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JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

THE INFLUENCE OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP ON VENTURE PHILANTHROPY IN
CHRISTIAN, K-12 SCHOOLS

A Prospectus Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
by
Renee G. Cervantes

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA
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ABSTRACT

This multiple case study explored the influence that authentic leadership has on venture philanthropy in five, Christian, K-12, non-profit schools in the United States. The research was conducted using a multiple case study method through qualitative interviews with the venture philanthropists of each Christian school. In this study, venture philanthropy at a Christian school was defined as the provision of a collective gift total of $1 million or more in cash assets, the provision of strategic assistance through a close funder-fundee relationship, serving on the school’s board of trustees or in an advisory role, and the implementation of social and financial performance criteria. The first theory guiding this study was authentic leadership as defined by Bruce J. Avolio, William L. Gardner, Fred O. Walumbwa (2005), and Bill George (2003). The second theory guiding this study was venture philanthropy as defined by Dr. Tamaki Onishi (2015). The study revealed that authentic leadership (AL) influences venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools. Participants ranked passion, self-discipline/consistency, Christian values/ethics, and relationship connectedness as the most desired AL attributes among their Christian school leaders. The research data also revealed that participants desire school leadership that exudes excellence, competence, commitment, stewardship, mission-focused, and a leader in whom the venture philanthropist can have trust and confidence. Furthermore, the research data suggests that the leader’s relationship connectedness contributes to improving stewardship, Christian values and ethics contribute to earning the venture philanthropist’s trust and confidence, and self-discipline/consistency and passion contribute to being mission-focused.

Keywords: Authentic leadership, venture philanthropy, fundraising, Christian school
Dedication

I dedicate this study to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I am eternally grateful for the strength He gives me to do all things to which He calls me (Philippians 4:13). I will forever cherish those moments when I reached the end of my strength so I could experience the beginning of His (2 Corinthians 12:10). I am grateful for His Holy Spirit guiding me in my studies during those late nights and early mornings. I want to also dedicate this study to my loving parents and the special people God placed in my life to encourage me. The challenging and rewarding doctoral journey is complete because of His grace that never fails. All glory to God.
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Authentic Leadership (AL)

Venture Philanthropy (VP)

Venture Philanthropist (VPT)
CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN

“No one has given sacrificially until he has gone beyond ten percent.”

--Jerry Falwell, Sr.

Introduction

Philanthropy is a significant focus for Christian school leaders as neighboring Christian schools compete for financial support (Van Slyke & Brooks, 2005). Christian school leaders serve as the face of the organization, ensure the financial success of the institution, and steward all assets (Wilson, 2010). If the Christian leader fails to do so, the organization cannot continue its mission. Donors place great hope and trust in nonprofits, such as Christian schools, to transform the world. A survey of nearly 1,700 high-net-worth donors reveals that 86 percent have the most confidence in nonprofit organizations than the government to solve societal and global problems (U.S. Trust & Indiana University, 2018). However, Christian nonprofit ministries who strive to impact the world must be “sustained by the hard-earned money it receives from its faithful contributors and members” (Picardo & Slaughter, 2016, p. 9). As the nonprofit sector grows and its relationship with the public sector deepens, Christian school leaders must work hard for financial resources and tax-exempt donations (Van Slyke & Brooks, 2005). Christian school leaders must also demonstrate accountability to their stakeholders (Van Slyke & Brooks, 2005), especially in venture philanthropy that regards accountability as a core element.

A recent study finds that generosity toward faith-based and education non-profit organizations is strongly present. In 2018, giving to religion-based organizations totaled $124 billion while giving to education totaled $58 billion (GivingUSA, 2019). Religious and spiritual organizations received the largest share (43 percent) of 2017 high-net-worth charitable dollars –
a 7 percent increase from 2015 (U.S. Trust, 2018). That is promising news to Christian school leaders who rely on the generosity of its donor base to sustain, fulfill, and grow its mission (Lehman, 2017). However, Christian leaders are not guaranteed philanthropic support and must distinguish themselves as deserving of the philanthropist’s investment. GuideStar (2020), a U.S. nonprofit reporting service, recognizes more than 138,000 Christian schools and academies that compete for financial support from donors, philanthropists, and venture philanthropists. This statistic creates a demand for Christian school leaders to develop or strengthen authentic leadership attributes necessary for a venture philanthropy partnership.

Venture philanthropy (VP) and authentic leadership (AL) theories (Onishi, 2015; Gardner et al., 2005; George, 2003) have interrelating elements of accountability, self-discipline, integrity (ethics), transparency, relationship connectedness, and successful organizational outcomes. It is also worth noting that the primary concern of VP is performance criteria (social and financial outcomes) (Onishi, 2015, p. 74). Furthermore, scholars and practitioners recognize that AL achieves desirable results in organizations (George, 2003; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Thus, this researcher explored how the elements above are prerequisites for the Christian school leader to experience VP success.

VP partnered with AL positions the Christian school to achieve its mission and make a societal impact. The benefit of VP in schools “goes far beyond providing capital. It includes matching board members, recruiting management team members, consulting, and linking education entrepreneurs to a powerful network of peers and new economy resources” (Frumkin, 2010, p. 12). Nonprofit organizations like Christian schools are on a quest for financial support and sustainability, which can come through VP (Community Wealth Partners, 2011). Venture philanthropy at a Christian school brings a combination of nonprofit and business resources that
can produce a more significant impact (Onishi, 2015). A Christian, K-12 school leader who receives a multi-million-dollar VP investment also receives the great responsibility of helping achieve VP success. Thus, it benefits Christian school leaders to develop AL qualities that VP demands and deems a prerequisite.

This researcher found a lack of scientific research on VP and AL in the Christian, K-12 school setting and a lack of research on AL’s influence on VP. Therefore, these multiple case studies consisted of qualitative interviews with five Christian school venture philanthropists to determine what AL qualities influence venture philanthropy, the most desired AL attributes in the Christian school leaders, and AL’s perceived influence on VP success. This study reviews the background to the research problem, the research design, significance of this study, the VP and AL theories and their interrelating themes, the analysis of the study’s findings, and the research conclusions, implications, and applications.

**Background to the Problem**

The research problem in this study addressed the practice of authentic leadership and venture philanthropy in five Christian, K-12 schools. For these five schools to successfully fund their mission, Christian school leaders and Christian school founders practice VP elements. As the findings suggest, venture philanthropists seek Christ-centered, authentic leaders who will achieve their school mission with excellence. Prior research on AL and VP in Christian, K-12 schools is not present, hence this study’s efforts to fill the research gap by exploring this problem. This research and its findings can serve as a framework for effectively practicing VP and AL to achieve successful results in Christian, K-12 schools.
Historical

This section discusses authentic leadership and venture philanthropy’s historical context and how the two practices have evolved. This section will also review how VP has gained momentum and popularity in non-profit organizations.

Authentic Leadership

Warren Bennis, a late American scholar, author, and professor, is credited for fathering the charge for authentic leadership. In 1989, Bennis’ first edition book *On Becoming a Leader* inspired Bill George. George is a former corporate CEO of Medtronic, one of the world’s largest medical device companies. In the book, Bennis states, “To be authentic is literally to be your own author (the words derive from the same Greek root), to discover your own native energies and desires, and then to find your own way of acting on them” (Bennis, 2009, p. 47). His book on AL elements (purpose, vision, passion, resiliency) motivated George to lead his corporation with authenticity. Bennis mentored George on the concept of AL and the two published *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value* (2003). Bennis and George’s book serves as a conceptual framework for this study and offers “a practical approach to developing leaders that enabled people to be their authentic selves, rather than emulating others” (George, 2014, para. 10).

George (2003) issued the call for authentic leadership as a result of corporate scandals. It is why AL emerged as a leadership theory based on ethics and values, which is greatly needed in today’s society (Northouse, 2010). The significant and very public ethical failures of leaders over the past few years beg for a new leadership approach to responding to the crisis (Gerber, 2006). It may explain why “confidence in the federal government and the public sector has declined since 2015” (U.S. Trust & Indiana University, 2018, p. 7). “In
response to repeated and spectacular lapses in ethical judgment by highly visible leaders, the public is demanding greater accountability of organizational leaders” (Dealy & Thomas, 2006 as cited by Walumbwa et al., 2008). These scandals in the corporate, political, and even Christian ministry arenas have also led to a more significant push for integrity and authenticity in leadership (Shen, 2017; George, 2003).

The AL theory emerged in 2003 in the scientific research field by Luthans and Avolio (2003). The scholars call AL a “positive approach to leadership and its development.” Luthans and Avolio “eclectically integrate” the approaches of positive, transformation, and moral/ethical leadership into a broader framework of AL (Luthans & Avolio, p. 243). The rise in technology, social media, and the internet presents a world that is nearly void of privacy. Thus, the bar is raised for leaders to exude AL qualities in all organizations (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Luthans and Avolio argued the need for AL after the “dot-bomb, September 11 terrorism, gyrating stock values, and meltdown of corporate ethics” (p. 241). They add that positive leadership addresses the problems to confront these societal issues, crises, and turmoil (Luthans & Avolio, 2003, p. 241).

