of these three themes cannot be overstated.

**Father involvement.** The development of the empirical literature has impacted how researchers, as well as lay persons, view the importance of father involvement, and has spawned a long list of father involvement organizations, such as the National Father Initiative, All Pro Dad, Become a Better Father, Better Dads, Boot Camp for New Dads, Christian Fatherhood,
Croswalk.com Parenting, Dad Labs, Dad Man, Fatherhood & Families Coalition of America, Fatherhood Educational Institute, Focus on the Family, and Promise Keepers. The social implications were well stated in Lamb’s (2010) opening chapter, titled, *How Do Fathers Influence Children’s Development? Let Me Count the Ways*, where he noted that the father-child relationship is greatly influential, and in Sarkadi et al. (2008), which stated that father involvement impacts children socially, emotionally, and academically, causing a significant impact on society.

**Homeschooling and discipleship.** This impact of father involvement, in general, takes a more pointed direction in the present study, as the social impacts for Christian homeschooling fathers are unique and particular to the homeschooling environment (Vigilant et al., 2014). Homeschooling has a unique impact on society with the countercultural aspect of taking one’s children out of the state-run public-school environment (Harding, 2011; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013), and the continuous growth of the movement to include approximately two-million plus students (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). This study’s emphasis on the homeschooling sub-culture, and more precisely, Evangelical Christian fathers’ discipleship within the homeschooling movement, gives this study the unique ability to impact the growing homeschool movement in their discipleship practices.

**Theological Context**

In this study, the first perspective the author will take is that of the biblical lens; therefore, the theological context of this study will center around Matthew 28:18-20. These three verses in the Bible provide a context for viewing the research process. Matthew 28:18-20 is called the Great Commission, as these were some of the last words spoken by Jesus Christ directly before He ascended into heaven, encouraging the followers of what would become
called Christianity, with instructions to go in His power and authority and make disciples as He
had done among them. The totality of the life, works, and teachings of Jesus Christ cannot be
summed up in these three chosen verses; however, they give a solid theological context for
discipleship for the purpose of this study. Jesus states in Matthew 28:18-20:

   And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and
   in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father,
   and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I
   have commanded you, and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.
   Amen.

Thus, as McEwen, Herman, and Himes (2016) stated in context to the movement in higher
education to “bear witness to God’s blessing in and for the world” (p. 308), this passage is
critical to understanding, and fulfilling the discipleship calling. This passage gives three basic
understandings for discipleship. First, “Go ye” (Matthew 28:19) could also be translated “as ye
go” (Morris, 2012). In other words, while going about daily activities, as a follower of Christ,
one should be building relationships (discipleship) that will hopefully lead to the next
understanding. The second understanding is that of baptism (Matthew 28:19), which means
leading the disciple into the spiritual position of obedience to God’s Word, as all power and
authority has been given to Him (Matthew 28:18). This act of baptism allows the new convert to
show their devotion, publicly, as they align their actions in obedience to the Bible’s directions to
be baptized (Mark 16:16). Thirdly, this verse communicates the expectation that as a disciple-
maker, one then needs to instruct the new convert to “observe all things” (Matthew 28:20). As
Jones (2013) stated, this correlates directly to parents, as it is the parents’ responsibility to
disciple their children, specifically mandated to the father (Ephesians 6:4, 1 Timothy 3:4-5).
Thus, Matthew 28:18-20 gives Christian parents a solid starting point for understanding discipleship, and how that relates to the role under study here, the father-disciple-maker.

**Theoretical Context**

The responsible father theory (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998), to be utilized in this study, has been used in complex family analysis for some time, but has not been applied to homeschool education, and/or father involvement, so far as this researcher is aware. This theory discussed the complexity of the multiple relationships that were always interacting to cause what was seen in the family unit from the outside (Doherty et al., 1998). Murray and Hwang (2015) described the theory as understanding that all of the relationships should be viewed holistically and through an “ecological lens” (p. 1186). This framework has been applied to fatherhood studies, but this researcher will broaden its use by applying it to the current study of fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship. The key aspect of this theory that makes it a good fit for this study, is the flexibility of the framework to look at the father’s relationships with the mother, child, and outside influences. This flexible, ecological approach could yield a currently unresearched bearing on the discipleship process in the homeschooling setting.

**Situation to Self**

As an Evangelical Christian homeschooling father of over eight years, and with nine children, developing a better understanding of the role of the father in discipling children is important to me in my desire to fulfill Jesus’ command to disciple (Matthew 28:18-20). My wife and I homeschool out of our sincere desire to disciple our children (Proverbs 22:6), so that they live a life of finding fulfillment in loving and serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Theologically, I believe the Bible to be inerrant in the original manuscripts, authoritative for living, and God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16). Therefore, ontologically, I believe that God is the all-powerful
Creator of all things (Genesis 1:1, John 1:1-4) and is omniscient, making all truth God’s truth, and any truth we may discover as established by God since before the foundations of the earth. Thus, ontologically my stance is positivistic in the belief that there is a real, existent, singular, objective reality that we only know in part (1Cor. 13:12) as limited, flawed human beings. Yet I am not positivistic in that I fully believe in the spiritual realm, as described in great detail throughout the Bible. This ontology informs my epistemological belief that knowledge is based on the discovery of God’s wonderful creation, and of His person, with these understandings constantly being augmented and enhanced by the working of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26).

I believe that Jesus Christ, the God-man, came from heaven to earth to save mankind from our sins (1Tim. 1:15). This is the foundation for my axiological belief that every person has enormous value, and as such, I value the possibility of understanding the lived experience of Evangelical Christian, homeschooling father-disciple-makers. Therefore, this study is of significant importance to me, as it will give me the opportunity to spend time learning from other Christian homeschooling father-disciple-makers, to tell their stories from their own perspectives, and to add to the empirical literature in a subject area that is of the utmost importance to me: fatherhood.

Problem Statement

The role of the father and his level of involvement in his children’s lives has been a concept of careful study for many years, intensifying when Lamb produced an article in 1975 that related the importance of father involvement to the healthy development of the child. This sparked many research studies (Allen, et al., 2012; Anderson, 2016; Coltrane, 1996; Harding, 2011; Lamb & LeMonda, 2004; Lewis, 2011; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Sarkadi et al., 2008), and multiple father involvement and self-efficacy quantitative measures (Hawkins et al., 2002;
Hawkins & Palkovitz, 1999; Sevigny, Loutzenhiser, & McAuslan, 2016). Lamb (2010) went on to state that the father-child relationship was greatly influential in many aspects of the child’s development. Further research identified that higher levels of father involvement produced advantages, including cognitive and socioemotional development, academic success, and reduced negative outcome for the children (Sarkadi et al. 2008).

More recently, with the continued growth of homeschooling in the United States, father involvement in homeschooling has been a slowly developing research area with most study focused on academic and social factors and the role of mothers in homeschooling (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Lewis, 2011; Lois, 2006, 2009, 2010; Morton, 2010; Vigilant et al., 2013). Lois (2010) studied the role of mothers in homeschooling and discovered intense role strain, and emotional burnout to be common. Vigilant et al. (2014) then brought the focus of their second study to the father’s perception of his role in homeschooling. This was absent in the literature up to this point. Reasons that fathers chose homeschooling had been researched (Vigilant et al., 2013), but their perception of their role had not. In completing the study on the interpersonal, and role-related understandings from the fathers’ perspective, Vigilant et al.’s (2014) results revealed a lack of discussion on discipleship involving the father in the homeschool setting. The problem to be addressed in this study is the current lack of understanding of the phenomenon of the lived experience of the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker, as there is no research giving a voice to the relationship between father and child in discipleship within the homeschool movement empirical literature.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the lived experience of the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker in the Mountain
West region of the United States. At this stage in the research, the homeschooling father-disciple-maker will be defined as a self-identifying Evangelical Christian father who lives in the home with his biological children, actively involved in discipling his children, and where the parents take full responsibility for their children’s educational programming, predominantly in the home. The setting of the study will be in the home of the participants currently living in the Mountain West region of the United States communicating with the researcher via technology. The theological framework guiding this study will be that of Matthew 28:18-20, as it gives a three-fold example of what it means to disciple in general, and will be specifically applied to the father-child relationship. This theological framework will provide perspective on what biblical discipleship should look like in the relationship between the Christian homeschooling father and his children. The theoretical framework guiding this study is the responsible fathering theory (Doherty et. al., 1998), as it described fatherhood as a complex system of negotiating relationships between mother, children, and outside influences. As the relationship between the father, mother, children, and outside influences are critical to the discipleship process, this theory could assist in shedding light on how to better prepare fathers who homeschool to disciple their children in what Duckworth and Buzzanell (2009) went on to describe as complex “webs of responsibilities” (p. 563).

**Significance of the Study**

This study will be significant to those involved in the homeschooling movement, particularly those who are Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-makers, as it will help fathers to understand the greater experience of fathers sharing the same life-experience as they. This study will also be significant to the empirical literature as it will address the gap that currently exists relating to a greater understanding of the dynamic between Christian fathers and
their children in the homeschool movement. Furthermore, it will be significant to the application of Matthew 28:18-20 in discipling children, as well as in utilizing the responsible father theory in connecting the webs of relationships and responsibilities (Doherty et al., 1998; Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009) within the homeschooling movement.

**Empirical**

At this point in time it has been shown that there is a great deal of literature that points to the significance of father involvement; however, there is little research in this area with homeschooling fathers and their perceived roles (Vigilant et al., 2014), and no research on the lived experience of the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker. This study would fill this gap, and deepen the empirical literature on homeschooling, which is a fast-growing phenomenon all over the United States, and around the world (Broughman & Swaim, 2013; Lamb, 2010; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Oh, 2016; Vigilant et al., 2014; Vigilant et al., 2013). This would give those studying in the field of homeschooling a new and deeper understanding of the role of the father in homeschooling.

**Theological and Theoretical**

Theologically, Matthew 28:18-20 has been utilized many times over the years to better understand discipleship; however, it has not been developed in the empirical literature in response to the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father. Theoretically, the responsible father theory (Doherty et al., 1998) has been utilized in many ways to make connections between systems of phenomenon, especially familial relationships (Bastais, Ponnet, Van Peer, & Mortelmans, 2015; Doherty, Erickson, & Larossa, 2006; Forehand, Parent, Golub, & Reid, 2016; Hognas & Williams, 2017; Holmes & Huston, 2010; Laakso & Fathering, 2004; Murray & Hwang, 2015; Parent, Forehand, Pomerantz, Peisch, & Seehuus, 2017; Webster, Low, Siller, &
This study would broaden the use of both Matthew 28:18-20 and the responsible father theory in looking at the relational aspects of the homeschooling father’s discipleship ideologies and practices. This use of both Matthew 28:18-20 and the responsible father theory would broaden the use of the scripture and theory, as well as strengthen the foundation of the continuing research in the field of fatherhood involvement, homeschooling, and discipleship, thus continuing to demonstrate the significance of this study to empirical social science research.

**Practical**

The practical significance of this study is the better understanding of roles, expectations, and discipleship with regards to fathers in the homeschooling movement. The lack of a clear understanding of the current state of the lived experience in discipleship within the homeschooling community in the empirical literature could lead to a failure in homeschooling fathers seeing the need to be more or less direct, active, and intentional in this endeavor. The state of discipleship in homeschooling may have direct impacts on the future of the homeschooling movement, such as the continuation of the model within individual families (Vigilant et al., 2014), and the continuation of beliefs in homeschooling in future generations (Bengtson, 2013). This study would deepen the understanding of this phenomenon, giving the readers a unique perspective to apply to homeschooling preparedness.

**Research Questions**

Central Question: How do Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers describe the essence of the lived experience of discipling their children? This question is central to the study in that it drives at the core of the phenomenon in question. The essence sought out by this phenomenological study is that of the role of the Evangelical Christian father-disciple-maker in a homeschooling setting, and told in the words of the participants. This is absent in the literature,
as Vigilant et al. (2014) demonstrated, and needed in the empirical research on fatherhood, as Duckworth and Buzzanell (2009) pointed out. Vigilant et al. (2014) and Duckworth and Buzzanell (2009) therefore provided the context for this question, and exposed the proposed gap in the literature to be filled by this study.

Sub-Question 1: How do Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers describe their experience as a home educator? This question is significant, as it will give context to one of the major aspects of the study that is unique: the homeschooling father. Part of understanding this experience will be understanding the initial and potentially evolving motivation for homeschooling. There have been multiple studies addressing parental motivations to homeschool (Harding, 2011; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Redford, Battle, Bielick, 2017; Rothermel, 2002, 2011; Spiegler, 2010; Vigilant et al., 2013), which have given a wide range of reasons, the most frequent being the school environment, moral instruction, a lack of satisfaction with academic instruction, and religious instruction (Redford et al., 2017). There has been much research completed on father involvement (Lamb, 2010); however, the research on the homeschooling father’s experience has been much rarer (Harding, 2011; Vigilant et al., 2014, 2013). With this in mind, understanding the particular space where the homeschooling father is coming from is significant, and foundational to this study. Understanding the experience of the father in homeschooling will lay the foundation to build on in understanding the essence of meanings found in the lived experience of the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker.

Sub-Question 2: How do Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers describe the role of every-day relationship building in discipling their children? This question is based on the theological framework of Matthew 28:18-20, where Jesus is quoted as saying “Go ye” or as
some have translated it, “as ye go” (Morris, 2012, p. 1456), referring to a lifestyle of discipleship. This question is also based in the literature which has stated that highly involved fathers produce greater academic, social, and emotional results in their children (Jones & Mosher, 2013; Lamb, 2004, 2010; Lewis, 2011; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Ray, 2017; Sarkadi et al., 2008). The literature mentioned, briefly, fathers as teachers, spiritual teachers, or spiritual leaders of the family, but did not go into great depth with how being a homeschooling father makes any difference in discipleship (McKinney, 2012; Murray & Hwang, 2015; Talbot, 2008, Vigilant et al., 2014, 2013). The father’s perspective here would give some understanding of whether the homeschooling setting is viewed as beneficial, neutral, or negative to the experience of discipling. This could inform the literature and contribute to future studies in homeschooling and discipleship. Thus, it is important to understand what the father’s perspective is on how involved he is in the day-to-day discipleship process with his children.

Sub-Question 3: How do Evangelical Christian fathers describe their efforts to teach their children the Bible and to encourage them to submit to its teaching? This sub-question was developed based on the theological framework of Matthew 28:18-20 and the father involvement literature. The first part of this sub-question is focused on the second verse, where Jesus stated, “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). This question will inform the study on activities fathers are currently engaging in to disciple their children through the Word of God, as directed by Jesus in Matthew 28:20. This question is born out of the Great Commission and will help develop a better understanding of what teaching their children the Bible means to Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-makers. The second factor of this question is that of submission, or obedience to the Word of God. This part of the question gets at the foundational teaching of the Word, and the benefits of father
involvement in the life of a child (Allen, Daly, & Ball, 2012; Coltrane, 1996; Goldstein, 1982; Gottfried et al., 1988; Lamb, 1975, 1987; Lamb & LeMonda, 2004; Lewis, 2011; Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000; Sarkadi et al., 2008). Matthew 28:19 brings out the importance of baptism, and more specifically, the importance of submission to the Word of God (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011; Clark, 2013; Cochran, 2011; Hattingh et al., 2016; James, 2013; Moreland, 2007; Morris, 2012; Piper & Grudem, 1991; Taylor, 2013). Thus, this question will guide not only the emphasis given in Matthew 28:18-20 to studying the Bible, but also the focus on the act and understanding of submission from the experiences of Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-makers.

Sub-Question 4: How do Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers-disciple-makers describe being a responsible father? This question is significant as it originates from the theoretical framework of the study, the responsible father theory (Doherty et al., 1998), and will focus on the relevant parts of the definition of responsible fathering given by Levine and Pitt (1995). These relevant parts of the definition focused on here will be that of presence versus absence in the home, economic support, and involvement in the life of a father’s child (Levine & Pitt, 1995). Levine and Pitt (1995) also included being ready to be a father and establishing paternity in their five-fold definition; however, since this study will focus on fathers who live in the home with their biological children, focusing on being ready and paternity will not be necessary. Duckworth and Buzzanell (2009) furthered this framework, when they stated that fatherhood was “problem solving amidst webs of responsibilities” (p. 563) in which fathers must navigate the relationship with their children, their children’s mother, and other outside influences. This question provides focus on the dynamic, systems theory-oriented understanding
of multiple influences, of differing parts of a system, and how they can impact each other
(Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Doherty et al., 1998; Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009).

Definitions

1. Discipleship – When one encourages another to follow Christ with their life, with the
goal of growing and learning to being like Christ, living like him daily (Anderson, 2016;
Hattingh et al., 2016; Taylor, 2013).

2. Epoche – This is an attempt by the researcher to enter a frame of mind where they have
set aside “prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things” (Moustakas, 1994,
p. 85). In this frame of mind, the idea is to view the phenomenon from a fresh
perspective, “allowing things, events, and people to enter anew into consciousness”
(Moustakas, 1994, p. 85).

3. Homeschooling – “Homeschooling refers to the practice of educating one’s children in
one’s home rather than in traditional brick and mortar schools” (McGowin, 2017, p. 136).

4. Horizionalizing – In phenomenological research this means that “every statement initially
is treated as having equal value” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97).

5. Imaginative variation – The process of attempting to find as many possibilities of
meaning from the horizons and themes found during phenomenological reduction,
utilizing “imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and
reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different
positions, roles, or functions” (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 97-98).

6. Phenomenological reduction – This is the process of looking specifically at the
phenomenon under study and reducing it down to the researchers own “experience of the
way things are” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 91). During this methodology, the researcher utilizes their own consciousness and the phenomenon in relation to themselves as the means for finding meaning in what data was collected (Moustakas, 1994).

7. **Structural descriptions** – A function of phenomenological investigation in which the researcher seeks to identify the fundamental structures of a phenomenon, including influencing settings, contexts, and conditions. The structural descriptions detail how the phenomenon was experienced (Moustakas, 1994 in Allen, 2016).

8. **Textural descriptions** – A function of phenomenological investigation in which the researcher seeks to use the experiences relayed by the co-researchers (participants) to describe what was experienced (Allen, 2016).

**Summary**

There is an abundance of literature on the positive impact of involved fatherhood and of homeschooling (Allen & Daly, 2007; Jeynes, 2011; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Ray, 2017), the problem is the lack of combining these two with scholarly research on discipleship to give a rich, deep, and thick description of the lived experience of Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-makers in the process of discipling their children. The purpose of this study will be to describe the lived experience of the selected father-disciple-makers, using their own words, coming to an essence of the phenomenon. With the growth of the homeschool movement, and its significant number of Evangelical Christian participants, it is critical to understand what fathers see as the essence of the lived experience of discipleship, thus supporting the continued growth and development of the homeschool model and clarifying the state of discipleship from the father’s perspective.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The importance of father involvement cannot be overlooked, a fact borne out in the empirical literature supporting its importance which has amassed over the past 40 years (Adamsons & Pasley, 2016; Allen et al., 2012; Coltrane, 1996; Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009; Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984; Goldstein, 1982; Hawkins et al., 2002; Jones & Mosher, 2013; Lamb, 1975, 1987, 2004, 2010; Lewis, 2011; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Marsiglio & Roy, 2012; Snarey, 1993). This literature on father involvement has included many types of participants, but has not specifically targeted the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker population, and has typically left the biblical concept of discipleship out completely (Vigilant et al., 2014). During the same time-period that father involvement literature was growing, the modern homeschooling movement began to emerge, and has spawned a slow growth of literature, specifically about homeschooling (Barke, 2014; Broughman & Swaim, 2013; Frost & Morris, 1988; Hadeed, 1991; Harding, 2011; Jeynes, 2011; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Lois, 2006, 2009, 2010; Merry & Howell, 2009; Morton, 2010; Ray, 1989, 1990, 1994, 1997a, 1997b, 2004, 2010, 2013; 2017; Ray & Wartes, 1991; Rudner, 1999; Shyers, 1992; Vigilant et al., 2014; Vigilant et al., 2013). This increasing body of literature has identified both areas of need for further scholarly study in homeschooling, as well as the importance of the roles and responsibilities of the mother and father in the process (Lois, 2006, 2009, 2010; Vigilant et al., 2014; Vigilant et al., 2013). In contrast, teachings on discipleship have been in existence since the beginning of mankind, in the Garden of Eden, as recorded in Genesis 1:26-29 and 2:15-17 (Hamilton, 2010; James, 2013). These verses have been referred to as the Dominion Mandate (James, 2013; Piper & Grudem, 1991; Prince, 2013; Sproul, 2004), and rightfully so; however,
they also have been used to show that “God’s purpose for humanity from the beginning has been to fill the world with worshippers who faithfully reflect his image and desires” (James, 2013, p. 34). Thus, God’s plan for discipling his followers was always woven into the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6:1-25; Genesis 1:26-29, 2:15-7). Therefore, when Vigilant et al. (2014) stated the need for more research in homeschooling, especially the role of the Christian homeschooling fathers, and Duckworth and Buzzanell (2009) stated that studying a “subset of fathers” (p. 570) could give a better sample, it was clear that the need for this study was significant, as it would add to the theological and social science empirical literature on the phenomenon of the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker.

In this chapter, an attempt will be made to place this study in the context of the literature on father involvement, homeschooling, and discipleship over the past four decades and beyond as necessary, as well as within the theological and theoretical frameworks with which the phenomenon will be viewed. Thus, this chapter will first describe the disciple-maker theological framework of Matthew 28:18-20, and also related scriptures in the Bible that are connected to father involvement, homeschooling, and discipleship. The responsible fathering theoretical framework (Doherty et al., 1998) will also be explored as a means to better understand the complex “webs of responsibilities” (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009, p. 563) fathers face in being involved, homeschooling, and discipling their children. Lastly, the significance of this study will be grounded in the related literature, exploring what is known, and not known, about father involvement, homeschooling, and discipleship, as it relates to the role of the Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker.
Theological Framework

The Christian faith is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, the eternal Word (John 1:1, 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21), as revealed in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. Thus, revisiting the biblical definition for discipleship given in the first chapter would be ideal at this point. Discipleship is when one encourages another to follow Christ with their life, with the goal of growing and learning to be like Christ, living like Him daily (Anderson, 2016; Clark, 2013; Cox & Peck, 2018; Cunningham, 2017; Ephesians 4:11-17; Hattingh et al., 2016; Hetzel & Beck, 2016; James, 2013; John 8:31-32, 15:1-17; Matthew 5:14-16, 16:24-25, 28:18-20; Luke 9:23, 14:27; Taylor, 2013). This process of discipleship can often be viewed as the primary responsibility of pastors and teachers (James, 2013); however, this theological framework intends to take this concept of discipleship and focus on how it functions within biblical fatherhood, thus making apparent the connection between father involvement and discipleship.

As one friend of the researcher poignantly stated from an unknown source, Matthew 28:18-20 is the Great Commission, not the great option.

With this basic understanding of the foundation of Christianity and discipleship, the Bible will be the guide for the theological framework of this study. The researcher will focus specifically on the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, but also utilize three related passages from the Old Testament that support the Great Commission (Genesis 1:26-29, 2:15-17 and Deuteronomy 6:1-7), discipleship in general, and its connection to the Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker (Clark, 2013; Cochran, 2011; Hamilton, 2011; James, 2013; Matthews, 1996; Sproul, 2004). Matthew 28:18-20 has been the backbone of discipleship teaching for almost 2,000 years (James, 2013; Morris, 2012, Morris, 1992), with the passages in Deuteronomy, and then Genesis, reaching back to the beginning of mankind (Genesis 1:26).
Although this theological framework is not exhaustive, these three sections of scripture, with related scriptures, will be utilized to develop a solid theological framework through which the study of the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker will be viewed.

**Genesis 1:26-29, 2:15-17**

The book of Genesis is often referred to as the book of beginnings, which is the meaning of the name given to the book (Morris, 2012; Willmington, 1984). The first 11 chapters of the book of Genesis give us the beginning of the universe (1:1), earth (1:1), all kinds of life forms on earth (1:11-26), mankind (1:26), marriage (2:23-24), sin (3:6), death (3:6, 21), the promise of the Messiah (3:15), child birth (4:1), murder (4:8), civilization (4:17), discipleship (1-26-29, 2:15-17), as well as many more beginnings (Kidner, 1967; Morris, 2012; Willmington, 1984). This is not an exhaustive list of the beginnings in Genesis chapters 1-11; however, for the purpose of this study it gives a strong indication of the importance of the book of Genesis in setting the stage for how to approach topics with a biblical theological framework. Genesis 1:26-29 and 2:15-17 show how God built relationships with Adam and Eve through instructions on their everyday living, and in the process giving insights into two of the three major themes of this study: father involvement and discipleship, with a strong emphasis on setting the example for fathers in discipleship.

**Father involvement from the beginning.** In the Bible, the greatest model for fathers is God Himself (Cochran, 2011). In the opening verses of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, God created man “in our image, after our likeness” (Genesis 1:26). This beginning states that God was intimately involved in the creation of mankind (Morris, 2012), and He went so far as to give the first human beings a direct blessing and instructions on how to live in this new world (Genesis 1:28-29). God has always been an involved Father, from the very beginning, leading
and guiding His creation in the “paths of righteousness” (Psalm 23:3). As Genesis 1:26 states, God made humanity in “our image,” and in 1:27, “in the image of God,” which begs the question, “What does this image of God mean, and how is it related to discipleship?”

**Discipleship.** God not only created mankind, but made them in His image, the *imago Dei*. The meaning of this has been debated for years (Clark, 2013; James, 2013; Matthews, 1996, Piper and Grudem, 1991), yet there has been a great deal of scholarship supporting this *imago Dei*, or image of God, as meaning that humans were made, from the beginning, with a triune nature: physical, emotional/intellectual, and spiritual (Clark, 2013; James, 2012; Hamilton, 1990; Morris, 2012), and that means that to some degree mankind was created to “represent the virtues, values, and aims of God’s kingdom here in the world” (Clark, 2013, p. 168). In other words, humans were created to be in fellowship with God and one another, coming alongside each other daily, intentionally involved in relationship-based spiritual formation process through God’s love (Clark, 2013; Morris, 2012; James, 2013). Therefore, the first human couple, Adam and Eve, were expected to, in the image of God, create a place where “God was known, served, worshiped and uniquely present” (Hamilton, 2011, p. 33). When this expectation of the *imago Dei* is taken, alongside the potential rendering of “work” and “keep” in Genesis 2:15, as “worship and obey” (Hamilton, 2011; Beale, 2004), the connection to discipleship shines through with much greater clarity. Thus, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were there in the beginning, even fashioning humans in a triune nature, like Himself (Kiesling, 2017), laying down the principles of discipleship for the first human couple.

Verses 15 through 17 of Genesis chapter two go on to give greater detail of God’s instructions to Adam, warning him of the consequences of eating the forbidden fruit, and giving him the freedom to eat any other fruit of the garden. Once again, God is intimately involved
with His creation, giving Adam instructions that, if heeded, could have saved the history of mankind from the violence and bloodshed that has marked it for many millennia. God therefore, in the first two chapters of the Bible, set the precedence for father involvement and discipleship with his children. In these two passages, God shows that He is concerned with humanity’s well-being and wants to lead them into all blessings, discipling each of them with care and concern for temporal and eternal destinies (Clark, 2013; Cochran, 2011; Hamilton, 1990; Hamilton, 2011; James, 2013; Piper & Grudem, 1991; Sproul, 2004). Thus, the foundation of father involvement and discipleship in the book of Genesis will be useful to undergird the three-fold application of Matthew 28:18-20, and to expand the use of this theology in the field of homeschooling, where it is present in some forms, but not used in the empirical literature concerning the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-makers.

**Deuteronomy 6:1-7**

The book of Deuteronomy is set within the context of the nation of Israel near entering the land promised to them by God, and comes after a host of miraculous events where God delivered the Jewish people from slavery in the land of Egypt (e.g. Exodus 4:3-9, 7:20, 8:6, 8:17, 12:29, 14:21-22), and sustained them during their time in the wilderness (Exodus 15:25, 17:6; Numbers 21:8-9). With this context in mind, Moses wrote Deuteronomy chapter six. The entire chapter can be summarized for the purpose of this study, by simply stating the essence of the first and last verses of the chapter: obey the commandments of the Lord (Deuteronomy 6:1, 6:25). In these verses God gave us specific details of how to pass on faith in Him, from generation to generation, thus enabling us to teach each generation to obey the commandments of the Lord (Halley, 1965; James, 2013; Kiesling, 2017; Morris, 2012).
Father involvement, homeschooling, and discipleship. The challenge of Deuteronomy 6:1-2 began with each individual Israelite being accountable to the commandments of God, not only to know them, but to do them (Clark, 2013; Hamilton, 2010; Harding, 2011; James, 2013; Johnson, 2013). In Genesis, God had shown Himself to be the example of an involved father (Clark, 2013; Cochran, 2011; Hamilton, 2010; Hamilton, 2011; James, 2013; Piper & Grudem, 1991), leading and guiding the first human couple toward peace and prosperity (even though Adam and Eve did not choose to follow). Here again He set forth His desire for parents to be actively involved in raising their children to follow Him (Clark, 2013; Harding, 2011; James, 2013; McKinney, 2012). Yet the end of verse two introduced something else entirely: “thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged” (Deuteronomy 6:2b). Thus, not only were the Israelites to know and follow the commandments of the Lord themselves, but the commandments were to be followed by their children, and grandchildren, providing for the discipleship of each succeeding generation.

God laid the foundation for discipleship in Genesis, and here visited it again in Deuteronomy chapter six, even more explicitly in verses 5-9. Here, God directed the Israelites to teach the commandments of the Lord “diligently unto thy children” (Deuteronomy 6:7). This is indicative of parental responsibility for education as well as discipleship (Clark, 2013; James, 2013; Johnson, 2013; McKinney, 2012; Parnell & Strachan, 2014). As Anderson (2016) stated it, biblical discipleship is “a daily process of deliberate and strategic planting of ‘seeds’ in the hearts and minds of young people” (p. 10); therefore, over 1,000 years before the life of Christ (Halley, 1965; Willmington, 1984), God commanded, here in this passage, for each Israelite to teach as they went about their daily life, discipling the next generation and beyond.
This statement appears to encompass fathers and mothers, as the author stated, “thou shalt teach them” (Deuteronomy 6:7); however, upon further research, it is notable, that the pronouns in Deuteronomy 6:6-7 are considered to be masculine singular in the Hebrew language (Hamilton, 2011; James, 2013), giving the responsibility directly to the father. This means that Moses was not writing to a tribe or nation so much as he was writing this section directly to each individual father (Hamilton, 2010; James, 2013). One can then ascertain, from careful study, that the responsibility for fathers in discipleship would be expected in a patriarchal society such as that of the post-Exodus Jewish nation (Clark, 2013; Hamilton, 2010; Harding, 2011; James, 2013; Piper & Grudem). Both parents were to be involved in the discipleship of the child (Deuteronomy 6:7, Exodus 20:12; Proverbs 23:22), yet the father was given the responsibility to see that it was completed (Deuteronomy 6:7).

After plainly calling parents to be involved in the spiritual and educational development of their children, in making disciples, this directive in Deuteronomy 6:7 continues to detail how parents, and more specifically fathers, should be providing this instruction. Verse seven states, “thou shalt teach them [the commandments] diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk to them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up,” clearly supporting homeschooling. Theologically, Deuteronomy 6:7 gives much strength to the idea, consistently in the literature, as well as in the Bible, that parents are responsible for the spiritual and educational formation of their children, intentionally discipling them through the Word of God (Block, 2005; Clark, 2013; Ephesians 6:1-4; Hamilton, 2011; Hamilton, 2010; Harding, 2011; James, 2013; Johnson, 2013; Jones, 2013; Latshaw, 1998; McEwen et al., 2016; McKinney, 2012; Murray & Hwang, 2015; Piper & Grudem, 1991; Parnell & Strachan, 2014; Sproul, 2004). This connects back to the intentional, involved, Father God
described in Genesis chapters one and two, and ahead to the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20.

**Matthew 28:18-20**

The centerpiece to this theological framework, from which this study will be mainly viewed, is the Great Commission, coming some 1,200-1,400 years after Moses’ commentary on parenting in Deuteronomy 6:1-7 (Halley, 1965; Morris, 2012; Willmington, 1984), and an approximated 4-5,000 years after God’s first example of fatherhood in Genesis chapters one and two, with Adam and Eve being discipled one-on-one by God (Halley, 1965; Morris, 2012; Willmington, 1984). There is much written on this section of scripture (7,560 results on Google Scholar for a recent search of “Matt. 28:19”). So much is written on the Great Commission that if taken on as a whole, it would be well beyond the scope of this study; therefore, a survey of the literature, especially as it is linked to fatherhood and homeschooling, will be presented here. The entire section is introduced with, and predicated on, Matthew 28:18, which states, “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” This statement from Jesus is extremely important, as He was about to ascend to the Father in heaven. Jesus assured his followers that He was no longer limited by His physical body, and that He had supreme authority in all things (James, 2013). Thus, the three-fold description of disciple-making given in Matthew 28:19-20 would be worthy of taking in detail, completing the development of the theological framework of this study.

“**Go ye,” or “as ye go,” Matthew 28:19.** In Matthew 28:19, Jesus, as recorded by the Gospel writer Matthew, gave his final commission to His followers: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” The beginning of this verse, “Go ye” (Matthew 28:19), could read, “as ye go” (Morris, 2012, p.
thus bringing a more relational, everyday life foundation to discipleship (Anderson, 2016; Baucham, 2007; Clark, 2013; Cox & Peck, 2018; Cunningham, 2017; Hetzel & Beck, 2016; James, 2013; Kennedy, 2015; Latshaw, 1998; Moreland, 2007, Morris, 2012). This idea of discipleship, as one goes about their day, is relationship-based and brings discipleship into the realm of a lifestyle decision, not merely some isolated thing we do at random intervals (Anderson, 2016; Clark, 2013; Cox & Peck, 2018; Cunningham, 2017; James, 2013; Kennedy, 2015; Kouzes & Posner, 2004; Latshaw, 1998; Moreland, 2007; Morris, 2012). The balance of the scholarship found this middle ground of daily “as ye go” ministry (Serrano, 2017), with some falling on extremes, making this statement to mean that all Christians should go on mission trips (Morris, 1992), to the other side stating that too much is made of this common word for “go” (France, 2007). Either way one interprets or translates the word “go,” this statement from Jesus has been one of the primary concerns of Christians over the last two millennia (Anderson, 2016; Clark, 2013; Cox & Peck, 2018; Cunningham, 2017; Hattingh et al., 2016; James, 2013; Kennedy, 2015; Moreland, 2007; Morris, 2012). As it is regarded by most as an essential part of the Gospel message, and also a key concept for Evangelical Christian father-disciple-makers, this review of the literature will give significant attention to its implications on biblical fatherhood and discipleship. In like manner, Solomon wrote in Proverbs 20:7, “The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him.” Thus, it is the daily, lifestyle decisions that are central to discipleship, and especially, the Christian father-disciple-maker.

Clark, in his 2013 study on Christian fathers and their intentional involvement in the relational spiritual development of their children, found significant positive connections between fathers’ involvement with their children’s spiritual development and factors such as: “intentional fathering, fathering satisfaction, spousal oneness, support from spouse and others, spiritual
intentionality, spiritual maturity, and relational closeness to God” (p. ii). This stands in agreement with the theological, as well as theoretical, literature on the importance of father relations with their children (Allen et al., 2012; Anderson, 2016; Aune, 2010; Clark, 2013; Doherty et al. James, 2013; Jones & Mosher, 2013; Kennedy, 2015; Kiesling, 2017; Kim, 2014; Lamb, 2004; Lamb & LeMonda, 2004; Lewis, 2011; Marsiglio & Roy, 2012; McKinney, 2012; Vigilant, Anderson, & Trefethren, 2014; Vigilant, Trefethren, & Anderson, 2013). Thus, according to the research, the relational aspect of a Christian homeschooling father making disciples of his children is a complex web of relationships (which will also be discussed at length in the Theoretical Framework section), and is paramount in importance (Anderson, 2016; Clark, 2013; James, 2013; Kennedy, 2015; Keisling, 2017).

**Obedience to the Word of God.** The next section, of Matthew 28:19, is that of baptizing new converts in the name of “the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” The importance of this part of the theological framework cannot be overstated, as it is critical to lead a new disciple into the obedience of the Word of God through the symbolic ritual of baptism, and thus encouraging and guiding them to come fully under the lordship of Jesus Christ (Anderson, 2016; Blackaby & Blackaby, 2011; Clark, 2013; Cochran, 2011; Cunningham, 2017; Hattingh et al., 2016; James, 2013; Jones, 2015; Kennedy, 2015; Kiesling, 2017; McEwen et al., 2016; McKinney, 2012; Moreland, 2007; Morris, 2012; Piper & Grudem, 1991; Taylor, 2013). Baptism is symbolic of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and provides an attesting to Trinitarian theology of “the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19). This public display of faith in Jesus Christ is also important in bringing the individual into the Christian community (James, 2013).
Matthew 28:19 is found in the context of Jesus’ preceding statement that “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18). Therefore, Jesus was saying that He is in authority over all things, and the expectation is that true followers of Christ will then obey His words as recorded in the Bible (Anderson, 2016; Cochran, 2011; James, 2013; McKinney, 2012; Morris, 2012; Naselli, 2013; Piper & Grudem, 1991; Parnell & Strachan, 2014). Thus, for a Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker, it is of the utmost importance to lead children to obey the Bible, and as such, follow the example of Jesus Christ in public baptism (Matthew 3:13-17), as well as in all other areas He has spoken to, recognizing Him as all-powerful and in charge.

“Observe all things.” The final part of the three-fold understanding of discipleship for the theological framework is that of instructing the individual in the teachings of the Bible. This is related to, but not the same as, being obedient to the Word of God. Obedience is the choice to submit to whatever Jesus Christ instructs through the Bible; however, teaching disciples to observe all the things that Jesus has taught requires many hours of careful Bible study, and learning to communicate with God and hear His voice, truly a life-long journey (Anderson, 2016; Armato & Marsiglio, 2002; Barke, 2014; Baucham, 2007; Clark, 2013; Cochran, 2011; Hattingh et al., 2016; James, 2013; Jones, 2015; Kennedy, 2015; Kiesling, 2017; McEwen et al., 2016; McKinney, 2012; Moreland, 2007; Morris, 2012; Piper & Grudem, 1991; Serrano, 2017). This discipleship process can be a daunting, time-intensive task (Anderson, 2016; Clark, 2013; James, 2013; Serrano, 2017; Watson & Watson, 2014); however, this verse finishes with the famous statement by Jesus, “And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20).
This assurance from Jesus (Matthew 28:20) was understood by the disciples present to mean the coming of the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-31), but also that there was the comfort of knowing that God would be with them through all their endeavors, including the long-term commitment of discipleship (Chandler, 2014; James, 2013). Blackaby and Blackaby (2011) referred to this dynamic of spiritual leadership or discipleship as “moving people on to God’s agenda” (p. 36). Blackaby and Blackaby (2011) also understood that this process was impossible without the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise at the end of verse 20, stating, “Spiritual leaders function within a paradox, for God calls them to do something that, in fact, only he can do” (p. 38). It was understood then that teaching children to observe all that Jesus has taught through the Bible was more than attempting to persuade them to be a Christian in name only, but to “secure wholehearted commitment to a person” (Morris, 1992, p. 746), who is Christ Jesus (Anderson, 2016; Barke, 2014; Clark, 2013; James, 2013).

Theological Framework Summary

Defining discipleship through the three-prong approach of this theological framework gives a strong balance to stand on within the literature on discipleship (Anderson, 2016; Armato & Marsiglio, 2002; Barke, 2014; Baucham, 2007; Chandler, 2014; Clark, 2013; Cochran, 2011; Hattingh et al., 2016; James, 2013; Jones, 2015; Kennedy, 2015; Kiesling, 2017; McEwen et al., 2016; McKinney, 2012; Moreland, 2007; Morris, 2012; Piper & Grudem, 1991) and the text of Matthew 28:18-20. The thrust of the literature agrees with this approach of discipleship over time, through intensive study of the Bible, in the context of the authority of Jesus Christ, and all under the promise that ends the book of Matthew that the Lord will be with His disciples through all of it (Anderson, 2016; Armato & Marsiglio, 2002; Barke, 2014; Baucham, 2007; Chandler, 2014; Clark, 2013; Cochran, 2011; Hattingh et al., 2016; James, 2013; Jones, 2015; Kennedy,
Therefore, the overall theological framework of Matthew 28:18-20, in terms of general discipleship, is not new to Christianity; however, applying it to the unique work of Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-makers allows the opportunity for this theology to provide a lens through which to see more clearly the phenomenon, and hopefully, the essence, of the lived experience of the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker.

**Theoretical Framework**


Since Lamb’s original work, many researchers have explored and discussed the complexities of fatherhood, father involvement, and the balancing act with regards to forces outside of the family unit (Adamson & Pasley, 2016; Aune, 2010; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Clark,
2013; Doherty et al., 1998; Dollahite et al., 1997; Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2005; James, 2013; Jones & Mosher, 2013; Klein & White, 1996; Lamb 1976, 1981, 1997, 2004, 2010; Levine & Pitt, 1995; Marsiglio & Roy, 2012; Murray & Hwang, 2015; Sarkadi et al., 2008; Sevigny, Loutzenhiser, & McAuslan, 2016). Out of these studies of the complexity of father involvement and the multilateral, ecological, systemic nature of the study, have come the more recent emphasis on responsible fathering (Doherty et al., 1998). This kind of value statement has often been avoided in social science research (Doherty et al., 1998), yet many researchers have settled on the understanding that there is at least some agreement about what being a responsible father means (Levine & Pitt, 1995). Thus, many researchers studying fatherhood adopted the idea that there was a level of responsibility that can be expected of fathers in general, and utilized the responsible fathering theory in developing their theory or study (Bastaits et al., 2015; Forehand et al., 2016; Holmes & Huston, 2010; Laakso & Fathering, 2004; Murray & Hwang, 2015; Parent et al., 2017; Webster et al., 2013). The use of such value-laden terminology (responsible) connects well with the theological framework described in the previous section, as Doherty et al.’s (1998) study ends with its two major premises being that fatherhood was highly contextual, and, significantly, that a “caring, committed, collaborative marriage” (p. 290) was the ideal situation for involved fatherhood. Therefore, based on the use of this terminology, and the theoretical framework based on the ecological, systemic approach, the responsible fathering theory as described by Doherty et al. (1998), will be utilized to view this study theoretically and in combination with the biblical theological framework previously described.

**Scholarly Origin**

The idea of responsible fathering has a rich biblical history, as was discussed in the theological framework, from the beginning of the world until today; however, the terminology of
responsible fathering from an ecological systemic approach, in the empirical literature has been more recent with the works of Dollahite et al. (1997), Levine and Pitt (1995), and culminating with the responsible fathering theory in use here as stated by Doherty et al. (1998). Doherty et al.’s (1998) ecological systemic framework has been utilized in multiple and varying empirical articles on the family since (Bastaits et al., 2015; Forehand et al., 2016; Hognas & Williams, 2017; Holmes & Huston, 2010; Laakso & Fathering, 2004; Murray & Hwang, 2015; Parent et al., 2017; Webster et al., 2013). However, to understand Doherty et al.’s (1998) framework, it is important to discuss where this theory comes from.

The first major theorist to specifically promote an ecological systemic approach to the study of family was Bronfenbrenner in his 1986 article, *Ecology of the Family as a Context for Human Development: Research Perspectives*. Bronfenbrenner’s (1986) article is situated in the rich systems theory history (Bertalanffy, 1968), looking at each factor as interdependent with other factors within a given system. Although Bronfenbrenner’s (1986) work was the first ecological systemic theoretical framework in family studies, in Lamb’s (1976) seminal book on the developmental relationship between the father and the child, he stated that an ecological approach to the growing field of father involvement was critical, when he said, “I also wish to draw attention to the dangers of over-specialization and the need to appreciate interdependencies” (p. 2), Lamb continued, warning of the danger of “ignoring the need to see continuity in the life cycle” (p. 2). In the notes section, Lamb (1976) also gave credit to Bronfenbrenner as one who gave comments on the drafts of the 1976 work. Therefore, the beginning of the modern father involvement movement was that of an ecological nature, with Lamb (1976) stating its importance in the opening of his book chronicling the current research of
the time, and with Bronfenbrenner (1986) later laying out a complex, multi-level ecological systems theory to advance research in the field.

Coming back to this point again over three decades later, in Lamb’s (2010) most recent edition of his seminal work, *The Role of the Father in Child Development*, Pleck (2010) outlines their Lamb-Pleck three factor model, as focusing on positive engagement activities, warmth and responsiveness, and control, with two auxiliary domains: indirect care and process responsibility. Pleck (2010) here returned to look at other theoretical models that could benefit the study of father involvement. Pleck (2010) listed Bronfenbrenner’s (1986) ecological systems theoretical framework’s proximal process as compatible with his Lamb-Pleck three factor model. These two coalesced well, as Lamb and Pleck’s research has brought them to a place of looking more carefully at the reciprocal nature of the father-child relationship (even mentioned in the 1996 3rd edition of *The Role of the Father in Child Development*), and how that was on display in Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) continued description of proximal process. This proximal process also showed a great deal of reciprocity in relationships from the ecological systemic perspective (Lamb, 2010). Pleck (2010) wrote that the main tenants of the microsystem level of Bronfenbrenner’s (1986) ecological systemic framework, and especially the proximal process (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) within it, matched well with the complex interactions within the family, as well as the father-child relationship. This showed the overlap of these two different theoretical frameworks, and how many aspects of the research on father involvement had come together in a multilateral, ecological systems research environment.

Over the years, from Lamb’s (1975) article to the most current conceptions, many theorists and theories have attempted to explain the complexity of fatherhood. One of the first theories in use in the empirical literature was that of the attachment theory, as utilized by
Kotelchuck (1976). This model was especially salient for infant studies; however, it seemed to wane in strength as children got older (Pleck, 2010). As noted above, Bronfenbrenner’s (1986) ecological systems theoretical framework was especially impactful to the literature (Pleck, 2010). Coleman (1998) discussed an important theory that made its way to family, then father involvement studies: social capital. In Coleman’s (1998) version of social capital theory, applied to the family, there were two distinct domains that were explored: financial capital and social capital. In Pleck (2010), this theory was highlighted in conjunction with the Lamb-Pleck model to form a new basis for fatherhood and family studies. Marsiglio (1995) looked at fatherhood through the life course theory, social scripting theory, and social identity theory. Ford and Lenrer (1992) contributed developmental insights that brought a greater emphasis on the systems theories in family relations, through their explanation and application of the developmental systems theory, expounded on in Klein and White’s (1996) family systems theory. More recently, Pleck (1997) described a four-factor model to be utilized as a guide in future fatherhood research. Forehand et al. (2016) utilized the family stress theory, in conjunction with the responsible fathering theory, to look specifically at cohabitating males, conflict, and support. Hognas and Williams (2017) utilized the family systems theory, also in conjunction with the understanding of responsible fathering theory from Doherty et al. (1998).

Doherty et al. (1998) drew mainly from the systems theorists and theoretical frameworks in developing their own ecological systems theoretical framework, focusing on the “web of personal, relational, and community influences” (p. 284) on fathers. This framework was influenced by the systems approach, as Doherty et al. (1998) diagramed the father-child-mother relationship as an interrelated triangle, with outside, contextual factors converging on and impacting from outside the triangle of the inner relationships (see Figure 1 on page 56). This
framework was influenced specifically by Erickson’s (1950) developmental theory, as well as Lewin’s (1936), Bertalanffy’s (1968), Bronfenbrenner’s (1986) and Klein and White’s (1996) systems work, Pleck’s (1997) four-factor model, and finally the context of Levine and Pitt’s (1995) focused definition of responsible fathering.

**Responsible, Involved Fathering**

Doherty et al.’s (1998) responsible fathering theory has since been cited by many authors (currently listed at over 3,200 on a Google Scholar search of “Doherty et al. (1998)”) in a variety of fields, especially those focused on fatherhood and family studies. The impacts of this theory, especially being cited by such a large quantity of studies, is difficult to measure, but its impact is sure to be significant. Doherty, himself, has been one of the most prolific writers on fatherhood and families from an ecological systemic perspective over the last four decades, having written or co-authored at least 16 books on marriage, family and fatherhood, as well as authoring or co-authoring well over 100 articles and/or chapters on marriage, family and fatherhood.

Much of the dialogue in fatherhood literature since Doherty et al.’s (1998) article has included the value-laden term “responsible,” and scholarship has accepted as a legitimate claim that fatherhood studies can have this value-statement attached to them. The literature has borne out many times over that involved, responsible fathering is critical for the future of the United States (Adamsons & Pasley, 2016; Allen & Daly, 2007; Allen et al., 2012; Anderson, 2016; Aune, 2010; Clark, 2013; Coltrane, 1996, 2001; Doherty et al., 1998; Dollahite, Hawkins, & Brotherson, 1997; Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2005; Klein & White, 1996; Lamb 1975, 1976, 1981, 1996, 2004, 2010; Levine & Pitt, 1995; Marsiglio, 1995; Marsiglio & Roy, 2012; Murray & Hwang, 2015; Sarkadi et al., 2008; Sevigny, Loutzenhiser, & McAuslan, 2016; Wall, 2007; Wilcox, 2004), thus, such a value-laden term is fitting, even in empirical research.
Homeschooling and Discipleship

Responsible fathering has been implicit in the literature on fatherhood, in homeschooling, and in discipleship for many years (Armato & Marsiglio, 2002; Cochran, 1999, Cochran, 2011; Hadeed, 1991; James, 2103; Jones, 2013; Moreland, 2007; Murphy, 2013; Piper & Grudem, 1991; Wyatt, 1999), yet not used in reference to Doherty et al.’s (1998) framework until the last decade (Clark, 2013; Hardin, 2011; Kennedy; 2015; Kim, 2014; Kim & Quek, 2013; Lewis, 2011). This is due, in large part, to the slow growth of fatherhood literature in general, and, specifically, the slow growth of homeschooling literature. The utilization of the responsible fathering theory in studies about homeschooling and discipleship is absent in the empirical literature at this point, as all the studies mentioned that have used the framework were in regard to discipleship, father involvement, parenting, or otherwise unrelated to this study, not in regard to homeschooling and discipleship together. The use of the value-laden terminology in this theory makes it a good fit with the theological framework, and with the biblical basis for discipleship studies. Thus, the use of the responsible fathering framework, in studying the lived experience of the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker, will extend the use of this theory beyond its former uses, and connect well with the theological framework, allowing the theory by Doherty et al. (1998) to further develop the empirical literature on fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship.

Responsible Fathering Theory Lens

As was stated previously, the responsible fathering theory has not been used in the specific context of fatherhood, discipleship, and homeschooling, and thus provides a new framework through which to view this study. This, coupled with the theological framework based on Matthew 28:18-20, creates a unique lens through which to view this study. The
responsible fathering theory took into account four of the five domains provided by Levine and Pitt’s (1995) beneficial attempt to define responsible fathering, namely, “fathers and legal paternity” (Doherty et al., 1998, p. 279), “father presence versus absence” (Doherty et al., 1998, p. 280), fathers’ economic support, and father involvement with children only, limiting themselves to men who were fathers (Levine & Pitt also had a criterion for waiting to become a father). This model focused first on the mother-father-child triad, then moved outside these internal relationships to discuss the contextual, external factors that exert influence on these primary relationships (see Figure 1 from Doherty et al., 1998, p. 285). This system of complex factors helped delineate the “webs of responsibilities” (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009, p. 563) that fathers found themselves in, giving parameters for this study, in conjunction with the theological framework of discipling by building relationships, providing spiritual leadership, and teaching the Bible. This combination will expand the use of both the theoretical and theological frameworks into the lived experience of the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker.
Figure 1

Influences on Responsible Fathering: A Conceptual Model


Related Literature

In response to Lamb’s (1975) seminal article, which stated that the role of father was significant to the proper development of the child, the bulk of the empirical social science literature relevant to this study was that of father involvement studies. Many studies, qualitative and quantitative, as well as studies developing measures of father involvement, have come out over the last four decades of research (Allen, Daly, & Ball, 2012; Coltrane, 1996; Goldstein, 1982; Gottfried et al., 1988; Hawkins et al., 2002; Hawkins & Palkovitz, 1999; Lamb, 1975, 1987; Lamb & LeMonda, 2004; Lewis, 2011; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Nugent, 1991; Pedersen,
Anderson, & Kain, 1980; Pedersen et al., 1979; Radin, 1982; Sarkadi et al., 2008; Sevigny et al., 2016). Although there is much research on father involvement, the literature on homeschooling is not as voluminous, but has been growing at an accelerated pace as more and more people choose this method of schooling (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). The empirical studies on discipleship are numerous as well; however, a vast majority of the writings are theological writings, exegesis of various scriptures, and works by respected leaders in Christian ministry, many of which are not typically considered a part of the empirical literate cannon and, typically, do not address the particular case of the modern Evangelical Christian homeschooling father in this process. Much of the discipleship literature relevant to fatherhood has been that of how to be a biblical father, not seeking out what the lived experience of a father is like at a personal level. The literature related to the topic of the lived experience of the Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker is substantial, mainly from the father involvement movement, yet often yields an understanding that only lends a limited amount of connection to the unique case of the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker in the United States’ postmodern culture.

**Father Involvement**

Before the beginning of the modern father involvement movement, with Lamb’s (1975) seminal work, the study of father involvement was centered around the study of father absence, the transmission of masculinity from father to son, and the financial provider or breadwinner role (Lamb, 1976). The breadwinner role was very significant at this point in the father involvement studies, but was going through great changes, due to the number of females entering the workforce in the 70s and 80s, yet, was still widely considered an important part of the father’s role (Lamb, 1975, 1976; Pleck, 1983; Pleck & Pleck, 1997). Foremost, of the two remaining subjects
relative to this literature review, father absence studies, even in its infancy, showed consistent associations with poor outcomes for children of either gender who had limited access to their fathers (Biller, 1974; Lamb, 1976). Children of father absent homes showed these negative impacts on their cognitive, social, emotional, and academic functioning (Biller, 1974; Lamb, 1976). These results were strong indicators that the role of the father, at least his presence, was in fact significant, hence Lamb’s (1975) article title, Fathers: Forgotten Contributors to Child Development. This made clear to Lamb, as well as others, that there was more to father involvement than what had been studied up till then, and that study of contextual factors of father involvement were well overdue (Lamb, 1976). With the association of father absence to a wide range of detrimental effects on children made clear, the question in the empirical literature of whether fathers had a unique value to their children was challenged, spawning the modern ecological, multilateral study of father involvement (Lamb, 1976).

Thus, the empirical literature on the interdependent nature of father involvement grew significantly since Lamb’s (1975) influential article and subsequent book chronicling the state of the field of study (Lamb, 1976). There have been multiple studies on fatherhood since, applying a variety of theories and models to the complex role of the father in the life of his children (Adamsons & Pasley, 2016; Allen & Daly, 2007; Armato & Marsiglio, 2002; Dubeau, Coutu, & Lavigne, 2013; Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984; Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Goldstein, 1982; Hawkins et al., 2002; Hawkins & Palkovitz, 1999; Kiesling, 2017; Lamb 1981, 1987, 2004, 2010; Lewis, 2011; Marsiglio et al., 2000; McDowell, Parke, & Wang, 2003; McEwen et al., 2016; Murray & Hwang, 2015; Sarkadi et al., 2008; Sevigny et al., 2016; Trahan & Cheung, 2016; Vigilant et al., 2014; Vigilant et al., 2013). The empirical literature on father involvement has thus been impacted by most of the major theorists including, but not limited to, Vygotsky,
Lewin, Erikson, Freud, Bandura, and Bertalanffy. Over the last four decades, the work of these researchers and the application of these varied theories have uncovered a plethora of themes in the development of the father involvement field of study (Lamb, 2010). Thus, this literature review will focus on the themes that relate most directly to the study at hand, as the number of studies and themes that have developed over the past four decades are so wide in scope that producers of volumes such as Lamb’s, *The Role of the Father in Child Development 5th Edition*, have relied on multiple authors that have specialized in specific areas of the modern study of father involvement.

**Financial responsibility/provider role.** This role has been in the literature for decades, with Lamb (1975) who stated that the role and its importance was an assumption for social scientists over 40 years ago, at the beginning of the modern father involvement movement. At that point in the literature, being the breadwinner was considered the most important role of the father with regards to his children in their younger years (Lamb, 1975, 1976). Fathers were not seen as very consequential outside of financial support of the family and emotional support of the mother, since the mother was viewed as the primary one to be studied for understanding interactions with and development of the child (Lamb, 1975; 1976). As a great deal of literature has attested to since Lamb’s (1975) work, there is much more to father involvement than financial provision. Although it is understood that breadwinner is not the only role of the father, it has also been found that men’s success, or even perceived success, in the breadwinner role impacts the father’s interaction quality, making it an important role nonetheless (Carlson & McLanahan, 2010; Doherty et al., 1998; Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009; Hognas & Williams, 2017). Thus, while the understanding of the complexity of the role of father was developing, the breadwinner role has remained significant up through the years, with studies consistently finding
financial responsibility as important to the role of fatherhood and to father involvement (Aberg et al., 2017; Allen & Daly, 2007; Barba, 2016; Carlson & McLanahan, 2010; Hognas & Williams, 2017; Lamb, 1976, 2010; Pleck, 1983; Pleck & Pleck, 1997; Sevigny et al., 2016), especially when the role of breadwinner was valued by the mother, or both mother and father (Adamsons & Pasley, 2013). Though this role has remained significant in the literature, it has also undergone some major changes.

Over the past hundred years, the breadwinner role as a man’s primary role has changed due to economic factors, women’s increasing participation in the workforce, and men’s desire to become more involved in the lives of their children (Adamsons & Pasley, 2013; Armato & Marsiglio, 2002; Aune, 2010; Altenburger et al., 2018; Barba, 2016; Cabera et al., 2000; Pleck & Pleck, 1997). Each of these changes has ultimately weakened this role, making it no longer central only to fathers, and has reduced the power that this role once gave fathers in the home (Aune, 2010). However, it should be noted that for many fathers, this was not a reduction of one role for another; for many fathers this was additive, making the caretaker and the nurturing roles central also (Barba, 2016). It has been hypothesized that men’s reduced importance in this role is partly because of a desire in the 1970s to rebel against the breadwinner role (Ehrenreich, 1983). It appears in the literature (Lamb, 2010), that the contextual factors, and the father’s desire to be more involved, are a better and more consistent description of this reduction of the importance of the breadwinner role among fathers, leading fathers to rethink the balance between work and family life.

**Work and family life balance.** The work of Doherty et al. (1998) helped theorists understand the phenomenon of fatherhood from a more complex systems approach, and opened the door to the study of the less understood work and family life balance, while Pleck and Pleck
(1997) helped frame general father role changes through American history. Pleck and Pleck (1997) pointed out how role changes happened, typically due to economic and cultural factors, but Barba (2016) pointed out that many times, the changing role of the father was not as simple as the changing of a defining role, but the addition of more roles. Combined, these three, Doherty et al, (1998), Pleck and Pleck (1997), and Barba (2016), provided a deeper understanding of the ecological, systemic nature of fatherhood, and gave context to how the roles have changed in work and family life balance.

**History of work and family life balance: Colonial period onward.** Pleck and Pleck (1997) showed that work and family life balance was especially impacted by economic changes in America from the colonial period onward. Before the Industrial Revolution, when many lived on farms or worked at a trade, the colonial period father was marked by the moral teacher role (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). This afforded the father more time with the family, and the typical home was centered around the father, thus work and family time often overlapped (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). Work and family life balance, in this setting, was more integrated and therefore less difficult to manage for fathers. However, with the coming of the Industrial Revolution, the balancing of work and family life was to change significantly (Pleck & Pleck, 1997).

One of the major changes around this time was that economic work and the work of the family were no longer entwined as they had been in the past (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997; Pleck & Pleck, 1997). This caused a reduction of the time that fathers would spend in the home, thus necessitating the change of the primary role of the father from the present, moral teacher to distant breadwinner (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). This changed the atmosphere of the home, as it became centered around the mother instead of the father (Pleck & Pleck, 1997).
difficulty in work and family life balance, as fathers were often working away from home, sometimes for weeks or months at a time.

Next, historically, was the addition of the more involved father as friend (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). This genial dad role was coupled with father as the male-role model. This impacted work and family life balance, as fathers were expected to be more involved and present at home, to interact with their children. In the 1970s, the nurture or, new father role, was also added, increasing the expectations for father involvement, to a point that began to create even greater work and family life balance struggles (Altenburger et al., 2018; Aune, 2010; Barba, 2016; Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009; Kuo et al., 2018; McLaughlin & Muldoon, 2014). The role of the father had changed significantly since the moral teacher and provider of the earlier periods, due mostly to economic changes, the increasing impact of the feminism movement, women leaving the home for the majority of the day to join the workforce, and the Industrial Revolution (Altenburger et al., 2018; Barba, 2016; Kiesling, 2017; Kuo et al., 2018; McLaughlin & Muldoon, 2014; Parker & Wang, 2013; Pleck & Pleck, 1997; Yavorsky et al., 2015). These new expectations were welcomed by some but proved difficult to achieve in reality (Altenburger et al., 2018; Barba, 2016; Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009; Keisling, 2017; Kuo et al., 2018; McLaughlin & Muldoon, 2014).

With the new addition of nurture role in the 1970s, fathers who desired to be more involved accepted the additional role, attempting to navigate expectations that posed significant issues with the breadwinner first ideology, which was a result of the Industrial Revolution (Altenburger et al., 2018; Barba, 2016; Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009; Pleck & Pleck, 1997). Fathers in general demonstrated that an attitude of being more involved was the ideal situation for their children; however, they were often less involved than they desired (Duckworth &
Buzanell, 2009; Lewis, 2011; McKinney, 2012). Work and family life balance was stated as one of the most common issues keeping fathers from being involved to the extent that they desired to be (Duckworth & Buzanell, 2009; Lewis, 2011; McKinney, 2012). The research literature shows that, while attempting to find this balance, fathers continued to meet barriers that made balance difficult, and also, conversely, found pathways that fostered the work and family life balance they sought (Allen & Daly, 2007).

**Barriers to work and family life balance.** In the search for a work and family balance that allowed men to be involved fathers and breadwinners, one of the main barriers was time (Allen & Daly, 2007; Barba, 2016; McLaughlin & Muldoon, 2014). The barrier of time came in multiple forms, mainly time away at work (Barba, 2016; Doherty et al., 1998), working long hours (Allen & Daly, 2007), abnormal work schedules (Allen & Daly, 2007), extra work time due to low wages (Duckworth & Buzanell, 2009) and the time deficit often noted in response to divorce or separation (Barba, 2016; Doherty et al., 1998). Another barrier to work and family balance, and ultimately father involvement, was that of losing one’s employment, which studies show to be a central role to fathers (Aune, 2010; Duckworth & Buzanell, 2009; George, 2016; McLaughlin & Muldoon, 2014). Fathers who were unable to fulfill the breadwinner role and were either unemployed or did not perceive themselves as being successful in providing financially, were less involved fathers, disrupting work and family balance (Allen & Daly, 2007; Doherty et al., 1998; Duckworth & Buzanell, 2009; Guarin & Myer, 2018; Kiesling, 2017). In addition to these barriers, lack of flexibility and leave time at work were stated as barriers more specific to fathers, decreasing involvement and destabilizing work and family balance (Barba, 2016; Clark, 2013; Kuo et al., 2018; McLaughlin & Muldoon, 2014).
Pathways to work and family life balance. On the other hand, changes in the workforce over the past four decades created the need for much more flexibility, with men and women working side-by-side in a variety of occupations that were once male-dominated (Allen & Daly, 2007; Kou et al., 2017). With an increasing number of fathers seeking greater involvement in their children’s lives, flexibility that was once reserved at the policy level for females (maternity leave and flexibility for childcare issues), was requested for their male counterparts (Allen & Daly, 2007; Clark, 2013; Kou et al., 2017; Lee & Duxbury, 1998). These changes were important, as greater flexibility and pro-family practices in the work place have been associated with greater levels of father involvement (Barba, 216; Clark, 2013; Kuo et al., 2018; McLaughlin & Muldoon, 2014; Pleck, 1997).

In summary, there are multiple barriers and pathways sub-themes in the work and family life balance literature that are still being developed. Some of the sub-themes have been there for a number of decades, while others are more recent developments, and may or may not develop into sub-themes representative of the field of father involvement. The most salient of the observations from the work and family life theme, were that of Duckworth and Buzzanell (2009), as they stated that overall, fathers viewed their role as that of a problem solver in a web of responsibilities. Their work and family life balance findings revealed a complicated process of negotiating meaningful activities, such as commitments to the family and community, with the necessity of the workplace (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009). This assessment and reassessment of commitments and priorities was considered a hallmark of fatherhood by the fathers themselves, and in particular to this theme, significant in the work and family life balance (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009).
**Teacher of morality and spirituality.** Joshua, the leader of the nation Israel after Moses’ death, stated, and at the same time demonstrated, the theme of teacher of morality and spirituality with one of the most well-known verses from the book of Joshua in the Old Testament:

> And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. (24:15)

This role of the father stretches back throughout biblical teachings for multiple millennia (Canfield, 2011; Deuteronomy 6, Proverbs 22:6, Matthew 28:18-20, Ephesians 6:4, etc.). In addition, almost 1000 years later than Joshua, Plato taught that moral education was the most essential part of the school curriculum (Jeynes, 2011). Thus, the pedigree of this theme is multifaced and stretches back through multiple time periods, as well as multiple cultures.

Moving forward in time somewhere around 2000 years after Plato, during the colonial period of American history, one of the main roles for fathers was moral teachers (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). This role encompassed morality, spirituality, and responsibility (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). The moral/spiritual teacher role was significant, especially when many fathers were much more involved in the education of their children, educating them in literacy and biblical understanding (Barba, 2016; Kiesling, 2017; Lamb, 2000; Pleck & Pleck, 1997). This changed significantly as America experienced the Industrial Revolution, fathers worked away from home much more, mothers became the center of the home, and the new moral teacher for many children (Kiesling, 2017).
Fast-forward to the modern father involvement movement, and the moral/spiritual leader role has been one of the most important, and frequently mentioned roles of fatherhood over the past four decades of research (Allen & Daly, 2007; Armato & Marsiglio, 2002; Barba, 2016; Canfield, 2011; Clark, 2013; Cunningham, 2017; Fraser & Danihelova, 2012; Fowler, 1981; George, 2016; Harding, 2011; Ishak, Low, and Lau, 2012; James, 2013; Jeynes, 2011; Kiesling, 2017; Lynn, Grych, & Fosco, 2016; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Murray & Hwang, 2015; Sevigny et al., 2016; Trahan & Cheung, 2018; Vigilant et al., 2014; Vigilant et al., 2013; Ware, 2011). Interestingly, many studies have named the role and spoke to a fathers’ stated importance placed on the role, but very few have gotten below the surface with regards to the nature and complexity of the moral/spiritual teacher role, unless the work was more theologically bent. No work appeared to give depth to the particular role of the modern Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker.

In the works that dig deeper into the moral/spiritual teacher role, much is to be discovered. Fathers who were more involved religiously/spiritually had greater reported father involvement (George, 2016; Trahan & Cheung, 2018) and higher moral expectations (George, 2016; Smith, 2003). The basis of the fathers’ positive involvement with the moral/spiritual teacher role was a sense of warmth and nurturing, typically identified with emotional engagement (Allen & Daly, 2007; George, 2016). The lack of involvement of fathers in this role, potentially due to the shift during the Industrial Revolution, was considered a growing crisis in America as many reports on youth include moral reasoning issues, and parents who handed over moral/spiritual responsibility to the churches and educational institutions (Armato & Marsiglio, 2002; Barke, 2014; Clark, 2013; Miller, 1999). This area of fatherhood, in particular, may
represent one of the largest gaps between what fathers stated was important and good for their children, and what they actually performed (Clark, 2013).

The moral/spiritual teacher role was also connected in studies to the actions of the church and public schools, and the need for greater encouragement and preparation for parents (Clark, 2013; James, 2013; Jeynes, 2011). It was stated that the God of the Bible desires that every parent lead his children to spiritual maturity, often noting the responsibility ultimately resting on the fathers (Clark, 2013; James, 2013; Jeynes, 2011). Jeynes (2011) also pointed out that much of this trust for moral/spiritual development was put in the hands of the public school, until the landmark Supreme Court decisions to remove Bible reading and teacher-led prayer from all public school systems. In the two decades following the landmark Supreme Court decisions, there was a precipitous decline in moral education in public schools, which was accompanied by plummeting academic achievement (Jeynes, 2011). Thus, many have identified the public school system as complicit in the current morality/spirituality crisis in America (Jeynes, 2011; Vigilant et al., 2014; Vigilant et al., 2013).

The role of moral/spiritual teacher has been displayed in the literature consistently for many years; however, the more modern understanding of the moral/spiritual teacher has been glossed over in many empirical, social science articles, mainly being addressed in more theological writings, or books proposing one Christian leader or another’s interpretation of the Bible’s commands for parenting. However, in what literature there is, fathers expressed that for the moral/spiritual teacher role to be effective, fathers must first model those values and morals (Fraser & Danihelova, 2012; George, 2016; Harding, 2011; Sevigny et al., 2016).

**Co-parenting in Context.** The disintegration of the nuclear family in America, well documented over the past 30-40 years, has brought great bearing to the importance of study
concerning two-parent homes, marital satisfaction, maternal gatekeeping, and the effects of divorce and the non-resident father (Allen & Daly, 2007; Altenburger et al., 2018; Aune, 2010; Clark, 2013; Doherty et al., 1998; Forehand et al., 2016; Hayward-Everson et al., 2018; Hognas & Williams, 2017; Jeynes, 2018; Lamb 2010; Sevigny et al., 2016; Snarey, 1993). This study is focused on the married, heterosexual, Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-makers; therefore, the effects of divorce and the non-resident father will not be detailed in this literature review. It has been shown that these variables, divorce and non-residency, were complex issues that deserve to be looked at individually and bring about questions of whether it would be inappropriate to mix a phenomenological study in such a way, as results may be diluted with regards to fathers who have a very different experience compared to each other. That being said, the contextual factors in co-parenting are also very complex. As Lamb (2010) has stated, fathers occupy multiple roles, and each is influenced by the nuances of the surrounding environment (context), both physically and relationally.

The two-parent home. The significance of the two-parent home was stated very clearly by Doherty et al. (1998), in their work for the National Council on Family Relations, which discussed father involvement and the responsible fathering theory development. Doherty et al. (1998) stated that, based on the empirical literature available at the time, the best environment to raise a child was that of a “caring, committed, collaborative marriage” (p. 290). Referencing the actual importance of this idea more recently, it has been noted that the two-parent home has often been given less serious attention in social science than it deserves as a significant component of father involvement (Jeynes, 2018). Marriage continues to be an important factor in the study of father involvement, but as the statement above suggests, it is not often emphasized in the social science literature rather, it is focused on in theological discussions of father involvement (Aune,
Within the context of the two-parent home, this study focuses on heterosexual couples, as there are complexities and factors of gay and lesbian couples that are still not clearly understood, and could differ considerably from that of heterosexual couples, giving an unclear picture of the lived experience of Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-makers.