In the early 2000s, an understanding, developmental process, and implementation of needed positive leadership had remained under-researched in the fields of both leadership and positive psychology (Avolio & Luthans, p. 241). Avolio & Luthans (2003) adopted the positive psychologists’ term for authenticity, which is “owning one’s personal experiences (thoughts, emotions, or beliefs, ‘the real me inside’) and acting in accord with the true self (behaving and expressing what you think and believe) (Harter, 2002)” (p. 242). Harter’s definition of authenticity is what Avolio and Luthans say:

Best depicts the type of positive leadership needed in contemporary times, where the environment is dramatically changing, where the rules that have guided how we operate
no longer work, and where the best leaders will be transparent with their intentions, having a seamless link between their espoused values, actions, and behaviors. (p. 242)

**Authenticity Defined**

The term *authenticity* is rooted in Greek philosophy (“To thine own self be true”) and discussed in psychological writings by humanistic psychologists Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 319). As discussed below, the two scholars maintain that authenticity and self-awareness are strongly correlated with ethical principles.

Rogers and Maslow focused attention on the development of fully functioning or self-actualized persons, i.e., individuals who are in tune with their basic nature and clearly and accurately see themselves and their lives. Because fully functioning persons are unencumbered by others’ expectations for them, they can make more sound personal choices. Interestingly, Maslow (1971, p. 346) conceives of self-actualizing people as having strong ethical convictions. (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, pp. 319-320)

To understand authentic leadership, one must understand the definition and synonyms of authenticity. Gardner et al. (2005) state that “authenticity is not sincerity,” but instead, it is “being one’s true self” (p. 6). One can also define authenticity as “genuine, reliable, trustworthy, real, and veritable” (Avolio & Luthans, 2003, p. 242). Sincerity is the extent to which the self is represented accurately and honestly to others, while authenticity is the extent to which one is true to the self or “relationship with one’s self” (Erickson, 1995, p. 124; Trilling, 1972 as cited by Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 320). Additionally, Neff and Harter (2002) state that authentic-self behavior is “acting in accordance with one’s inner thoughts and feelings” (p. 837). It is worth noting that a leader can never be entirely authentic or inauthentic, but rather can “achieve levels of authenticity” (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 320).

An *inauthentic* leader is overly compliant with stereotypes and demands related to the leadership role (Henderson and Hoy, 1983 as cited in Avolio & Gardner, 2005). AL scholars state that a lack of authentic self-behavior is to be “deceitful, dishonest, manipulative, phony, and conniving” (Luthans & Avolio, 2003, p. 242). Inauthenticity is also a detriment to the leader’s
fundraising efforts. The authentic leader shares successes and challenges of his or her organization (Haas, 2020). “Donors desire openness and transparency and know when you’re hedging. Authentic people do not say things they do not mean or make promises they cannot keep” (Haas, 2020). Authenticity is vital in the leader’s relations with others because all leadership is relational (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). A leader’s positive relationships are essential to organizational success (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). Thus, this study will further discuss how relationship connectedness and other AL attributes are necessary for VP.

**Venture Philanthropy**

Venture philanthropy emerged in the 1990s as an unconventional funding model and was later coined “venture philanthropy” near the turn of the millennium (Onishi, 2015, p. 66). VP is also known as outcomes-driven philanthropy, evidence-based philanthropy, performance-driven philanthropy (Grossman et al., 2013, p. 4), high engagement philanthropy, and strategic philanthropy (Arrillaga & Hoyt, 2005; Letts & Ryan, 2003; Morino & Shore, 2004). Venture philanthropy, a non-profit version of venture capital, was created to build the capacity of the funded organization (Frumkin, 2008; Moody, 2008), solve societal problems (Grossman et al., 2013), and for many venture philanthropists – seek a social return (Onishi, 2015, p. 74). Venture capital methods include due diligence, risk management, performance measurement, relationship management, investment duration and size, and an exit strategy (Grossman et al., 2013). Many of these formal processes are central to Christian school VP, especially conducting due diligence (site visits, interviews, or meetings), which assesses whether a gift has met its goals (Shen & Reitman, 2017, p. 18).

Venture philanthropists strive to make a long-term commitment and connect with organizations directly in their portfolios – eager to express themselves through action in the
social sphere (Frumkin, 2010). Venture philanthropists “see their gifts as investments and draw on the analytical rigor of the for-profit world to assess the nonprofit organizations they support” (Bildner et al., 2020). The VPT consistently uses funding to accelerate growth toward scale and create a measurable impact to attract the next funding level (Grossman et al., 2013). The VP model was promoted by business schools, scholars, and news media (e.g., Harvard Business School, *Forbes* [Gupte, 1999], *Time* Magazine [Greenfeld, 2000], *Fortune* [Colvin, 2001; Whitford, 2000]) and was claimed as possibly the “greatest revolution in the nonprofit sector” (Community Wealth Ventures, 2001, p. 9 as cited by Onishi, 2015, p. 66). This revolution continues today in Christian schools that strive to impact God’s kingdom.

**Theoretical Background**

This section discusses the theoretical context on AL and VP and the variables and concepts underpinning the research. Authentic leadership in this study is based on the scholarly theory and practitioner concept. The VP theory in this study includes elements most commonly implemented in U.S. non-profit organizations.

**Authentic Leadership**

The AL theory (Avolio et al., 2007) and the AL concept (George, 2003) guided the interview protocol, which explored the Christian school leader’s attributes and abilities through the perspective of the VPT. The AL theory that primarily guided this study is by AL scholars Avolio, Gardner, and Walumbwa (2007), who measure AL based on the following elements:

- **Self Awareness:** To what degree is the leader aware of his or her strengths, limitations, how others see him or her, and how the leader impacts others?
- **Transparency:** To what degree does the leader reinforce a level of openness with others that provides them with an opportunity to be forthcoming with their ideas, challenges, and opinions?
- **Ethics/Morals:** To what degree does the leader set a high standard for moral and ethical conduct?
- **Balanced Processing:** To what degree does the leader solicit sufficient opinions
and viewpoints before making important decisions? (n. p.)

In Authentic Leadership Theory and Practice: Origins, Effects, and Development, Avolio et al. (2005) state that authentic leaders are leaders who:

- Know who they are and what they believe in
- Display transparency and consistency between their values, ethical reasoning, and actions
- Focus on developing positive psychological states such as confidence, optimism, hope, and resilience within themselves and their associates
- Are widely known and respected for their integrity (p. xxiii)

This study was also guided by the AL concept by AL practitioners Bennis and George (2003). They state that AL elements are “purpose, values, heart, relationships, and self-discipline” (p. 36). In their book, Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value, Bennis and George state that authentic leaders:

- Demonstrate passion in their purpose
- Behave with proper values
- Lead with a compassionate heart
- Establish connectedness in relationships
- Consistently demonstrate self-discipline (p. 18)

The AL theory (Avolio et al., 2007) and concept (Bennis & George, 2003) underscore values/ethics, relationships, heart, consistency, and accountability. Accountability is also a key theme in venture philanthropy (Frederick et al., 2016). Wood and Winston (2005 as cited by Frederick, 2016, p. 3) define accountability as:

The leader’s (a) willing acceptance of the responsibilities inherent in the leadership position to serve the well-being of the organization; (b) implicit or explicit expectation that the leader will be publicly linked to his/her actions, words, or reactions; and (c) the expectation that the leader may be called on to explain his or her beliefs, decisions, commitments, or actions to constituents. (pp. 86-87)

This likely explains the popularity of authentic leadership as it “points to the desire to have leaders who are trustworthy and accountable” (Frederick et al., 2016, p. 303).
**Venture Philanthropy**

One can describe VP as “human resources and funding invested as a donation in the charity by entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, and trusts and corporations searching for a social return on their investment. It involves high engagement over many years with fixed milestones, tangible returns, and an exit achieved by developing alternative, sustainable income” (Pepin, 2005, p. 166). The goal of VP is to “help create and grow stronger and more sustainable social enterprises through the provision of financial resources and non-financial support to the social enterprise, including the development of impact measurement practice” (Mityushina et al., 2019). Long-term organizational success and sustainability must be a top priority for nonprofit leaders, and it stems from more than just financial health (Mityushina et al., 2019; Community Wealth Partners, 2011). Community Wealth Partners (2011) suggest that the following are five drivers of sustainability in nonprofit organizations:

- **Social impact**: Results of organizations or individuals’ efforts that solve or positively advance social issues by producing a positive change in attitude, behavior, or condition for the target constituency. There must be an informed understanding of the social problem, a clear articulation of vision, mission, goals, and a process to measure and evaluate outcomes.

- **Focused business strategy**: Requires an understanding of what has to happen to achieve the organization’s social goals and choices the organization makes about how to accomplish those goals. There must be a plan to identify and understand the operating environment, create a unique value proposition and develop a supporting business model.

- **Economic viability**: Financial health of an organization; sustainable organizations have an operating model that generates a surplus that will carry the organization’s work forward in the long-term. There must be a firm command of the organization’s liquidity, profitability, revenue growth, revenue sources, and resource allocation.

- **Capacity to deliver**: Talent, infrastructure, and organizational processes needed to execute the business strategy to have social impact. There must be an understanding of the business capacity of a nonprofit organization with an explicit focus on internal strengths and weaknesses across multiple areas of the organization.
Adaptability: The discipline of updating and/or developing products and services in anticipation or response to changes in customer needs, behaviors, and the operating environment. There must be consistent monitoring of the four cylinders of the sustainability model: social impact; focused business strategy; economic viability, and capacity to deliver guided by a clear understanding of the reasons and goals for change and a spirit of innovation.

Julia Reed, a managing director for Relationship Management at Schwab Charitable, states that as a venture philanthropist:

You are selecting not-for-profit organizations with similar rigor, the impact, or potential impact that an organization has as a metric of its performance. The term “venture” in this context really refers to charitable giving as an investment, where the primary performance metric is the impact on the beneficiaries your giving will have. (Bildner et al., 2020).

This researcher finds that diverse theoretical and methodological perspectives on VP are present but have the following interrelated elements: relationship cultivation, supporting or structuring the mission, investment plan execution, oversight, and investment return and exit. The specific theoretical model guiding this study is by Dr. Tamaki Onishi (2015), who defines VP as:

1) Use of various (philanthropic and market-based) funding instruments
2) Provision of strategic assistance through a close funder-fundeep relationship
3) Taking seats on the boards of funded organizations
4) Use of blended (social and financial) performance criteria (pp. 70-71).

It is worth noting that VP scholars Onishi (2015) and Moody (2008) cite the VP model by The Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF), formerly Center for Venture Philanthropy (CVP). The VP model by SVCF/CVP (n. d.) is as follows:

1) Investments in a 3-6-year plan for social change
2) A managing partner relationship
3) Accountability-for-results process
4) Provision of cash and expertise
5) An exit strategy (p. 4)

The above processes are easily applicable to the Christian school setting. However, this study will discuss why authentic leadership must be in place for a successful VP partnership.
Sociological Background

This section discusses authentic leadership and venture philanthropy’s sociological background and how the two practices impact Christian, K-12 schools. As this study reveals, AL and VP strive to make an eternal, spiritual impact on school constituents.

Authentic Leadership

Authentic leaders make a positive difference in their organizations and the lives of the people they serve. The authentic leader is a person of the highest integrity committed to building enduring organizations, has a deep sense of purpose, and stays true to his or her core values (Klenke, 2007). A negative influence distracting from AL is the entertainment industry that glorifies leaders with high-ego personalities. “(Movies) focus on the style of leaders, not their character. In large, making heroes out of celebrity CEOs is at the heart of the crisis in corporate leadership. Leadership is authenticity, not style” (George, 2003, p. 11). George adds the following commentary:

The complexities of twenty-first-century corporations demand new leadership. We need leaders who lead with purpose, values, and integrity, and are good stewards of the legacy they inherited from their predecessors. We need leaders who build enduring organizations, motivate their employees to provide superior customer service, and create long-term value for shareholders. We need a new kind of leader – the authentic leader – to bring us out of the current leadership crises. (p. 9)

Forbes (2018) states that one reason behind the current leadership crisis is a deficiency in self awareness. The leader’s self awareness of his inner dynamics (beliefs, mindsets, attitudes, feelings, emotions) allows him to make intelligent responses instead of conditioned reactions. To lead an organization well and achieve VP standards, a leader must first understand himself and then seek to understand his team members and venture philanthropist (Pearse, 2018).
Venture Philanthropy

VP is not a charity, but rather an investment that serves “more people, more effectively” (Grossman et al., 2013, p. 2) and helps solve societal problems (Grossman et al., 2013). Christian nonprofit schools play a crucial role in the United States’ religious landscape by shaping the souls and minds of students as future Christian leaders and ambassadors for Christ. The largest private, distinctively Christian school association, the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), states that Christian education shapes students academically, spiritually, and in their worldview and skills (ACSI, 2020). This noble cause is achievable by funding a Christian education to students through a supported annual fund or capital campaign (Schwartzberg, 2007; Scheitle, 2009). Venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools can:

1. Advance school programs
2. Build additional campus locations to serve more students
3. Improve student outcomes
4. Improve the graduation rate
5. Educate future leaders
6. Increase student enrollment (Grossman et al., 2013)
7. Enhance a biblically grounded education

Christian education provides a biblical worldview centered on creation, fall, and redemption (Fennema, 2001 as cited by Hull, 2003). “Several key theological principles are embedded in this worldview, such as the sovereignty of God, the authority of scripture, the creation as God’s kingdom, and the covenantal nature of God’s relationship with creation” in the context of reformed Christian education (Fennema, 2001 as cited by Hull, 2003, p. 205).

Financial support of a Christian, K-12 school helps transform “a world that is God’s handiwork” (Harris & Wilson, 2017, p. 33). Christian, K-12 education can train, educate, disciple, and equip students to positively transform the world by fulfilling The Great
Commission (Matthew 28:19) and The Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40). Investments in Christian, K-12 schools help fund a Christ-centered education that is an extension of teachings in Bible-based churches. The weekly Sunday school, Sunday sermon, or Bible study group teaches children and teens for 1-2 hours per week. However, a Christian, K-12 school spiritually and academically shapes students for up to forty hours per week.

Theological Background

This section discusses authentic leadership and venture philanthropy’s theological background and how Christian school VP and AL seek to honor God and His biblical principles.

Authentic Leadership

A Christian, authentic leader reflects the holy character and conduct of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:15-16) and employs the elements of AL, including remaining true to his God-given, authentic personality and identity in Christ. A Christian, authentic leader is not to be confused with an authentic Christian leader. An authentic Christian leader exudes authentically Christian qualities, while a Christian, authentic leader is a Christian who intentionally practices every AL attribute and reflects his true self. Christian leaders highly regard “truth,” which is the bedrock of Jesus Christ, who is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). Truth is also the theme of authenticity as it accurately reflects the true inner self.

As defined by Avolio et al. (2007), authentic leadership focuses on self-awareness, transparency, ethics/morals, and balanced processing. These elements reflect biblical teachings that Christian, authentic leaders embody. Self-awareness allows the Christian, authentic leader to be aware of his inner and outer man. It occurs when the leader welcomes the truth from others, the Holy Spirit, or himself regarding his words, thoughts, and actions. This leader prays, “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any

The Christian, authentic leader who practices transparency also speaks the truth in love just as the Holy Spirit and God’s word does (Ephesians 4:15, 2 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 4:12). The values/ethics of the Christian, authentic leader align with God’s word and reflects the “fruits of the Holy Spirit” (Galatians 5:22-23), The Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40), and The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). A Christian, authentic leader with balanced processing seeks to know and understand others’ opinions, challenges, and ideas. Proverbs 18:2 says, “A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion” and “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice” (English Standard Version, 2011, Proverbs 12:15). A Christian, authentic leader may experience an opposing opinion by a colleague or subordinate. However, this type of leader is a man of understanding who welcomes it with a calm spirit (Proverbs 17:27).

**Venture Philanthropy**

The act of giving and Christianity are synonymous with love. In the Greek tradition, the word “philanthropy” means ‘love of mankind’” (Sargent, 2014, p. 2). Christian venture philanthropists are familiar with John 3:16, which correlates love with giving (for God so loved the world that He gave). Jesus Christ discusses loving humankind as a commandment that comes second to, and is like, the first and great commandment – loving the Lord God with all of one’s heart, soul, mind (Matthew 22:36-40). It is no surprise then that the earliest recorded events of formal fundraising activities often link to religious practices, specifically the Jewish faith (Sargent, p. 3). Christian ministry fundraising invites those with money to a new relationship with their wealth. Christian school fundraising allows the superintendent and donor to meet on
common ground, which is the organization’s mission (Nouwen, 2010). Nouwen states that “Whether we are asking for money or giving money, we are drawn together by God, who is about to do a new thing through our collaboration (Isaiah 43:19)” (p. 17).

Christian venture philanthropy marries venture philanthropy with the Christian faith. “The distinction between secular and Christian philanthropy is not in the specific activities themselves, but rather in the motivation and message behind the actions” (Minnich, 2016).

Scripture states that “Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed for they share their bread with the poor” (Proverbs 22:9). The blessing that God grants a Christian venture philanthropist is not always in the form of money but rather a revelation “of the character of God the giver, moving (the philanthropist) to gratitude and wonder-struck worship” (Andemicael, 2016, p. 637). Scripture guarantees that the need for philanthropy will never cease. Deuteronomy 15:11 states, “For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore, I command you, ‘You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and the poor, in your land’” (English Standard Version Bible, 2001). In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:42), Jesus commands generosity both in giving to people so needy that they cannot pay back and in lending to those who can pay back (Gundry, 2010). This passage begs the question that if Jesus commands generosity to a “beggar” who may or may not glorify God in his lifestyle, how much more would Jesus command generosity to Christian schools that intentionally advance God’s kingdom?

The historical, sociological, theological, and theoretical concerns in VP and the influence that AL has on VP are focal points of this study. Venture philanthropy and authentic leadership demand similar elements such as accountability, self-discipline, transparency, relationship connectedness, and positive organizational outcomes. Therefore, this multiple case study performed qualitative interviews with five Christian, K-12 school venture philanthropists to
determine what AL attributes influence VP, the most desired attributes and abilities in the Christian school leaders, and the perceived influence of AL attributes on VP success.