Another subfactor of the two-parent home is that of the economic differences between two-parent homes and single parent homes (Allen & Daly, 2007; Flouri & Malmberg, 2012; Randles, 2018). The father’s income, combined with the mother’s in a two-parent family, contributed significantly to the economic well-being of the child, as the father earned on average more than half of the income in a two-parent home (Allen & Daly, 2007), and the incidence of poverty was much higher in single parent homes (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). Randles (2018) also stated that the opposite appears to be true, “poverty makes it harder for fathers to be involved” (p. 36); therefore, in a self-reinforcing cycle, poverty pushes the father away and when the father is away poverty is often the result. Also, within the two-parent homes each parent had a greater opportunity to be involved in things they enjoy outside of the home compared to single parents (Lamb, 2010). Notable in the literature, was that increased father involvement has been shown to decrease the impacts of low socioeconomic conditions on children (Flouri & Malmberg, 2012). This ability to have greater economic stability and more access to activities that bring pleasure to each parent, in two-parent homes, lead to a greater possibility of positive outcomes, not only for father involvement but for the family holistically.

**Marital satisfaction.** Along with greater economic stability and flexibility with more than one parent able to be responsible for the care of the children, marital satisfaction became another significant subtheme of the co-parenting in context theme (Allen & Daly, 2007; Clark,
Many times over, marital satisfaction has been correlated, associated, or directly stated to be significant with increased levels of father involvement resulting (Allen & Daly, 2007; Clark, 2013; Formoso et al., 2007; Lamb, 2010). These results have been strikingly consistent but have had some variants in the empirical literature. Hosley et al. (2008) took the study a step deeper, linking greater marital satisfaction to religious activity together, providing a foundational study for how to develop the marital satisfaction that the literature showed as an important factor. Snarey (1993) showed a significant relationship with these two variables; however, it was the other way around, where involved fathering seemed to be a catalyst increasing marriage quality. In an ecological, systemic theoretical framework, this made sense, as each relationship is considered two-way and could be impactful in a reciprocal manner (Doherty et al., 1998; Lamb, 2010). Marital satisfaction and increased father involvement seemed strongly influenced by coparenting within multiple contextual factors, and thus multiple factors were interacting in connection with one another, creating a system that was complex and highly contextualized (Forehand et al., 2016; Lamb, 2010).

**Maternal gatekeeping.** Another factor that was related to marital satisfaction was that of the amount of conflict in the relationship, which could improve or reduce marital satisfaction, and also be related to maternal gatekeeping (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Doherty et al., 1998; Forehand et al., 2016; Lamb, 2010). Mothers who sought to control the involvement of the father with the child were participating in what is sometimes called maternal gatekeeping. The study of maternal gatekeeping was first brought into much clearer focus by Allen and Hawkins’ (1999) seminal work. Much more has been learned about maternal gatekeeping, such as the ability of mothers to open and close gates (Altenburger, 2018). The concept was specifically
studied at first from the negative perception of gatekeeping as limiting father involvement (Allen & Hawkins, 1999); however, it has also been studied as gate opening with nuances (Altenburger, 2018; Fagan & Cherson, 2015). Within the study of the mother’s gate opening behaviors, Fagan and Cherson (2015) found that there are a couple basic types of gate openings, facilitative behaviors and encouragement. This nuanced separation of how the mother opens gates to the father to increase involvement has promise for further study, as it appeared that facilitative behaviors were negatively correlated with father involvement, whereas encouragement was correlated with increased father involvement (Fagan & Cherson, 2015). The study of this distinction in maternal gate opening could lead to evidence in support of a more encouragement-driven model for mothers looking to increase father involvement, teachings and trainings in that direction to further develop methods for increasing father involvement, and hopefully improved marital satisfaction at the same time.

The highly-involved father. As studies have borne out, another theme of recent research on father involvement has been that of the highly-involved father (Hawkins et al., 2002; Hawkins & Palkovitz, 1999; Dubeau et al., 2013; Sevigny, 2016). The significance of increased levels of father involvement in child development led to an increase in father involvement studies, which attempted to more clearly define, and more accurately measure, the highly-involved father (Hawkins et al., 2002; Hawkins & Palkovitz, 1999; Dubeau et al., 2013; Sevigny, 2016). These studies deepened the empirical literature on father involvement and revealed how complex the phenomenon of fathering really was, as they agreed and disagreed on many points, and continually sought to more clearly define the essential elements of the highly-involved father. Even among the differences scholars had in defining and measuring the highly-involved father, results continued to confirm the previous results time and again, that higher levels of
involvement is beneficial to the child. Sarkadi et al.’s (2008) study stated that advantages of increased father involvement included cognitive, socioemotional development, academic success, and a reduction in negative outcomes for children. The consistent findings, despite differing approaches, and the resulting complexity showed the contributions to the ecological, systemic responsible fathering theory made by the system theorists to be very valuable to the study of fatherhood, and in particular, the highly-involved father and the impacts thereof (Doherty et al., 1998; Thelen & Smith, 2003; Lamb, 1975, 1976, 1981, 1996, 2004, 2010). These complex “webs of responsibilities” (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009, p. 563) and roles the father played between mother, child, and outside forces, showed the validity of the responsible fathering theory, supporting Doherty et al.’s (1998) work.

**Academic and cognitive impacts.** As the highly-involved father studies were gaining a presence in the father involvement cannon of literature, multiple studies concerning father involvement solidified the presence of positive outcomes for children (Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984; Goldstien, 1982; Lamb, 1987; Nugent, 1991; Pedersen, Anderson, & Kain, 1980; Pedersen, Rubinstein, & Yarrow, 1979; Radin, 1982; Shyers, 1992; Snarey, 1993), as well as what those outcomes would be, and ways to attempt to quantify or qualify them (Hawkins et al., 2002; Hawkins & Palkovitz, 1999; Dubeau et al., 2013; Sevigny, 2016). These academic and cognitive development studies have continued, and over time branched into positive impacts on specific academic domains (literacy, mathematics, etc.) and cognitive functioning (Gordon, 2016; Jeynes, 2015; Jones & Mosher, 2013; Sarkadi et al., 2008; Varghese & Wahcen, 2016). With the academic and cognitive benefits of increased father involvement situated firmly in the empirical literature, some theorists and scholars turned to the social and emotional aspects of father involvement.
Social and emotional impacts. Studies that sought to better understand the emotional development of the child quickly followed the academic findings with multiple studies in the 80s and into the early 90s (Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984; Goldstein, 1982; Gottfried et al., 1988; Lamb 1987; Radin, 1982; Shyers, 1992). These studies consistently showed more positive results, socially and emotionally, for children whose fathers displayed greater involvement (Lamb, 1987). With a solid, and growing foundation of empirical social science literature, the study of social and emotional impacts began to splinter off into focused studies, developing multiple subthemes that addressed the complexity of this aspect of father involvement. Some of these subthemes are coming into greater clarity all the time (ex. mental health issues and children with disabilities); however, two in particular have strong scholarship in support.

Risky behavior. This first factor was identified as an issue at the beginning of the modern father involvement movement because of its presence in the previous absent father studies (Lamb, 1975, 1976). However, more study was needed to develop a better understanding of why the presence of the father in the home resulted in reduced risky behaviors, especially drugs, alcohol, and sexual promiscuity, since it had been studied from the opposite angle in the absent father studies. Upon further research it was found that increased father involvement led to more healthy attachments and a reduction in the risky behaviors (Altenburger, 2018; Kabi & Pereia, 2017; Sarkadi et al., 2008). These reductions in risky behavior were found to be in response to the increase in father involvement; however, as it is with all these factors, the interaction of this factor with other factors created a cumulative effect that was hard, if not impossible, to factor individually, as it was a part of the greater ecology of the home, and of the family system (Doherty et al., 1998; Lamb, 2010).
Social skill development and play. The second, more nuanced, result found in the social and emotional studies, was that of the importance of a father’s involvement in play and the resulting social skill development (Altenburger, 2018; Barba, 2016; George, 2016; Jeynes, 2016; Lamb, 2010; Sarkadi et al., 2008). Fathers’ rough and tumble, high energy style of play was found to be significantly correlated to better social skill development (Bretherton, Lambert, and Golby, 2005; Fletcher et al., 2011; Paquette, 2004). In addition, greater father involvement in play at a young age was predictive of a lasting relationship that maintained high levels of father involvement (Altenburger, 2018). As this sub-theme continues to develop, the quality, not the quantity, of the father-child interaction may become more of a focus, as it has been shown to be very impactful in the social and emotional domains (Altenburger, 2018; Pleck, 2010).

Warmth and nurturing. As important as the concept of new fathers has been in the literature, it is really a subtheme of warmth and nurturing in fatherhood that has been a part of the father involvement movement since the beginning of the modern movement (Lamb, 1975; Lamb, 1976), and was even a concept before the modern movement (Sears et al., 1957). Warmth from fathers has been connected to improved results in discipline (George, 2016), authority, parenting, masculinity, and passing faith on from one generation to another (Barba, 2016; Bengtson, 2013; George, 2016; Lamb 1976, 2004; McLaughlin & Muldoon, 2014; Sears et al., 1957). Bengtson’s (2013) multi-generational, four-decade study identified the warmth of the father as the number one factor contributing to passing on faith from one generation to the next. Warmth in relationships between father and child has a global-type effect, which impacted and seemed to mediate the effects of multiple other factors (Barba, 2016; Bengtson, 2013; Lamb, 1976, 2004; Sears et al., 1957).
One of the most important factors mentioned often with warmth, was that of nurture and emotional expressiveness. The focus on father involvement, and more involved fathers in general, has led to what was referred to as the new father, a more expressive, physically and emotionally present fatherhood (Armato & Marsiglio, 2002; Aune, 2010; Barba, 2016; Kim, 2014; Lamb, 2010). This change in the direction of a significant amount of fatherhood research connected well to the theological framework of this study, because having an expressive, physically, and emotionally present father, is more like Father God, as seen in the Garden of Eden. In this research, it was apparent that the impacts of the father involvement research have changed the cultural atmosphere in the United States and abroad with fatherhood being described more frequently as significant, impactful, and critical to the foundation of our culture and way of life (Adamsons & Pasley, 2016; Allen et al., 2012; Armato & Marsiglio, 2002; Clark, 2013; Coltrane, 1996, 2001; Jones & Mosher, 2013; Jones, 2013; Kiesling, 2017; Lamb, 2010; Lewis, 2011; Marsiglio & Roy, 2012; McKinney, 2012; Murray & Hwang, 2015; National Fatherhood Initiative, 2016; Sevigny et al., 2016; Vigilant et al., 2014). At this point in the development of the empirical literature, it was known that the involvement of the father was significantly linked to positive outcomes for children, and that this relationship lies within the complex web of connections with the mother, child, and external forces (Doherty et al., 1998; Duckworth & Buzanell, 2009, Ray, 2017). What is not known is how father involvement impacts the lived experience of the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker. This study seeks to make those important connections so that the gap in the literature can be filled, and a better understanding of this particular type of fatherhood can be developed.

Homeschooling
The cannon of empirical literature on homeschooling has been growing over the past four decades, with the modern movement beginning around the same time as the modern father involvement movement with Lamb’s (1975) foundational work (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). Even with four decades of scholarship, Kunzman and Gaither’s (2013) meta-analysis of the empirical research on homeschooling, consisting of 351 texts chosen out of over 1,400 texts, claimed to be comprehensive of the movement. However, the rate of scholarship has continued to accelerate in the field of homeschooling, such that Ray (2017) stated that such a feat would be beyond the scope of a single article or literature review. Ray (2017) spoke of multiple growing areas of the homeschooling literature that would constitute an individual review, such as “who should be in charge of the education of children” (p. 608). Even with increased research as of late, due to the growth of the homeschool movement (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Ray, 2017) this field is still open to discovery in many ways. As Kunzman and Gaither (2013) pointed out, even the research that has been completed on homeschooling was suspect in many ways, as it was almost entirely qualitative, with little quantitative study to balance out the scholarship. Therefore, in Ray’s (2017) systematic review of the homeschooling literature focusing on academics, socialization and success in adulthood, there was particular focus on more recent quantitative studies, scholarly, peer reviewed articles, and the use of controls in the studies. Also of significance was the fact that the homeschool population in the United States has been known to avoid data collection, which makes the student population and demographics difficult to engage and study (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). Despite all of this, the demographic make-up of the homeschool movement has continued to be better defined with each study, and especially with the efforts of Redford et al. (2017) in their analysis of the data collected in 2012 U.S. Department of Education nationwide survey.
There has not, as of yet, been developed a systematic, widely accepted way to structure a review of the homeschooling literature; however, for the purpose of this review, I will follow Ray’s (2017) systematic approach, which looked at demographics, reasons for choosing to homeschool, academic achievement, social development, and success in adulthood. There will be some caveats that relate to the role of the father, and the connection between homeschooling and discipleship.

**Demographics of homeschooling.** The demographic landscape of the homeschooling movement has changed significantly over the past four decades, with much greater diversity in the movement (Ray, 2017; Redford et al., 2017). A population that was once almost exclusively conservative Christian has come to have diversity, not only in religious affiliation, but also diversity in ethnic make-up and political affiliation (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Ray, 2017; Redford et al., 2017). Redford et al.’s (2017) analysis revealed that more than 60% of homeschoolers were in cities and suburban areas, and almost a full third of all students being homeschooled in the U.S. were minorities. Also of note was significant diversity in educational attainment, with almost one-third of the parents of homeschoolers having a high school diploma or less, and 14% having advanced degrees or schooling (Redford et al., 2017). Another significant point was that there were similar numbers of homeschoolers in grade bands of K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12 (Redford et al., 2017). Lastly, in Ray’s (2010) study a national sample showed that homeschool families were close to the median income of similar family units. These statistics gave a much more diverse picture of homeschooling in the U.S. than was formerly the case.

**Parental motivations to homeschool.** Motivations to homeschool are varied, and often reveal a complex mixture of multiple reasons (Spiegler, 2010); however, some of the motivations
have been consistent throughout the modern movement. The modern homeschooling movement was steeped in religious motivation from the beginning, and this theme continues in the literature (L. Hanna, 2012; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Ray, 2017; Redford et al., 2017; Vigilant et al., 2014; 2013). Motivations have also been observed to change over time in the homeschooling model (Rothermel, 2011). Some of the most common and important motivators in the literature for parents to homeschool were the school environment, moral instruction, dissatisfaction with academic instruction, and religious instruction (Kunsman & Gaither, 2013; Ray, 2017; Redford et al., 2017; Vigilant et al., 2014, 2013). These motivations were typically broken down into two categories provided by Van Galen’s (1986, 1988) works: ideologues and pedagogues.

Van Galen (1988) defined ideologues as those who chose to homeschool from an ideological approach, such as the conservative Christians who sought a curriculum that lined up with what they believed. Pedagogues were defined as those who were not concerned about the secular nature of public schools but were concerned about what they perceived as the lacking pedagogy of institutional schools (Van Galen, 1988). This characterization of different groups of homeschooling parents has held up well over the years, being referenced multiple times over the past three decades (Coleman, 2010; Knowles, Marlowe, & Muchmore, 1992; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). In 2012, L. Hanna reinforced the notion of the impact of this theory, with only four percent of respondents not identifying with one or both of these groups. This distinction became important to this study, as Vigilant et al. (2014, 2013) showed that homeschooling fathers’ main reason for homeschooling fell under the ideologues grouping.

**Role of the father in homeschooling.** The role of the father in homeschooling has been written about extensively in “self-help” and “how to” books (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013), yet there is little empirical data to give voice to how fathers feel about these expectations, and the
reality of the lived experience of Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers. With the central role that was placed on fathers in the Bible (Deuteronomy 6, Ephesians 6:4, Genesis 1:26-29), and in scholarly literature regarding education (Clark, 2013; James, 2013; Piper & Grudem, 1991), it is important to understand this role, and what fathers perceive that to be internally, in addition to the external expectations that are placed on them. Vigilant et al. (2014) opened this up as it pertained to the homeschooling model with their work that showed fathers’ main role to be emotional managers. Supporting the wife, who was typically the primary teacher (Lois, 2006, 2009, 2010), was one of the most important roles according to fathers, as well as a linked role of sustaining the homeschool model, and being a spiritual leader. This work laid the foundation for this study’s focus on the lived experience of Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-makers.

**Academic achievement.** Potentially, the most written on topic in the homeschooling literature, that of academic achievement, has multiple connections to the study at hand. I refer to the question, “Is homeschooling a viable alternative to institutional schooling?” Since the beginning of the modern homeschooling movement, the question of whether parents with no teaching certification could adequately school their children has driven much of the quantitative research (Ray, 2017). A synthesis of the peer reviewed, scholarly research has been somewhat mixed (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013) yet, still overwhelmingly in favor of the positive impacts of homeschooling (Ray, 2017). Early quantitative research in homeschooling was often cited as not being methodologically sound, with the results of non-representative homeschoolers being compared favorably to national averages of public and private schoolers (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Ray, 2017). However, as the field of research grew, many studies began to control for
important variables in their studies, and as a result a clearer picture of academic achievement came about.

In Ray’s (2017) systematic review, it was discovered that out of 14 articles, 11 showed homeschooling having a positive impact, two studies had mixed results, and one study showed no significant difference. Of the 11 studies that showed a positive impact, over half controlled for variables that could confound the data. This study showed a much greater depth to the homeschooling movement, with regards to solid data supporting the effectiveness of the alternative educational environment. The results showed that homeschooling was at least as effective, and quite possibly more effective, than institutional schooling (Ray, 2017). This is significant for this study, in that fathers may find academic achievement significantly connected to continuing in the model, whereas other fathers may not see this as an important goal and may be more focused on the religious and moral instruction that would not show up on such academic measures. Some fathers may also see academic achievement as unimportant related to the perceived failings of the public school system, and thus prioritize the safety, moral development, and biblical curriculum that they can closely monitor in the homeschool setting (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Ray, 2017; Redford et al., 2017; Vigilant et al., 2014, 2013).

In addition, within the homeschooling environment there is a growing trend to describe education as synonymous with discipleship (Anderson, 2016; Sproul, 2004). This, coupled with moral/religious instruction being the number two most often stated reason for homeschooling and the number one most important reason stated for homeschooling (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013), shows that there is significant understanding in the religious members of the homeschooling movement that education, and thus homeschooling, is inextricably connected to discipleship (Anderson, 2016; Sproul, 2004).
Social development. The second most researched and talked about area of research in homeschooling is that of social development (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Ray, 2017). In his systematic review, Ray (2017) showed that 13 of the 15 peer reviewed articles showed clear, positive outcomes for homeschoolers in a variety of social developmental areas. Of these 13 studies that yielded positive results, seven controlled for confounding variables (Ray, 2017). Kunzman & Gaither’s (2013) study did not find a significant difference between social interaction among homeschoolers and public school students, only a noticeably decreased amount of time homeschoolers spent with their peer group. Homeschoolers were more likely to spend time with a wider range of age groups in a typical period of time (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). Scholars have not agreed on whether this is good or bad, with proponents on both sides (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013).

With Vigilant et al. (2013) having stated that moral socialization was the main objective found in their study of homeschooling parents who self-identify as Christians, it appeared that socialization is firmly planted on the radar of homeschooling parents. Socially, homeschool students have been found to be less likely to drink alcohol and/or get drunk, use tobacco and illicit drugs (Thomson & Jang, 2016; Vaughn et al., 2015), have lower levels of depression, fewer externalizing problems (Guterman & Neuman, 2017), and argue less (Montes, 2015). These were only the positive results from the studies that controlled for variables; not included were the positive results in the non-controlled studies (Ray, 2017). Thus, as was stated earlier, this area is important to the lived experience of the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker, as moral socialization is a significant goal of these types of fathers. It is potentially a much better metric to determine if the homeschooling model is reaching the goals that the adherents have set for themselves.
Success in adulthood. Of the research areas mentioned, this one is significant, and still growing in depth and complexity. Ray’s (2017) review yielded 16 results in success in adulthood, of which 11 showed positive outcomes, seven of which controlled for confounding variables. These studies were based on a growing number of individuals who have experienced homeschooling to varying degrees; however, the average interviewee had between six and eight years of direct experience, so the results provided an accurate picture of current homeschooling success into adulthood (Ray, 2017). This area of the homeschooling literature is significant to the current study, as success in adulthood is a common concern among parents from a variety of backgrounds.

Summary

Currently, there is much known about several important themes of father involvement, such as the breadwinner/provider role, the work and family life balance, the moral and spiritual teacher role, two-parent homes, marital satisfaction, maternal gatekeeping, highly-involved fathers, academic and cognitive benefits, social and emotional impacts, warmth and nurturing fathers, and the contextual nature of all of these themes. In addition, the homeschooling movement has provided a growing body of evidence in support of the movement academically, socially, and with regards to future success post-high school. Yet in all the literature there is little known, specifically, about the lived experience of the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker. This gap in the literature applies to the knowledge on the subject of fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship, as well as the theoretical applications thereof. This study proposes to fill that gap in the literature, bringing a better understanding of the experiences and expectations of Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-makers to the forefront of the discussion, extending the reach of the responsible fathering theory (Doherty et al., 1998) in
the process, and potentially eliciting more scholarly research into the complexities of fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to deepen the understanding of the homeschooling movement, particularly, the Evangelical Christian father’s role in making disciples of his children. This phenomenon has not been addressed in the empirical literature at this point, yet the question of the experience of specific types of fathers was raised by Duckworth and Buzzanell (2009) in their article on the balancing act of fathers with work time and family time. Therefore, this study attempts to fill a gap in the literature of the lived experience of Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-makers. In order to better understand the experiences of these fathers, this chapter presents the design of the study, research questions, setting, participants, and procedures. These are followed by my role as the researcher, data collection, data analysis, and trustworthiness. The chapter closes with ethical considerations and a summary of the main points of the chapter.

Design

This study used a qualitative study design, as the goal of the study was to gain a better understanding of the experience of Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-makers. The qualitative design allowed for a greater depth of study, albeit a smaller sample due to the tremendous amount of data produced through the interview process. With the goal of this study being to understand the phenomenon in question in depth, the interview-driven qualitative approach was the best suited approach for the study. The qualitative approach was most appropriate for this study, as the idea of this design was to engage with phenomenon in the natural setting and bring about meaning from the input of those who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). The qualitative
design was the most appropriate design to hear the voice of those men who have had the lived experience of being an Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker.

**General Design**

There are multiple types of qualitative studies, some of the most common are: ethnographies, case studies, grounded theory studies, narrative studies, and phenomenology (Creswell, 2013). With a desire to gain a deep understanding of one particular type of fatherhood, as suggested in the literature by Duckworth and Buzzanell (2009), the focus on the phenomenon of fatherhood was chosen, specifically Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers, and their role in discipling their children. As is detailed in the researcher’s role, this particular subject, fatherhood, was impactful to the researcher, as well as being a national and international issue (Lamb, 2010; Ray, 2017). Therefore, this researcher’s desire to understand the essence of the lived experience of these fathers and focusing on what it means to be an Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker, made the choice to utilize the phenomenological study clear to this researcher. One notable example of the use of this methodology in the review of the literature was that of Murray and Hwang’s (2015) transcendental phenomenological study concerning what African American fathers perceived their role as in fatherhood. This study not only utilized the transcendental phenomenological methodology that was utilized in this study, but also employed the responsible fathering theory (Doherty et al., 1998) that was the foundation of this theoretical framework. Thus, with an impactful study that utilized the same methodology and theoretical framework as was planned for this study, and phenomenology’s strong focus on a deep, rich, and thick understanding of the topic, the transcendental phenomenological approach was chosen.

**Specific Design Type**
The researcher decided on the phenomenological approach to a qualitative design, consequently, it was important to make a choice among the different phenomenological approaches, of which hermeneutical and transcendental phenomenology seemed the most fitting. The previously mentioned study by Murray and Hwang (2015), gave a strong case for the transcendental phenomenology, with its focus on telling the participants’ stories, giving voice to the fathers in the study. Being so close to this phenomenon, as this researcher is an Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker, the researcher desired to discover the essence of the role of fatherhood from the fathers in the study, not marked by his personal beliefs but from their own words and their lived experience. The Epoche, or bracketing, that is central to a transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) was appealing for the study, as it would force the researcher to try to put his personal biases aside, approach each interview with a fresh, non-judgmental approach, and focus on listening to the stories of the men in the study. Therefore, the transcendental phenomenological, qualitative approach was chosen to describe the essence of the lived experience of Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-makers.

**Research Questions**

**Central Question**
1. How do Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers describe the essence of the lived experience of discipling their children?

**Sub-questions**
1. How do Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers describe their experience as a home educator?

2. How do Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers describe the role of every-day relationship building in discipling their children?

3. How do Evangelical Christian fathers describe their efforts to teach their children the
Bible and to encourage them to submit to its teachings?

4. How do Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-makers describe being a responsible father?

**Setting**

The setting of this study was connected to the design of the study and location of the researcher being in the Mountain West region of the United States. As this study was a transcendental phenomenology, and the main source of data was the interview, this study focused on participants who were in the Mountain West Region of the United States. The Mountain West Region of the United States includes: Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). This region of the United States has not been the target of fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship studies at this point in time, thus choosing this area gave an opportunity to widen the research base, bringing this study into a new area of the United States. The Mountain West region is unique in that it has rural areas with vast distances between towns, and there are also urban areas that are home to around 75% of the total regional population (Schmalzbauer, 2011; Shumway, 2003). The rural parts of the Mountain West are unique in that much of the work is in the oil and gas industry and ranching (Schmalzbauer, 2011), but the region has seen a large influx in service and amenities-based business such as skiing, hiking, fishing, hunting, etc. (Keske, Bixler, Bastian, & Cross, 2017; Shumway & Otterstrom, 2004).

The setting of the interviews were at the participants’ discretion, with all having taken place via technology. With the personal aspect of this study, it was important to create an interview environment that encouraged open, honest discussion, which seemed to be the case in each interview. Allowing the participant to choose the location allowed for a greater degree of
openness, but it was also the priority of the researcher to create a non-judgmental atmosphere of trust and ease (Moustakas, 1994) so the participants were open to sharing in-depth information about the topics of fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship. Each interview provided a depth of detail that indicated to the researcher that a proper environment for the study was achieved.

**Participants**

This was a purposeful, criterion, snowball sampling, as the intention was to conduct in-depth semi-structured interviews with self-identifying Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers who stated that they were engaged in discipling their children. The purposeful, criterion, snowball technique for sampling that was used in this study has been used in other studies on fatherhood (Armato & Marsiglio, 2002; Murray & Hwang, 2015; Nchinda, 2014; Trahan & Cheung, 2016), and provided for the focused participants that this study required. The first criterion for choosing participants was that they were currently married, living with their spouse, and their biological children. This study was limited to this population for multiple reasons. First, this was a study about fatherhood, thus fathers were chosen who were living in the home with their children, currently experiencing the phenomenon of fatherhood (Moustakas, 1994). These fathers were chosen as they were currently engrossed in the phenomenon and had detailed insights into what was going on in their lives. The participants were limited to currently fathering fathers, as they were not far removed from the phenomenon, hopefully giving greater details and more relevant insights than those who were no longer fathering with the same proximity and intensity.

Secondly, the participants were limited to those who were married and lived in the home with their biological children. This was important as this study focused on a particular type of
fatherhood as suggested by Duckworth and Buzzanell (2009). The studies discussing non-resident fathers, fathers living with a significant other to whom they are not married, and with children that were not their biological children, showed that there are unique differences in these populations (Adamsons & Pasley, 2016; Barba, 2016; Clark, 2013; Doherty et al., 1998; George, 2016; McKinney, 2012; Mercer, 2013; Murray & Hwang, 2015; Roy, 2014; Sevigny et al., 2016; Trahan & Cheung, 2016); therefore, this study limited the focus to married, resident fathers who lived with their biological children at the time of the study.

Thirdly, this study focused on participants who self-identify as homeschooling fathers. This study limited the participants to those whose children were schooled at home versus the traditional brick and mortar schools (McGowin, 2017), and who had been homeschooling for at least three years. Three years was chosen for this study as it showed a greater level of commitment to the homeschooling model and gave the father a greater measure of experience to draw from when he described his experience with homeschooling and discipleship in the model. Focusing on fathers was important as the resurgence of homeschooling in the past four decades has provided for many questions in the literature that have not been adequately addressed, especially for the role of fathers (Vigilant et al., 2014). Most of the current scholarly research in the area of homeschooling has left out the lived experience of the father, focusing more on the mother’s experience (Lois, 2006, 2009, 2010; Vigilant et al., 2014; Vigilant et al., 2013).

Next, the population of homeschooling fathers was limited to those who self-identified as Evangelical Christians and stated that they were currently discipling their children. This gave the study a greater deal of focus, ensured that the fathers had experienced the phenomenon under study, and that they shared significant Christian theological characteristics. Evangelical Christians were specifically noted in the fatherhood literature as conservative Protestants who, in
recent years, had tended to be more nurturing fathers, able and willing to express emotions, and the clear majority of religious and non-religious homeschoolers (Aune, 2010; Gaither, 2009; Jeynes, 2011; Kunzman, 2010; Lois, 2016; Oh, 2016). Also of significance was that among this population of homeschoolers who self-identified as Evangelical Christians, one of their main reasons for homeschooling was their Christian faith (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Redford et al., 2017). Fathers who do not identify as Evangelical Christian may have significantly different motivations and experiences with the phenomenon; therefore, focus was needed here. This study then gave this specific type of father a voice in the empirical literature. Having focused the sample of participants in this way hit the point of the lived experience of the father-disciple-maker, which has not been studied in the homeschooling literature of Evangelical Christian fathers (Vigilant et al., 2014). This has expanded the literature on fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship.

Lastly, the sample size of participants was decided based three main factors: Liberty University’s guidelines for qualitative studies, data saturation, and a rich, thick, and deep palate of information (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Liberty University’s Dissertation Handbook stated that a qualitative study typically has between 12 and 15 participants, or more. The Handbook also stated that a study may not have fewer than 10 participants without prior approval of the research consultant. The author felt all three factors had been met after the 10th participant interview and capped the study there, falling near the typical range of 12-15 participants suggested. Creswell (2013) stated that a phenomenological study can be three to four participants, or in the 10 to 15 range, which was the case with this study, as it also lined up well with Liberty’s required minimum in the handbook. Polkinghorne (1989) had a bit broader range, with five to 25 participants being the suggestion, which also generally supports Liberty’s
handbook and the results of this study. Moustakas (1994) provided an exemplar which he titled, “Summary Guide of Study for Potential Co-Researcher” (p. 109). In this guide, 12-15 participants were highlighted as ideal for a transcendental phenomenology. The number of participants was important as the data needed to be comprehensive but also manageable.

The second and third factors here were linked, in that they describe adequate data collection. One key in determining the sample size when conducting this phenomenological study, was that of saturation (Creswell, 2013, Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005). This term was in many ways borrowed from Creswell’s (2013) descriptions of data collection in the grounded theory method as well as being stated by Mack et al. (2005) in relation to purposive sampling. The connection of this term with purposive sampling linked it to phenomenological studies using this sampling method as another way to relate the deep, thick, and rich palate of information that is desirable in these studies. It was important to have a significant enough depth of data to reach saturation, as this ensured that there was significant enough information to discover the essence of the phenomenon. Saturation was reached when no new meaning units were found in new interviews (Creswell, 2013). At this point, the researcher had a strong indication that sufficient information had been gathered to have a rich, thick, and deep palate of information, so as to discover the essence of the phenomenon at hand. This depth of understanding is what sets qualitative studies apart from most quantitative studies (Creswell, 2013).
Table 1

*Participant Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Homeschooling</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Associate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian/Other</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bartholomew</td>
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<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Rural</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthias</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Procedures**

For this transcendental phenomenological study, a combination of Moustakas’ (1994) and Creswell’s (2013) suggestions for how to proceed with a phenomenological study was used. The researcher submitted a proposal for research and was accepted by the Liberty School of Education. Next, a defense of the proposal was made before the committee. Acceptance into the research phase was obtained, and the research proposal application was submitted to Liberty University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) gaining approval for human research. After approval was received from the IRB, the approval letter was placed in the Appendix of the
Pilot Study

Next, the researcher began the process of completing a pilot study. The researcher had the questions reviewed by an expert in the field, discussed their feedback with the dissertation chair prior to IRB approval, and implemented changes as needed. The pilot interview of the questions was conducted with one local homeschooling father that met the criteria for the study. This provided the researcher with insider feedback on the questions and supported the researcher’s position that the study questions provide the potential for deep, rich, and thick data from interviews in the data collection phase (Creswell, 2013). Once the pilot was finished, no questions were adjusted; however, a question about the word “responsible” in question four was noted but did not seem to be an issue with the researcher moving to the sub-questions that make it clearer. There did not appear to be any changes necessary after reflecting on the pilot interview.

Participant Recruitment

Following the pilot study, the formal study began by the researcher contacting the local homeschool cooperative: Sublette County Homeschoolers. The cooperative was asked if they would be willing to contact fathers in their group to see if they were interested in being involved in the study. The leader of the cooperative in return gave the researcher permission to post the recruitment letter, consent form, and an explanation of the study on the group’s Facebook page. This did not yield any participants that met the parameters of the study; therefore, the researcher attempted contact with the homeschool cooperative in Jackson, but the email listed online was no longer valid. Thus, the researcher contacted the homeschool cooperatives in Star Valley and Sweetwater county via their Facebook pages. Sweetwater Homeschoolers Facebook group
returned contact and allowed the researcher to create a post similar to that on Sublette County Homeschoolers’ page. From here, the researcher spiraled out to homeschool group pages throughout the state of Wyoming, and then Idaho, Utah, and Colorado before completing the interview phase.

Once contact was made with interested participants, the researcher made sure the participants were willing to meet all the requirements of the study. The requirements were to participate in at least one 45-60 minute interview, participate in a survey, either online or as a physical copy, give the researcher the right to record and transcribe the interview, and permit the researcher to publish the data anonymously in the dissertation and any other publication the researcher found appropriate (Moustakas, 1994). Each participant was also given the option to participate in an asynchronous Facebook group discussion for three sessions until the group was capped at four. Participants were also encouraged to participate in member checking of their interview transcript, looking for accuracy and providing clarification if needed. Achieving maximum variation (Creswell, 2013) was also considered in selection of participants; however, this was not possible as the pool of individuals who met the criteria and were passionate about being involved in the study were difficult to recruit. Therefore, each candidate the researcher contacted who met the criteria and were passionate about being involved in the study (Moustakas, 1994) was included.

**Initial Contact and Pre-Interview**

Once the purposeful, criterion, snowball sample began to elicit responses, interviews were scheduled that worked for the interviewee and the researcher. These were added to a Google calendar that was password protected, to which only the researcher had access. A reminder was added in for one hour before the interview to confirm the time of the meeting with
the participant. The initial contact to set up the interview was also used to get to know each participant a little, so that they had an idea of who the researcher was before meeting in person, and to ensure that they agreed to all aspects of the proposal letter and had any questions about the study answered fully. Because of the unique challenges in the Mountain West Region, and only one participant living fewer than two hours away from the researcher, each interview was completed via telephone, Facetime, or Skype. Each participant was given the opportunity to meet in person or via technology; however, due to the vast distances, and the difficulty of scheduling these interviews in a timely manner, each participant chose rather to meet via technology. Over half of the participants lived in excess of four hours away from the researcher’s home.