**Researcher’s Relationship to the Problem**

This researcher possessed a great interest in the research problem as she works in the non-profit (development) fundraising field at a Christian, K-12 school. This researcher was also inspired to conduct a study on VP in Christian, K-12 schools as her employer is a recipient of VP and a collective contribution of $3.5 million (2017-2020 dollars). The venture philanthropist financially supporting her employer meets VP’s elements as his family foundation provides strategic assistance through a close funder-fundee relationship, holds a seat on the board of trustees, and uses blended (social and financial) performance criteria (Onishi, 2015).

**Statement of the Problem**

Fundraising is a significant focus for Christian school leaders as their neighboring Christian schools remain competitive for philanthropic support (Van Slyke & Brooks, 2005). A leader of a Christian, K-12 school represents the organization and must ensure its financial success. If the Christian leader fails to do so, the school cannot continue its mission. To help fund the school’s mission, experts teach that Christian school leaders should dedicate at least 30 percent of their time to fundraising (development) efforts with potential major donors (Lehman, 2017; Haas, 2020). Additionally, the Christian school leader is the chief fundraising officer and must be a part of relationship-based major and principal gift requests (Lehman, 2017). A major gift represents a personal commitment from a donor in a relationship with the mission and the leader (Mission Advancement, 2020).

The leader possesses the “prestige often required and demanded by the (major gift) prospect to close significant gifts. (Leaders) also have strategic information that can enhance the
ability for greater storytelling case enhancement, and to answer deep dive operational questions” (Haddad, 2020). Given that the average age of school superintendents is 54.5 (AASA, n. d.) and the average age of millionaires is 62 (High and Gary, 2018), the school leader is best suited for cultivating a close relationship with a potential venture philanthropist versus the fundraising (development) officer.

Major donors expect to rub elbows with the school leader who oversees the expenditure of their significant gifts. Additionally, the school leader must steward substantial donor funds and efficiently manage a multi-million-dollar budget (S. Lehman, personal communication, July 17, 2020). “Donors are demanding greater accountability as to how their gifts will be invested and used; thus, organizations must be prepared to provide financial reports and annual reports outlining the organization’s overall financial performance” (Regenovich, 2016, p. 263).

This study discusses how integrity, self-awareness, passion, relationship connectedness, accountability, and positive organizational outcomes are AL and VP’s interrelating themes and prerequisites for VP success. Published authors and experts on Christian philanthropy agree that venture philanthropists seek a Christian, nonprofit leader who possesses integrity and passion for the organization’s mission and vision (B. High, personal communication, June 20, 2020; S. Lehman, personal communication). However, it benefits the leader and organization to accompany these key attributes with a critical ability, as Schuyler Lehman discusses below. Lehman is a non-profit fundraising consultant and founder of Mission Advancement and the author of The Perfect Development Office and The Perfect Campaign. Lehman describes below how a current crisis in Christian school leadership stems from a lack of business-savvy leaders whose background is often rooted in education.

Private, Christian school tuition will continue to rise annually and cross the threshold where families will struggle to afford it, especially in an economic crisis. All the while,
teachers are expecting and wanting annual salary increases. Many Christian school leaders were once teachers and principals and lack extensive experience in running a school. We need to push past the sole focus of the ‘passionate’ Christian school leader and stress that Christian school leaders must also become business savvy. (personal communication, July 17, 2020)

Hence the need for Christian school authentic leaders who practice relationship connectedness and desire to learn from business-keen, venture philanthropists.

Jim Bildner (et al., 2020), CEO of Draper Richards Kaplan Foundation, discusses the dynamics between a venture philanthropy organization and its non-profit beneficiaries that receive $100,000 annually and his three-year board participation. His foundation conducts due diligence to ensure the non-profit organization will hire and retain incredible talent, execute and maintain payroll, develop a budget and strategy, and read financial statements. Bildner says, “Our seconding of our managing directors to these early-stage organizations inherently provide every one of our entrepreneurial leaders with somebody who (the non-profit leaders) know they can call day and night.”

Venture philanthropists who partner with authentic leaders will know that they are highly self-aware of their strengths and weaknesses – such as a lack of high business acumen (Zhu, 2006). Authentic leaders of effective organizations compel philanthropically minded individuals to invest in and partner with them (Hodge, 2016). “High trust nonprofits raise more money” (Hodge, 2016, p. 227), and trust develops when a nonprofit organization excels in performance and donor communication (Sargent et al., 2005 as cited by P. Rooney & U. Osili, 2016). Business savviness coupled with transparent communication is key to funding a budget gap (Mission Advancement, personal communication, September 10, 2020).

One of the biggest misconceptions about private schools is that tuition covers – or should cover – the total costs associated with the school. When you account for overhead such as salaries, facilities, maintenance and upgrades, and new program development, it's easy to
see how quickly a school budget can extend beyond tuition revenue. How you communicate your budget, however, is key to funding the gap. (Mission Advancement)

Financial performance, an element of VP, and business acumen at Christian schools are critical as leaders strive to navigate the economic crisis from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) surveyed 790 member schools in the United States in April 2020. The survey found that the majority of schools provided financial assistance to families; did not offer discounts or tuition refunds; attempted to minimize staff furloughs and layoffs; and planned to participate in the SBA loan program through the CARES Act (Swaner & Powell, 2020). The survey also found that due to COVID-19, 40.8 percent of the surveyed schools halted fundraising campaigns and initiatives. In comparison, an additional 37.8 percent of schools continued fundraising campaigns and initiatives with modifications to existing plans. Survey respondents continued or modified fundraising efforts as “donors were often willing to continue or increase their giving toward financial assistance or special funds designated for families struggling with COVID-19-related financial needs” (Swaner & Powell).

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitates Christian school leaders’ consideration of “innovative new business models and income streams” (Swaner & Powell). Christian school authentic leaders who are VP recipients practice balanced processing and seek and implement financial advice from a business-savvy venture philanthropist. “High-net-worth individuals often possess specific skills and traits that add value to an organization, such as business or leadership experience, leading to serving on boards and advisory committees. These individuals have often reached their peak earning years and have the experience that lends itself to important roles within an organization” (P. Rooney & U. Osili, 2016, p. 188). In venture philanthropy, Christian school leaders can expect to step out of their professional comfort zone, which may be limited in
best business practices. Mario Morino, the founder of Venture Philanthropy Partners, describes how a venture philanthropist merges economic norms with social norms.

These engaged philanthropists expect that nonprofits look at and learn from the business world to gain efficiencies, learn to model new programs, replicate those models, and then scale them. These hypomanic, passionate, and results-driven philanthropreneurs will not tolerate nonprofit “business” as usual. They expect we will work as hard at doing good with their gifts as they worked to earn the money the first place. They bring to the table their creative minds, their intense curiosity, their experience, and their contacts. They are attracted to new ways of doing social good. (Hodge, p. 240)

Authentic leadership is imperative in successful philanthropic support and capital campaigns (Savage & Hamlin, 2015 as cited by Eicher, 2017). Capital campaigns require intense efforts by the leader and development staff to build “financial assets of an institution in a specified amount of time” (Nehls, 2012, abstract). It is the school leader “who builds the bridge with donors – who creates the story that links the donor to the school in such a way that donors feel compelled to give” (Colson, 2015 as cited by Eicher, 2017, p. 34).

Research by Eicher (2017) explores a leadership style’s influence on philanthropy and fundraising in three independent P-12 schools. The study did not research venture philanthropy, authentic leadership, and Christian schools but found that the school leaders utilize transformational, transactional, and distributive leadership behaviors and characteristics to maximize fundraising success (Eicher, abstract). Therefore, this multiple case study performed qualitative interviews with five Christian school venture philanthropists to determine what AL attributes influence venture philanthropy, the most desired attributes and abilities in the Christian school leaders, and the perceived influence of AL attributes on VP success.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of these multiple case studies was to explore the influence of authentic leadership on venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools. In this study, venture
philanthropy at a Christian school was defined as the provision of a collective gift total of $1 million or more in cash assets, the provision of strategic assistance through a close funder-fundee relationship, the venture philanthropist serving on the school’s board of trustees or in an advisory role, and the implementation of social and financial performance criteria.

The first theory that guided this study is authentic leadership, as defined by Bruce J. Avolio, William L. Gardner, Fred O. Walumbwa (2005), and Warren Bennis (2003). An authentic leader owns his personal experiences and acts according to his true self (Luthans and Avolio, 2003). In this study, the Christian, authentic leader also embodies passion, relationship connectedness, Christian values/ethics, self-discipline/consistency, balanced processing, self-awareness, transparency, and compassion.

The second theory that guided this study is venture philanthropy, as defined by Dr. Tamaki Onishi (2015). VP is performance-based development finance to organizations that expand their social impact (John, 2006). VP elements include the use of various (philanthropic and market-based) funding instruments, the provision of strategic assistance through a close funder-fundee relationship, taking seats on the boards of funded organizations, and the use of blended (social and financial) performance criteria (Onishi, 2015, pp. 70-71).

**Research Questions**

**RQ1.** What attributes do venture philanthropists seek in a Christian school leader before giving to the Christian school?

**RQ2.** What abilities do venture philanthropists seek in a Christian school leader before giving to the Christian school?