Utilizing the telephone, Facetime, Skype, or other technologies have opened up many opportunities for researchers that were not practical before (Creswell, 2012; P. Hanna, 2012; Lo Iacono, Symonds, & Brown, 2016). In reference to Face Time and Skype, Lo Iacono, et al., (2016) stated that they saw these synchronous, or real-time, connections to be “just as good as the data gathered using face to face interaction. In some cases even better in fact” (Lo Iacono, et al., 2016, p. 112). Seitz (2015) stated that there were some limitations, with regards to reading body language, having calls dropped, audio issues, and seeing visual cues that are benefits of in-person interviews. Yet, Seitz (2015) stated that these can be overcome by applying solid techniques, such as making sure the internet connection is quality, utilizing a quiet place, and focusing on facial expressions. Also in support of technology mediated data collection, Lo Iacono, Symonds, and Brown (2016) state that these technology-based interview limitations “can be overcome or, in some cases, create new opportunities” (Lo Iacono, Symonds, & Brown, 2016, p. 112). Holt (2010) stated that telephone interviews, in a situation where vast distances are
involved, allow the participants the freedom to shift times as needed due to their own scheduling changes, and to be free from the obligation that comes with a preplanned interview where the researcher has travelled hours to get there. Therefore, in this particular study, this researcher found that utilizing the technology-based methodology for the interview phase to be appropriate and successful.

Informed consent was ascertained before each interview, including clarification of ethical issues, such as the participant’s ability to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. The procedure for getting ready for each interview was normalized (Moustakas, 1994). This included a period of time for reflection on the topic, purpose of the study, questions, and procedures for the interaction. Also, in preparation for the interview, the researcher spent a period of time in prayer, asking the Lord to clear his mind of any prejudgments and to enter the interview unbiased, as to better hear the participant in his own words. Preparation for recording the interview was part of the normalization process, with always bringing at least two digital recorders. Each of the digital recorders was checked for working order before each interview and was fully charged with a charging cord and extra charger readily available for each interview if needed. Each recorder was checked for adequate storage capacity, and capacity was confirmed before each interview. Five minutes before interview time, one more check for proper functioning of the recording devices was made.

**Interview and Post-Interview**

Each interview began with a normalizing procedure of introductions, a review of the purpose of the study, and a time for any questions about the topic or interview questions. This time allowed the researcher to make sure that the participant was comfortable with the study and to build rapport, so the individual was able to more completely and thoroughly share his
experience with the phenomenon under study (Moustakas, 1994). The interviewer then conducted the semi-structured interview, attempting to bracket-out personal beliefs on the topic, to truly be present and able to listen to the participant with an open mind to their particular experience with the given phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The purposeful, criterion, snowballing method was utilized by asking each participant for other potential interviewees at the end of each interview. This process took place until the interview process had resulted in saturation, as evidenced by the repetition of participants’ experiences with no new themes occurring in the data (Creswell, 2013), while at the same time observing the university’s mandatory minimum of 10 participants for this type of study. The university’s mandate of 10 participants falls within Creswell’s (2013) suggested range for a rich, deep, and thick phenomenological study.

Each interview was digitally recorded, as was agreed to prior to setting up each interview. Then, within two days, the researcher completed each researcher reflective journal, with the exception of the last two interviews. These were completed after the two-day period due to personal and family issue of the researcher. Therefore, to maintain continuity, the researcher listened to the interview in its entirety and completed the researcher reflective journal at the same time. The researcher completed the first transcription manually and then hired a transcription service to transcribe each subsequent interview verbatim. The accuracy of each transcription was then checked by the researcher, and corrections made as necessary. Once the researcher had a personally reviewed copy of the transcriptions, they were sent to the participant digitally via email, asking that they review them for clarity and accuracy. The digital and physical copies of the interviews and researcher reflective journals were kept safe in a locked, fireproof safe and password protected computer to which only the researcher has the password.
Each participant was also asked to join the Facebook discussion group for further involvement in the study, until the group was full at four participants. The Facebook discussion group was utilized to dig deeper into the three main domains of the study: fatherhood, homeschooling and discipleship. The Facebook group was set to be a secret group, where the name of the group and its members were only known to each other, and not searchable on Facebook. Joining the group was by invitation only and the researcher was the administrator of the page with member-only access. Once the Facebook group was closed, all the data was transferred to a Microsoft Word document and the page and all its contents deleted. All the data from each of the sources was disassociated with the participant’s actual name, given a pseudonym, and will be destroyed within 10 years of the completion of the dissertation.

The Researcher's Role

I have had the lived experience of being an Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker for over seven years, a father for over 13 years, and Christian for over 25 years. Thus, I feel that I am too close to this study to truly bracket-out all my preconceptions about Christianity, fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship. However, I do have a strong desire to understand the experiences of other fathers from a fresh, non-judgmental perspective, and to know as an individual what other Evangelical Christian fathers are doing to disciple their children. I recruited participants for my study with whom I do not have a relationship, in order to eliminate as much bias as possible. It is my sincere desire to tell their story, not mine.

Also, of important distinction, is my belief in an all-powerful (Isiah 40:28), all-knowing (Psalm 147:5), all-present (Jeremiah 23:24) Creator God (Genesis 1:1). I believe in an objective reality that only God knows perfectly (1 Corinthians 13:12, Psalm 147:5), and on which my personal perception has no effect. In addition, I believe that I am a new creation, fundamentally
different spiritually, through salvation in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). I believe that the Holy Spirit lives within me (Romans 8:9), leading and guiding me in all things (John 16:13), and thus I cannot, nor should I, bracket-out whatever the Holy Spirit speaks to me during the interview process. I understand that this means that I am not truly attempting to bracket-out everything in my mind, the Epoche Moustakas (1994) writes so much about, but I am purposefully attempting to bracket-out everything but the voice of the Holy Spirit. As the human instrument in this phenomenological study, I feel it is important that I disclose this information, as it will be a part of the study, since the Holy Spirit and I are inseparable in this study of the lived experience of Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-makers.

**Data Collection**

There were multiple types of data collection for this transcendental phenomenological study on the lived experience of the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker. The researcher started the data collection process by obtaining informed consent from the participant and scheduling a time for the interview. The interview was followed by a survey shared via email. This survey served three purposes: to confirm that the participant met the criteria for the study, to provide a context within which to put the results of the study, and to better understand the experience of fathers in homeschooling and discipleship. The majority of the data collection was during the semi-structured interviews that ranged from about 40 minutes to almost 90 minutes. These interviews were then transcribed and returned for member checking (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). A Facebook discussion group was also created, to discuss the three domains of the study: fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship. This group was asynchronous, which allowed the fathers the freedom to respond as they had opportunity. The three data sources, interview, survey, and Facebook discussion group, provided a solid base for
the triangulation of the data in the study (as they were different sources and types of data). Each looked at the phenomenon from a different angle and were all in distinct settings of their own (Patton, 2002).

**Survey**

This source of data (see APPENDIX C) gave detail to another angle on the phenomenon, was helpful in placing this study in context of other studies on fatherhood, and gave information on the demographic variety within the study. Duckworth and Buzzanell (2009) stated that it would be important, moving forward in the literature, to study particular types of fathers, and thus this study fills the gap in the empirical literature on the lived experience of Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple makers. Yet even within this particular group of individuals, it was important to know the make-up of the group, demographically and geographically. Thus, this study was set in the Mountain West Region, and was limited by the demographic makeup shown by this method of data collection. Survey questions 1-13 were demographic in nature, served to confirm that the participant met the parameters of the study, and were used to place the sample in the literature currently available to researchers.

Survey question number 14 gets into the section of the survey that gave detail to this particular data collection angle. Factors in choosing to homeschool have been shown to be complex and often change over time (L. Hanna, 2012; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Ray, 2017; Redford et al., 2017; Rothermel, 2011; Spiegler, 2010; Vigilant et al., 2014; 2013). This question is steeped in the literature on schooling choices and the reasoning behind them, and helped the researcher understand critical motivations of the group as a whole, and individually in homeschooling.
Question 15 gave the participant an opportunity to reflect on his homeschooling experience as a whole. This question yielded important perceptions of the reward, or lack thereof, in relation to the whole of homeschooling from a father’s perspective. With literature supporting the father’s role as encouraging the wife to continue in the model (Vigilant et al, 2014), it was interesting to see how the results here compare with those of other studies of fathers that show their positive outlook.

Questions 16 and 17 gave a solid foundation to the importance of religion and biblical discipleship. These were central to the study of fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship. Studies in various fields, not only fatherhood, have shown that people place a high value on things they deem important. Thus, these two questions drove at the level of motivation of this sample of fathers in regard to their religious beliefs and importance of the Bible in discipleship.

Question 18 took a look at one particular aspect of fatherhood, what each participant deemed the “single most important job.” This question led in multiple directions, as each father focused on different parts of this particular role they filled. Vigilant et al. (2014) found this concept to be very important, as the fathers they interviewed expressed that being an emotional manager of the home was most important in continuing to homeschool. Protector, provider, and leader have also been cited often (Cunningham, 2017; Lamb, 1975, 1976; Oh, 2016; Pleck, 1983; Pleck & Pleck, 1997; Raley, 2017; Vigilant et al., 2014, 2013).

Question number 19 sometimes mirrored the answer to 18, led into 20, and diverged from both, which was interesting to see. The greatest concerns of the father were also linked to the answer to number 14, which gave more detail as to why homeschooling was the families’ choice of schooling mode. As with question 14, the literature has developed a depth and complexity in explaining why parents choose the homeschooling model over the other options that are
available to them (L. Hanna, 2012; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Ray, 2017; Redford et al., 2017; Rothermel, 2011; Spiegler, 2010; Vigilant et al., 2014; 2013). This question gave a different angle from which to look at the data, which also spoke to each participant’s homeschooling experience, as well as how that related to discipleship.

Finally, survey question number 20 tied the questions above into one essential question on the passing of one’s faith to the next generation. This question has been studied at length, notably in Bengtson’s (2013) multi-generational, four-decade study which followed multiple families over three to four generations. Bengtson’s (2013) study discussed how and why some families transmitted faith from one generation to the next and others did not. The answer to this question had a relationship to the fathers’ responses in number 15. Thus, this question gave the researcher another angle to look at motivations and perceived successes of fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship.

Interviews

The semi-structured interview was chosen as the premier method of data collection, as this was the foundation of the study, and of most qualitative studies (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The interview is widely considered the best data collection method in qualitative research to develop a deep, rich, thick understanding of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994), and is a form of data collection that addresses each of the research questions for this study. Therefore, the interview provided the majority of the data. This method was useful to collect as much data as possible, with rich detail, and the researcher attempted to utilize member checking to gain greater clarity in understanding the data collected; however, the communication gained in member checking was minimal, with multiple acknowledgements of some level of review, but no corrective feedback.
At the interview, introductions were made, and ice-breaking conversation was facilitated to get to know each other a little better. As the researcher felt the need to develop more rapport, he briefly shared transparently about his own fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship experiences, creating a non-judgmental atmosphere of trust and ease before the beginning of the recorded interview (Moustakas, 1994). Acquisition of informed consent was checked one final time before any portion of the interview was conducted, and the researcher had the signed consent form at each interview. There was also time before the semi-structured interview for a review of the purpose of the study and explanation of any terms or concepts with the informed consent or the study itself. It was explained to the interviewee that it was his lived experience as an Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker that the researcher was here to listen to and gain a better understanding of (Moustakas, 1994). With the centrality of the participant’s lived experience in mind, the interview focused on the participant, and opened up for more informal conversations about shared experiences after the interview was concluded.

The interview was then uploaded for transcription by an online transcription service in each case, with the exception of the first transcription which was transcribed by the researcher. Once the company had transcribed and returned the interview audio and text files to the researcher, it was reviewed in its entirety by the researcher (if not completed by the researcher). Finally, a copy of the transcription was sent back to the participant digitally for member checking.

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about your experience with choosing to homeschool.
   a. Have your motivations to homeschool changed over time? If so, why?

2. What does it mean to you to be a homeschooling father?
a. How have you helped your son/daughter develop academically and what challenges have you faced?

b. How have you helped your son/daughter develop socially and what challenges have you faced?

c. How have you helped your son/daughter develop emotionally and what challenges have you faced?

d. What has been your experience with the expectations that your children, spouse, and other outside influences have for you in the role of homeschooling father?

3. Please describe your role as a Christian homeschooling father, in discipling your children.
   a. What kind of practices and activities do you engage in with your child in order to grow them as a disciple in their faith?
   b. What place does studying the Bible have in the process of discipling your children?
   c. Please tell me about your experience discipling your children in regard to their actions and understandings of submission to the Bible as the Word of God?

4. What are the expectations that your children, spouse, and others outside influences have for you in the role of a responsible Christian father?
   a. What has been your experience with being present in or absent from the home as a father?
   b. What has been your experience with providing economic support for your children?
   c. What has been your experience with being involved in the lives of your children as a father?
5. What have we not covered that you believe would be important to know in understanding your view of the role of the Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker?

Question number one and the sub-question served a several purposes. The first purpose was to break the ice with a question that a homeschooling father may have answered in some form or another many times before. Secondly, this question gave the researcher rich data on homeschooling motivations over time and how they evolved in each particular case. Thirdly, this series of questions gave the researcher a view into the experience of the father in choosing to homeschool, and whether that choice was ideological, pedagogical, some combination of the two, or something else entirely (Van Galen, 1986, 1988; L. Hanna, 2012). The study of motivations for homeschooling has been significant, with multiple studies addressing it directly or as a component of their study (L. Hanna, 2012; Harding, 2011; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Redford et al., 2017; Rothermel, 2011; Spiegler, 2010; Vigilant et al., 2013). Motivation has been a significant question for those advocating homeschooling, as well as for those advocating public or private schooling. An important part of understanding parent motivations was the reasons why they first choose to homeschool, but also why they continued to choose to homeschool (Rothermel, 2011). This selection of questions got at the heart of this important aspect of the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker.

Question number two and its sub-questions focused more on the homeschooling component of this study. Vigilant et al. (2014) stated that the Christian homeschooling father was in many ways an emotional manager who attempts to prolong the homeschooling model by supporting the mother in multiple ways. These five questions got at the heart of the role of a Christian father as a homeschooling dad and husband. Sub-questions a-c also dove into the specific areas of concern in the literature, academic, social, and emotional (Gaither, 2016, 2017;
Lamb, 2010; Ray, 2017; Vigilant et al., 2014), which contributed to the whole of homeschooling and provided valuable insight into the relationship between the father and the children on multiple levels. Providing a greater understanding of these three areas adds to the empirical literature, as homeschooling studies to date have not connected these three areas with the lived experience of the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker. The next sub-question continued the homeschooling theme and connected it to the responsible fathering, ecological framework (Doherty et al., 1998), with a particular focus on the experience and expectations of the child, spouse, and outside factors. The homeschooling experience is significant, as it relays another layer of the complexity of the phenomenon of fatherhood being studied. This set of questions brought the interview to a point where the participant was at ease, having shared very personal information in a non-judgmental atmosphere (Moustakas, 1994).

Question three and the sub-questions got at the core foundation of this study, the understanding of the lived-experience of the Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker. This sequence of questions focused on the most complex realities of the study, the four roles combined: Christian, father, homeschooler, and disciple-maker. These questions were significant to this study as the Bible states clearly that parents are responsible for the discipleship of their children (e.g. Deuteronomy 6:4-25, Ephesians 6:4, Proverbs 6:22, 1 Timothy 3:4-5), which includes their education (Anderson, 2016; Sproul, 2004). This calling on parents to disciple their children was further narrowed down in Ephesians 6:4, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” thus clearly identifying the responsibility of parents, specifically the father (see also Clark, 2013; Cochran, 2011; James, 2013; Kennedy, 2015; Kiekhaefer, 2013; Kiesling, 2017; Ware, 2011). These four questions worked to unearth the role of this particular type of father, as well as to dig
deeper into the experience as it pertains to the theological framework of Matthew 28:18-20. The main question and sub-questions each focused on one part of the theological framework and allowed the researcher to share in the experience of the father, through his own descriptions of his role, discipleship activities, thoughts on studying the Bible, and experience with regards to submission to the Word of God. Each of these, nestled under the umbrella of Christian fatherhood and homeschooling, gave the researcher valuable data on the main phenomenon under study. The research clearly showed that this was an area untouched in any great depth (Vigilant et al., 2014), and that giving voice to this particular type of father added significantly to the empirical research (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009).

Question four, and its three sub-questions, finished off the more structured part of the interview by focusing specifically on the responsible fathering framework. This line of questioning identified the participant’s experience with the main focus of the responsible fathering theory as utilized in the current study. The main focus of these questions was based on Doherty et al.’s (1998) use of Levine and Pitt’s (1995) definition of responsible fathering. The first was expectations that they feel inside the family unit and outside, then they focused on father presence, economic support, and finally involvement in the life of their child. These questions allowed the researcher to better understand the father’s view of responsible fathering, which Duckworth and Buzzanell (2009) stated are complicated “webs of responsibilities” (p. 563), where fathers struggle to balance their relationships with the child, mother, and outside influences.

The final question, number five, was a general question to elicit reflection over the interview by the interviewee. Occasionally, this opened up additional areas not covered in the interview (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). It was also an easy ending to the interview
process, signaling to the participant that it was a good time to change the subject, or move into more common or leisurely discussion.

Asynchronous Facebook Group Discussion

The last source of data collection was an asynchronous Facebook group discussion. This online forum was developed based on three questions, which drove the three sessions. These questions provided feedback on the participant interview, and looked at fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship from a different angle than the interview or survey. Participants were encouraged to create at least one original post for each question and reply to at least one other person’s post in each session. Involvement beyond the two post per session was completely voluntary and was the case on most of the questions. Participants were also encouraged to utilize pseudonyms for those they may reference in their posts; however, this was not an issue in anyone’s posts.

Creswell (2013) stated that this method of data collection has some distinct advantages, such as the ability to build flexibility into the study with asynchronous groups, managing the data of multiple respondents, and reducing the cost for travel and transcription. In addition to these, data collection via the internet has been shown to create a more nonthreatening environment, as respondents can participate in their normal environment (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, each of these questions was addressed in a separate discussion session which included all the participants that volunteered (group closed at four participants) and an asynchronous schedule. This allowed the much-needed flexibility for many fathers; however, there was a soft deadline for comments on each of the three questions, which were presented in subsequent sessions one week apart. This Facebook group was comprised of volunteers from the participants in the study, as each participant was invited to join the group discussions until the group was closed at four members.
This group began meeting when the four participants accepted the Facebook invitation and was capped at four participants. This, secret, invite-only, Facebook group allowed the researcher to explore a variety of participant views, while not having to be concerned about the remoteness of the researcher’s location and unrealistic travel demands.

Facebook Group Discussion Questions:

1. In reflecting on your interview, what thoughts or additions do you have concerning fatherhood, homeschooling, and/or discipleship?

2. Please describe your relationship with your father and mother.

3. Please describe the value you place on having the support of your spouse in discipling your children.

The first question in the Facebook group discussion gave participants an opportunity to reflect on their participation in the interview process (something each of them have in common), and it was at the same time an icebreaker to induct participants into involvement in the group (Ashe, 2018). Encouraging participants to be comfortable and to be able to share honestly was important in this phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994). In addition, Creswell (2013) stated that the online format will help with comfortability in responses.

The second question was steeped in the literature on the warmth of parents (or lack thereof) and the impacts that this can have on future generations (Allen & Daly, 2007; Barba, 2016; Bengtson, 2013; George, 2016; Lamb, 1975, 1976, 2004; McLaughlin & Muldoon, 2014; Sears et al, 1957). As was noted earlier, in a multi-generational, four-decade study, Bengtson (2013) showed that the warmth of the father was the number one factor in faith transmission from one generation to another, but it was also closely followed by the warmth of the mother, even surpassed in the sub-population of Jewish children. Therefore, understanding these foundational
relationships in the lives of the participants gave a much greater depth to the information gained in the survey and interview.

Lastly, the third question was based, partly on Harding’s (2011) work, which stated that one of the main roles of homeschooling parents was that of being partners. Also, it has been shown that each role impacts the others in an ecological webbed way (Doherty et al., 1998; Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009). The importance of this relationship showed through in the answers to this question, and in how it was brought up in multiple interviews and surveys.

**Data Analysis**

The primary text for the data analysis portion of this study was Moustakas (1994), as this is a transcendental phenomenological study. Moustakas (1994) outlined a multi-step process for taking the data collected and working down to the essence of the phenomenon. This process began with the Epoche, then phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and finally the synthesis of meanings into the essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). This process was supplemented by a researcher reflective journal that was completed, generally, within one to two days of the interview. This served as notes on the meeting, and as a starting point for the Epoche, as it gave insights into the facts, feelings, and potential themes recorded by the researcher within close proximity of time to the experience.

**Researcher Reflective Journaling**

In the two days directly after the interview, the researcher completed a personal reflective journal on each interview but two. This reflection was a semi-structured open memoing (Creswell, 2013), and attempted to identify any personal biases, facts, feelings, and/or themes discovered during the meeting. There were places for facts and feelings in each reflective journal, in addition to the identification of personal biases and potential themes. During this time
of open memoing the researcher attempted to bracket-out as much bias as possible, while identifying and writing down each one individually (Moustakas, 1994). This record of biases, facts, feelings, and potential themes served as a foundation while transitioning into the Epoke stage of data analysis.

**Epoke**

Each session of phenomenological reduction began first with prayer, as this is the researcher’s most effective way to clear his mind. Thereafter, facts and feelings were written out, to attempt to establish Epoke (Moustakas, 1994). Once the emotions and personal biases were bracketed-out to a point of personal satisfaction, the topic came into focus and the researcher reduced the phenomenon down to units of meaning to grasp the textural and structural essence of the data collected. Directly before each interview or interaction with the data the researcher attempted to accomplish Epoke by having a period of time set aside to attempt to bracket-out as much as possible of the researcher’s own pre-judgements, biases, predispositions, and preconceived ideas (Moustakas, 1994) about what an Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker should or should not be, and prepared to listen to the participant’s story, and what he was saying this experience means to him. This was a critical step in the transcendental phenomenological study, as it allowed the researcher to clear his mind so that he could see the participant’s lived experience of being an Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker through a fresh perspective, as if for the first time (Moustakas, 1994). This researcher does not believe it was possible to completely bracket-out himself and his firmly held personal beliefs about Christianity, fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship; however, the researcher cleared his mind as much as was possible, attempted to visualize and hear the phenomenon through the words of the father being interviewed (Moustakas, 1994). This Epoke
process was employed throughout the entire data analysis phase as the researcher attempted to bracket-out himself and hear the voices of the participants.

**Phenomenological Reduction**

With the interviews, member checking, reflective journal, survey, and discussion group all converted to digital copies and transcribed as necessary, all the information was printed off and put into a binder for review, notetaking, and highlighting. This began the process of looking at each piece of data over and over again from multiple perspectives, valuing each piece the same at first, then reducing down to the horizons of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). With repetitive sessions with the objects and the experience, the researcher allowed the experience of the phenomenon to enter his consciousness, focused on it and described it in as much textural language as possible, revisiting each data source multiple times. Attention was focused on what stood out to the researcher, and the researcher began to identify words, phrases, and ideas that were meaningful, and repetitive among the participants.

The researcher continued through this process of horizonalization, using the three-fold message of Matthew 28:18-20 and the responsible fathering theory to better understand the themes and meaning units that were found. The meaning units and codes were developed and recorded for further research while going through each new transcription (Moustakas, 1994). Once these codes became more apparent throughout the data, they were clustered into themes (Moustakas, 1994). These themes were color coded with highlighters on paper and stored securely. At the point of the development of themes the researcher reflected on each one and began to generate sub-themes.

This continued until the organization of the themes and textural descriptions of the phenomenon seemed to be complete, attaining saturation, as no new codes or themes were
discovered in the last interview (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Ten participants were interviewed, meeting the criteria for this study through the university, and at the point of saturation and 10 participants, the phenomenological reduction process was replaced by the next step, imaginative variation, which overlapped somewhat with initial sources and later sources.

**Imaginative Variation**

At this point the themes were brought together and the structure of the phenomenon was explored using “imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from various perspectives, different positions, roles or functions” (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 97-98). This process sought to take the textural description and the themes that were identified, and give structure underneath them as to how they came to be. The researcher used this process to describe the essential structures of the phenomenon of being an Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-makers (Moustakas, 1994). This process was dependent on the researcher’s own creativity and intuition as the human instrument of this phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994), as well as on the leadership and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

**Synthesis of Meanings and Essences**

Once the imaginative variation phase of data analysis was finished, the final stage was to take the textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon and synthesize them into one essence representing the lived experience of the Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers discipling their children (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). This synthesis of meanings and essences is the crown of the transcendental phenomenological study. This yielded as complete a description of the phenomenon as this one researcher, in this particular period of time, can tell (Moustakas, 1994).
Trustworthiness

The validity, or as Eisner (1991) stated it, credibility, of qualitative studies have long been questioned, especially by those who prefer the quantitative method of study (Creswell, 2013). Thus, it was important to have a solid approach to trustworthiness that was credible, dependable, confirmable, and transferable. As many qualitative studies have become more rigorous, and an emphasis has been put on data collection and analysis procedures that are trustworthy, the credibility of this type of research has grown (Creswell, 2013).

Credibility

Credibility refers to the degree to which a study uses multiple data sources and has persuasive evidence in support of its conclusions (Creswell, 2013). In order to increase this study’s credibility, once each interview was transcribed it was emailed to the participant for member checking (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Each participant was given the opportunity to review and check-off the document as accurate, or give suggestions for change, before the researcher began the data analysis processes. Multiple participants reviewed their transcript and stated that they felt it was accurate. There were no suggestions for changes in any of the transcripts in this study. With three differing sources of data, credibility was strengthened through triangulation of the data as well (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas 1994).

Dependability and Confirmability

The dependability and confirmability of a study relates to the consistency of the study in representing the participant, and also the accuracy of the study in representing them (Murray & Hwang, 2015). To strengthen the dependability and confirmability of the results, rich, thick, and deep explanations of the phenomenon were gathered with full transcriptions of each interview, member checking for accuracy and clarity, and reflective journaling by the researcher (Creswell,
The results displayed strong dependability as they were enriched by the depth of data. The triangulation of the data also provided a sense of confirmability as well, with multiple sources converging on each theme analyzed and extracted. This gave the reader a great deal of trust in the results and their ability to be confirmed through multiple sources (Moustakas, 1994).

Member checking was utilized to strengthen dependability and confirmability as it allowed the members to check the transcripts, which provided assurance of greater accuracy (Creswell, 2013). The main significance was that each of the member-checks were completed in a timely manner, because the farther away from an event the participant was, the less likely that participant was to remember the details of the event clearly. In this way, member checking allowed the participants to become part of the research process in a timely fashion, and as co-researchers (Moustakas, 1994).

**Transferability**

Transferability is the idea that what is found in one study may transfer to another study (Creswell, 2013). This study provided a rich, thick description of the phenomenon, allowing the readers to have confidence that this was an accurate portrayal of the data on this demographic and geographic group (Creswell, 2013). This study was of a small group of Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-makers in the Mountain West region of the United States, which may not be transferable to many other locations, but provided insights as to the phenomenon of the experience of fathers in homeschooling anywhere. These important themes could be a basis for further study with larger groups of individuals, or could create the groundwork for a quantitative measure to follow up this study.
Ethical Considerations

The study of the lived experience of the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker was filled with personal stories and information; therefore, the most important ethical consideration for this study was to protect the data collected from these fathers, as they would not have been willing to share personal, sensitive details if they were not sure that a well thought-out plan was in place to keep their data safe. Therefore, the computer and filing cabinet that the data were stored in were locked, physically for the cabinet, and with a password that only the researcher knows for the computer. Once the data was printed off, the researcher disassociated each person from his information, gave pseudonyms for names and places, and removed any information that the researcher deemed personally identifiable. To protect each member’s identity, a codebook was created linking the participants to their pseudonyms. The codebook was stored in a separate location from the data and accessible by the researcher alone. Also, a professional transcription service was consulted to protect the identity and knowledge of the researcher’s participants.

As this was a study on fatherhood and personal ideas, beliefs, and stories were shared, there was some risk of childhood trauma coming up in the interview process. Although never requested, the researcher had counseling services made aware of my study and ready to talk with the participant if requested. In this case, the likelihood of such a severe reaction to talking about fathers was very rare and the risks of this happening was outweighed by the likelihood of this study having a positive impact on the participants, as this study gave a voice to a segment of the population that does not have a voice on this phenomenon in the empirical literature at this point.

All participants were given an informed consent form before any data was collected, so that they were aware of a few important human research rules. It was explained to them that
their participation in the study was completely voluntary, and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time before the publication of this study. These were important ethical concerns, as participants needed to know that they were not bound to the study. The researcher made this clear when we scheduled the interviews, and when we met before the interviews.

Summary

The central research question guiding this study, “How do Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers describe the essence of the lived experience of discipling their children?” necessitated a qualitative methodology to get the depth of data needed, and as such, the qualitative method was chosen. The interest of this researcher in understanding and giving voice to the essence of this phenomenon led the researcher to the phenomenological approach. Further, the researcher’s close ties to the topic were instrumental in the decision to attempt to tell this story in the words of the participants, without personal interpretation; thus, the transcendental phenomenological approach was selected over the hermeneutical approach. This design was the best fit to give voice to the participants as well as to seek an answer to the central research question stated above, and the sub-questions: How do Evangelical Christian, homeschooling fathers describe their experience as a home educator? How do Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers describe the role of every-day relationship building in discipling their children? How do Evangelical Christian fathers describe their efforts to teach their children the Bible and to encourage them to submit to its teachings? How do Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers-disciple-makers describe being a responsible father?

In a study of such depth, limiting the scope was a necessity; therefore, geographically, the Mountain West Region was chosen, and a survey added to put this study into the context of other studies on fatherhood and to approach the data from a different angle. In addition, the participant
recruitment was limited to those who self-identify as Evangelical Christian, are actively homeschooling, have been homeschooling for at least three years, are married and the biological father of the children in the home, and are interested in this study. These limitations are significant in terms of the literature on fatherhood and were also guided by this researcher’s personal interest in these areas. Clearly, the role of this researcher was significant in the topic of choice and impacted the study as the researcher was the analysis tool in the qualitative study here. With that in mind, the researcher chose the transcendental method to attempt to reduce bias, and to focus on the participants’ experiences.

With three data collection strategies, the interview, survey, and Facebook discussion group, the rich, deep, and thick palate of information needed to discover the essence of the lived experience of Evangelical Christian homeschooling father disciple-makers was present. The personal nature and depth of this information was secured with solid, ethical storage measures, and care for all data. This data was then analyzed through Moustakas’ (1994) transcendental phenomenological lens, with some additions by Creswell (2013) as well. These two researchers’ designs for phenomenological research mesh well, as Moustakas (1994) gives a much greater detail to the transcendental phenomenology, while Creswell (2013) gives many of the same topics a second explanation where Moustakas (1994) can be a difficult read, and adds some up-to-date information concerning online discussion groups. This study analyzed the data collected utilizing Moustakas’ (1994) framework, Epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of meanings and essences. Utilizing this framework provided the research with solid trustworthiness, and strongly supported the researcher’s ability to discover the essence of the lived experience of the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis, hence at this point it is important to revisit the purpose statement for this study in order to create a clear path forward through the chapter. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to deepen the understanding of the homeschooling movement, particularly the Evangelical Christian father’s role in making disciples of his children. This particular phenomenon has not been addressed in the empirical literature at this point; however, Duckworth and Buzzanell (2009) did raise the question of the experience of specific types of fathers in their article on the balancing act of fathers with work time and family time. With the identification of this gap in the literature, this study attempted to fill a part of that gap concerning the lived experience of Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-makers. Thus, this chapter describes the findings resulting from the process the researcher took in analyzing the data collected via one interview and survey from each of 10 participants, and a Facebook discussion group that included four of the 10 participants. The chapter begins by reviewing the research questions that guided the study, then giving an overview of the participants, and a brief profile of each participant. This is followed by the presentation of the themes with the themes and sub-themes explained as they were discovered by the researcher. The themes were then utilized to answer the research questions and create a textural description, structural description, and synthesis or essence of the phenomenon. With the data analyses culminating in the essence of the phenomenon, a final summary of the findings are given to close out the chapter.
Participants

The recruitment methodology for this study was a purposeful, criterion, snowball sampling that produced 10 qualified participants who were included in this study. Each participant was from the Mountain West Region, currently married, living with his spouse and biological children, currently homeschooling, having a minimum of three years of homeschooling experience, self-identified as an Evangelical Christian, and stated that they were currently discipling their children. Each of the participants voluntarily gave his time for the semi-structured interviews, completed the survey, and four of the participants were also a part of a Facebook discussion group that participated for four weeks in an asynchronous environment. With the vast physical distances between the participants and the interviewer, the participants chose to use Skype, Facetime, or telephone to conduct each of the interviews. Each participant chose to complete the surveys via a Microsoft Word document sent to their email. In order to protect the identity of each participant, pseudonyms were given to each participant based on the disciples of Christ. Overall the sample provided the researcher with surprising variety and also many similarities within their lived experiences being an Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker.

Peter

Peter is a father of two and has homeschooled for the past 18 years. Peter stated that he and his wife did not choose homeschooling initially, saying “It was kind of chosen for us,” as they were overseas for a number of years and had no schooling options readily available for their two children. Peter recalled that this changed when they returned to the United States and enrolled both children into public school. One child hated it, and therefore, Peter gave both children the option of homeschool or public school, and one chose homeschooling. Hence, a big
part of Peter’s journey to continuing homeschooling was not pedagogical or ideological, but student choice and being careful to notice each child’s different needs. Speaking of the child that choose homeschooling, Peter stated that during some small efforts at summer learning at home “she blossomed through the whole thing.” This was the evidence needed to make homeschooling a reality for the one child who wanted it and was doing well with home-based learning.

James

James is a homeschooling father with five children and has been actively homeschooling for four years. James stated that it was not “a terrible stretch” for them to homeschool as both he and his wife were “homeschooled, clear through.” James discussed his motivations as being mainly social and academic, stating, “I don’t want my kids being raised by their peers, that’s my job” and “academically, there is just no contest between what we can give our kids through homeschooling and what the schools do.” James discussed homeschooling as a parental responsibility that he felt he had to do if he could.

John

John has been a homeschooling father for 23 years and has 11 children. In the beginning, John and his wife decided to homeschool from a relational perspective with their oldest child. They did do some of the schooling through a Christian school; however, almost all of their children’s schooling was at home with just a few select public school classes when the children were older and in a location that enabled them to pick and choose. The motivation to homeschool started with a relational focus, but over time it became the preferred method for schooling their children, and as John explained it, “then she (his wife) fell in love with it.” Thus,
ultimately John and his wife decided it was the best option relationally, theologically, and financially.

**Andrew**

Andrew is a homeschooling father of two children and he and his wife have been homeschooling for over 10 years. Andrew himself has been more directly involved for about four years. Andrew stated, “We never really considered public schooling.” Andrew further explained, “Originally, it was practical,” as his job required relocation often; however, he continued “We have come more to take that as a biblical stance than we originally started with.” Andrew explained that with frequent moves, homeschooling was a practical decision; however, he says, “I believe it is the parents’ responsibility to teach and train their children. That goes for academics, as well as it goes for discipleship and faith matters, as well as everything else.”

**Philip**

Philip stated that he has eight children and has been homeschooling for approximately eight years. Philip stated that their journey to homeschooling “started with my desire.” Philip stated that, ideologically, he and his wife could not agree with “socialism being pushed and favoritism” to every religion other than Christianity in the public schools. This culture was a major motivator to homeschool their children. Thus, when they started schooling their oldest, they were on the same page and began homeschooling. Philip stated about his theological basis for homeschooling, “My desire (is) for them to be able to know that God’s Word is truth and it’ll just shine forth…and they’re not going to get that in a public school.”

**Thomas**

Thomas has been homeschooling for about 18 years and stated on his survey that he has six or more children. Thomas stated that his positive experiences with homeschoolers in his
community and seeing the profit in it were strong factors in choosing to homeschool; however, Thomas and his wife did start their schooling journey in the public school for the first couple of years. Explaining how he was motivated ideologically, Thomas stated, “We began homeschooling primarily because we were beginning to learn what it meant to live as faithful followers of Christ and did not want to have to undo a secular teaching here at home.” In addition to their developing understanding of faith, “Our child was being socialized by their peers, which we didn’t find very appealing,” so there was a socialization aspect to the choice as well.