**RQ3.** What are the most desired authentic leadership attributes among these Christian school leaders?

**RQ4.** What are the perceived influences of authentic leadership attributes on venture philanthropy success?
Assumptions and Delimitations

Research Assumptions

This researcher assumed that authentic leadership influences venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools. Venture philanthropy (VP) and authentic leadership (AL) theories (Avolio et al., 2007; George, 2003) have interrelating elements of accountability, self-discipline, transparency, relationship connectedness, and positive organizational outcomes. Venture philanthropy’s primary concern is performance criteria (social and financial outcomes) (Onishi, 2015, p. 74), which led this researcher to assume that the AL attributes above are prerequisites for VP success. Furthermore, there is growing evidence that authentic leaders achieve positive organizational outcomes (George et al., 2007; George, 2003). Although the study examined five venture philanthropists from their respective Christian schools, this researcher acknowledges that this study’s findings may not represent VP success cases in all Christian, K-12 schools. Every Christian school is unique, and factors such as leadership, location, school history, school demographics, and community support may influence its ability or inability to achieve VP success.

Delimitations of the Research Design

1. This research was delimited to superintendents or heads of school at Christian schools in the United States. The schools ranged from PreK-12 and serve primary or secondary grade levels or both levels.

2. This research was delimited to Christian schools that identify their education as Christ-centered and reference the Christian faith in their mission or vision statement.

3. This research was delimited to venture philanthropists who serve in a board or advisory capacity at the Christian school in which they have invested $1 million or more.

4. This research was delimited to AL attributes of leaders that influence VP at their Christian school. Authentic leadership was also reviewed through a biblical lens. This research does not comprehensively study other leadership styles (e.g., transformational, transactional, laissez-faire, charismatic, servant).
5. This research was further delimited to Christian schools with VP success, which was defined as the provision of a gift total of $1 million or more in cash assets, the provision of strategic assistance through a close funder-fundee relationship, the VPT serving in a board or advisory role, and the implementation of social and financial performance criteria.

6. This research was delimited to venture philanthropy funding with a collective total of $1 million or more in cash assets. The total did not include pledges that have the potential to become outstanding and unfulfilled.

**Definition of Terms**

1. **Annual Fund:** The “building block for all fundraising” that provides “a steady flow of income for the organization’s programs, services, and activities” (Schwartzberg, 2007, paras. 4-5).

2. **Authentic Leader:** A leader who owns his personal experiences and acts in accord with his true self (Luthans & Avolio, 2003), and an individual who fulfills one or all of the following descriptions:

   a. Individuals who practice:

      i. **Self-Awareness:** Showing an understanding of one’s strengths and weaknesses and the multifaceted nature of the self, which includes gaining insight into the self through exposure to others and being aware of one’s impact on other people.

      ii. **Transparency:** Presenting one’s authentic self (as opposed to a fake or distorted self) to others.

      iii. **Ethical/Moral:** An internalized and integrated form of self-regulation guided by internal moral standards and values.

      iv. **Balanced Processing:** Leaders who solicit sufficient opinions and viewpoints prior to making important decisions. These leaders objectively analyze all relevant data before coming to a decision (Avolio et al., 2007, pp. 4-7).

   b. Individuals who practice self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency, which develops from *purpose* (passion), *values* (behavior), *heart* (compassion), *relationships* (connectedness), and *self-discipline* (consistency) (George, 2003, p. 36).

3. **Capital Campaign:** A capital campaign is a method of raising the necessary funds to build a new building, initiative, program, or to fund an endowment. Capital campaigns “are widely used in non-profit organizations such as churches, independent colleges, and schools” (Diaz, 2013; Quinn et al., 2006; Roach, 2009 as cited by Eicher, 2017, p. 19).

4. **Christian, Nonprofit School:** Organized and operated exclusively for educational purposes and “meets certain other requirements to be considered tax-exempt under
Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3)” (IRS, 2020). The school “focuses on the promotion or maintenance of Christianity while providing a complete academic education” (Laats, 2010; Swezey, 2006; Zandstra, 2012 as cited by Schroeder, 2012, p. 5).

5. Fundraising: “A method of securing additional funding to run programs, initiatives, and facilities with a for-profit or nonprofit organization. Fundraising can increase an organization’s ability to remain competitive in a competitive marketplace” (Diaz, 2013; Quinn et al., 2006 as cited by Eicher, 2017, p. 20).


7. Venture Philanthropy Elements:
   a. Onishi (2015, pp. 70-71)
      i. Use of various (philanthropic and market-based) funding instruments
      ii. Provision of strategic assistance through a close funder-fundee relationship
      iii. Taking seats on the boards of funded organizations
      iv. Use of blended (social and financial) performance criteria
      i. Investments in a 3-6-year plan for social change
      ii. A managing partner relationship
      iii. Accountability-for-results process
      iv. Provision of cash and expertise
      v. Exit strategy

8. Venture Philanthropy Success: The fulfillment of agreed-upon, social and financial performance or criteria markers between the funder (VPT) and fundee (Christian school).

Significance of the Study

This study’s practical significance reveals the importance of authenticity in leadership in today’s nonprofit sector. Recent tumultuous events in American society have included the COVID-19 pandemic, economic crisis, social unrest, corporate, political, and even Christian ministry scandals. These events have placed greater attention on the ethics, performance, and solutions by leaders. However, one study shows a greater reliance on nonprofit leaders than for-profit or governmental leaders to create solutions. A survey of nearly 1,700 high-net-worth
donors reveals that 86 percent have the most confidence in nonprofit organizations than the government to solve societal and global problems (U.S. Trust & Indiana University, 2018). Thus, authentic leadership in non-profit organizations is at peak demand among high-net-worth donors and venture philanthropists.

This study will allow Christian school leaders to learn major gift fundraising and AL attributes that influence venture philanthropy. This study benefits Christian school leaders who may lack experience working with high-net-worth philanthropists, which could be detrimental to a fundraising campaign (Crowe, 2013). Christian school leaders often find their school budget “under-funded with a large gap between tuition generated and the cost of operating a school” (Crowe, 2013). Fundraising is critical for Christian school leaders as they are considered the real “CFO” (chief fundraising officer) and chief development officer (Lehman, 2017). Constituents want to hear from the decision-maker (leader) in a campaign as he must grow the donor base (Crowe, 2013).

Christian school leaders must be realistic about the amount of money and time required to raise the school’s financial resources (Crowe, 2013). Fundraising expert Schuyler Lehman (2017) suggests that Christian school leaders designate at least 30 percent of their time to fundraising efforts and have the revenue to fundraising cost ratio of 4:1. This ratio equates to four dollars raised for every dollar spent on consulting expenses, board training on fundraising, development salaries, direct mail expenses, travel expenses, donor lunch expenses, software expenses, and special event expenses. The Christian school leader seeking VP must first develop the fundraising fundamentals, such as the above recommendations. In addition to this study, Christian school leaders can strengthen their understanding of major-gift fundraising and VP
through a wealth of fundraising resources (e.g., books, fundraising consultants, webinars, newsletters, blogs).

This study can also educate venture philanthropists on the AL attributes and abilities that facilitate VP success, which may increase their opportunity for financial sustainability, social and spiritual impact, and fulfillment of the school’s mission. Raising more money precedes growth in the mission, and gifts from philanthropists and donors determine how much work can be funded to accomplish the mission (Lehman, 2017). Schuyler Lehman has helped raise billions of dollars for nonprofit organizations and argues that the most significant resources for future growth will come from a relationship-based, one-to-one connection with major donors (Mission Advancement, n. d.; Lehman, 2017). Relationship connectedness is also a key element in authentic leadership.

Christian school leaders fundraise and lead with biblical values (Crowe, 2013), while Christian philanthropists give to express gratitude for the financial resources God has given him or her (Minnich, 2016). Expressing gratitude is fundamental in the Christian school leader and venture philanthropist relationship. Gratitude deepens relationships with donors “because they feel that their generosity made an eternal difference. Your ministry partners should never feel that their gifts are expected, taken for granted, overlooked, or unappreciated” (Haas, 2020). Scripture teaches that Christians who give sacrificially leave a lasting legacy long after the philanthropist’s life. In Hebrews 11:4, God approves Abel as righteous for his excellent sacrifice, and Abel’s gift “still speaks through his faith, though he is dead” (Modern English Version, 2014).

Relationship connectedness, ethics, self-awareness, passion, accountability, and positive organizational outcomes are interrelating elements of AL and VP and topics in this study. Many studies exist on AL, but none exist in the Christian, K-12 school setting regarding its influence on venture philanthropy. This researcher’s study is similar to Eicher’s research (2017), which focuses
on the influence of leadership style on philanthropy and fundraising in three independent Appalachian schools. However, this study concentrates solely on venture philanthropy and authentic leadership attributes. It differs from Eicher’s research, which focuses on (non-venture) philanthropy and transactional, transformational, or distributive leadership attributes (p. 3). This study fills a literature gap and is of significance to scientific research as it focuses on authentic leadership’s influence on venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools.

**Summary of the Design**

This study employed a multiple case study design and conducted qualitative interviews with all five participants. The researcher used qualitative interviews with venture philanthropists to explore why they invest more than $1 million in a Christian school and if authentic leadership attributes and abilities in the leader influenced their contribution. This researcher conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews that sought the views and opinions of the venture philanthropists. Three of the five qualitative interviews for this multiple case study were audio and video recorded, and two were audio recorded. The researcher coded data from the interviews so themes and interrelating themes could be analyzed and interpreted for research findings (Creswell, p. 196).
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

“Giving is worshipping God.”