**Bartholomew (Bart)**

Bart has been homeschooling for 16 years and stated that he has six children. Bart’s motivation stems from his own childhood experience with Christian school, public school, and homeschooling. Bart stated, “I probably, initially, was very driven by academic excellence, and that is shifted more towards one of the clear commands that God gives fathers…to teach your children diligently and to teach your children to love Him diligently.” Bart stated, “Homeschooling just seems to be the best venue for that.” Bart explained that up to this point they have homeschooled them “all the way through.”

**Matthew**

Matthew is a homeschooling father of seven children and has been homeschooling for over five years. Matthew said that their journey to homeschooling “was my wife’s idea to begin with.” They had educated their children via the public school for several years, but were concerned as “it was really a recognition that the type of education that our children were getting in a public school system was not going to be in line with the worldview that we hold…that God is the loving Creator of everything, including all aspects of knowledge.” Pedagogically,
Matthew stated, “We also knew that the way that the public education system is structured, it really compartmentalizes learning and education, and we don’t see is as that either. We see all sources of knowledge, again, pointing to God.” In addition to these pedagogical and ideological differences with the public-school system, Matthew stated that, “it was also a recognition that we had some pretty relatively gifted children” who were not being challenged in the public-school system. In summary, Matthew stated, “Ultimately…we believe that the purpose of education is to know God and make Him known. That’s why we ultimately followed the Lord’s lead in homeschooling our children.”

Simon

Simon has been a homeschooling father for around 10 years and reported that he has more than six children. Simon began schooling his first child in a Christian school; however, this changed quickly as he “realized kind of right away, kind of her attitude change…not the way she normally would’ve handled herself.” This negative personality change motivated them to “pull her out of school” and look at homeschooling as an option that better fit the relational aspect of schooling. Simon stated that their motivations to homeschool haven’t changed since then, stating, “we usually ask them what their thoughts of school is, if they would like to entertain the idea of going to school…we’ve given them that option, but we feel like that has still been the best mode for us.”

Matthias

Matthias has been homeschooling for about 23 years and has nine children. Matthias began schooling his children in private Christian education, then switched to homeschooling “mostly for financial reasons.” Matthias’ motivation to homeschool has since changed from necessity to pedagogy and ideology/theology. Pedagogically, in reference to schooling outside
the home, Matthias stated, “What I don’t like about it is you have to separate family, send your kids away.” Ideologically, Matthias stated, “The reason we continued, and as I learn more, education is really building relationships with our children and discipling them.” Theologically, Matthias stated, “I believe that it’s the father’s responsibility, he’s the one charged to bring up his children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord it says in Ephesians 6:4…It’s absolutely essential to bring up those children in the glory of the Lord.”

Results

The results of the study were arrived at after careful study and consideration of each piece of data presented. As described in detail in Chapter Three, the researcher included data from one interview and one survey from each participant, and the data associated with a four-week asynchronous Facebook discussion group that included four of the 10 members of the participant pool. This data was then transcribed (if necessary) and printed out for the researcher to read and take notes on. At the same time as the transcription of the interviews, the researcher completed reflective journaling to work toward identifying any personal biases, facts, feelings, and/or themes that were beginning to be developed. The data was then broken down into units of meaning or codes that included words or phrases that stood out to the researcher. This continued throughout each interview and as the codes began to become more apparent, they were grouped together into themes and sub-themes. The codes were initially sub-divided into three domains, homeschooling, discipleship, and fatherhood, as this was the basic order of the questions in the interview. This process produced a large number of themes and sub-themes with multiple codes under each sub-theme. At this point themes and sub-themes were reviewed to discover patterns and repetitions in the them, as well as to compare each one to the guiding theological and
theoretical framework to identify overriding themes and sub-themes that were throughout multiple themes. This helped the researcher to condense the themes and sub-themes, while also identifying sub-themes that were pervasive throughout multiple themes, such as education is discipleship and example, which is not listed as a sub-theme for all themes, but is at the very least a code found in almost all of the themes. The six themes and their sub-themes are listed below. For a table of codes see Appendix E: Table of Codes.

Table 2

Outline of Themes and Subthemes

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
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<td>Make Disciples</td>
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<td>Bible Teacher</td>
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<td>Teach Submission to the Word of God</td>
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<td>Education is Discipleship</td>
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<td>Responsible and Accountable</td>
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<td>Father-Home-Educator</td>
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<td>Father-Economic Provider</td>
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<td>Provision by the Grace of God</td>
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<td>Father-Guide to Adulthood</td>
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<td>Teach Financial Literacy</td>
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**Theme Development**

There were eight potential main themes that were discussed by most or all of the participants during data analysis, with six of them being discussed in some form during the questions in all three domains, fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship. The fathers in the study spoke about being a disciple-maker, teacher, co-laborer with their wife, economic provider, guide to adulthood, and about expectations in all three domains. Being a social and emotional guide, as well as being present and involved were discussed in two and one domains respectively; however, they were also included in some ways in one or more of the main six themes. These two potential themes were incorporated into the first six themes, as this seemed the most natural way to display the data, and almost all the significant concepts in them were already present in the main six themes. These two potential themes, now included in the other
themes, were helpful in clearly answering the research questions where they were discussed separately as needed in addition to being integrated into the six themes that emerged. There was a degree of difficulty in identifying each theme and then its sub-themes as there was a great deal of overlap between the three domains (fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship) in the responses from the fathers, with multiple respondents seeing them as three-in-one and inseparable. This was reflected in the codes as well, with multiple codes that were similar falling under multiple themes and subthemes (see Appendix E: Table of Codes). With that in mind, the researcher attempted to carefully consider multiple ways the data could be grouped and created the table above to show the data in the organization that seemed to most clearly relate the fathers’ experience with the phenomenon.

**Father-disciple-maker.** On the survey, when asked the question, “What do you think is a father’s most important job?” all 10 participants in the study identified discipleship as the most important job of a father. Three of the fathers cited the importance of being an example in discipleship, as Peter did when he stated that he sought to “set a Christlike example for his kids in every area of life.” Three men spoke of discipling their children to know Christ. Andrew phrased it as “raising children to know, love and honor God with all of their being, so that they become followers of Christ and ambassadors for God’s Kingdom.” Two men each focused on discipleship through teaching the Bible and nurture according to Ephesians 6:4. Bart spoke of teaching the Bible, eluding to Deuteronomy 6:4, “diligently teaching God’s Word and the fear of God to his children,” and Matthias stated, “Ephesians 6:4, to bring up his children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” In the interviews, there were two quotes that seemed to sum up the fathers’ perspectives on this role, with James stating, “more is caught than taught,” and Matthias, in like fashion referencing the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “follow me as I
follow Christ.” Likewise, the Facebook discussion group produced this telling quote from Andrew, “Because I am a father, I am called (just as much as any pastor, evangelist, or missionary) to teach, train, raise, nurture and discipline my children.”

It was apparent, right from the beginning that these men saw being a disciple maker as an essential role, and spoke more frequently of this role than any other throughout the study. This was considered a multifaceted venture by the fathers with the following subthemes emerging: setting an example, making disciples, being a Bible teacher, encouraging submission to God’s Word, seeing education as discipleship and being responsible and accountable. Each of these subthemes were supported strongly and referenced by a majority of the participants to earn inclusion.

These subthemes are of notable significance as they correlated with the theological and theoretical frameworks. Theologically, Matthew 28:18-20, Deuteronomy 6:1-7, and Genesis 1:26-20, 2:15-17 were all incorporated in the fathers’ responses. Specifically, Matthew 28:18-20 was clearly represented in all three categories stated in the framework, with the subthemes of being an example, making disciples, submitting to God’s Word, and teaching the Bible. Theoretically, the responsible fathering theory was represented in the responsible and accountable subtheme, as well as multiple other subthemes, with overlapping concepts of responsibility, presence and involvement being integrated into the whole of being a father-disciple-maker. Thus, in the first theme, both the theological and theoretical frameworks proved valuable to the study of fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship.

Example. The first subtheme, example, was mentioned by all participants and in all three domains of fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship. This subtheme was quite expansive as the fathers in this study spoke foremost about being spiritual leaders in regard to their children,
spouse, church, and community, they also admitted to being imperfect examples, and examples of submission to authority. This subtheme also crossed over many of the themes and subthemes throughout the study, such as being an example in work ethic, personal devotion, personal disciple making, and the list goes on.

In the context of his role as a spiritual leader by example, Matthias quoted Luke 6:40, stating, “Jesus spoke and he said, ‘A pupil is not above his teacher but everyone after he has been fully trained will be like his teacher.’” Matthew, also speaking on being a spiritual leader by example stated, “Ultimately, the role, as a Christian homeschool dad, is to be the spiritual head of the household and the leader. That they look to you as the example of how to conduct themselves in this life and how to view appropriate education standards.” Multiple participants connected this role to the fruit of the Spirit, with Philip stating, “They should be able to see the fruit flowing forth out of my life. Fruit of repentance or fruit of just, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness should be flowing forth out of me.” Additionally, Thomas stated, “They should expect the fruit of the Spirit to be evident in the home and the way I conduct myself.” Matthew went on to connect the fruit of the Spirit with his beliefs on the reliability of the Bible’s teachings: “That I would display to them what it means to be a man of God, and embrace humility, self-control, and leaning on God for wisdom, and holding the Bible up in such esteem, that there is no question that they would ever hear from me as to the accuracy and reliability and certainty of the truth and Scriptures.”

All participants also spoke particularly about their own struggles with being an imperfect example. This honesty and transparency showed many of the fathers’ struggles with failure to be the example they would like to be as something that they think about often. Simon spoke of being genuine with his attempt at being an unhypocritical Christian example, stating, “I mean,
we’re about it, we’re not saying one thing and doing something else.” Whereas John, Peter, James, Philip, and Matthew clearly stated that they fail, Peter in particular stated, “just saying, here’s what Scripture says, then trying to live it out in our lives as well. Sometimes better than others, of course.” In the Facebook discussion, James, speaking of teaching our kids through our struggles, stated, “Being vulnerable with our kids about our own problems and struggles can be one of the most difficult, but most important parts of both teaching and discipling.”

Another word that was codified under example and used synonymously by multiple participants was modeling. In particular, modeling submission to authority was a significant part of the example subtheme. Thomas talked about this including multiple areas of life, stating, “Men model that as they submit to their leadership in the church, the laws of the land, the government placed over them, their employers, you know, and wives and children should see a godly man submitting to authority.” Matthew also emphasized the importance of personal accountability with submission, stating, “Well, I live it before them…I constantly remind them that the Lord is my Lord and I submit to Him.” Philip encapsulated it succinctly by stating, “So, to help them submit…mainly comes from seeing mom and dad in action.” Thus, whether leading well or struggling, these men saw being an example in every area as paramount to being a father-disciple-maker.

**Make Disciples.** The process of making disciples, first of their own children, then of others, was another subtheme that every father spoke about extensively. All 10 of the participants spoke about making disciples from the perspective of it being a way of life. Elucidating on this, Thomas states, “So, discipleship is really the fabric of our home…discipleship is how do we integrate the truths of God’s Word into the everyday, the milieu of life, the everyday practical decision-making and setting priorities and patterns of
work?” John explains this process more from the perspective of the glory of God, saying the goal is God’s glory and stating, “He’s given you talents…to glorify the Lord.” John, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Simon, and Matthias point to the glory of God, and Simon in particular states, similarly to John, “The key thing is to glorify God, and to give Him the glory.”

Another key component of the fathers’ statements about making disciples was overseeing the family faith development. Each father stated this was a significant role that included a pattern of training and educating their children before sending them out to make disciples themselves. Matthias stated, “That’s the way, the pattern in Scripture, even in their old age, in adulthood, they’re trained first and then they’re sent out.” Philip brought the Great Commission to light, stating, “So, I’m called to go and make disciple of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit, teaching them everything I’ve commanded you, and the main disciples that God has given me is my children.” Andrew connected this to responsibility and being led by the Holy Spirit, saying, “So, my responsibility, then, is to oversee that and to make adjustments following the leading of the Holy Spirit to where my children need to learn.” Simon pointed out the seriousness of overseeing his family’s faith development, stating, “That has to be something that I can’t afford to…allow them to be derailed, because of…what’s going on in society, and peer pressures and those types of things.”

One significant aspect of making disciples and overseeing family faith development was family worship and/or family devotions. All of the participants had some method of family-centered disciple making that typically was made up of one or more of four elements, Bible reading, Bible study, prayer, and singing. Bart stated, “We’ve tried to be fairly faithful, family devotions, that’s been all over the map.” James spoke of working with the younger ones when they read the Bible each night before bed, saying that “the language is pretty dense. So, helping
them to, helping it to sort of come alive for them is pretty important.” John stated that “We do the evening Bible time, and in the morning after breakfast…we have Bible reading and prayer,” which almost all the fathers stated was their attempted routine also. Bart stated that their family devotion had taken on a different form with each individual who could read studying the same passage of Scripture each morning and then meeting together about once a week to go over it with each individual child. This method was described as a kind of hybrid of family devotions; however, it was stated to produce good conversations throughout the day. Most, like Bart, followed some kind of systematic process. Philip stated, “Just walking through verse-by-verse, and reading it through, and then trying to bring a principle across on what the Scriptures say.” Peter stated that his focus was more on the “why” we do these things than just the “what” of following the rules, obeying “in love.”

Also of significance was the direct quotation of or reference to Deuteronomy 6. Philip, Bart, and Simon drew directly from this section of Scripture, especially the first seven verses, while other participants referred to it indirectly or spoke of the concepts given in this section of Scripture as foundational to disciple making. This usage of Scripture was characterized by the father’s involvement in relationship building, diligent teaching, and a day-to-day disciple-making process. James spoke of his personal relationship as foundational in discipling his own children, stating, “I think at the core of Christianity is the fact that Christ died to restore our relationship with God.” Philip stated, “So, it always comes down to your relationship with Christ, your relationship with God’s Word.” Peter saw the development of the child’s relationship with Christ as supported by their “Bible study.” Bart, more directly connected this relational process to the biblical text in Deuteronomy 6: “There’s no if, ands, or buts about, ‘my words will be written on the doorposts’ and ‘you will teach them diligently to your children while they rise up
or they sit down,’ If they go off by the wayside and you will teach your children to fear the Lord.’ That is just clear, laid out black and white.” John included teaching and preparing his children for evangelism in this day-to-day relational disciple-making, as he stated that he taught his children how to “gain a hearing for the Gospel” in their daily walk and encouraged them to “do as much learning as you can, and make sure it’s in submission to Christ, so you can use it later on.”

Finally, each father described his discipleship activities in varying detail, but each father had a number of practices and activities that they reflected on as important to making disciples. Once again, another area of agreement between all 10 participants was that of being heavily involved in the church. This discipleship activity was very significant as it was cited as a source for social discipleship by seven of the participants, with John stating, “We’ve always been heavily involved in church…that’s the socializing and that’s discipling them through that.” This was stated as a place where they can have hands on experience in ministry, as John stated it, “So, we want them to all have…before they leave our house, to have experiences in teaching Bible to children or to peers.” Exposure to other Christian viewpoints, involvement in other churches, and in non-denominational activities with the church were all mentioned as part of that discipleship. In addition, Peter, John, and Bart mentioned music ministry and Bart, Matthew, and Matthias saw sports as a potential discipleship tool. In all these activities Simon stated that it is important that his children are grounded in their faith and that “they are also grounded in the community.”

**Bible teacher.** This subtheme pervaded the research analysis, insomuch that it was broken up into two subthemes that were well able to stand on their own. The two subthemes that are closely related, but separate, are the father as the Bible teacher and teaching submission to
God’s Word. When given the options of “very important,” “important,” “not that important,” or “other” on the survey, nine participants rated the Bible as very important in how they would describe the Bible in regard to discipleship. The only father who did not select “very important,” selected “important.” This makes it clear that these Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers hold the Bible in high regard in their discipleship efforts.

Multiple fathers appealed to Deuteronomy 6 as biblical support for teaching the Bible diligently to their children. Reflecting on his reasoning for homeschooling, Bart stated, “I probably, initially was very driven by academic excellence, and that is shifted more towards one of the clear commands that God gives fathers…to teach your children His Word diligently, and to teach them to love Him diligently.” Bart went on to say, “Homeschooling just seems to be the best venue for that.” This focus on diligently teaching their children the Word of God was also cited as a reasoning for the fathers bringing everything back to the Bible. John said the Bible is “our starting point…the foundation,” and Andrew said, “The whole Bible is written for all of us.” Clearly stating this idea as well, Philip said, “That’s number one. It’s God’s Word. I mean, there’s no more directions that we have.”

In many ways very similar, John, Bart, and Matthias looked to Ephesians 6:4 as biblical support for teaching the Word of God to their families. In talking about raising children, John stated, “A little more philosophical or responsibility duty, I’m command to as parents, to train up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Continuing to bring everything back to the Bible, Philip stated that 2 Peter 1:3 “says that it has given us everything for life and godliness. Everything we need. It sustains us.” Philip also stated that 2 Timothy 3:16 gives us trust in teaching our children the Bible, as he said the Bible states, “For all scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness that
the man of God can be competent and equipped for every good work.” At least seven of the 10 participants stated explicitly that the Bible is central in discipleship. Andrew stated that the Bible is “Central. Absolutely central.” He went on to say that all teaching in the home “absolutely, positively has to be solid Christian worldview-founded.” Speaking of the centrality of teaching the Bible in discipleship, Thomas stated, “I’m not sure what else you’d disciple them toward on in.” In the context of discipleship ministry, Matthias stated, “Absolutely, absolutely first place…you will not grow without the Word of God.”

Another facet of the father being a Bible teacher that fathers hit on was that of the Bible being an academic subject in homeschooling and teaching it to them from the time they are young. Matthias stated, “We do that very early because they’re really a blank slate…so we want to fill up their minds with the Word of God right away…and then they have the foundation from which to work, combat the enemies, the world, their own flesh, and Satan as Satan brings his fiery darts.” Peter, John, Andrew, Simon, and Matthias all specifically stated that the Bible is one of their academic subjects in homeschooling, whereas the other fathers discussed teaching the Bible to their family only in a devotional setting. John specifically stated, “We do treat the Bible as an academic subject while we’re homeschooling, as well. Not only does it bless her Bible study, but it’s a tough class.” Accordingly, Simon stated, “We use a Christian curriculum, so they get Bible as one of their subjects.” This intensive study was cited as important and challenging; however, individual devotional study was also viewed as important in the spiritual development of disciples.

**Teaching submission to God’s Word.** Early in the research process, a part of the subtheme of Bible teacher, teaching submission to God’s Word, developed into a subtheme itself as the support for it emerged more and more strongly, eventually including eight of the ten
participants in its results. As was taken up briefly in the example subtheme, modeling submission to authority was a significant part of this subtheme. Thomas appealed to his own example to teach his children how to submit to the authority of God’s Word: “I have two men that God has placed over me as my elder authorities in the church. I live in that context. I submit to their authority.” Matthew stated,

Well, I live it before them. I constantly remind them that the Lord is my Lord and I submit to Him. I call them to the Bible every day…in relation to whatever circumstances they’re going through…I try to call to attention to what the Lord has to say, in His Bible, in His Word, about that circumstance.

In addition to this understanding of submission to God’s Word by example, John speaks directly to teaching submission to parents at a young age as preparation for submission to God’s Word, stating, “We want you to submit to our authority and to obey us so that later, you will submit to the Lord’s authority and obey Him.” Thomas also comments in the same vein, stating, “I think the way we would initially think about that (submission to the Word of God) is young children need to learn how to submit to authority.” Thomas agreed with the necessity of this, stating, “so they understand, that we’re all under authority and there’s a willingness to submit to authority.”

Connecting this concept of submission to God’s Word with discipline, Thomas continued, saying, “Even in the way we administer discipline…I always put it in terms that I am submitting to Christ, my authority, and He wants the best for you.” John, Philip, Bart and Matthew also stated that teaching discipline should be based on submission to God’s Word. In this way, John in like manner stated
When we are dealing with our children, a child in a discipline situation, we first discuss what happened and make sure they understand what their actions, their response, their attitude was and then we compare it to what the Scriptures says, what God’s Word says. This connection of discipline to submission to the Word of God was relayed somewhat differently by Peter, as he stated, “I don’t really know if it’s as much discipling them as it is just saying, ‘Here’s what Scripture says,’ and then trying to live it out in our lives as well.”

James brought into focus the heart behind submission, saying, “So, instead of being about rules, you’re not just submitting to rule, you are submitting yourself to what He has asked of you and being obedient to Him out of love.” Submission to God’s Word out of love is what Thomas called heathy submission, stating, “It’s healthy. It’s God’s means for protection.” Reflecting on this process of learning to submit out of love, and submit to the Word of God long term, Bart and Simon spoke about the life-long nature of submission to God’s Word in adult children. Bart stated,

It’s showing now that some live out on their own and are continuing to submit to God’s Word, and to love Him, and to be faithful in church, and just make good decisions all the way around in life based on God’s Word.

Simon spoke of the long-term growth and ongoing process of submission to God’s Word, stating, The more they see it, and the more they grow, in discipling, and their growth, it’s going to be more real to them, it’s going to change them, it’s going to grow them, it’s going to make it different. I mean, but that’s an ongoing life

Each of the participants who spoke of submission to God’s Word conveyed a gravity toward submission, stating its importance in order to make disciples effectively.
**Education is discipleship.** One very intriguing and impactful subtheme that developed unmistakably was that of education being discipleship. This subtheme was present in the responses of nine of the 10 participants. One thing that became clear was that the fathers in the study saw teachers, curriculum, and peers as particularly influential over the disciple-making process. Making a comparison between public school and homeschool curriculum and teachers, John stated, “Knowing what the curriculum is like in a public school, knowing what the majority of the teachers, who are professional, but, it’s very difficult to not have your personal beliefs influence how you teach.” Along these same lines, Matthias as referenced previously, brought to light Luke 6:40 and how the student becomes like the teacher. Thus, Matthias said, “You have to be very careful on who the teacher is then.” For the fathers in this study, this stance that education is discipleship, was biblically based as they emphasized that the teacher, the curriculum, and the peers of their children should be chosen with great care and in accordance with the Word of God.

Looking at curriculum in particular, the fathers saw the content to be taken in by the student to be important, and a reason in itself to homeschool, Matthew stated, “It (the reason for homeschooling) was really a recognition that the type of education that our children were getting in a public school system was not going to be in line with the worldview that we hold.” Matthew went on to say, “Ultimately, every form of education and knowledge should be pointing to the ultimate truth for us, which is that God is the Creator of the universe, and He sent His Son to die for us.” Thus, a biblically based curriculum was stated as a priority in education for at least John, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bart, Matthew, Simon, and Matthias. These fathers all stated that the education that they were providing in their subjects were directly related to the overall discipleship of their children.
Of some variance was the perceived impact of peers, with some fathers not giving it as much importance as curriculum and teacher, yet other fathers, such as John stating, “The biggest reason our kids are not to be full-time public school is the students, and then the curriculum, and then the faculty.” In the survey, most fathers stated that their main reason for homeschooling was religious instruction; however, James diverged from the norm and stated, “Socialization – it’s my job to raise my kids, not their peers’ job.” In the interview James stated the same thing somewhat differently: “I don’t want my kids being raised by their peers, that’s my job.” In the context of his feelings of responsibility to homeschool, and he and his wife being the primary influencers in their children’s lives, James stated, “Raising our kids, the character you get from having your parents be the primary source of your learning and direction, is a whole lot better than if you sort of farm that out to somebody else.” Therefore, while peer influence may not have been at the top of all the fathers’ list of reasons for homeschooling, it was obviously powerful for a segment of the participants, and they were not comfortable with leaving the impact on discipleship that public school peers could have.

Four fathers referenced either Deuteronomy 6 or Ephesians 6:4 as biblical support for their belief that education is indeed discipleship. The fathers in the study who comment on these two sections of Scripture typically referred to homeschooling as God’s mandate. Matthias stated it succinctly: “According to God’s Word, we’re mandated to raise our children, I believe, in a Christian environment.” Matthias went into more detail, stating, “The bulk of that is the foundation, has to be Christian. The best way to do that is through homeschooling and then we build relationships that way, and as I said, that education is discipleship.” Andrew stated it this way: “So, I don’t actually see any kind of a separation between the Christian education my children are receiving and their discipleship. I see them as one and the same.” Thomas,
speaking of their homeschooling experience, said, “It’s the integration of Christ into everything, and so, discipleship would probably be a better description of our homeschool experience right now than actually what most people think of homeschooling.” Matthew identified God at the center of the educational experience: “God is the loving Creator of everything, including all aspects of knowledge.” Reflecting on the history of education, in the Facebook discussion Bart stated,

Looking back through time has been helpful for me: imagining a ‘homeschooling dad’ in Israel during Kind David’s time or on the East Coast in the 1700s…fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship would have been very integrated, seamlessly flowing from one to another.

With this in mind, Andrew made note of the fact that “a number of authors point out that homeschooling is the original model of schooling.” Strikingly, almost every father in the study used the verbiage “education is discipleship” or something very close to that, showing the importance of this subtheme to the fathers.

**Responsible and accountable.** The last subtheme under the main theme of father-disciple-maker was discussed throughout the study by all the fathers, but most explicitly when talking about their duty to educate and disciple their families. Speaking specifically to the word “responsibility,” Peter stated,

As far as what responsible is, and “I do what I want kind of thinking.” We just don’t play that game. It’s not one of those, I’m going to do what I want, unless were just teasing. It’s one of those things where it’s, this is right, this is wrong. We aim at doing what’s right, we try to stay away from doing what’s wrong.
Similar in practicality, James stated that responsibility is “something that you pick up and you shoulder and do your best to make the world a better place around you.” Bart spoke of it in terms of education, stating, “It means to be directly responsible for your children’s education. For the results, both good and bad.” Philip and Matthew both characterized being responsible as trusting in God and His Word, as well as living it out in front of their families.

In the context of working out his occupational schedule so that he could be home more, James spoke of specific responsibilities, stating,

I want to be there and raise my kids and be, to be able to be the one who is responsible for addressing their bad behavior or helping them to see what direction to go and encouraging them in their successes and when they do things that are good things.

James conveyed the particularity of this role, stating, “I have a role here that nobody else can have,” and how important it was to him not to take it lightly. Speaking to this particular role and how significant a role model was to him, Bart stated, “I’ve been focused on being a godly dad since I became a dad, and my dad was a good role model in that.”

Bart also spoke of the primary responsibility for parenting to be on the shoulders of the father, regardless of whether the family chooses homeschooling or not, stating, “If I was to talk to any dad, I would say, ‘You have to be doing this discipleship thing, no matter what school they’re in.’” Bart went on in detail to discuss the responsibility of teaching character in your children, stating,

As a parent, no matter what school you put them in, your tasked with teaching them the hard things anyways, you’re tasked with teaching them to be honest, you’re tasked with teaching them how to love. You’re tasked with teaching them how to deal with other
people and conflict and all these things…Math and English is pretty easy compared to that.

Matthias, spoke of how he and other leaders teach responsibility, stating,

So, we teach that fathers, that's your responsibility. That's your job. You're mandated to do that. So, you can't pass that off to a youth pastor. You can't pass that off to a Sunday school teacher. You're responsible, you need to do that. You need to train them in the Word of God and teach them God's Word.

This focus on the responsibility of fathers, regardless of schooling options, was a significant finding as some of these fathers were homeschoolers themselves and all of them stated in the survey that their experience with homeschooling was positive, showing that this responsibility did not lead them to view homeschooling negatively.

Using the terms of accountability, John, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, and Bart spoke of the father’s accountability to God for the home and the schooling, with John stating, “Ultimately, I will answer to the Lord for the overall home, the overall school.” John saw this responsibility as described in 1 Timothy 3 with regard to him being a bishop of the home. Several fathers, while discussing being responsible and accountable, also included the role of protector. This was a major theme in the literature review; however, only half of the participants mentioned it explicitly. James stated it as “protecting my children from the things that will actually damage them while still allowing them to be vulnerable enough to learn how to deal with hurt.” John and Thomas mentioned completing tasks around that house and overall care as examples of protection, while Matthew spoke about it as a balance between work and protection, saying, “There’s a balance between the provision that I’m called to be and the protector that I’m called to be for my children and my family in general.” While about half of the participants did not
speak to physical protection as something that they were responsible for or accountable to, it was
evident in the careful thought that they put into choosing an educational path for their children
and discipling them, that they were most certainly concerned with their well-being and
protection.

**Father-home-educator.** This theme was present throughout the interviews and in all
three domains of fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship, yet it was one with a wide variety
of applications. There were some things that were typical of almost every father’s statements,
such as, in all cases but two, the mother being primarily responsible for the teaching of core
subjects, with the father helping in areas of strength and seeing himself as the main Bible
teacher. However, the level of involvement and interest in being involved in day-to-day
education varied greatly.

This theme also connected to both the theological and theoretical frameworks.
Theologically, this theme and its subthemes connected to the involvement, discipleship, and
homeschooling spoken of in Genesis 1:26-29 and 2:15-17 and Deuteronomy 6:1-7, as well as
connecting to Matthew 28:18-20, as parents felt it was their responsibility to teach their children,
that they rightfully had that authority, and that education was in all actually discipleship. The
work-family life balance was especially indicative of the theoretical framework: the responsible
fathering theory. This emphasis on finding a balance hearkened to the tenets of father presence
versus absence, father involvement, and economic support stated in the responsible fathering
theory.

**Education is the responsibility of parents.** Separating the father as the home-educator
and the father as the disciple-maker was difficult, as there was a significant amount of overlap
between the two themes, and the idea of education being the responsibility of the parents is no
exception. This topic was spoken of similarly to that of the biblical responsibility to disciple, as the fathers utilized Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 6:4 to blend education and discipleship into one idea. However, there were plenty of aspects of the practical education of the children that showed the father taking on a specific role, which was unique with each father. This subtheme was stated by nine of the 10 participants and defended biblically as well as practically. Andrew stated it explicitly: “To be directly responsible for your children’s education.”

Part of this philosophy came from the personal schooling experience of the participants, with some being homeschooled themselves, taught in private schools, raised in public schools, or a variety of the three. Also, several of the participants were teachers in the public and/or private sectors, which influenced their thought processes on a home-based education. Bart stated, “So, kind of sampled it all: Christian private school, public school, homeschool, community college and a major university.” Referencing the benefits he found in homeschooling, Bart continued, So, as a guy who was homeschooled myself, it seemed like a lot of days, it only took three or four hours if you’d knuckle down and focus and not be distracted by the class clowns and the disciplinary issues and all the other things that can go on.

Speaking about the responsibility to homeschool and the primacy of faith, Simon stated, “It’s my duty to make sure that my family is not only educated, but is grounded in their faith, and I feel like that is more important even than their education.”

Andrew spoke of this responsibility to teach his children in terms of his biblical research, stating,

So, in all those areas, I believe that’s my responsibility to pass it onto my kids, not just because I feel like it, because Bible research leads me to say I’m the only one that’s going
to give account to God for that specifically. We as parents, me and my wife would give account to God for that.

Speaking more to the responsibility to be involved to the best of his ability, Matthew stated, “It also means that I am intentionally choosing to be involved in my children’s education in the most intense way possible.” Simon talked about his responsibility to educate his children as a protective understanding as well, stating,

I don’t want to just have them sheltered away from things, and they don’t understand the world that they’re being raised in, but I want them to be sheltered from some of it, because I don’t want it to be just an easy derailment for them in their faith and in their walk.

Looking back to the biblical times and American history, multiple fathers stated that education has always been the responsibility of the parents and was the original model of schooling. In the Facebook discussion, Andrew and Bart spoke specifically about this responsibility being supported historically and likening their responsibility to homeschool to multiple time periods when this was the cultural norm. Philip related it to the teachings in Deuteronomy 6, stating that fathers were to “walk along the way” with their children and that they were also called to “be able to walk it out in real life to them.” Bart stated it this way, that the command of God is “to teach your children His Word diligently.” Matthias echoed Bart’s statement, saying it was the parents’ responsibility to “teach our children diligently to walk in the way of the Lord.” Philip summed it up well, stating, “The challenge is to make sure that I’m focused on Christ and to be able to focus on, what does Christ want me to do with my children?”

**Education is discipleship.** This unique and intriguing subtheme was present in the father-disciple-maker theme as well. Once again, almost all fathers in this study relayed through
their comments that education and discipleship together were really one in the same. The majority of the fathers in the study were not the primary teachers of their children during the day, as many of them had jobs outside the home for at least a portion of the homeschooling day, yet they saw even the education of their children in subject areas other than Bible to be a form of discipleship. In the context of the curriculum and homeschooling, John stated that it was his “responsibility to (be) discipling, bringing our kids up in the fear of the Lord.” Although each of the nine fathers who spoke of education as discipleship expressed that they were responsible for the education of their children, there was some variety in their ideas on who they could rightfully delegate that authority to, with some viewing it as only parental, whereas others saw the mandate as only restrictive to those who were Christian influences.

Andrew spoke of being called particularly, as a father, to educate his children: “I am called…to teach, train, raise, nurture, and discipline my children.” Andrew did state that he and his wife shared this duty, but he related that he was the one responsible foremost. Matthias stated the connection this way: “My goal is homeschooling…it’s to give them a godly education, and teach them the Word of God, and pray that they walk with the Lord and of course they get saved.” Citing the biblical portion of their education, Matthias stated that education is discipleship, taking it back to birth by saying,

The goal there is to raise children that love the Lord and just instill in them from a very early age the Word of God and put that in their conscience and their mind…their minds are pliable then, they’re teachable. They haven’t been corrupted by anything yet and you have those young children from birth to teach as God has commanded us.

This thought process was inclusive of the subtheme Bible teacher, but also spoke of the father as the educator and how that is truly discipleship from the beginning.
Speaking once again of this correlation between education and discipleship and specifically as it pertains to the father as educator and Bible teacher in the homeschool setting, Philip stated, “So, my desire was to be able to preach God’s Word to them, show them God’s Word, and also knowing that God’s Word’s living, active and they’re not going to get that in a public school.”

Thomas took the concept of education being discipleship from the Word of God to each subject area when he stated, “We’re discipling our children, and we’re discipling them through all the things God has given us to study and through science and geography and economics and I mean, those are all pointing back to God, and are useful in us understanding God and how He would call us to live.”

Matthew’s statement summarized well much of the fathers’ comments on the education is discipleship subtheme when he said, “We believe that the purpose of education is to know God and make Him known.” As Philip was quoted earlier, and multiple fathers expressed, this is not something that you will get in the public-school setting.

**Individualized education.** As father-educators, these men saw one of the big benefits of homeschooling to be that of providing an individualized educational experience. The majority of the fathers discussed how they were able to better educate their children at home by tailoring the curriculum and teaching to each individual student. This was even true of the fathers who had five or more children, and was not limited to smaller family sizes. Philip, a father of eight children, stated, “We’ve went from just trying different ways of being able to teach them, just for different…I mean, each kid’s different, so they learn differently.”

Peter, a father of two, discussed individualized education as they went from homeschooling to public school, and back to homeschooling with one child, stating that after public school not going well for this child, they did some summer schooling at home and his child just “blossomed” in this individualized
educational environment. Thus, even though it would be a financial sacrifice, Peter and his wife decided to homeschool their child once again, as it was clearly the best fit for the child.

Speaking of direct group instruction, Philip stated, “You’ve got to be able to organize the discussion around the little ones, and then work it up to the bigger ones…because you’re going to lose the younger ones if you start off with the big discussion.” This individualization was a benefit for group related work as well as individuals’ ability to then move at an accelerated pace, as Simon stated it:

I think the coolest thing about homeschooling is, or one of the cool things about it is seeing them excel, and do well, where I think they're... ahead of the game, ahead of the pace where they would be in (public) school; seeing that they're getting things faster than those other kids maybe that they're friends with, or...that are supposedly in the same grade, and they seem to be a little ahead. That's really... it's really neat to see.

In addition to the style of education and pacing, each father spoke of their input into the educational process uniquely. Each of the fathers contributed to the individualized educational environment the most effectively and consistently in subject areas where they had relative strengths. Of the fathers the majority spoke of contributing significantly in math or math and science. Simon stated, “I’m usually the one that helps them with their math, because that’s more my thing, so I’m the math one.” James spoke of his contribution to their children’s individualized education as beginning with helping to choose a curriculum that he and his wife felt would best meet the needs of each child, and then he intimated his role as “to pose him challenges,” or learning experience that would challenge his limits.

James also spoke of the individualized educational environment as a challenge, stating, “What I can say as far as the challenges go is that each of my kids learns differently.” James
went on to discuss the difficulties of an individualized education and some of the aspect of that education that he considered significant, stating,

I think the challenge is, to learn how to both teach kids the things that they are interested in, and to draw them into learning by focusing on those things, but also to bring in those things they have less interest in and teach some of those other things without turning them off of the learning. Because the way that they are going to learn best is when you can get their curiosity activated. So, how do you teach kids the way they individually need to be taught in order to get the best retention, the best understanding. I think that’s a big challenge.

This struggle of actualizing and continuing the individualized education was stated by multiple fathers, especially with the children learning at individual rates, and having to be ready to work on a math problem at a moment’s notice from a range of elementary basics to high school advanced mathematics. In light of the struggles, the overall comments by the fathers were that of a positive nature, with Philip, stating on the survey that individualized education was one of the most important reasons for homeschooling, and this sentiment was shared by a majority of the father-educators.

**Work-family life balance.** This subtheme of the father-educator was significant as it was listed by the majority of the fathers as a major roadblock to being as involved in the day-to-day education of their children as they would like to be. Peter stated that he even enlisted his oldest child in helping him keep a healthy balance when he began graduate work, stating,

I walked into my oldest’s room, said ‘Listen, I need something from you. I need you to tell me if I ever start ignoring the family, because if I do, I’m dropping it, and that’s it. It’s not worth it.’
With a depth of transparency, John intimated the same concern of keeping the balance as a father-educator and how it can sometimes shift away from family to ministry when he stated, “I’m torn between caring for the church, the congregation, and caring for my family. And often, I think my family has been shorted, because I can do those later.” With multiple participants being in full-time ministry, or at least heavily involved in the ministry of the local church, this dilemma came up more than once. These fathers stated feeling that the needs of those outside their family were so great that it was easy to begin to spend too much time away, with Bart relating that he had been a part of a building project, committees, service teams, and outreach, which took him away often and became an issue at times, stating, “So, my kids, maybe there's been some times of like, ‘Man dad, can we just go fishing? You've been practicing for praise team a lot this week, but can we go fishing?’”

Another struggle with the work-family life balance for the fathers as home-educators is that of time and energy. Philip stated that you work all day in your job outside the home, and then “you’ve got your bigger job to do in keeping them…pointing them to Christ, not being lazy.” So, coming home and being involved in their children’s education, Philip and other fathers considered a fight against selfishness. For some fathers this has not always been the issue, but it has ebbed and flowed with their work situation and seniority in the workplace. Thomas, reflecting on his work experience over the years, stated, “I’ve had jobs that have allowed me to, at times, be home, be more flexible, work from home. So, at those times, I was more involved in the day to day stuff.” Bart described it as more of a gradual process as he became a seasoned worker in his field, saying the first 10 years were rough, getting the worst jobs with the worst hours, but that he has been able to be more involved “as my career’s planed out.” Regardless of how their careers turned out, or where they were currently in their
occupational journeys, the fathers expressed that keeping the proper focus was key in maintaining a healthy work-family life balance as father-educators.

**Father-learner.** The final subtheme in the father-educator theme was that of the father-learner. This subtheme was represented by all 10 of the fathers and was far-reaching, as the fathers discussed multiple times where they were the learner as much, if not more, than their own children. Starting off, and connecting back to the individualized education subtheme, these fathers spoke of the difficulty involved in meeting each student’s needs, regardless of the size of the family. Peter stated that his one child “blossomed” in a home-education environment, whereas his other child asked to be kept in the public school. As was mentioned earlier, James spoke somewhat extensively on the care and concern taken with the challenge of meeting each student’s needs. Simon, speaking of the challenge of keeping with and providing immediate assistance to his high schoolers, stated, “I’ve found that to be challenging, when your hands are off a little bit more, it’s more challenging sometimes to offer them an immediate assistance.” Andrew stated that he had to learn a whole new field of specialized education in the process of homeschooling. All 10 of these homeschooling fathers discussed the learning process with curriculums, modifications, methodologies, and all manner of learning through the process of attempting to educate their children at home.

John took this concept of the father-learner and spoke of how it affected him spiritually, stating, “My wife vocalized it to me...part of the reason God gave us children is to...for Him to disciple us, because we see things in their lives, and if we actually are considerate, that’s a reflection of us.” John continued, “Having children trains us, disciples us, disciplines us as much or more than our training of our children discipline, and train, and discipless them.” Matthew discussed this also, but from the perspective of a refining process: “They’re the type of blessing
that is unmatched by any other type of blessing because they refine us, they show us our weaknesses, it causes us to draw closer to the Lord and lean on His wisdom.” Thomas took this into the emotional control domain, stating that he had learned how to better understand emotional development throughout raising his children.

Learning took on many forms for these father as they began to study curriculum and viewed themselves as educational researchers of sorts. Andrew, who stated that there were some issues with how his children had been taught reading in the public school, stated, “Biggest challenge was reading. So, I did a lot of research…I realized that what my child needed was a stronger connection to phonetics, phonetic reading.” James, John, Andrew, and Philip discussed supplementing the curriculum as needed and working together to learn the curriculums with their wives. Each father-educator who spoke about academics was confident in the superiority of the homeschooling model compared to the public school, even if educational excellence was not their primary goal. Speaking of rigor, Peter stated, “I can guarantee my wife teaches a more rigorous class.” Peter even stated that his child who was previously homeschooled felt like she wasn’t learning anything when they attempted a transition to the public school. Peter, James, and Bart used essentially the same phrase, with James stating, “Much better use of their time,” and that it was “no contest,” with homeschooling the clearly better academic option compared to public schools.

Even among the two fathers who plainly stated that academics were not really the focus of homeschooling, there was a sense of their role as a learner. Thomas stated, “I’m not academically driven,” yet he stated that he came to that conclusion after learning more about education later on, as his initial focus had been academic excellence. The more he learned about raising a family, the more he realized academics was not foremost: “We equipped them, my son,
to provide for a family, and to be a faithful husband and father. And those were more important than the academics, actually.” This learning process as a father-educator was described by these fathers as not being limited to subject matter in their texts, but as learning from the choosing of curriculum, to how to launch their children into the work force, and eventually support their own families.

**Father-spouse co-laborers.** This theme was represented multiple times by all 10 participants, even though this study was largely about the role and experience of the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker. The understanding stated in other themes before this was that fathers see themselves as primarily responsible to God for the education/discipleship of their children; however, it was not lost on any participant how critical the mother is in this process. The fathers’ comments in this study show that they place a tremendous amount of trust in their wives as co-laborers in raising their children.

This theme does not fit a well into the designated Scriptures initially, but as taken with the Bible as a whole, it is clear that any call to discipleship in the Bible will surely involve the mother just as much, if not more, than the father. In the responsible fathering theory, having a strong respectful relationship with the mother is critical to meeting the tenets of father presence and involvement. Thus, this theme brings strong support to the theological and theoretical frameworks as well.

**Unity with spouse.** This subtheme was supported by all 10 of the fathers in this study. The subtheme emerged quickly during the interviews, transcriptions, and analysis, particularly being a focus in the Facebook discussion group, with one of the weeks dedicated to discussing the value placed on spousal support in discipling children. Peter stated that the spousal relationship must come first, and this was threaded through multiple participants’ comments. In
reference to discipline and having a child ask one parent, then the other, Peter stated, “At the same time, they need to know that mom loves dad, dad loves mom, and mom and dad’s relationship takes precedence over them. I think that works with stability as far as homeschooling, but also stability in life.” Philip stated that it is his role “to love my wife.” Thomas said that he felt his role was to love and lead his wife first, stating, “We have to be mindful that our primary responsibility is to our wives first and lead and love them well, and then our children out of that.” Matthew, connecting unity and love of the spouse back to the Bible stated that Scripture talks about “how to love my wife.”

Bringing 1 Peter 3:7 into the study, Thomas discussed at length being understanding with his wife, stating,

Support my wife, you know? Really, 1 Peter 3:7, live with my wife in an understanding manner and try to understand who she is and work within her capacities, and not require or expect her to do things that she’s unable to do or doesn’t have the capacity to do. Thomas went on to call to attention how fathers can put their wives in unhealthy situations if they do not heed the particular make-up of their wives, stating, “I don’t think it’s biblical to jeopardize the health of our wives, and that could be emotional.” Philip also commented on this topic, stating that when he gets home from work it is time for mom to check-out a little bit and hand the discipline over to dad.

This kind of tagging out that Philip described was significant in the responses of the fathers, as they described unity with the spouse in their co-laborer role as a team effort. James stated it directly in the Facebook discussion group, posting, “It would be practically impossible to actually do that (disciple) without working as a team.” Continuing to comment on unity, James posted, “If my wife and I were not on the same page in every way that matters, that
approach wouldn’t work.” Matthias utilized the “same page” verbiage as well in the context of biblical expectations for husbands and fathers, stating, “My wife and I are on the same page.” This teamwork concept was stated by John in emotional guidance sessions, and James with regard to planning the homeschool curriculum over the next couple years.

On the flipside, unity with the father’s spouse was stated to be important but difficult at times. Multiple fathers stated that their spouses were not in unity with them on homeschooling at first, but that their perspective had changed over time. One father stated that he had struggled to be consistent with discipleship efforts over time and feels less than supported in those efforts. Another father, discussing attempting to be a leader in the home early in marriage and facing resistance to unity, stated, “The more I got into God’s Word, the more me and her got together and in God’s Word, we grew closer to one another in our relationship.” Thus, for the most part, issues with unity between the father and mother were alleviated over time and the couple moved forward with the father and spouse being co-laborers in unity.

**Complementary roles.** The teamwork, or lack thereof, discussed in the subtheme unity with spouse, was strongly connected to the subtheme described here. Each father in this study spoke of complementary roles that he and his wife took on as they endeavored to be co-laborers in raising and educating their children. Each father spoke of how he contributed to homeschooling/discipleship based on his particular strengths, with some being much more hands on than others. As was stated earlier under father-educator, the majority of the fathers were not the primary homeschooling parent, that role was the mothers’, with the fathers contributing in their areas of strength, such as math and science, and being more or less involved based on their current occupational situation. Most fathers saw themselves as a support to the mother who did, as Bart stated, the “lion’s share” of the schooling. Simon, commenting on educational support,
stated, “I’m very supportive with her, making sure that she feels supported in this as well. I help where I can with the kids.” Speaking of being more involved in the hands-on teaching, Thomas stated that he is the one who is more “wired for teaching,” whereas his wife “facilitates the education.” Andrew spoke of similarities to Thomas, stating that he is heavily involved in the day-to-day teaching of his children, and that he and his wife both are able to provide a part of their educational experience.

As co-laborers with complementary roles, the fathers also stated that one of their roles was that of being the leader of the household and the wife, as Christ was their leader. Most of the fathers stated that their wives were on the same page with this role distinction. One of the significant related ideas discussed by the fathers was that of the “high calling of motherhood,” as Matthias stated it. Matthias and John stated it explicitly; however, multiple fathers referenced the great value they put on their wife’s decision to stay at home and homeschool their children. Matthias related the Scripture reference Titus 2 as a proof-text for the high calling of motherhood, stating,

My wife, she doesn’t have a full-time job. I don’t think women are called to that. A wife and a mother is not called to go out and have a full-time occupation away from the house. I think her high calling is being a wife and mother, staying at home and taking care of the children and then the domestic part of that.

Matthias further connected the complementary role of the wife to Genesis 3 where the curses were pronounced on mankind, saying,

We've told people, ‘Why should she experience the curse of the husband?’ To the husband God said, ‘Your curse is that you’re going to have to work by the sweat of your brow now. The Earth is going to bring forth thorns and thistles and so on and that's your
curse, and her curse was childbearing.’ Why should she go out and experience the curse of working by the sweat of her brow as it were now too?

John also commented on his wife’s desire to work outside the home on occasions, stating that he assures her of her great value in the home, and encourages her in her role as a wife and mother. In all the comments, the father and mother appeared to have worked out, or been in the process of working out complementary roles to ensure the success of their labors together in raising their family.

**Mother is primary teacher.** As was stated earlier, in most cases the mother was considered by the father to be the primary teacher. This subtheme emerged from the interviews quickly with at least eight participants referencing the mothers as the main teacher for their children. This has been a strong trend in the modern homeschooling movement and was obvious in this study. This role included different responsibilities with regard to curriculum based on the particular make-up of the couple, but the day-to-day hands-on aspect of homeschooling was similar in all eight fathers’ comments. Peter stated that he is minimally involved as his wife designs and/or chooses the curriculum and instruction, whereas James stated, “My wife has done a lot of the lesson planning,” but said that they planned the curriculum together, looking out a couple years at a time. John explained, “I typically refer to my wife as the Head Mistress of the school…My wife is the one who does the sit-down, actually explains things.” However, later on John stated that he takes care of the high school-aged children and his wife focuses on the middle and elementary school-aged children. Bart, Matthew, and Simon all agreed that their wife, as Matthew stated it, has “been the primary instructor” of their children. Simon said, “She is hands-on in the homeschooling department more than I am.”
This role was very important to the fathers, as they shared that they could not do the homeschooling themselves while also working full-time to support the family economically. Thus, when one of the fathers took over the majority of the homeschooling, he noticed a role strain, as this part of the co-laborer relationship was being changed, and the mother was no longer in the position of being the primary teacher of the children. This role-strain struggle demonstrated, by his comments, that altering the dynamic of the mother as the main teacher also impacted the educational environment at the theme level, throwing off the balance of the father-spouse as co-laborers. Thus, the importance of this role was unmistakable while analyzing the data for themes and subthemes.

**Father-administrator/principal.** With the mother being the primary teacher in their homeschool, the fathers in this study saw their role more as the administrator or principal of the school. This role was different for each father, but typically included attention to curriculum, discipline, supporting the wife, as well as helping to set the schedule. John stated this plainly, “I am the administrator.” John discussed a list of duties that are typical of school administration, stating, “I keep track of the high school transcripts and records and grades and such. I’d say I do a general oversight of what’s going on.” Speaking on leadership, Thomas stated, “Part of it is just leading our family well through the process.” Bart added support to this concept when he stated, “Big picture direction is my role and what we’ll focus on and what we’ll not focus on.”

A significant part of this help in direction that the fathers described came as curriculum help. The fathers in the study saw themselves a curriculum-helpers, with at least six of the fathers describing in some detail how they assisted with curriculum. Peter, James, John, Andrew, Thomas, and Matthew spoke of how they helped with making curriculum decisions. Peter stated that his wife makes most of the curriculum and instruction decisions but described
how they have discussed curriculum questions in the past, stating, “My wife comes to me with, Bible curriculum things, just to bounce it off what she thinks she needs. In this case, well, ok, let’s try this.” James spoke of making curriculum decisions, stating, “We share in that decision and I help carry the weight of that.” Matthew described how this has changed over time for him, saying, “As they’ve gotten older, I’ve been more involved in math and science and things like that, and more involved in choosing the curriculum.” Thomas spoke of helping his wife to choose a curriculum that fit her needs as well as the students’ needs by commenting, “We do some online stuff that we didn’t do initially, just to help her, and to make it as conducive to her capacity as possible.” Helping in the curriculum decision-making process was one of the top roles that the fathers saw themselves operating within the administrative role, with the exception of discipline, which eight of the 10 fathers stated that they were involved in on a regular basis.

John, who has 11 children, stated that helping with discipline was critical in helping his wife and the emotional development of his children, especially the bigger his family got, intimating, “And so, with the disciplining of the children, getting them to obey cheerfully, properly, with the right attitude, that is….that seems to take care of most of the emotional problems.” In regard to discipline, Philip stated that it was important to his wife that he “be able to come home and take over.” Thomas similarly stated that it was important that he “deal with most of the behavior stuff.” Bart, stated that as he has gotten farther into his career, having more time at home, he gladly deals with the behavioral issues, stating, “And as my career's planed out and they've gotten older, her expectations have been, if there's discipline issues, take care of it, which I'm quite eager to do. I see that as my role at a high level.” Speaking of homeschooling in general and his role as an administrator, Bart went on to say, “Probably my biggest role is enforcement.” Matthew stated the behavior-helper role as well as that of taking care with their
studies, stating, “I help them primarily by addressing character issues that I see and their studiousness.” Matthew went on to tie behavior, studiousness, and the glory of God together for his children, stating,

I help them by tying together the subjects that they don’t necessarily have affinity for. I tie those into the glory and the Creation. The glory of God in His creation…help them to know that there is no lower value knowledge, discipline, because they all are an aspect of our Creator.

This tying together of multiple aspects of the administrator role showed how the father and mother were working together, co-laboring, raising their children to know Christ and to see Him throughout their academic undertakings.

**Father-economic provider.** The research as well as the results of this study were replete with the significance of the fathers being able to provide for their families economically, and how that was a central theme in seeking to understand the essence of the lived experience of Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-makers. Each father commented on this as it related to all three domains, fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship. This exploration into the comments of these 10 fathers revealed three major subthemes: main breadwinner, work-family life balance, and provision by the grace of God. This study contained an interesting cross-section of economic providers with fathers who are in full-time ministry, working one or more jobs, running their own business, and/or retired.

The father-economic provider theme does not directly connect to the Scriptures utilized in the Theological framework, but is certainly one of the tenets of the responsible fathering theory. Economic support is one of the five main tenants of the theory, with this being seen by
scholars over the years as a significant part of what it means to be a responsible father, which was shared by the participants in this study.

**Main breadwinner.** Not only did the fathers describe the importance of providing financially for their families, they all described part of their role as responsible, godly fathers as being the main breadwinner for the family unit. Not all the fathers in the study necessarily agreed to which degree they felt comfortable with their wives working outside of the home. Some had agreed with their wives early on that her workplace would be the home as a wife and mother, while others had a more fluid idea of the role of wives and mothers in the workplace outside the home based on financial situations. James stated his position this way: “It is primarily my responsibility to take care of these people and so I do my best to do that.” In contrast, Peter described himself at the main breadwinner but that financial provision was a team effort on the whole, saying, “we’ve been blessed to be able to provide.” Andrew stated, referring to the management of finances, “My wife is involved in the finances from an understanding it perspective. She doesn’t manage it, but she understands how it all flows.” Also mentioned in the context of the wife’s involvement in the finances was the high calling of motherhood, which was discussed earlier under the father-spouse co-laborers theme in the complementary roles subtheme. Here again in similar fashion, two fathers in particular intimated their firm belief that the role of wife and mother are their wives’ highest calling, specifically citing Titus 2 in support of this stance.

Speaking of the difficulty of this role at times, one father called it “incredibly painful sometimes.” This father spoke of how he worked in a job that was a repetitive process, yet he himself is more of a creative individual. The process of getting up and going to work in a job that does not fulfill his desires, but simply provides for his family financially was a deep struggle
for this father. Along the same lines, but more focused on the weight of the responsibility, another father stated, “I won’t try to disguise the fact that I feel a very, very heavy weight many times with the stewardship and the responsibility that I’m given over my family, to provide for my family.” Within a mixture of the joy of providing along with struggle also emerged the idea that the financial ability of the parents impacted the choice to homeschool. Peter, before restarting homeschooling, stated that they would only homeschool if they could figure out a way to afford it. James also stated that from the beginning he and his wife said they would homeschool if they could afford to. Other fathers shared that they started their children in private Christian schools, but after the second or third child, could no longer afford a private Christian school that they felt comfortable with and promptly began homeschooling their children. Thus, economic provision impacted the very decision to homeschool, and the majority of the fathers in this study discussed that as their responsibility.

**Work-family life balance.** This subtheme was expounded on earlier when discussing how it impacted the father-home educator’s ability to be involved directly in the educational enterprise; however, it came up again when talking about the financial provision for the family and the fathers’ role/responsibility in that provision. The fathers, described this tedious exercise of priorities as somewhat complicated with multiple groups vying for their time and only so much time to spread around. As was stated earlier, and reiterated by the fathers here, those fathers who worked for significant periods of time outside of the household stated that it limited their ability to be involved in the homeschooling, and at times, made it difficult to disciple their children with the intensity that they desired. Speaking of the time demands of providing economically, John stated, “I had a summer job. I would often work on Saturdays or school
holidays for financial reasons.” In the midst of this time crunch, the fathers discussed ways they sought to balance out their work and family life.

Peter talked specifically about making time to be present and involved in the lives of his children, stating, “I’d take a day off, vacation day from the bank and say, were gonna go and hit our favorite restaurant and play video games, or whatever. Just spend the day with them.”

Likewise, John stated, “We always ate breakfast together” when his schedule allowed it. He also stated that they ate dinner together almost every night and did family chores together to put that time of socializing with kids in. Philip characterized it as a struggle sometimes to “just being able to work, and then come home and work some more.” Peter also spoke of being in full-time ministry and how working from home in that role allowed him to “oversee the things” more often, creating a better work-family life balance. Andrew, also able to work from home, echoed these thoughts as he stated, “My work responsibilities, even my school responsibilities...it's right here. I'm in this exact same room.” Thomas also connected with this integration of work and home, stating, “We integrated our church into the life of our home, but I’m home most of the time.” Simon discussed how the integration of ministry and family has been a blessing to him, stating,

Now I’m home every night. I get to spend all the time with them I want. If I do go out of town for something, it’s amazing, because I’m doing ministry now, so they’re like, “Where’s your family? Got to bring your family with you.” So, it’s a totally different atmosphere now, and it’s been very, very good for my family.

Taking the discussion in a different direction, nine of the 10 fathers spoke specifically about attempting to achieve a work-family life balance through careful consideration of their career pathways. Thomas stated, “So, I’ve changed occupations really with the…with, how can I
provide for my family and allow my wife to be home to care for our children.” Thomas further explained, “We decided it would be better for us to reduce our income and for me to take just a job laboring out here if necessary, to…so I could be home and be present.” Continuing with the single-income based career path consideration, Matthias stated, “This is a single income family. My wife and I decided right away when we were married that she wasn’t going to go to work outside the home.” James, focusing on a career that allows him to maximize his time at home, stated it as such: “I have chosen a career path that, at the moment, I am able to be home more often than most people are, specifically because I want to be there and raise my kids.” Matthew stated that he took his direction from God, stating that God made it clear to him that he needed to be home more. Philip kind of summed up these thoughts on the priority of the family in the work-family life balance by positing, “Why are we here, what is our purpose?”

Provision by the grace of God. With multiple full or part-time ministers in this study and all participants being self-described Evangelical Christians involved in the local church ministry to varying degrees, this subtheme developed surprisingly, as it was not really indicated in the literature this author researched for the purpose of this study. Six of the 10 fathers in the study spoke about their ability to provide economically as by the grace of God. John stated it succinctly, “I provide the finances by the Lord’s grace.” Philip, Matthew, and Simon described their journey as growing to trust God as the provider, with Philip stating, “And it was just trusting in Christ, knowing that He provides it all. He won’t let the sparrow fall to the ground, he never let me fall to the ground.” Talking more about the growth process, Philip continued, saying that at one point we were “freaking out” about what to do, “then going, all right, God provides. God’s going to provide, and He always did,” also describing it as a “sanctification process.” Matthew described it by stating that he “stepped into a huge chasm of faith,” and “I’m
really in a situation where, if the Lord doesn’t provide for my family, then it’s not going to be provided.” Discussing this intimate process with the Lord’s financial provision, Matthew continued that he has “seen firsthand now that the Lord indeed does provide for our needs.”

Simon discussed provision by the grace of God in terms of serving God, not money, and the resultant joy in seeing God provide in such amazing ways. Simon stated,

I was making no money, but extremely happy, and just the joy in our life, and then watching God do some amazing things, and bless us in some ways that were like…crazy, that just showed me that it’s not about those things.

Simon went on to discuss how many fathers tend to focus on money, making it more important than it should be, saying,

I fought hard for years and years, where I felt like…I knew I had Christ in my life, but I was really adding Him to my life, instead of living my life for Him. And I was hoping that…I still want all these great things the world has to offer, but at the same time, I was never being satisfied, because I was striving after those things; I wasn’t striving after Christ.

Simon said that there is an overemphasis on finances in our culture, but that he has seen that his kids would rather have more time with him than more things, saying, “Their focus is…me, honestly. They want to be with me. And they’d rather me be home and make less money, than me be gone and make more.” These fathers conveyed a reliance on the Lord for economic provision, while each one talked about working hard to earn a living, each ultimately identified God as their primary Provider.

**Father guide to adulthood.** Almost every father who had children that were in high school or older made significant statements about guiding their children through homeschooling
and preparing them for life after their secondary education. Readying their kids for this transition to adulthood was important enough that nine of the 10 fathers spoke explicitly about at least one of the following: financial literacy, guiding them towards their talents, and guiding them through each stage of life all the way to adulthood.

This theme, as with the father-economic provider made a much clearer connection to the theoretical framework than that of the theological framework presented. However, guiding their children to adulthood and in their talent discovery connected well to the idea of discipleship, albeit toward their ability to earn an income verses specific knowledge of the gospel. Even in that, John in particular, stated that all our skills and abilities should be “submitted to Christ.” The theoretical framework connected well with the fathers teaching their sons, by example and explicitly, to provide for the family economically, be involved, and be present.

**Teach financial literacy.** One of the biggest subthemes of the guide to adulthood theme was that of financial literacy and teaching the principles thereof to their children. One of the more unique methods relayed was that of Peter and his wife budgeting with their kids present so they could learn what goes into budgeting and the stress of finances. He stated, “They need to see the stress, they need to know what we’re doing, and they need to get an idea that money does not grow on trees.” Speaking of teaching biblical principles of financial management, Andrew stated,

I’m starting to ingrain some of the things into them that I was taught, not until my 20s. If they can learn it in their teens…they’ll be further down the road than I was when it comes to proper financial management.

Andrew went on to state that he was giving his children the opportunity to work in his businesses and that has helped them, stating, “So, I hope to teach them that more by living it and by
involving them at the level that they can.” In addition to this, it was of note more than once that fathers taught their kids tithing, giving, and saving in addition to wisely spending their money.

Another part of this financial literacy was that of a good strong work ethic. Peter reflected on his parents’ example and his own, stating, “One of the things my parents did, was they tried to set a good standard for work ethic. And I’ve tried to do that for our kids.” This was important to other fathers, but no father mentioned it as much as Bart. To Bart, this was a significant part of preparing his children for life after his home, and he took it seriously, stating that the reason for him and his wife homeschooling has become, “More discipleship. Yeah, as well as the value that the work ethic brings to it.” Bart spoke about the unique opportunities that homeschooling has brought his kids through the flexibility of the scheduling and working with in a family business, stating, “I’ve really valued the flexibility that comes from them to be able to work more and to work with him (family member), and to teach them some things like work ethic and stuff.”

Laying down a comparison between the academic focus and how he has become more focused on developing financial literacy, including a strong work ethic, Bart stated, “If they couldn't spell that great, but they were involved in church ministries and were reading and had a good functional understanding of math and had a good work ethic and understood what it meant, then I was satisfied.” In like fashion, Thomas discussed his focus on preparing his children for adulthood, stating, “We equipped them, my son, to provide for a family, and to be a faithful husband and father. And, those were more important than the academics, actually.” Matthew, speaking of his children’s expectations stated, “I think they would have an expectation that what we're doing is preparing them for a life beyond living in our home.” Relating a conversation that he had with an individual who had the opposite experience, not feeling prepared for the work
world when he completed his homeschooling, Simon stated, “I want to make sure that that doesn't happen.” Thomas’ comments on their practical approach to preparing their children for adulthood is a fitting finish here: “We try to fit those (work experiences) in with their personality and what their interests are to prepare them to be able to enter the world successfully, and to provide and do the things required.”

**Talent guide.** Thomas’ comments on preparing his children for adulthood also connect well to the next subtheme, talent guide. John stated it well when he recounted the story of his college math professors who influenced him, as the professors’ desire to teach math “directly flowed out of their desire to please the Lord and glorify Him.” John stated that it helped him to see that “we may not have abilities in every area. Well, we need to develop the abilities we do have and try to do everything as unto the Lord so that, one, He’s pleased.” In this process, as Thomas stated above, fathers attempted to find the things that each child was particular good at, or talented in, and encourage them in that direction. Matthias stated looking for a good personality and talent fit this way, “Give him direction in what they’re interested in as far as an occupation and do that with them so they can think about those things as they get older.”

While working this out with their children, multiple fathers mentioned pushing back against the notion that their children needed to go to college, and focused more with on-the-job experience and trade schools. Thomas stated, “We did not groom our children for a professional college path through homeschooling, primarily;” however, he went on to relate how he guided them toward their interests, “So, if it requires academics, we would have pursued that.” Andrew and John agreed, stating that they had prepared their children to be ready for either avenue, but that college was not somehow more preferable. Bart stated it well, “The big focus that we’ve
had…is the importance of just getting out and working around adults and the importance of being out in the working world and the lessons that come with that.”

Guide them through each stage to adulthood. This subtheme arched from birth to adulthood as the parents strove to raise godly children, guiding them through each stage all the way to adulthood. Matthew explained that it meant:

Being deeply involved in the guiding and loving and directing of my children, and being there from the moment they’re born, every day that I possibly can be, and enjoying every phase of their development and helping them grow and mature, and helping them to look at the world in a different perspective as they grow from children into adolescents, in to your adults.

In the survey, Matthew stated it much more succinctly, “To raise children into adults that embrace Christian values.” Deeply intimating this process, Matthew went on to state,

Looking forward to the time where I have adult children that are my best friends because of the way that I’ve disciplined them in love and the way I’ve nurtured them in love, and the way that I’ve walked with them in love, and the way that I’ve showed them what it means to rely on God, and the way that I showed them what it means to walk in His ways. That is one of the true joys of my life.

James discussed it more from the perspective of preparing them and walking them through each stage while developing them emotionally for the world they live in:

So that they can, they can be, well, part of becoming an adult is learning how to grow, despite the people around you being negative, or despite the difficulties that face you. And I think that is both the challenge and the biggest responsibility that I face.
Discussing this connection from childhood to adulthood, Bart focused more on the practical application of hard work and “just getting out there” to develop this overarching pathway, stating that it not only included preparation for work, but also for ministry and personal growth in Christ.

**Expectations fathers experienced.** Understanding the expectations placed on the fathers was important to this researcher, and as the fathers began discussing their individual experiences as Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-makers, first three, then five distinct subthemes developed within the overarching theme of expectations. These subthemes follow well the factors of influence described in the responsible fathering theory, describing how the mother and child influence the father within the context of the nuclear family unit, and how contextual factors outside the nuclear family also impact the father, with this study bringing the addition of the father’s personal expectations of himself and God’s expectations. The expectations that developed into subthemes are: personal expectations, God’s expectations, spousal expectations, children’s expectations, and contextual expectations. All of the fathers contributed significant statements about the expectations they feel have been placed upon them, those they gladly take up, and also those they know are out there, but that they are not concerned about.

This theme is widespread as it touches on a variety of relationships, some more heavily than others. Theologically, all of the framework Scriptures’ teachings are referenced, either directly, or indirectly. Theoretically, the expectations listed in the responsible fathering theory and included in the theoretical framework, are all included in some form or another with the potential exception of legal paternity, as these are all fathers who are married to the mother of their biological children and living in the same home all together. Thus, understanding the
expectations that these fathers felt in their experience is valuable to both the theological and theoretical frameworks.

**Personal expectations.** The first subtheme of expectations for the fathers was that of their own personal expectations for themselves. This subtheme overlapped with the other subthemes somewhat as in each of these subthemes many of the same Scriptures were utilized to come to similar conclusions; however, the way in which this occurred seemed to be unique. As in the theme father-disciple-maker, Matthias expounded on the quote, “Follow me as I follow Christ” from 1 Corinthians 11:1, stating,

> We should set the example and walk in integrity following the Lord ourselves, obeying and submitting to the Word of God ourselves so that our children see that pattern and know that, “Hey, that’s what…my Dad’s walking the walk. He doesn’t just talk a good game, but his walk matches his talk and therefore I can trust him.”

Using Proverbs chapter nine as his guide, Thomas stated, “If you rebuke a wise man, he loves you more,” and “that I would be a man who seeks input, correction,” and “that I don’t bow up against people confronting me.” These were all expectations that Thomas had for himself as he studied the Scriptures and was influenced by them. Matthias and Philip stated in particular the expectations set forth in 1 Timothy 3 for elders or bishops, with Matthias stating, “That should be the goal.”

Other personal expectations that were stated included Thomas’ comment, “providing for a family,” and “using my authority for their good and their care.” Bart shared his perspective on the lack of high expectations for fathers, stating, “Sometimes I think my expectations and what Scriptures expectations are, are higher than pretty much anybody else’s expectations are around
me.” This was troubling to Bart as he saw low expectations, also mentioned by multiple fathers, as hindering fathers from being all that God calls them to be.

**God’s expectations.** James’ comments led this subtheme off quite well: “The only expectations that I really care much about are God’s expectations of me.” James went on to discuss the lofty expectations that he saw in Scripture balanced by God’s mercy, stating that God’s expectations “can be rather overwhelming sometimes if I’m not also aware of His mercy and His love for me.” Bart echoed James’ sentiments, that God’s expectations are all that really matter in the end, and in a humble transparent comment, stated that in the end God will say, “All the good results that you get is My grace.”

Matthew also revealed that God’s expectations are primary, specifically in relation to how he treats his wife, stating that what matters is “what the Scripture has to say about living with her,” his responsibility is to “love my wife,” and the be a “representative of Christ in the marriage relationship.” Matthew went on to say, in reference to his children, that God expected him to “raise them to the best of my ability, to have their own genuine relationship with Christ.” Matthias also spoke of his responsibility to his children: “God says that He wants a godly seed.” Thus, each of these men described how God’s expectations were far reaching into their lives, their relationship with their wives, and into the raising of their children for God.

**Spousal expectations.** Another major subtheme within the expectations for fathers’ theme was that of the spouse’s expectations. This area has been touched on in multiple other themes and subthemes, with the fathers explaining how their relationship with their wife impacted fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship. Here these expectations are taken more directly, attempting to convey each father’s own personal experience. John, discussing his inability to be very involved in homeschooling and his wife’s relating this to their children,
stated, “So, she set the expectations.” Also discussing homeschooling, John commented further on his and his spouse’s relationship that developed, “I do a lot of stuff behind the scenes. They don’t know I keep their grades and make transcripts and stuff.” In this statement, John eluded to the expectations his spouse has for him that have just naturally taken place over time. Speaking of expectations that have been more clearly delineated, Philip, as was stated earlier, said they agreed he would “come home and take over.” This, Philip stated, helped his wife to relax a bit after working with the kids all day.

Thomas and Matthias explained that their spouses’ expectations came from a shared worldview based on the Bible, and thus were sometimes stated as communicated expectations, and at other times the fathers sounded as though these expectations were uncommunicated but expected. Thomas stated, “I think their expectations would come from a biblical worldview.” To this Peter, James, John, Andrew, and Matthias agreed, with Matthias stating, “She expects me to lead.” Getting into more detail of what biblical worldview meant, Thomas gave a list of the things he felt his wife expected of him in this role:

That I would be a faithful man of God, that I would be consistent, that my profession of faith and conduct at home would be consistent, that I would exemplify godly characteristics: love and patience and kindness and gentleness, self-control. Those things would be evident in the home.