--Ed Dobson, late LU founding dean

Overview

This study primarily focused on venture philanthropy and used the authentic leadership theory and concept to establish its qualitative interview protocol. The following chapter discusses the theoretical frameworks of VP and AL. This chapter also outlines how VP and AL elements possess Christian themes and values, which, when employed, advance God’s kingdom.

Theological Framework

Venture Philanthropy

Christian school philanthropy brings the love of God from heaven to Earth. Money creates a heart connection between the philanthropist and the recipient, for where a man’s treasure is, there his heart will also be (Luke 12:34). “Those who need money and those who can give money meet on the common ground of God’s love” (Nouwen, p. 22). Religious philosopher Simone Weil writes, “He who treats as equals those who are far below him in strength makes them a gift of the quality of human beings, of which fate has deprived them. He produces the original generosity of the Creator with regard to them. This is the most Christian of virtues. Such virtue is identical with a real, active faith in the true God” (Weil, 1951, p. 88). A Christian leader’s fundraising efforts is rooted in the knowledge that “God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8).

A Christian school’s mission and vision are crucial to advancing God’s kingdom because without vision, the people perish, and without a mission, the people lose their way (Proverbs
The Christian school vision and mission must be like “trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither (Psalm 1:3)” (Nouwen, 2010, p. 17). The Christian nonprofit leader communicates the vision, mission, and the impact of supporters’ gifts. Generosity is a faith decision, and Christian school leaders must appeal to donors with the truth that their donations will make an immediate and eternal impact in the lives of those they serve – students (Haas, 2020). One example of a direct impact on students comes from tuition assistance or scholarships that allow inner-city students to receive a private, transformative, Christian-worldview education. According to Haas (2020), vice-president of The Timothy Group, a Christian ministry fundraising consulting firm, communicating the school’s vision is vital with major donors. As Haas discusses, a donor’s generosity deserves clarity on how their investment helps achieve the mission.

When you have a clear vision and a clear path to accomplish that vision, people will rally to your cause. Donors want to know that your ministry is a good investment that will produce a spiritual return on their gift. The students you educate today will be leaders tomorrow.

Patrick McLaughlin (2018), the founder of The Timothy Group, echoes a similar point. He states that major donors are purpose-driven people and a mission or vision statement that fulfills that purpose appeals to them (p. 82). According to McLaughlin (2018), an unclear vision breeds a donor’s lack of confidence in the organization.

The quality of your ministry vision will impact the quantity of major/mega donor participation. If your vision is incomplete, or if your vision is unclear, you will not capture the heart, mind, soul, and checkbook of the major donor.

When donors and venture philanthropists give themselves to planting and nurturing love on Earth, their efforts will reach out beyond their chronological existence (Nouwen, 2010). Major donors “do not measure the value of their lives by their net worth; rather they measure their life’s meaning based on whether they were their authentic selves in life, made a difference
in the world, and left a lasting legacy” (Kubler-Ross, 1969 as cited by Hodge, 2016, p. 233). The Apostle Paul teaches wealthy Christians not to put their hope in their uncertain wealth but to put their hope in God (1 Timothy 6:17). Christian school leaders have the “privilege of challenging their high-net-worth donors to place their hope in God by laying up ‘treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age’ (1 Timothy 6:19)” (Haas, 2020).

A Christian school leader cannot approach fundraising with the attitude of a beggar. Instead, he should pursue fundraising and his purpose with passion (George, 2003, p. 36). If the Christian school leader believes in his school’s mission and vision, then he carries the confidence to ask for money standing up, not bowing down. “Without apology, he invites people to be a part of his vision” (Nouwen, 2010, p. 19). Asking a philanthropist for money in Christian nonprofit fundraising must be done in a manner where the donor will not give reluctantly or under compulsion but rather with a pre-meditated contribution and a cheerful heart (2 Corinthians 9:6-8).

Christian leaders need to recognize that requests for funds will influence a world that does not belong to us (Harris & Rod, 2017, p. 32). The body of Christ is a global community called to cross boundaries and give out of its resources to attend to those in need, which includes Christian schools (Andemicael, 2016). Christian, K-12 school leaders oversee the discipleship and education of students 18 months old to 18 years old. However, this honorable task comes at a cost in funding salaries, programs, utilities, rental fees, maintenance costs, and many other expenses.

Fundraising must remain at the forefront of a Christian leader’s mind but not consume it to the point of functional atheism (Harris & Rod, 2017). In *Keeping Faith in Fundraising*, Harris and Rod (2017) state that the Holy Spirit’s tranquility must rule the hearts and minds of Christian
leaders. According to Harris and Rod (2017), a Christian ministry leader serves his soul well to remember that God is in control and cares for his ministry’s needs.

If my work as a fundraiser is rooted in my identity in Christ, led by the Holy Spirit and an expression of worship to the Father, then I do all my activity with a recognition that He is in charge, He is accomplishing what he wants to achieve with his own standards for faithfulness, and I do not need to live frantically. (p. 86)

Christian school leaders can request donations with God’s confidence because fundraising is gospel work and accomplishes God’s purposes (Harris & Rod, 2017). Christian leaders should also take “a fresh look at the distinction between charity – the historic practice where donors gave to express gratitude and to exercise the spiritual discipline of generosity – and the more contemporary work of philanthropy, where money is given to achieve improvement in the world” (Harris & Rod, p. 89). The Christian leader can fundraise with conviction knowing Who he works for, Who owns the “cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10),” and Whose grace is ultimately at work (2 Corinthians 9:8,14). Christian leaders must remember that if they commit their way to the Lord and trust in him, He will act (Psalm 37:5).

Some leaders may consider it distasteful to ask constituents for money, but scripture proves otherwise. Fundraising in Christian ministry is comfortably addressed by the Apostle Paul, who encourages the church to give generously to the saints’ needs. Paul states:

For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints – and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. (English Standard Version, 2001, 2 Corinthians 8:3-5).

The Apostle Paul encourages Christians to excel in faith, speech, knowledge, love, and generosity to prove that their love is genuine (2 Cor. 8:7-8). “He also includes a theological rationale for their giving when he points to Jesus, who ‘though he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich’ (2 Corinthians 8:9)” (Brashler, 2018, p. 51).
The Apostle Paul teaches Macedonians that “giving beyond what is financially comfortable for them, is a witness to the power of God transforming them into the image of the One who gives freely without expectation of reward” (Demicael, 2016, p. 629). As reflected below, this call for generosity is similar to God’s instructions to Moses in Exodus.

God commands Moses to tell the Israelites to gather gifts to be used to build and furnish God’s tabernacle. “Whoever is of a generous heart” (Exodus 35:5) and “everyone whose heart was stirred and whose spirit was willing” (verse 21) respond to the command of Moses. Out of gratitude for God's steadfast love and mercy, the Israelites generously gave whatever gifts they could offer to build and furnish a sanctuary for God. (Brashler, p. 51)

Christian leaders like the Apostle Paul and Moses exemplify a confident Christian fundraising style. In The book of Jerry Falwell, Harding (2000) discusses how believers’ donation practices are an act of sacrifice that vacates a commercial economy and enters a Christ-centered realm in which “material expectations are transformed” (Harding, p. 109). Jerry Falwell Sr.’s fundraising style for the then Liberty Baptist College, now Liberty University, “tapped into preexisting interests among his constituents” (Harding, p. 109). As discussed below, Falwell leveraged his authority in the academic and ministry realms to appeal to the interests of Christian, conservative supporters.

He told them things they wanted to hear about Liberty Baptist College—that hemlines and hairlines were carefully monitored there, and that, unlike other colleges, Liberty was a place where students learned to love America and respect authority. While Liberty was not of the world, it was at the same time in the world—it would give its students access to credentialed degrees, better jobs, still higher education.

Falwell’s appeals followed tried-and-true fundraising formulas, creating a sense of crisis and impending doom if contributions were not forthcoming. And of course, Falwell was, for those who listened to him faithfully, a figure of authority, and authority depends on obedience. Falwell’s asking for money, and his people’s giving it to him, enacted his authority. (Harding, p. 109)

Falwell’s fundraising success from his constituents reflects the findings of a recent Giving Institute study (as cited by DonorPerfect, 2020). The study finds that donors are most likely to
give if they are asked by someone they know well or a clergy member (DonorPerfect, 2020). Falwell provides a framework for Christian school leaders who make a fundraising appeal to Christian stakeholders.

Church-attending Christians who support Christian education are the lynchpin in Christian school fundraising. A study by Lin (2004) shows that the more pious the believer, the more the doctrines will constrain people’s actions, and the more people are encouraged to donate. A study by Brooks (2003) finds that people who regularly attend religious institutions are more likely to develop the customary practice of financial giving. Religiously affiliated individuals are more than two times more generous with their financial contributions on average ($1,590) than those without a religious affiliation ($695) (Austin et al., 2017). Additionally, a survey of 1,530 households found that religiously conservative individuals contribute more than liberals in terms of support to religiously affiliated nonprofits and total donations to nonprofit organizations (Egers, 2015). Pew Research Center (2014 as cited by Zinsmeister, 2019) data shows that “65 percent of weekly church attenders were found to have donated either volunteer hours, money, or goods to the poor within the previous week.”

Church sermons have likely focused on the biblical practice of tithing, which is donating 10 percent of one’s income (Malachi 3). Preachers and Christian school leaders teach on the importance of giving knowing that “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (English Standard Version, 2001, 2 Timothy 3:16-17). “Faithful Christians—and fundamental Baptists are among the more faithful in this respect—sacrifice themselves narratively, in their conduct, and financially to God. Their gifts of money do not go to any man of ministry but go directly to God and represent obedience to him”
The studies above affirm that Christian school leaders are well-positioned to ask Christian constituents to donate.

Haas (2020) states that spiritual impact, spiritual wisdom, fiscal responsibility, and a healthy organization attract God’s “kingdom givers” (Haas, 2020). Christian philanthropists seek financially-sound business plans and may want to “review your audit, challenge your financial projections, and question your strategic plan. They want assurance that if they give significantly, you will manage their gift well. ‘Whoever can be trusted with very little can be trusted with much’ (Luke 16:10)” (Haas). Haas adds that major donors will become frustrated with ministry leaders who make poor business decisions. It is why they seek the following key elements in the Christian leader:

- **Clear Thinking**: Effective fundraising starts with a clear, compelling case for support based upon sound research. Some ministry leaders make decisions on a hunch, but God has given you a mind to think carefully about your steps. “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?” (Luke 14:28).
- **Good Judgment**: A businessman who served on a board became increasingly frustrated with the way the executive director overspent the budget then desperately turned to donors for help. The businessman/board member raised red flags at every meeting, but the other board members gave into the leader’s whims. Finally, the board member left; he couldn’t stand to see the ministry he loved destroyed by bad decisions.
- **Competence**: One major donor evaluated a leader’s track record and concluded, “He’s a nice guy who genuinely wants to help people, but he’s somewhat incompetent.” Donors who have this attitude about your ministry’s leadership may stop giving and wait for the next leader, or they may maintain status quo giving, but they certainly won’t give sacrificially.
- **Diligence**: Laziness is a cardinal sin. Donors can understand if you fall short of your projections, but they don’t understand if you don’t give 110% percent to achieve your goal. Major donors accomplished success in business because they worked hard and have little sympathy for those who seem to coast. “All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty” (Proverbs 14:23). (Haas, 2020)

Haas also challenges Christian leaders to practice self-awareness – an element of authentic leadership. “If God has called you to leadership, evaluate yourself to see how you
match up with these donor expectations” (Haas). Philanthropists want “facts and figures that demonstrate your ministry effectiveness” and are “concerned about your spiritual accounting as you are of your fiscal accounting” (Haas, 2020). As Solomon demonstrates in 2 Chronicles 9:1-4, a healthy organization and a leader’s spiritual wisdom are attractive to high-net-worth individuals. The passage states:

When the queen of Sheba heard of Solomon’s fame, she came to Jerusalem to test him with hard questions. She arrived with a large group of attendants and a great caravan of camels loaded with spices, large quantities of gold, and precious jewels. When she met with Solomon, she talked with him about everything she had on her mind. Solomon had answers for all her questions; nothing was too hard for him to explain to her.

When the queen of Sheba realized how wise Solomon was, and when she saw the palace he had built, she was overwhelmed. She was also amazed at the food on his tables, the organization of his officials and their splendid clothing, the cupbearers and their robes, and the burnt offerings Solomon made at the Temple of the Lord. 

“Wise donors know that only spiritually healthy organizations can make an eternal difference. For the queen, seeing was believing. Solomon exceeded her expectations. She was amazed at his wisdom and how God had blessed him in every imaginable way” (Haas, 2020).

Due diligence is critical in Christian venture philanthropy. According to Haas (2020), due diligence challenges the Christian non-profit leader to prepare for all questions by the philanthropist.

Solomon was by no means a charity case, but the queen of Sheba came with expensive gifts and hard questions. He answered her every question, nothing was too difficult for him. Major donors also ask hard questions. They conduct the same due diligence as they would for a potential business partnership and look for fiscal responsibility, spiritual impact, and a healthy organization. (Haas, 2020)

John D. Rockefeller, Jr., a prominent philanthropist in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, encourages due diligence between the donor and nonprofit leader. Rockefeller states, “Whether
we expect dividends in dollars or human betterment, we need to be sure that the gift or the investment is a wise one and therefore we should know all about it” (Haas).

Christian philanthropists make a financial investment to see a spiritual return that significantly impacts God’s kingdom. Christian venture philanthropists steward a resource that they know they do not truly own. Deuteronomy 8:18 states, “But you must remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to get wealth, so that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is today.” Christian venture philanthropy allows for a financial and spiritual blessing for both the funder and fundee (ministry constituents). The Christian venture philanthropist entrusts the Christian organization with a portion of his or her God-given wealth to impact heaven and on earth. It is why Christian leaders who are VP recipients must reflect biblical qualities and AL attributes underpinned by authenticity, transparency, and truth in Christ (John 14:6). Anything short of these attributes can threaten the reputation, success, and future of the leader and his organization.

**Authentic Leadership**

Christian leaders can look to the Apostle Paul as an example of authentic leadership in Christian ministry. In Titus 3:1-8, “Paul reflects the same self-awareness, accountability, influence, and trusting relationships with followers that authentic leaders emulate” (Wilson, 2018, abstract). Paul’s letter to Titus teaches leaders and followers in ministry to behave with self-awareness, accountability, influence, and trusting relationships with followers – practices in AL as exegetically analyzed in the table below (Wilson, 2018).
Table A1

**Titus 3:1-8 and Authentic Leadership**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Awareness</td>
<td>For we ourselves were once…(3:3)</td>
<td>“Paul’s admission and self-awareness opened the minds and hearts of his followers to consider their own transgressions and renewal” (p. 208).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Remind them to be…(3:1)</td>
<td>“Paul expressed his own accountability by incorporating himself into the group of sinners when he stated, ‘we too were foolish’” (p. 210).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence</td>
<td>Insist on these things…(3:8)</td>
<td>“Paul strived to have Titus and the other Christian leaders positively influence all the people of Crete and to recognize the high standard of Christian morals and values” (p. 208).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trusting Relationships</td>
<td>The saying is trustworthy…(3:8)</td>
<td>“transparency, accountability and commitment to moral standards creates a trusting and influential relationship with others” (p. 203).</td>
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**Authentic Leadership Elements**

George (2003) states that the authentic leader practices self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency, which develops from *purpose* (passion), *values* (behavior), *heart* (compassion), *relationships* (connectedness), and *self-discipline* (consistency) (George, 2003, p. 36). This researcher argues that venture philanthropists who partner with Christian school authentic leaders are poised for venture philanthropy success as both possess Christian *values*, have the *purpose* of fulfilling the school mission, have a *heart* for students to receive a Christian education, are strongly connected in *relationships*, and practice *self-discipline* to achieve a mission. The Christian school authentic leader also embodies self awareness, transparency, values/ethics, and balanced processing, which all have biblical undertones (Avolio et al., 2007).
**Self Awareness.** The authentic leader is aware of his strengths and weaknesses, personality characteristics, emotions, how others see him or her, and how the leader impacts others (Avolio et al., 2007, p. 4). The Christian, authentic leader strives to see himself through the eyes of Jesus, which is that he is “beloved, deeply loved, cherished, forgiven, and gifted” (Linhart & Nieuwhof, 2017, p. 43). In the book, *The Self-Aware Leader: Discovering Your Blind Spots to Reach Your Ministry Potential*, Linhart and Nieuwhof (2017) state:

> All of the strategies, skills, and self-awareness we can learn are secondary to the fundamental source of nurture in our lives, the abiding presence of Christ. Learning how to remain close to Jesus, be honest with ourselves and others, live in authentic community with others, and develop gracious ways in our relationships requires a high level of discipline and regular moments of fresh perspective. (p. 44)

A leader can develop greater self awareness by reflecting on the following questions posed by Linhart and Nieuwhof (pp. 54-55).

1. What makes you feel defensive?
2. What triggers your insecurity?
3. Who do you compete with, and do you compare yourself to others?
4. Are you satisfied with your gifts and abilities?
5. What are the reasons you react a certain way?
6. Who do you admire, and what attributes in him/her do you admire?

The Christian, authentic leader examines his work and seeks to reflect Christ in his conduct and character (Galatians 6:4). He analyzes his past, temptations, emotions, pressures, and conflicts (Linhart and Nieuwhof). The leader assesses himself through the lens of Romans 12:3 that says, “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sound judgment, according to the measure of faith God has distributed to every man” (*Modern English Version Bible*, 2014). Self awareness begins when the Christian leader has a transparent conversation with himself and, most importantly – God.
Transparency. Transparency requires the leader to present his or her true self instead of the fake or distorted self (Avolio et al., 2007, p. 5). Roberts (2016) is the author of *Working with Christian Servant Leadership Spiritual Intelligence: The Foundation of Vocational Success.* He says the leader must use great discernment when showing transparency. “The appropriate degree and nature of transparency are contingent on the situation, the character of the workgroup, and the overall trust levels” (Roberts, p. 161). However, when appropriate transparency and vulnerability are practiced, “it releases great human relationship energy, as our strength becomes perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). It reduces the unbearable pressure to act, pretend, and project through image management – an exhausting proposition” (p. 161). Roberts discusses the general principles or steps to establishing transparency:

1. Communicate to staff that the leader does not have all the answers, is not perfect, does not expect others to be perfect, and making mistakes and sins is a natural part of the human condition.
2. Leaders must admit when they make mistakes and ask for forgiveness.
3. Leaders must not retaliate against employees who are open and honest about their opinions and feelings or disagree with the leader.
4. Leaders must reward employees with public praise for being transparent.