Matthias also continued on this idea of a shared biblical worldview, stating, “The father's mandate and how you bring up your children, nurture, or the discipline and instruction of the Lord to raise them that way and raise godly children.” Matthias also spoke of the reality of being a spiritual leader in his family, and his wife’s expectations for him to live what he teaches, stating, “She’s thinking, ‘Okay buddy, you better live up to what you’re saying here.’ The kids
are watching. They’re always watching, and they know what’s going on.” Speaking very transparently of these spousal expectations in godly behavior and leadership, Andrew stated, “She expects what should be expected of me even though I’m never going to be all of that, despite trying. With God’s grace, I will.”

Speaking of homeschooling and the father-administrator role that John, Thomas, Bart, and Matthew had discussed earlier, Thomas stated, “Well, I think, initially, her expectations was that I would be kind of like the principal, and I'd kind of set the curriculum and discipline if necessary.” Thomas went on to state that he is much more involved than this, but that was a place where he was able to exceed her expectations. Bart relayed here again that his wife expected him to help out with the discipline, which he stated he was “quite eager to do,” stating, “I see that as my role at a high level.” Speaking on homeschooling and discipline, Matthew stated,

The expectations that I feel from my wife are to be involved, to be supportive, to be alongside of her when she’s struggling with the curriculum choice, or with how to handle teaching a subject…to help her to be accountable with her rules.

Continuing on the homeschooling expectations, multiple fathers stated that their wives expected them to help with answering questions, discipline, making decisions, and with advanced help in their particular area of strength.

Expectations on time spent with family were also stated here, as Bart intimated: “She probably has some expectations for me to be a little bit more focused on time with my kids and making sure ministries are a solid third and sometimes that crosses up.” Matthew also stated expectations to “love my wife,” to be “understanding,” and to be a “representative of Christ.”
These fathers all gave the impression that their Evangelical Christian faith and study of the Bible produced a great deal of their spouse’s expectations.

**Children’s expectations.** The children’s expectations were somewhat different. As Matthias put it, “When they’re young they don’t have any expectations.” Thus, many fathers explained this process as getting to develop or set the expectations when they are young. With all of the fathers stating that the Bible is important or very important to discipleship, as with the spouse, the expectations tended to flow out of the biblical expectations for fathers. The expectations of the children were widespread, with John discussing homeschooling by stating, “They haven’t had much expectations just because of time, because my wife was trying to shield me from any of that.” Bart, speaking of his children’s lack of expectations stated, “I don’t know that they had a lot of expectations because they’ve never known anything else.”

Speaking of homeschooling and life in general, James stated, “Your kids basically expect everything of you, because you’re dad and of course you have both all the answers and you know how to do everything perfectly, unless proven otherwise.” So, there was a tension between the fathers seeing their children as expecting nothing in some ways, and everything in others. Peter stated that his children expected him to help in his personal area of strength, which he stated was more English oriented. In agreement with Peter, James stated, “They expect me to be able to answer the question they have and help them to know how to learn.” Andrew echoed James’ last sentiment, saying in the context of homeschooling that his children expect him to “be able to teach them whatever it is they need to know from now until they’re done learning.” Continuing on with homeschooling, Thomas stated, “I pick up the slack where needed. I do what’s necessary to help with the schooling, wherever that’s needed.”
Spiritually speaking, Philip said, “My kids have an expectation, when dad comes home, he’s going to teach me something out of the Bible.” Thomas made the connection between his children’s expectations and a biblical worldview, stating, “I think their expectations would come from a biblical worldview.” Thomas stated that his children should expect “that I serve my family, my kids, my wife well.” Matthias described these spiritual and physical expectations this way, “They expect father to lead, to love his wife, to love his children, and to teach them from the Bible besides just put food and water on the table, keep them clothed.”

Some other areas Matthew spoke to in particular were patience and looking out for his children’s best interests, stating, “I think they expect me to be patient,” as well as, “They expect me to be looking out for their best interests.” In addition, Matthew and Philip added that they felt as if their children expected them to discipline them if needed, with Philip stating, “If I’m disobeying, he’s going to correct me,” and Matthew stating his children expected him to “set boundaries” for them. Philip also maintained that his children expect to enjoy his presence, stating, “I know he’s going to have fun with me.” As was stated at the beginning of this subtheme of the expectations of fathers, this one took a wide view, with expectations being hard to define in the younger ages, but as their children grew older and began to understand the teachings of their parents, they began to have a clearer sense of their expectations, typically based on a biblical worldview.

**Contextual expectations.** This subtheme was significantly different among the fathers, with some fathers putting little to no value on it, and others placing a higher value on family and church expectations, yet the commonality seemed to be that these fathers were selective in what contextual expectations, or expectations outside of the nuclear family, to which they gave serious thought. Matthew stated it very bluntly when asked about his experience with contextual
expectations, stating, “You’re talking to a guy that really doesn’t care what other people think.” Outside of a few people whose opinions he sought out, Matthew stuck to his guns and did not state any contextual factors that he felt concerned about. James shared this view, stating that he limited outside influences to a few respected individuals, stating, “As for people outside, you know, outside of a few people’s advice I would seek, I don’t really worry very much about other people’s opinions or expectations. I don’t find that that’s a useful thing to do.” He also stated, concerning his family’s over-involvement and setting boundaries, “I’ve had to work pretty hard and be pretty proactive at creating good boundaries in my life.” Interestingly, some of the fathers’ extended families were somewhat skeptical of homeschooling, with varied expectations and questions at first, but have all come to support them or at the least be neutral. In the context of his wife’s parents and homeschooling, Bart stated, “They’ve gone from being, maybe mild detractors, to fans of it.” Peter said that he did not feel expectations in homeschooling, stating, “If they have any expectations of me, they sure haven’t said anything.” Andrew, in the unique position of the main homeschooling parent in the home, stated, “Being a homeschooling father as opposed to a homeschooling mom, I don’t know that there’s a lot of expectations to be had from outside.”

The contextual influence that the fathers spoke about the most, as far as valuing their expectations, was that of the Christian community in which they lived and worshipped. One of the important factors for the fathers was that of having a supportive faith community. Simon discussed his Christian community as very supportive, stating, “I think probably the majority of people though, I would say at least in our environment, would be supportive…we’ve came from a church that was…a lot of people do participate with homeschooling, so it’s not abnormal.” Matthias had a similar experience, describing that “We have a very strong homeschooling
church.” Andrew also stated, “The whole faith community is very supportive of homeschooling.” Some of the time this included the pastors of their church family, sometimes it did not. Peter, James, John, and Andrew said that their pastors were supporters, with Peter, John, and Andrew stating that their pastors were directly involved, and as Andrew stated it, his “Pastor is super supportive in homeschooling.” Andrew went on to say that his pastor is “totally on board with the parental role in education being the primary role.”

Of the homeschooling fathers in this study, at least eight of them talked about being in leadership in their local church, with at least six of those being in the ministry part or full-time. To this researcher’s knowledge and at the time of the interviews, at least three are functioning in the pastoral role.

The Christian community was not only generally supportive from the lay people to the leadership but expected the fathers to do their best to exemplify the biblical model given for fathers. One expectation that was significant was that of raising godly children, which Andrew stated as, “They expect me to raise children who are going to continue to serve God, as evidenced by going to church, Christian disciplines…living a lifestyle that is obviously reflective of a child of Christ, of an ambassador for Christ.” Bart stated that his pastor would expect him to “pray with them…like a structured one-on-one prayer time.” Matthias stated they would expect him “to lead them in a godly manner, and again, teach them the Word of God, show them how to worship God.” Philip stated that he and his church would expect him to attempt to exemplify the teachings for bishops in 1 Timothy 3. Philip stated this as,

I'm striving to have a godly family, to be the man of the house, to be a leader of the house, to be able to uphold first Timothy chapter three so that I can be part of the body of Christ, that I could be a leader, an elder or bishop or deacon in the church.

In a sort of summary statement, Matthias stated, “In our church we expect men to lead.”
Also mentioned by the fathers were that of the expectations of the unbelieving community, those who are not Christian. This community was characterized by Thomas as “They don’t understand homeschooling.” Thomas went on to discuss the impacts of these expectations of unbelieving family: “One of the things we didn’t anticipate was the pressure from our unbelieving family.” Thomas stated that he himself did not feel that so much as “I think my wife feels that pressure some, primarily from her family.” However, of their pressures to match the education of the public schools, he stated “That’s not the measurement we’re using.” Also feeling some pressure from the outside, John described being a teacher and expectations from colleagues to enroll his children in the school at which he taught: “However it looks, it looks. We’ve got to do what’s best for our kids, regardless.” Bart stated that his colleagues expected his children to have excellent academics since they were homeschooled, relating, “So, there’s this expectation like, ‘Don’t your kids homeschool? They should be whip smart.’” Simon listed the expectations that he saw from those outside the faith community and just generally in society, stating,

Well, I think some of the basic things, that our society, or anybody would say a good father should be is somebody that loves their kids, loves their spouse. That is faithful to them. That is a good provider, provides the things they need. Simon went on to make the connection between what the unbelieving community expected, and what he felt should be the most important thing as a Christian, stating,

Obviously, that's pretty... basic stuff: home, clothing, food, shelter. All these things. Emotional development for them. I think just being good at taking care of those needs that they have, from the physical to the emotional, but I think honestly, the spiritual part is the biggest thing.
Simon’s comments summed up this subtheme of contextual expectations well and was a solid conclusion to the theme of expectations for the fathers connecting the physical, emotional, and spiritual elements of care.

**Research Question Responses**

This study on fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship was designed to answer one central research question and four sub-questions. The central research question of the study was based in the literature and sought to better understand the unique experiences of one specific type of father as Duckworth and Buzzanell (2009) suggested. The themes and subthemes that were discovered in the data analysis and detailed previously were the primary sources utilized to answer each of the questions.

*Central question: How do Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers describe the essence of the lived experience of discipling their children?* The fathers in this study described in great detail the roles that they felt they filled, or were expected to fill as Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers in discipling their children. The first theme, and the most extensive of all the themes, was that of father-disciple-maker. In this theme the fathers described themselves as playing many parts in this process, including being an example, making disciples, being a Bible teacher, teaching submission to God’s Word, seeing education being discipleship, and feeling responsible and accountable to God for the discipleship of their children. The fathers also discussed this lived experience of discipling their children in terms of their role as father-educator, specifically their responsibility over their children’s education. The fathers spoke extensively about co-laboring with their wives in this journey, citing the importance of unity with their spouse, the complementary roles they played, how the mother was the main educator in most cases, but that the father was able to have genuine input and influence into their day-to-
day education in the role of the father-administrator, casting the vision for homeschooling and working with their children in emotional development and discipline issues.

In addition, to these themes, the fathers saw a part of the experience of leading and discipling their children as tied to their work of being an economic provider and guide to adulthood. On these two themes the fathers spoke mainly about finding balance with work so they could be more present and involved in homeschooling/discipleship and training up their children to be able to someday navigate their adult life financially and in the context of family discipleship themselves. The final theme, expectations the fathers experienced, showed clearly that discipleship of their children was heavy on their minds and influenced their relationships within the family unit and without.

Textural description. As Moustakas (1994) describes it, “From the themes and delimited horizons of each research participant’s experience, a textual description is constructed” (p. 133). With this in mind, the results from the themes and subthemes were utilized to develop a composite textural description of the lived experience of Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers in discipling their children. The composite description is: the fathers in this study of Evangelical Christian homeschoolers and discipleship spoke most extensively and passionately about the centrality of faith and family in all their endeavors. The fathers described these two roles as influencing decisions in every area of their lives, with their faith in Jesus Christ and the Bible as the center point from which all else developed. These fathers described their faith and how it motivated them to discipleship in every area of their lives, with all 10 men citing discipleship that flowed out of their faith in God as the single most important job of a father.

Thomas captured this centrality of the family role, stating, “You sort of start to center everything that you do in some way around raising those kids and bringing them up.” James
pointed to the exclusivity of it, when he said, “I have a role here that nobody else can have,” and Bart added how becoming a dad focused his life: “I’ve been focused on being a godly dad since I became a dad.” This role included the father-spouse co-laborers theme and how these fathers supported their wives in homeschooling, made career occupation choices based on family life, spent most of their spare time with the nuclear family, and attempted to transmit their faith to their children through their personal example and teaching the Bible to their family regularly.

Structural Description. The textural description above was taken with the themes and subthemes and a composite structural description was created. Moustakas (1994) stated, “The individual structural description provides a vivid account of the underlying dynamics of the experience, the themes and qualities that account for ‘how’ feelings and thoughts connected” (p. 135). The underlying dynamic here that Moustakas speaks of is that of faith. All of the fathers in the study brought each significant ideology back to their faith in Jesus Christ. Faith was the “what,” the “why,” and the “how” for these fathers. Their thoughts expressed on fatherhood and the centrality of that role all came back to the exercise of the teachings of the Bible as they put their trust in them. As Thomas poignantly pointed out regarding his faith in the teachings of the Bible and the discipleship of his children, “I’m not sure what else you’d disciple them toward or in.” Thus, to answer how the textual descriptions were undergirded, and came to be, it is simply their faith in God and His ability to supply them with the knowledge and strength needed to disciple their children.

Synthesis of the textural and structural. Moustakas (1994) stated, “The final step of my phenomenological model requires an integration of the composite textural and composite structural descriptions, providing a synthesis of the meanings and essences of the experience” (p. 144). To answer the central question of the study, “How do Evangelical Christian
homeschooling fathers describe the essence of the lived experience of discipling their children.”

A final synthesis was developed as follows. At the very core of their experience, these fathers described being passionate followers of Jesus Christ as they strive to disciple their children toward Christlikeness, despite their own feelings of failure as well as success. These men describe the process of discipling their children as all-encompassing, an experience that requires more of them than they are ever able to live up to, driving them to God’s mercy and grace. These fathers describe having built their lives around their relationship with God being a disciple of Christ themselves, so that they can disciple their children. This experience saturates all of their decisions, as they consider how their choices will impact their family and, ultimately, their own personal faith journey. These fathers have attempted to center their lives around the teachings of Christ, in order to exemplify these teachings for their children to follow as well. These fathers intimated the difficulty in finding time for each relationship as they attempt to negotiate all their responsibilities in such a way as to provide economically, physically, and emotionally, but most of all, spiritually. They see their lives as a triangle with father, mother, and child at each point and their faith in God at the center of the triangle. They see their relationships with each other as all being impacted by their relationship with God, each relationship connected in a complicated ecology to the others (see Figure 2 below). The fathers describe all of these relationships as being placed within the contextual factors of the community, pulling on each relationship from outside the family unit. This experience of discipling their children then becomes a web of relationships inside of and outside of the family unit, all impacted by their relationship with God. Thus, the primacy essence the experience of Evangelical Christian, homeschooling fathers discipling their children is that of the centrality of faith in God, without which the essence of these fathers’ experience is no longer understood.
Figure 2. This figure represents the essence of the experience of the fathers in this study. The figure was inspired by the work of Doherty et al. (1998) in Figure 1, but takes that framework and expands upon it with the central role of faith in God that the fathers in this study described in their experience of discipleship, thus combining the theoretical and theological frameworks. The
solid lines represent relationships that can be seen between father, mother, and child. The dotted lines represent the relationships between the triad and God, who is at the center of the family. Each line, dotted or solid, has arrows on both directions as relationships affect one-another.

**Sub-Question 1: How do Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers describe their experience as a home-educator?** The fathers in this study described a variety of roles they took on as father-home-educators. This experience for them was one that was predicated on their belief that education is the responsibility of the parents. This idea that parents, specifically fathers, are “directly responsible for your children’s education” as Andrew stated it, was central to understanding their experience as home-educators. The fathers stated that they were not only responsible for their children’s education, but also accountable to God for this charge that they felt was expressed in the Bible, specifically citing Deuteronomy 6, and Ephesians 6:4 the most often.

These fathers experienced education and their educator role as within and a part of the discipleship process, with Matthias stating that “education is discipleship.” Inside this discipleship/education experience, the fathers saw education as individualized to each child, just as discipleship was an individual and family process at the same time. The fathers expressed that they were constantly learning as educators, researching curriculums, learning advanced content all over again, and trying to find the best fit educationally for their children and spouse. All of this experience was directly impacted by the fathers’ ongoing attempts to balance work and family life. The fathers described an experience of being pulled in multiple directions and having to revisit their priorities often to keep a balance that they were comfortable with or felt like was the best they could do.
**Sub-Question 2: How do Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers describe the role of every-day relationship building in discipling their children?** The fathers’ role in everyday relationship building with regard to discipleship was described as an ongoing process that was centered around being an example in all areas of life and discussing why the fathers lived the way they did. Thomas stated, “So, discipleship is really the fabric of our home…discipleship is how do we integrate the truths of God's Word into the everyday, the milieu of life, the everyday practical decision-making and setting priorities and patterns of work?” This description included all that the fathers do as a potential example and teaching point for discipleship. John’s description gives us the “why” of this understanding of discipleship: “The key thing is to glorify God, and to give Him the glory.” Summing up quite nicely the role of everyday relationship building in discipling their children, Matthias quoted the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Follow me as I follow Christ” (Modern English Version).

**Sub-Question 3: How do Evangelical Christian fathers describe their efforts to teach their children the Bible and to encourage them to submit to its teaching?** The fathers spent a great deal of time describing their efforts to teach their children the Bible, and how to encourage them to submit to God’s Word. In the survey, a full 90% of the participants responded to the question about the importance of the Bible in discipleship as “very important,” with the only other response being “important.” The fathers described having family devotions regularly, which typically included prayer, reading the Bible, expounding on the Scriptures, and for some participants, singing. The Bible teacher subtheme was extensive and at first included submission to the Word of God as a code under it, but as more and more fathers described their firmly rooted beliefs in the importance of submission to the Word of God, it also became a subtheme under the father-disciple-maker theme.
Personal and family devotions were considered essential, with the understanding that, as Matthias stated, “The point there is that they understand that it is the Word of God. God used men to write it down, but He’s the Author and this is just like Him speaking to us.” Matthias also stated, “The Bible is our sole authority for faith and practice.” Thus, John and Thomas discussed their efforts to teach submission to God’s Word from the time that children were young, with Thomas stating, “I think the way we would initially think about that is young children need to learn how to submit to authority.” John then extended that out farther, connecting teaching authority and submission to parents when they are young to God and His Word when they are older, stating, “We want you to submit to our authority and to obey us so that later, you will submit to the Lord’s authority and obey Him.” Therefore, the fathers described their efforts to teach their children the Bible and submission to the Word of God as a continual, life-long devotion.

**Sub-Question 4: How do Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers-disciple-makers describe being a responsible father?** Interestingly, the fathers in this study did not seem to see a difference to be had for any fathers being responsible fathers; they felt the same standard applies to all men, as the standards are derived from the Word of God, the Bible. Therefore, the fathers described being a responsible father in mostly biblical terms, focusing on Ephesians 6:4, Deuteronomy 6, and 1 Timothy 3. Responsible fathers were seen as those who were good examples, were learners and teachers of the Bible themselves, and were responsible and accountable for their family’s well-being physically, emotionally, intellectually, and most importantly, spiritually. Thomas put it this way: “Using my authority for their good and their care.”
Responsible fathers were co-laborers with their wives, loving and leading them as well as the entire family. The fathers described this role as including taking care of providing for the family financially and teaching the children financial literacy, along with helping them get practical experience in jobs to help them transition to adulthood once homeschooling was complete. Most importantly in the role of a responsible father, their spouses, children, families, faith community, and they themselves, expected the fathers to be godly men as described in the Bible, with Matthias stating, “That should be the goal.”

Summary

Presented in this chapter were the final results of the analysis phase of this study. With all the data compiled from 10 semi-structured interviews, 10 surveys, and one four-week asynchronous Facebook discussion group including four of the 10 participants, the researcher began the chapter by reviewing the guiding research questions, participant overview, and participant profiles to familiarize the reader with each of the 10 participants. The researcher then utilized Moustakas’ (1994) guide to phenomenological study to analyze the results presenting them as themes and subthemes with rich, thick descriptions of each, in the participant’s words as much as possible. The six themes discovered were: father-disciple-maker, father-home educator, father-spouse co-laborers, father-economic provider, father-guide to adulthood, and expectations fathers experienced. Each of these themes had three or more subthemes supporting them, with father-disciple-maker having the most with six. Under each theme a connection to the theological and theoretical framework was recorded to place the theme in the overall framework of the study.

Finally, each of the research questions was answered individually, finishing with the central question of the study, “How do Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers describe the
essence of the lived experience of discipling their children?” In order to answer this final question a composite textural description was developed from the existing themes and remainder of the data. Then the composite structural description was developed from the themes and informed by the composite textural description. Lastly, a textural-structural composite synthesis was developed, leading to the final essence of the phenomenon under study focusing on the faith and family of the fathers in the study.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experience of the Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple-maker in the Mountain West region of the United States. This connection of multiple domains was discovered as a gap in the current fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship literature. Duckworth and Buzanell (2009) stated that it would be beneficial to understand specific types of fathers in their study on work-family life balance, thus this study was initiated and completed to achieve that end. With the rise in homeschooling across the nation, this study has a particularly important place in the literature. In this chapter, the researcher took the research results from the previous chapter, the methodology, and the literature review together and presented interpretations and conclusions with the purpose and phenomenon under study in mind.

To accomplish this goal, the following chapter was broken down into six parts beginning with a summary of findings, with a brief answer to each of the research questions. Next a discussion section focused on the relationship of the findings to that of the empirical, theological, and theoretical literature presented in Chapter Two. After the discussion section came the implications of the findings, once again delineating the areas of theological, theoretical, and empirical, with the addition of practical implications. Delimitations and limitations of the study were described next, with recommendations for future research following. Finally, the chapter was then completed with a summary of the study including salient points for consideration.

Summary of Findings

Utilizing Moustakas’ (1994) research method for a transcendental phenomenology, six major themes were discovered in the data analysis and included in this study. These themes
were father-disciple-maker, father-home educator, father-spouse co-laborers, father-economic provider, father-guide to adulthood, and expectations fathers experienced. These themes, their subthemes, and the remainder of the data set were utilized to answer each of the study’s research questions, which will be briefly discussed here beginning with the central research question in this summary.

**Central Question**

How do Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers describe the essence of the lived experience of discipling their children? In answering this question, the researcher looked at each theme, subtheme, and sub-question, and then developed a textural composite description, and from all of those formed a structural composite description. These latter two were then used to create a textural-structural synthesis, or essence of the study. This essence of the lived experience of Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers discipling their children was centered on their faith and family. These two formed the backbone of the experience that these fathers described, tied in closely with their trust in the Bible as the Word of God and guide for living.

**Sub-Question 1**

How do Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers describe their experience as home educators? The fathers described this experience as one that was based on their belief in education being the responsibility of the parents and the belief that education is discipleship. The fathers spoke of the work this role required in being an active learner in the homeschooling field, working to provide the best and most appropriate education they could for each child. The fathers also described their experience of being home-educators as one that constantly required them to keep focused on their priorities, creating a work-family life balance that they believed honored their mandate from God to provide care for the education of their children.
Sub-Question 2

How do Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers describe the role of every-day relationship building in discipling their children? Describing this role, the fathers touched on just about every area of their lives. The fathers saw much of this role being fulfilled in their everyday example, but also stated that making time for family and individual discipleship was important to developing these relationships. One of the most salient quotes came out of this question, when Matthias quoted the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:1, stating, “Follow me as I follow Christ” (MEV).

Sub-Question 3

How do Evangelical Christian fathers describe their efforts to teach their children the Bible and to encourage them to submit to its teaching? As with some of the other questions, the data was replete with the fathers’ statements on the importance and trustworthiness of the Bible for doctrine and practice. The fathers spoke of teaching the Bible from a very young age, helping the little ones to access the text with explanations and examples. The fathers also spoke of teaching submission, first to parents, but ultimately as a guide for them in submitting to God and His Word as they grew older and were able to better understand the Bible.

Sub-Question 4

How do Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers-disciple-makers describe being a responsible father? The fathers in this study stated that all men should be responsible fathers, and that those descriptions in the Bible are for them all. The fathers in this study stated that they were responsible for the education and discipleship of their family, and ultimately accountable to God for it as well. The fathers described taking care of their family physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually, with the spiritual being the most important.
Discussion

This study on fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship contributed to the empirical, theological, and theoretical literature as it outlined the lived experience of a group of fathers not yet voiced in these fields of literature. These findings support and contribute to the literature in their focus on this particular group of men’s strong foundation of faith and family, and support the theological and theoretical frameworks presented herein as well.

Empirical

Empirically, the literature on fatherhood has been developing steadily over the past four decades since Lamb’s (1975) seminal work on the role that fathers play in the development of the child. Since Lamb (1975), many articles have been written showing consistent results with father involvement: increased levels of father involvement have positive impacts on student performance, disciplinary issues, and positive outcomes for children (Allen, Daly, & Ball, 2012; Coltrane, 1996; Goldstein, 1982; Gottfried, Gottfried, & Bathurst, 1988; Lamb, 1975, 1987; Lamb & LeMonda, 2004; Lewis, 2011; Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000; Pedersen, Anderson, & Kain, 1980; Pedersen, Rubinstein, & Yarrow, 1979; Radin, 1982; Sarkadi et al., 2008). Similarly, the fathers in this study described themselves as involved in the lives of their children, albeit, not always living up to their own expectations, yet they intimated the importance of their efforts to be highly involved. The fathers in this study stated that their level of involvement was important with regard to the behavior of their children, supporting the literature in this area. It was noted that the fathers in this study found being involved in the disciplinary process as important and a critical role for many of them. With increased involvement from both parents in the homeschooling model, the fathers related that their children’s academic, social, and emotional health outpaced their peers’ children.
The emotional findings were somewhat unique in this study, as the literature on the emotional impacts of involved fatherhood has not been as well developed as the academic and social domains. Many of the fathers described rooting the emotional in the spiritual, utilizing biblical principles to guide and direct emotional learning. This concept of being an emotional guide through teaching the child to align their emotions with biblical principles was not found by this author in the empirical literature on father involvement. Thus, this study extends the scope of the empirical research on the emotional domain of fatherhood involvement. With Duckworth and Buzzanell (2009) suggesting studies on particular types of fathers, this study also adds to the wealth of fatherhood and father involvement studies present in the literature at this time.

Homeschooling empirical research does not have the history that fatherhood research has, nor anywhere near the empirical and theological research that discipleship has. The modern homeschooling movement had its beginnings around the same time Michael Lamb wrote his seminal work in 1975. Since this time, the empirical literature has focused largely on academic and social aspects of the homeschooling movement (Frost & Morris, 1988; Guterman & Neuman, 2017; Nueman & Guterman, 2017; Ray, 1990, 1994, 1997a, 1997b, 2004a, 2010, 2017; Ray & Wartes, 1991; Rudner, 1999; Shyers, 1992), with emotional impacts beginning to be studied more carefully with Merry and Howell’s (2009) study just over a decade ago. This study adds significantly to each of these domains: academic, social, and emotional. Academically, homeschoolers have been compared over and over again to their public and private school counterparts; however, as was revealed in this study, though fathers felt their home education was far superior to that of the public school in particular, many were much more concerned about the learning and growth spiritually than academically. The fathers’ goals were not
primarily academically oriented, but spiritually oriented, and often very practical-vocational in their overall emphasis of education.

One unique contribution that this study makes to the empirical literature on homeschooling is that of strongly reinforcing the idea that many Evangelical Christian homeschoolers believe education is discipleship. Anderson (2016) wrote on this topic, but the concept is generally absent in the homeschooling literature; however, it seemed a very vital understanding to the members of this cohort with only one member not making at least one significant statement concerning it. This finding also bridges a gap between the empirical literature on homeschooling education and that of discipleship.

Writings on discipleship have been a part of human history as far back as the book of Genesis, with Father God being the first example of an involved father and example of discipleship in history (Hattingh et al., 2016; Kiesling, 2017). Much of the writing on discipleship is that of textual interpretation, devotional reading, and theologians’ interpretations of the biblical texts in reference to fatherhood in today’s culture. Thus, this study deepens and widens the empirical literature on discipleship, clearly connecting it to education, homeschooling, and the fatherhood involvement literature. As was stated earlier, the belief among these fathers that education is discipleship widens the scope of the discipleship literature and brings in important educational literature that could be of benefit to those studying discipleship. Education being discipleship has been existent in some private Christian schooling literature but has been mostly absent from the literature that takes on fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship, with the possible exception of Anderson (2016). Hence, this study gives a greater depth and breadth to the empirical discipleship literature by connecting it to domains not necessarily considered by empirical researchers previously.
Theological

In the theological literature, discipleship tends to be described as an event between a person and someone outside of their home. This study, however, focused on the experience of discipleship within the homes of these 10 Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers. This application of the theological framework, including Matthew 28:18-20, probably the most famous of discipleship frameworks, to the parental relationship broadens the empirical literature, diverging from the vast majority of previous empirical research on discipleship. The connection with homeschooling, brings in another domain to be considered when discussing discipleship. This study added to the current literature, as this was considered a gap in the literature when looking at fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship together.

Adding to this discussion on discipleship was the fathers’ focus on faith and family. These roles were central to their lives and permeated the research in all the roles that they spoke of in their personal lives. Thus, theologically, it appears important to discuss discipleship in an ecological way that includes more than meeting with an individual at an appointed time weekly to discuss biblical theology and practice. The fathers in this study described discipleship as being an example in every area, as a way of life. They described the impacts on their family life in terms of being founded on their faith in Jesus Christ and their trust in His Word, the Bible. These are not entirely new to the discipleship empirical literature but expand it significantly in the context of the complete study of fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship.

In addition, the empirical literature on the modern homeschooling movement states that its foundation was based on the motivation of religious education (L. Hanna, 2012; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Ray, 2017; Redford et al., 2017; Vigilant et al., 2014; 2013). These motivations for homeschooling have been shown to change over time (Rothermel, 2011), just as several of
the fathers’ motivations to homeschool changed over time in this study. Even with changing motivations over time taken into account, the results of this study still support the theme of religious instruction being the main reason for homeschooling in this group of Evangelical Christians, as on the survey a full 80% of the fathers in this study identified “religious instruction” as the most important factor in their decision to homeschool.

**Theoretical**

Even though this study had such a strong connection with the theological framework, with the essence of the fathers’ experience being founded on their faith in God and their family life, the theoretical framework of the responsible fathering theory (Doherty et al., 1998) was strong as well. This study supported the three main tenets of the responsible fathering theory, which Doherty et al. (1998) stated as the importance of father presence versus absence, economic support, and father involvement. These three of the five major tenets to responsible fathering were present and supported in this study.

The father presence versus absence tenet was clearly evidenced as the fathers discussed the importance of being present extensively. The fathers saw this as an important part of their role and in this way the study at hand supports the results of previous literature, stating the importance of the father being present cannot be underestimated (Hwang, 2015). The fathers in this study also made a clear distinction made in the responsible fathering theory, that fathers who were merely present, but not involved, did not meet the definition given by Doherty et al., (1998) as responsible fathers. A clear distinction was made by the fathers in this study: being present is not enough, fathers must be involved, once again supporting the empirical literature up to this point that shows the importance of involvement. Finally, the results of this study also give strong support to fathers providing for their wives and children economically. The breadwinner
theme has been important in fatherhood literature since before the modern involved fatherhood movement beginning with Lamb’s seminal work in 1975. The fathers in this study reaffirmed that this is still an important role to Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers. Unique to this study in the theme of economic provision was the fathers’ willingness to earn less in order to be more present and involved. This diverges from the typical literature on fathers being more concerned with being a provider financially than emotionally and spiritually. Thus, the main concern of the fathers in this study was not to be the breadwinner, but to disciple.

**Implications**

This study focused on three domains: fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship. These domains were looked at from the vantage point of the lived experiences of 10 Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers in discipling their children. The essence of the study, in short, was that these fathers’ faith and family were central in their lives, with all themes and subthemes centered around the fathers’ faith in Jesus Christ and their trust in His Word, the Bible for all aspects of faith and practice. This study discovered a unique convergence of fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship that addressed a gap in the literature. Even though there have been many studies in each of those knowledge domains, this study tied the three together in a way that is not present in the literature at this time. The implications of this study then, are important theologically, theoretically, empirically, and practically.

**Theological Implications**

The theological framework of this study centered around the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, the Old Testament call to father-disciple makers in Deuteronomy 6:1-7, and the relational/discipleship passages between God the Father and Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:26-29 and 2:15-17. This theological framework, based on a few select Scriptures spanning the
Creation to Jesus’ ascension, was most certainly not exhaustive, but presented a strong framework through which to view the study theologically. The passages in Matthew and Deuteronomy were cited the most often by participants and were relative to their home education endeavors in their personal theology. In theological literature, the Great Commission in Matthew 28 has been most commonly used to describe discipleship and missions that occur outside the home; however, in this study the fathers extended its usefulness to that of the family ministry, specifically fatherhood. The theme of making disciples as you go about your daily life, taken from verse 19, remained a very potent part of the overall understanding of discipleship for these men, as father-disciple maker was the number one theme, and the number one subtheme under it was example. In this subtheme the fathers relayed their experience with living out the teachings of the Bible on a daily basis and the unique position that homeschooling gave them to engage in that to a significant degree in the presence of their entire family.

Mentioned the most frequently by book name and chapter was that of Deuteronomy 6. To many of the men, this passage was the equivalent to the New Testament verse Ephesians 6:4, though more detailed. These two Scriptures were cited throughout the study, and particularly to develop a biblically supported stance for homeschooling with a discipleship orientation. Deuteronomy 6 has been used as a theological framework for private Christian schooling in the literature; however, the results of this study show that almost all of the fathers did not agree with that stance. This disagreement with utilizing Deuteronomy 6 to support private Christian schooling tended to grow stronger in the fathers as they progressed farther into homeschool and became more educated in the movement. These fathers stated that the nature of the text was that of children’s companionship with the parents throughout the day, and thus was not indicative of private Christian schooling. This was a significant finding in this study, as whether schooling
outside the home meets the biblical model or not is a controversial topic theologically, and one that there is not a current consensus on in the Christian theological literature. Thus, the results in this study could be utilized to suggest the idea that education is discipleship, that education is inherently relational, and thus should be completed by the parents in a homeschooling setting where education is under parental direction.

With education is discipleship being a subtheme that crossed over two of the six themes, another implication of the results of this study of Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple makers is the place of public schooling in Christian theology. The fathers in this study suggested that sending their children to public school full-time would be a compromise with what they viewed as the clear teachings of the Bible. With most children of Evangelical Christians currently enrolled in the public-school system, this suggestion has far-reaching implications. Such a shift in the theological beliefs of a fathers’ ability to delegate the responsibility of education would impact Evangelical Christian families in a variety of ways, from finances and education to potentially where and how they worship.

In the theological framework the role of the father to disciple his children is clear; however, the results of this study suggest that there is a diversity of roles that the father must take on that were not explicitly delineated in the theological framework or theoretical framework. The fathers in this study listed father-disciple-maker the most often as an example of a role, which was to be expected, yet roles such as social-guide, emotional-guide, guide to adulthood, father-learner, father-administrator, and father as a talent-guide were somewhat more surprising and suggest that greater research into these roles should be conducted to better understand how these role impact fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship. Thus, follow-up studies into each of these roles that the fathers described would be beneficial, and potentially
expand the literature and understanding of these roles, as well as whether these roles are also common among differing types of fathers. One of the roles in particular that could yield the greatest practical application would be to focus on the role of the father as a guide to adulthood. Having a better understanding of this particular role would not only be beneficial to the growing literature on fatherhood, but also to fathers who are seeking to better understand how to prepare their children for the world of work themselves, and therefore, could be a study producing some useful guidance for fathers. The majority of the fathers in this study only briefly mentioned their relationships with their children after finishing homeschooling; however, further research into the role of the father-disciple-maker into and throughout adulthood would be beneficial to the research. It would also be beneficial to know if the fathers’ experience is that the discipleship relationship ends once the children leave the home, or does it continue with a change(s) in the level of intensity and frequency.

Thus, it is the recommendation of this researcher that all publics with a vested interest in biblically-based Christian discipleship review the theological implications of education as discipleship and whom it is that should be teaching their children. Said publics should then seek to take practical steps to align their practices, teachings, and support services in accordance with Matthew 28:18-20, Deuteronomy 6:1-7, and Ephesians 6:4 as they inform educational modality. As was eluded to here, it is also the recommendation of this researcher that Matthew 28:18-20, the Great Commission, be viewed by church leadership as well as lay people as starting with the family and then moving out from there. Additional texts such as 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Ephesians 6:4, and Deuteronomy 6:1-7 make it clear that evangelism and discipleship should start at home.

Finally, theologically, this study presents a new framework to view future research into fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship through: faith, family, and fatherhood: a biblical,
ecological framework (see Figure 2 on page 185). This framework describes the relationships between each person in the father, mother, child triad as impacting each other, centered around faith in God. The solid lines representing those relationships that are between the triad, and dotted lines representing the relationship with God that also impacts and influences each of the relationships. This new framework on biblical fatherhood is flexible, as it could be used with any member of the triad in future research, and could also be altered or annotated in such a way as to relate the relative closeness of each relationship, and how that can affect the balance of the overall family dynamic. Thus, it is recommended that this framework be utilized in further research to see if it holds up to or may be improved by continued scrutiny and be considered as a theological as well as a theoretical framework.

**Theoretical Implications**

Theoretically, the responsible fathering theory as espoused by Doherty et al. (1998) fit very well within the parameters of this study. With this study’s population limited to fathers who were married to the wife of their children and living with them currently, preparing for fatherhood and establishing legal paternity were not relevant to the study and were therefore excluded; however, father presence versus absence, economic support, and father involvement were included. The results of this study showed that this theory connected well with the fathers in the study. Each of the three ideas listed were present and in force within the study. The fathers spoke about being present and the difficulties that ensued when they were absent for periods of time due to work. This coupled with being involved were major motivators for the fathers in their career choices and attempts to maintain a healthy work-family life balance.

This work-family life balance was described in the literature as fathers being problem solvers in a “web of responsibilities” (Duckworth & Buzanell, 2009). This was supported in the
results of this study with two subthemes devoted to work-family life balance and with the fathers speaking at length about this balance, requiring a revisiting of their priorities on a regular basis. Taken together this shows that the responsible fathering theory still has value in shedding light on the important roles that fathers cannot forsake and still consider themselves responsible fathers.

With the successful application stated here in mind, this theoretical framework should be used for further research studies into fatherhood, specifically studies that deal with the role of the father in an ecological, systems type of way. This theoretical framework was fruitful, in particular, when dealing with father presence, father involvement, and the father as economic provider, and as such would be a framework to consider with further fatherhood studies connecting to these particular themes. Thus, future researchers should utilize this theory in studies of a variety of fathers to expand the use of this helpful theory, and to test the limits of its applicability. Leadership within the Evangelical church should also take notice, assisting father in meeting these three goals of responsible fathering with teachings and practical supports that will aide fathers in the process, such as counseling and programs on biblical finance to help them be in a position financially to support the family and be present and involved.

**Empirical Implications**

This study focusing on fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship adds to the empirical literature in each of these domains and has implications for further research in the empirical literature. Taking Duckworth and Buzzanell’s (2009) advice to explore the experience of different types of fathers to better understand those types of fathers and to strengthen the fatherhood research in general, this study gave voice to the Christian Evangelical homeschooling fathers in the study. This study added to literature the fact that specific types of fathers have
different sources from which they form identity, and that for some all of their roles in life converge around one role. Armato and Marsiglio (2002) called that a master identity. Armato and Marsiglio (2002) wrote about this in relation to men’s work in a religious organization, the Promise Keepers. This study suggests that this master identity was the fathers’ faith, which was central to them in all they did as fathers. This suggests that a clear understanding of the master identity of each group of fathers would be beneficial in future fatherhood studies in general, as well as in studies of homeschooling and discipleship. This master identity may not be present in all types of fathers; therefore, it would be beneficial to broaden the understanding of this concept by including it in future research studies on fathers other than Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers. It would be important to note in future studies if other types of fathers center their lives around one master identity, if their identity is a plurality of ideas, if their perceived identity is ecological, or otherwise. Therefore, it is recommended that Evangelical Christian leadership develop an understanding of this master or central identity, in order to better understand the discipleship experience of the homeschooling fathers that they minister to.

Also spoken of in earlier sections, the significant subtheme of education is discipleship should affect the direction of the empirical literature on fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship. Future research should show whether this is the case with fathers who are not Evangelical Christians. As explained earlier, the further study of this subtheme could impact the empirical literature but have even greater impacts practically for those who are exposed to the teaching and adopt the understanding theologically and practically.

**Practical Implications**

Practicality is where this study’s results may have their greatest usefulness. The belief of the vast majority of the fathers in this study that education is discipleship, has significant
practical implications. With the modern family-centered movement such as family-integrated churches, there being a National Center for Family-Integrated Churches, and multiple works being circulated within conservative circles authored by Dr. Voddie Baucham Jr., the resources are out there to help people practically apply this concept to their family lives, moving from the public and possibly also private schools to a homeschooling model.

Practically, the results of this study also imply that fathers’ workplace decisions can be made in a different light than they have often been in the past. The fathers in this study almost unanimously reported that their career choices were greatly influenced by a strong desire to be present and involved, so that they could disciple their children. These fathers had a deep desire to provide an example for their children that was worthy of following, with one of the most salient quotes the fathers brought out being 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Follow me as I follow Christ” (MEV). These fathers desired to effect change in the lives of their children, leading them to an understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and desiring to see their children’s own personal choice to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

The final practical, positive consequence of this study is that of providing fathers, especially Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers with the stories of other fathers like them. Reading through the results of this study may prove to be encouraging and uplifting to other fathers of this particularity, which could bring about a greater fellowship between fathers in the body of Christ. In completing this study, this researcher has been blessed over and over by the stories of other fathers, and hearing their voices, knowing that they are fallible human beings just like the author of this study. If others may be blessed in reading and reflecting on this study, then this researcher will have met, and even exceeded his goal by encouraging the body of Christ through his doctoral journey.
With the voice of these 10 fathers now in the empirical literature, future researchers in fatherhood studies should at least consider utilizing this method of transcendental phenomenology to continue to strengthen the particular individual voices of the participants in the literature, allowing them to speak to us, and thus deepening even more our understanding of the unique lives of the fathers in each distinct circumstance. Practically speaking, the results of this study should inform pastor and church leader on how to better minister to Evangelical Christian, homeschooling fathers within their framework of faith, family and fatherhood. Understanding the centrality of their faith in all that they do would provide ministers some key insights into how to reach these families that the literature shows some pastors struggle to connect with.

**Delimitations and Limitations**

With this study being a transcendental phenomenological qualitative research study about fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship, certain delimitations were necessary. First, because of the researcher’s desire to understand the particular phenomenon of the lived experience of Evangelical Christian homeschooling father-disciple maker, it was necessary to delimit the study to a phenomenology, and with the researcher’s desire to present the results in the words of the participants, giving voice to the participants, a transcendental phenomenology was chosen. With the focus of the study being on Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers, the participant selection was delimited to only those who had experienced the phenomenon personally and were experiencing it currently. Thus, this study was delimited to fathers who self-identified as Evangelical Christians and were currently homeschooling. In order to better focus the phenomenon and to avoid complex factors that would be better studied individually to see their particularity, this study was delimited to fathers who were married, living with the wife
of their children, and with only biological children in the household. With a desire for a rich, thick palate of data to develop the essence of the phenomenon, the study was delimited to fathers who had a minimum of three years of experience in homeschooling as well. This study was also delimited to a sample of 10 participants in the Mountain West Region, as this was the region the researcher lived in and 10 participants was the required minimum by Liberty University and falls in the range of suggested participants in Creswell (2013).

Some of the delimits that were unavoidable for a feasible study were also limitations, as a population of 10 homeschooling fathers is not a big enough sample size to truly be representative of all Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers in the Mountain West Region. Another limitation in the population was that of ethnic diversity. The participants in this study were 90% Caucasian, much less diverse than the population of the Mountain West Region. This could have been due to the limitation of the sampling method being a purposeful, criterion, snowball method, whereby homeschool cooperatives all over the state of Wyoming and in multiple surrounding states were contacted, but participants who responded were asked to give the researcher a list of other fathers to contact and/or gave them his contact information to share with other fathers he felt would be interested.

Finally, this study was limited by my personal ability, as the human instrument, to effectively break down the data and present it in such a way as most completely and accurately conveys the voice of these 10 fathers. In the process of this study I attempted to eliminate as much researcher bias as possible by following Moustakas’ (1994) process of epoche, to bracket out personal bias, preconceived notions, and to allow the phenomenon to enter my consciousness as free from my personal interpretation as possible. I believe I was able to come to each session with a clarity of mind, attempting to trust each participant and see them through their own words.
Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this study have expanded the empirical literature on fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship. These results did have limitations though, and it would be beneficial for there to be subsequent research into each of these areas of limitation. Specifically, this study was limited ethnically, and studies that were more ethnically diverse, or studies that targeted a particular ethnicity would be beneficial. It would advance the empirical literature, as Duckworth and Buzzanell (2009) stated, if more particular types of fathers were researched, and thus, even if they were smaller participant pools like this study, taken together, the synthesis of the studies could yield results that are truly representative of the diversity found in the Mountain West Region and beyond.

The results from this study would be beneficial to utilize as a baseline for mixed-method studies that couple the depth and richness of the data in a phenomenology and the generalizability of a quantitative study analysis. Informed by the phenomenology, the questions in a quantitative study could dive deeper into the themes of this study and into the essence of faith and family that motivated the fathers’ daily actions in the study. One could even utilize a father involvement measurement tool in conjunction with continued in-depth research to better understand what motivates other fathers to display the traits described in this study and in the responsible fathering theory by Doherty et al. (1998).

This study displays a significant connection between education and discipleship. Further research could address to what degree this is present in other faith traditions. Studying the consistency of these results among homeschooling Protestants would be beneficial to inform the literature. The research could also be broadened beyond Protestants to views of education as discipleship with Catholics as well. Another step further in research would be exploring if this
belief that education is discipleship influences the curriculum selection process, and to what degree. Deepening the research to include the perceptions of the wives and children of the education is discipleship belief could produce a better understanding of the overall family beliefs. Further research on faith transmission from one generation to another, and whether the education is discipleship belief has a significant effect would also be of value. This study could be multi-generational as well. With varying years of experience in this study among homeschooling fathers, it would further develop the understanding of this topic to see a follow-up study investigate whether the length of time a Christian couple homeschools has a predictive connection to the education is discipleship belief.

In reference to the fact that many of the homeschooling fathers spoke positively about the support of their faith community, a study into the support of the Christian church in regard to homeschooling across a greater and more diverse sampling could produce results to inform the Church on how to best support the homeschooling movement. Based on the fathers’ descriptions of homeschooling being biblically based and the apparent benefit of having a supportive community, a study into the role of Christendom actively supporting homeschooling as a primary means of evangelism and discipleship would add to the literature on evangelism and discipleship. Finally, with the fathers in this study viewing their fathering as biblically-based discipleship coupled with their comments about the secular influence in public schools, and in the world in general, it would be beneficial to study the impact of modern secular culture on biblically-based fatherhood. Answering questions about how modern culture impacts the fathering practices of men who base their parenting on the Bible would give great insight to the Church on how to help fathers identify and fight against those secular influences of which education and discipleship could be paramount.
Summary

The purpose of this study was to describe the lived experience of Evangelical Christian homeschooling fathers in discipling their children. The journey of this study began with the researcher’s desire to encourage Christian fathers in their efforts to train up the next generation for the glory and honor of Jesus Christ, to know Him, and to make Him known. Thus, when this researcher found a gap in the literature that allowed him to dive into fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship study, he was thrilled. The process of developing Chapter One was exciting as the research showed a clear need for the study, and a theological and theoretical framework were chosen. For Chapter Two, the researcher battled to get through the volumes of research to clearly identify the theological and theoretical frameworks within their separate literature domains. The author realized at this point that to operate out of three mostly separate domains, involved fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship, was going to be a challenge, yet it came together with time, study, and much prayer. Through four sub-questions, one central question, and the study of phenomenology as expressed by Moustakas (1994), Chapter Three was completed with some help also from Creswell (2013).

With the foundation in place, Chapter Four was potentially the most exciting part of the study. After all the research it was time to sit down with the fathers, complete the interviews, analyze the data, and discover the themes and subthemes, leading to the crowning moment of the phenomenology, the essence of these fathers’ experience as father-disciple makers. The six themes discovered, father-disciple maker, father-home educator, father-spouse co-laborers, father-economic provider, father guide to adulthood, and expectations the fathers experienced, provided many future implications that were later chronicled here in Chapter Five, and gave the author much to think about in developing the essence of the phenomenon. The essence of the
phenomenon that emerged was simple yet powerful: the centrality of faith in the lives of the father-disciple-makers, grounded in the teachings of the Word of God, and seen by these fathers as empowered by and resting upon their faith in Jesus Christ as their God, the ultimate provider of all good things.
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

IRB Approval Letter

The Appendix must include a variety of artifacts. The appendix must include the IRB application (replace with the approval letter for the complete dissertation), informed consent/assent forms, surveys/questionnaires/instruments, protocols (interviews or observations), sample transcripts of interviews, theoretical memos, and other documents used to establish and audit trail. Any identifying or personal information (names, schools, districts, phone numbers, email addresses) should be eliminated. If numerous types of artifacts are included as appendices, each type should have a section labeled as Appendix A, Appendix B, etc. Each appendix must be addressed in the narrative text. The appendix title should be capitalized, bold, and centered.
APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent

CONSENT FORM
THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF CHRISTIAN HOMESCHOOLING FATHERS IN FULFILLING THE BIBLICAL ROLE OF DISCIPLE-MAKER: A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENONOGICAL STUDY

William Robert Farrington
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study on Evangelical Christian, homeschooling father-disciple-makers. This study will be a qualitative study focusing on fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a married father, living in the home with your wife and biological children, have been homeschooling at least three years, are a professing Evangelical Christian, and are currently active in discipling your children. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

William Robert Farrington, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to better understand the lived experience of Christian homeschooling fathers who are discipling their children.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
1. Participate in a 45-60 minute semi-structured interview. This interview will be audio recorded for transcription.
2. Participate in a survey covering demographic information and fatherhood perspectives. This survey should take 10-15 minutes.
3. Volunteer to also participate in an optional asynchronous Facebook group discussion for three sessions. This group will be asked to reflect on, and answer, one specific question in each of the sessions. These questions will facilitate looking at fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship from a different angle compared to the survey and interview. This should take between 20-30 minutes.
4. Volunteer to also participate in an optional Facebook group that is dedicated to providing feedback to the author as themes emerge from the data analysis. This will also be asynchronous, as I will share the themes as they emerge in separate posts. Feedback from participants will help guide the research findings. Participation in at least one post will take approximately 20-30 minutes; however, you can be as involved as you like, providing more feedback than the minimum of one post.
5. Participate in checking your transcript for accuracy and/or clarification (optional), which will take somewhere around 30 minutes.
**Risks:** The risks involved in this study is minimal, unless you have had severe trauma in parenting or with your father figure that would upset you to talk about. If you were to get very upset speaking about parenting or your father, I would immediately end the interview and provide you with information for voluntary counseling. I am a teacher in the public school system, so you should be aware that if I am made aware of any form of abuse or neglect I would be required by law to report it.

**Benefits:**

The direct benefits you should expect to receive from taking part in this study are a better understanding of fatherhood and homeschooling, and reflection on your own discipleship tendencies.

Benefits to society include a better understanding of what it is like to be an Evangelical Christian, homeschooling father who is discipling his children.

Another benefit would be the expansion of the scholarly literature on homeschooling fathers, as there is much literature on homeschooling mothers, but not much on fathers.

**Compensation:** There will not be any compensation monetarily, only the intrinsic satisfaction of contributing to the growing body of literature on fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship.

**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 you specifically. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participants will be assigned a pseudonym, and any identifiable information will be mixed between the different participants so that you are not identifiable. We will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password locked computer and/or a locked filing cabinet and may be used in future presentations. Ten years after I have completed my dissertation, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for ten years after I have finished my dissertation and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- I cannot assure participants that other members of the Facebook groups will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group; however, I will encourage each member to keep the information private.

**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. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw from the study 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, including Facebook groups data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is William Farrington. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact me at 307-231-3101 or wfarrington@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty advisor, Dr. Sarah Pannone, at sjpannone@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 me as part of my participation in this study.

______________________________________________________________________________
Signature of Participant
Date

______________________________________________________________________________
Signature of Investigator
Date
APPENDIX C: SURVEY

Survey

How old are you?

What is your Ethnicity? (Select all that apply):
☐ White/Caucasian
☐ Hispanic/Latino(a)
☐ African-American/Black
☐ Asian
☐ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
☐ Other

What is your marital status?
☐ Single (never married)
☐ Married
☐ Separated
☐ Widowed
☐ Divorced

Highest level of education completed:
☐ Less than high school degree
☐ High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
☐ Some college but no degree
☐ Associate degree
☐ Bachelor’s degree
☐ Master’s degree
☐ Professional degree
☐ Doctorate degree

First 3 numbers of your zip code:
(Used to determine whether he sample is local, national, and from which areas.):

What best describes the area you live in?
☐ Urban
☐ Suburban
☐ Rural
☐ Remote
☐ Other: Please explain:
What best describes the type of organization you work for?
☐ For profit
☐ Non-profit (religious, arts, social assistance, etc.)
☐ Government
☐ Health Care
☐ Education
☐ Other

How many hours per week do you USUALLY work at your job?
☐ 35 hours a week or more
☐ Less than 35 hours a week
☐ I am not currently employed

What is your religious affiliation?
☐ Christian
☐ Jewish
☐ Muslim
☐ Buddhist
☐ Hinduism
☐ Unaffiliated (i.e., Atheist, Agnostic)
☐ Other

Number of children:
☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☐ 5
☐ 6+

Gender(s) of child(ren) (select all that apply):
☐ boy
☐ girl

Age of child(ren):
☐ 0-11 months
☐ 1-3 years old
☐ 4-6 years old
☐ 7-9 years old
☐ 10-12 years old
☐ 13-15 years old
☐ 16-18 years old
☐ >18 years old

How many years have you homeschooled?

What was the most important factor in your decision to homeschool?
☐ Religious instruction
☐ Improved academic instruction
☐ Individualized instruction
☐ Safety
☐ Other:

Has your experience with homeschooling been?
☐ Positive
☐ Negative
☐ Neutral
☐ Other:

How would you describe your religious beliefs?
☐ Very Important
☐ Important
☐ Not that important
☐ Other:

How would you describe the Bible in regard to discipleship?
☐ Very Important
☐ Important
☐ Not that important
☐ Other:

What do you think is a father’s single most important job?

What are some of your greatest concerns regarding fatherhood?

How have your children responded to your faith?
APPENDIX D: FIGURE 1 COPYRIGHT PERMISSION

William Doherty
[External] Re: Responsible Fathering Use Permission
To: Farrington, William

Sir, I found new contact info in this email: William Doherty bdoherty@umn.edu

[EXTERNAL EMAIL: Do not click any links or open attachments unless you know the sender and trust the content.]

Just go for it, William, with my permission. If you ever publish your dissertation study in a journal and want to use the figure, then ask NCFR. Best of luck with your research.
Bill

William J. Doherty, Ph.D.
Professor of Family Social Science
Director, Minnesota Couples on the Brink Project
Director, Citizen Professional Center
University of Minnesota, 612-625-4752
Co-founder of Braver Angelics www.braverangels.org. "Braver Angels" was inspired by the words of Abraham Lincoln, who not only called on Americans to summon the "better angels" of our nature — but called on us to find the courage to pursue a more perfect union, "with malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right."

See More from Farrington, William

Macbook Pro
Responsible Fathering Use Permission
To: bdoherty@umn.edu

Dr. Doherty,
Hello, my name is Will Farrington and I am a doctoral student at Liberty University. I have focused my dissertation on fatherhood, homeschooling, and discipleship. I have utilized the responsible fathering theory as my theoretical framework and would like to include the triangular figure from your 1998 article, Responsible Fathering: An Overview and Conceptual Framework. Could you give me permission for the use of this figure, or do I need to go through the Journal of Marriage and Family?

Thank you for your work in fatherhood research as it has blessed my study greatly.

Blessings,
William Farrington
Liberty University
Graduate Student
APPENDIX E: TABLE OF CODES

Interview, Survey, and Facebook Group Coding

Themes, Subthemes, and Codes

- **Theme: Father-Disciple-Maker** “Follow me as I follow Christ.”

  - **Subtheme: Example** “More is caught than taught.”
    - Codes:
      - Like teacher, like son - Luke 6:40
      - “Follow me as I follow Christ.”
      - Fruit of the Spirit
      - Live the Word
      - Godly conduct
      - Healthy relationships
      - How we treat others
      - Imperfect example
      - Modeling for our kids
      - Be genuine
      - Live out the love of Christ
      - Spiritual Leader by example
      - Discipleship is the main part
      - Bible study
      - Lead that as an example
      - Spend time with them
      - Modeling submission to authority
      - Seek the spiritual first

  - **Subtheme: Make Disciples** - Train up a child
    - A way of life
    - Discipleship
    - Training
    - Living for God’s glory
    - Talk about life as you go through your day
    - Glorifying God with our emotions
    - In all things, glorify God
    - Oversee family faith development
    - Train, educate, and disciple
    - Balance of Community influence and spiritual grounding
    - To disciple them with a Word-first approach
    - Spirit-led discipleship (p4.in.), (p5.in), (p6.in.),
    - Family Worship/ Devotions
    - Bible studies, reading the Bible, and prayer
- Edify
- Encourage
- Fear of the Lord
- Make Christ known
- Share the Gospel
- Deuteronomy, chapter six.
- Discipleship – Relationship building
- Then developing the child’s relationship with Christ
- Spousal initiation
- Discipleship Activities
- Heavily involved in the church
- Expose to other Christian viewpoints
- Family integrated church, meaning that the children are with the family, with the parents, in the worship service
- Music Ministry
- Sports Discipleship/Evangelism/Outreach
- Teach/prepare kids for evangelism/ministry

○ Subtheme: Father-Bible Teacher
  - Bible: Very important in discipleship
  - Teach them diligently Deut. 6
  - God’s Word Is truth
  - Preach God’s Word to them
  - Discipleship mindset instead of a homeschool mindset
  - Homeschooling is best fit to achieve biblical commands for fathers
  - Academic excellence vs. discipleship orientation
  - Biblical worldview
  - Bringing everything back to the Bible
  - Centrality of the Bible in discipleship
  - Laying the foundation young
  - Bible academically in HS
  - Regular Bible reading coupled with prayer
  - Individual study
  - Biblically supported stance
  - Deuteronomy 6
  - Walk along the way with them
  - Be an example of success and failure
  - It is my responsibility to teach my family
  - Ephesians 6:4
  - Raising them up in the fear of the Lord
  - Head of wife as Christ is head of husband
  - Love my wife
  - Be a representative of Christ in the marriage relationship.
- **Subtheme: Submission to God’s Word**
  - We want to teach submission to parents as preparing for submission to God.
  - Learning submission from a young age
  - Appealing to God as the authority in discipline
  - Teach discipline is based on God’s Word
  - The Bible is the authority
  - Prayerful correction
  - Live out Scriptures
  - Living, active Word of God
  - Trusting in His Word, will, and works
  - God is the Author of the Bible
  - Glory to God
  - Healthy submission
  - Modeling submission to authority
  - The Word of God is the truth
  - Teaching the Bible in obedience to His mandate
  - Adult children
  - Ongoing Life-Life Long Process

- **Subtheme: Education is discipleship**
  - The curriculum and teachers are important in how your child develops
  - Teachers beliefs
  - Peers’ influence
  - Curriculum and religious instruction
  - Biblical Curriculum
  - Christ centered curriculum
  - To create Truth seekers
  - Contextual learning vs. Compartmentalization
  - Relationship-building/based
  - Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 6:4
  - God’s mandate to raise our children
  - Christian environment
  - Christian foundation
  - Raising them up in the fear of the Lord
  - Train up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord
  - Delegated authority
  - Original model of schooling
  - Win their hearts
  - Education and discipleship overlap
  - Education is discipleship
  - Discipleship is the fabric of our home

- **Subtheme: Responsible and Accountable**
- **Duty/Responsibility of the Father to educate**
- Bible research leads me
- The father’s responsibility
- Discipline and instruction of the Lord
- Accountable to God for home and
- Protector: physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually
- Work-family life balance
- Protective environment
- Bad company corrupts good morals
- Companion of fools will be destroyed
- Responsible
- Trusting in God and His Word, as well as living it out
- Financial responsibility
- Education is a parental responsibility regardless of school choice
- A central role in your life: Fatherhood
- Central figure in your kids’ lives
- I have to fight against my selfish nature
- Focused on being a godly dad

- **Theme: Father-Home-Educator**

  o **Subtheme: Education is the Responsibility of Parents**
    - Personal Schooling Experience
    - To be directly responsible for your children’s education
    - The parents are responsible/accountable to God for their child’s education in every area
    - Secular Public school
    - Utilizing Family Worship to set the tone/train them for schooling
    - Keeping the proper focus
    - This is a biblically supported stance
    - Original model of schooling
    - Deuteronomy 6 (p6.in.), (p9.in.), (p12.in.)
    - Be an example of success and failure
    - It is my responsibility to teach my family
    - Teach our children diligently
    - Teach kids how to learn
    - Best option out of Public, Private Christian and Home (p4.In.), (p9.in.)

  o **Subtheme: Education is discipleship**
    - The curriculum and teachers are important in how your child develops
    - Secular public school
    - Contextual learning vs. Compartmentalization
    - Eph. 6:4
    - Education and discipleship overlap
- Education is discipleship
- Seeing education and discipleship as one and the same
- Blend everything
- Homeschooling goals
- The integration of Christ into everything
- The purpose of education is to know God and make Him known.

○ **Subtheme: Individualized education**
  - Own pace
  - Trying different ways of teaching
  - Each kid is different
  - Age-based individualization
  - Accelerating in areas of strength
  - Teach them the Bible
  - Help with questions in area of strength
  - Help them to learn
  - Direct them to engage

○ **Subtheme: Work-life balance issues**
  - Safeguard time with kids
  - Feeling torn between church and family
  - Time for homeschooling
  - Missed time due to working away from home
  - Work at work, then work at home
  - Fighting selfishness
  - Keeping the proper focus
  - Time/energy balance
  - Flexibility in the workplace
  - Pointing them to Christ
  - Focus on Christ

○ **Subtheme: Father-Learner**
  - Individual Student needs
  - Individualized student learning
  - Finding student interests
  - Learning Special Education
  - God uses our children to teach us
  - God uses children to disciple and train us
  - Learned how to better understand emotional development throughout raising kids
  - Difficulty with older students re-learning advanced material on the spot
  - Immediate assistance
  - Learning about curriculum choices
- Theme: Father-Spouse – Co-Laborers
  
  o Subtheme: Unity with Spouse
    - Spousal relationship must come
    - Love and lead my wife first
    - Teamwork
    - Same page
    - Consistency in discipline
    - Emotional guide
    - Seeing God teach us through our kids
    - Spousal support is critical to parenting
    - Struggles with Spiritual leadership with my wife
    - Spousal hesitancy to homeschool
    - Sacrifice in homeschooling
    - Being understanding with my wife
  
  o Subtheme: Complementary roles
    - High calling of motherhood
    - Titus 2 – homeworker
    - The curse in Genesis
    - Family-first ministry
    - Head of wife as Christ is head of husband
    - Lead the family
    - Responsible for my family
    - Overseer
    - Bishop of our home
    - Love my wife
    - Be understanding
    - Be a representative of Christ in the marriage relationship
    - Wife’s involvement in finances
- Hands-on Educational support
- Help with advanced academics
- Spousal support
- Give her a break
- Teaching and facilitating

- Subtheme: Mother is primary teacher
  - Designs/chooses curriculum and instruction
  - Curriculum decisions together
  - Wife does lesson planning
  - Hands on teacher
  - Wife as school leader
  - Wife primary teacher
  - Husband primary teacher
  - Purpose in homeschooling
  - Husband – wife balance

- Subtheme: Father-Administrator/Principal
  - Father is the leader/Principal of the home
  - Father’s role as curriculum helper
  - Supplement and/or change curriculum as needed based on student performance
  - Curriculum choices based on parental abilities
  - Father’s role as Discipline helper
  - Discipline is critical
  - Take over when I get home
  - Take care of most of the behavioral issues
  - Varied levels of involvement over time
  - Motivator
  - Father Schedule Maker
  - Homeschool year-round
  - Homeschooling schedule flexibility
  - Summer slowdown

- Theme: Father-Economic Provider

- Subtheme: Main Breadwinner
  - Father is provider of money for curriculum
  - Father-primary responsibility
  - Shared responsibility to provide
  - It can be a painful responsibility
  - Financial ability to homeschool
  - Financial ability to private school
▪ Wife’s involvement in finances
▪ High calling of motherhood
▪ Titus 2 and motherhood
▪ The curse of Genesis

○ Subtheme: Work-family life balance issues
▪ Providing financially limits ability to be involved in direct teaching
▪ Fathers struggle to live up to their own ideas of involvement
▪ Fathers working outside the home struggle to make time for homeschooling
▪ Being a pastor working from home allows some more latitude
▪ Provider role/responsibility creates role strain with personal expectation for involvement
▪ Working on days off and holidays
▪ Fathers seek to create times to socialize with their kids in the midst of busy schedules
▪ Eating together as a family
▪ Fighting selfishness
▪ Keeping the proper focus
▪ Career path considerations
▪ Career Path to provide on a single income
▪ Career path choice to provide, yet maximize time at home
▪ Changed career course due to God making it clear that I needed to be home more
▪ Home/Job integration
▪ Family-integrated church

○ Subtheme: Provision by the Grace of God
▪ Providing the finances by the Lord’s grace
▪ Familial respect for hard work
▪ My role is to help her see how much she is saving us by being at home
▪ Growing to trust God as the Provider
▪ Had a steady job for several years, then inconsistent and had to move a lot and depend on God for provision
▪ I have grown tremendously in trusting God with my finances over the past several years
▪ A sanctification process trusting God with our finances
▪ A huge chasm of faith for financial provision
▪ Seeing God provide our needs
▪ Relying on Him to provide for our needs
▪ The Lord has been just amazingly gracious to us
▪ Serving God, not money
▪ Overemphasis on finances a cultural issue
▪ Kids prefer time over money
- **Theme: Father-Guide to Adulthood**

  o **Subtheme: Teach Financial Literacy**
    - Budgeting w/kids present
    - Instill a strong work ethic
    - Teach biblical principles of financial management
    - Teach them by involving them in my business
    - Give them work opportunities
    - Preparing sons to support a family
    - Preparing our daughters to be home makers
    - Expanded opportunities for work with flexible schedule
    - Non-traditional schedules can assist in giving work experience

  o **Subtheme: Talent Guide**
    - Teach your kids to develop and use their talents to glorify the Lord
    - Utilize the things you are talented at to develop a good testimony
    - Talents a platform for being able to share the gospel
    - Look for a good personality fit
    - Thinking about providing for a family
    - Desire to teach sons to work with hands to fix things
    - Academics not really the focus
    - Focus on being a faithful husband
    - Focus on working around adults
    - The importance of being out in the working world and the lesson that come with that
    - Trade vs. College

  o **Subtheme: Guide Them Through Each Stage to Adulthood**
    - Deeply involved in guiding through each stage
    - Raise children into adults that embrace Christian values
    - Being best friends as adults
    - Role: Being good stewards of His children
    - Social/Emotion preparation for adulthood
    - Raise godly children
    - Working with adults

- **Theme: Expectations for responsible Fathers**

  o **Subtheme: Personal expectations**
    - Provide financially
- Protecting
- Minimally involved
- Follow me as I follow Christ.”
- Lead in submission to Christ and His Word
- Proverbs 9 – wisdom
- Low expectations
- 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 for elders the standard

○ Subtheme: God’s expectations
  - The only expectations that I really care much about are God’s expectations of me
  - God’s expectations can be overwhelming
  - God’s mercy and grace
  - God’s expectations are all that really matter in the end
  - Loving my wife
  - Being understanding with my wife
  - Conduct worthy of disciple
  - Household that is above reproach
  - Know right from wrong
  - Know the Word of God and live by it
  - Godly seed

○ Subtheme: Spousal Expectations
  - Helping answer questions, make decisions, and advanced help in areas of relative strength
  - Wife sets the expectations
  - To come home and take over
  - Deal with disciplinary issues once home. (p6.in.)
  - Godly man
  - Godly husband and father
  - Biblical worldview
  - Faithful to wife and family
  - Be consistent, that my profession of faith and conduct at home would be consistent
  - Fruits of the Spirit
  - Serve the family well
  - She expects me to lead
  - Deuteronomy 6
  - Principal
  - More involved than expected
  - Involved and supportive
  - Leader
  - Provider
  - A biblical husband
▪ More time at home
▪ Live up to what you’re

○ Subtheme: Children’s expectations
  ▪ Minimal expectations when young
  ▪ They expect me to teach them
  ▪ Help with questions in my personal area of strength
  ▪ Kids basically expect everything of you
  ▪ Answer questions
  ▪ Teach the whatever they need to know until they graduate
  ▪ Teach them the Bible
  ▪ Pick up the slack where needed
  ▪ To have fun with dad
  ▪ Discipline as needed
  ▪ Set boundaries
  ▪ Godly man, husband, and father
  ▪ Expectations from biblical worldview
  ▪ Faithful man of God
  ▪ Meet physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs
  ▪ More expectations as they grow in the Word
  ▪ Patience
  ▪ Look out for best interests
  ▪ Create the expectation
  ▪ There are times when they would like to have more of my time
  ▪ We get to set that expectation
  ▪ Older kids to see that your lifestyle matches what you are teaching them
  ▪ from God’s Word

○ Subtheme: Contextual/Outside expectations
  ▪ Expectations are based on their personal worldview
  ▪ Don’t care much what others think
  ▪ Christian community
  ▪ Outside impact is limited to few respected individuals
  ▪ Raise godly children
  ▪ Kids go to church, follow Christian disciplines
  ▪ Ambassador for Christ
  ▪ Pray with kids one-on-one
  ▪ 1 Timothy Chapter 3
  ▪ Supportive faith community
  ▪ Pastoral Support
  ▪ Faithful leader and model
  ▪ God’s mandate and how you bring up your children, nurture, or the
  discipline and instruction of the Lord
  ▪ In our church we expect men to lead
- Unbelieving community
- They don’t understand homeschooling
- A comparative education (or lack thereof)
- Pressure from our unbelieving family
- Very little expectations from outside for fathers
- Expectations from colleagues/ students (School Teacher)
- Expectations to enroll children where the father teaches
- Colleagues expect academic excellence from homeschoolers
- General society expectations
- Kids are good citizens
- Kids graduate high school
- Kids go to college
- Kids get a good job
- Father loves spouse and kids
- Father is faithful
- Economic provision
- Oversee discipline
- Emotional development
- Family
- Expected to put then in school for high school
- Pretty neutral