Transparency stems from a spirit of humility and “is an explicit recognition” that one does “not have to be perfect to earn approval, respect, and love from God first, and others second” (Roberts, p. 156). Christian authentic leaders who practice humility extend the same grace to others that they receive from God. This value is supported by 1 Peter 5:5 that says, “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble,” and Ephesians 4:2 that says, “With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love” (*English Standard Version*, 2001). The advantage of transparency by the authentic leader is that his or her employees can learn from the leader’s
mistakes or errors and share in the comfort he receives from the Lord (2 Cor. 1:4) (Roberts, p. 162).

**Ethics/Morals.** A hazard in leadership is that it can induce the belief that a leader is “excepted from moral requirements that apply to the rest of us” (Price, 2006, p. 125). Therefore, the Christian, authentic leader must set and exercise a high standard for moral and ethical conduct (Avolio et al., 2007, p. 6). Authentic leaders predictably and consistently do the right thing “even when there is a calculated risk involved” (Bass, 1990 as cited by Abbott, 1999, p. 15). Proverbs (10:9, 28:6, 11:3, 19:1, 20:7) asserts the importance of walking in integrity and the crookedness of a man being made public. The authentic leader conveys his principles, values, and ethics through actions, not just words, in public and private settings (Avolio and Gardner, 2005, pp. 329-330). The Christian, authentic leader aims “at what is honorable not only in the Lord’s sight but also in the sight of man” (English Standard Version, 2001, 2 Corinthians 8:21).

The leader strives to be an example to others by reflecting integrity in his words and deeds (Titus 2:7).

The Christian, authentic leader intentionally measures his words and actions against what is acceptable to God and aligns with His commandments (Psalm 19:14, 1 Timothy 3:1-13). The Apostle Paul instructs leaders to model good works (Titus 2:7) that are achievable through God’s divine power. Second Peter 1:3-4 says:

> His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. (English Standard Version, 2001)
Godly ethics and morals are practiced by the Christian, authentic leader who, like the Apostle Paul, possesses “powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil” (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Hebrews 5:14).

**Balanced Processing.** The Christian, authentic leader solicits others’ ideas before making critical decisions (Avolio et al., 2007, p. 7). Proverbs 19:20 says, “Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future” (*English Standard Version*, 2001). God gives wisdom generously to the leader who asks for it (James 1:5). However, the leader understands that God’s direction can come from employees or colleagues who communicate wise and valuable input. The Christian, authentic leader allows others to sharpen him into a more authentic leader (Proverbs 27:17). He is receptive to faithful “wounds” of a friend, advisor, colleague, professional or spiritual mentor, or authority figure (Proverbs 27:6). This Christian, authentic leader welcomes their challenges and truths regarding his spiritual, personal, and professional life due to transparent discussions. Proverbs 11:14 warns, “Where there is no guidance, a people fall, but in an abundance of counselors, there is safety” (*English Standard Version*, 2001).

The Christian, authentic leader does not see himself as wise in his own eyes (Proverbs 12:15) and knows that experience, age, and accolades do not always equate to wisdom. Job 32:8-9 affirms this and says, “But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding. Great men are not always wise, nor do the aged always understand judgment” (*Modern English Version*, 2014). A Christian leader void of counseling, most certainly the Holy Spirit’s counseling, is also void of understanding (Deuteronomy 32:28). The Christian, authentic leader practices balanced processing with the source of all wisdom, knowledge, and understanding – the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit teaches the leader all things and reminds him of
the words of Jesus Christ (John 14:26). The Spirit of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, is a Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2). It is why the Christian, authentic leader seeks transparent conversations with the Holy Spirit and key individuals to ensure organizational success.

Christian Values in the Authentic Leader’s Fundraising

Authentic Christian leaders possess the biblical quality of integrity, which allows them to be guided by the Lord and walk securely (Proverbs 10:9, Proverbs 11:3). Haas (2020) discusses the significance of integrity and transparency in the Christian leader. According to Haas (2020), Christian ministry fundraising should never tolerate dishonesty in donor communications.

(The Apostle) Paul meant what he said and lived what he believed. Integrity is a bedrock principle of fundraising. Donors must have complete confidence that you are accomplishing what you advertise in your ministry and wisely using the funds you receive. Accurate donor reports are critical to continued donor engagement. Everything your ministry does either builds trust and credibility or erodes it – your communication, your ministry impact, the way you deal with controversies, and even the way you treat your staff. (Haas, 2020)

Demonstrating self-discipline and practicing positive values are dimensions of AL (George, 2003). Christian school leaders who fundraise for projects also raise donor expectations that their gifts will be designated for that project (Haas, 2020). It is why integrity, biblical values, and self-discipline complement the authentic leader who works heartily for the Lord (Colossians 3:23).

A Christian school authentic leader who develops a passion for his purpose (George, 2003) is well-suited for the role of “chief fundraising officer.” The Apostle Paul exudes passion in fundraising for the early church when he says, “For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action” (New Living Translation, 2015, 2 Corinthians 9:2). Like Paul, the Christian, authentic leader passionately shares
testimonies of donors’ generosity that can spur other constituents toward sacrificial gifts (Haas, 2020).

Compassion and relationship connectedness are AL attributes and effective in fundraising. These elements lead the Christian, authentic leader to focus on donors whose heart connects with theirs (Haas, 2020). “One Christian university analyzed their million-dollar gifts and discovered that in almost every situation, the donor’s first gift was small, but their gifts grew as their relationship grew” (Haas). Christian, non-profit leaders often have opportunities to serve, bless, pray with, and show compassion for their donors (Haas). These occasions open the door for the Christian leader to ask the donor to prayerfully consider making a sacrificial gift just as Elijah asked the widow for her last meal during a famine (1 Kings 17). Haas (2020) states that people give to people they know and love even during a crisis, so strengthening donor relationships is time well spent. Additionally, the leader’s life experiences assist him in opening “his heart to have compassion for the most difficult challenges that people face along life’s journey” (George, 2003, p. 39).

The Crucibles of the Authentic Leader’s Life

Authentic leadership development is also known as “life’s program.” It allows leaders to use life stories to help them lead and develop over time through reflection on life’s experiences (Avolio, 2005). Bennis (2009) interviewed 125 successful and authentic leaders, and most indicated that their life stories and experiences fueled the passion, purpose, and values by which they lead. Over three-quarters of the leaders identified a specific transformative experience, what Bennis calls a crucible, as the essential factor in their success. This experience allowed them to discover authentic leadership that enabled them to become fully integrated leaders (Bennis, 2009).
In Authentic Leadership, George (2003) shares how deaths and a cancer diagnosis of a loved one moved him to think of and contribute to others more often. George (2003) adds how “In times of personal crisis, the grace of God and the power of faith can provide the basis for healing” (p. 32). The difficult challenges of an authentic leader’s life are what George and Bennis (2003) refer to as the “crucible’s work.” The Oxford Dictionary (2019) defines a “crucible” as a ceramic or metal container in which metals or other substances may be melted or subjected to very high temperatures. It also defines a crucible as a severe trial when different elements interact and lead to creating something new. This concept is similar to James 1:2-4, which states, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (English Standard Version Bible, 2001).

Leadership is similar to a crucible in that it brings fiery trials, intimidating elements, and setbacks, which can make or break a leader. New challenges in leadership are elements that have the potential to sharpen and purify the leader. If a leader counts his trial as “pure joy,” he is a leader who welcomes the testing of his faith that produces steadfastness, endurance, character, and hope. The Apostle Paul echoes this when he tells Christians to “Rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (English Standard Version, 2001, Romans 5:3-5).

To become an authentic leader, individuals must pursue a personal journey of self-discovery, self-improvement, reflection, and renewal, in addition to developing a leadership style consistent with their personality and character (Shirey, 2006). Trials or “crucibles” in an
authentic leader’s life bring to the surface impurities of the heart and reveal true motives behind their words, actions, and desires. It is why the authentic leader must have an internalized moral perspective and high self-awareness (Walumbwa et al., 2008). He is a leader who prays, “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me and lead me in the way everlasting” (English Standard Version, 2001, Psalm 139:23-24). It is only in the crucible where the leader will have his values challenged and “find the ‘true north’ of his moral compass” (George, 2003, pp. 37-38).

Christian leaders who do not strongly reflect AL attributes have access to the Triune God, who has the power to transform and renew leaders (Romans 12:1-2). AL attributes are achievable to all Christian leaders and can be developed through introspection, self-control, self-awareness, and sanctification while remaining true to their personality. Discovering authentic leadership in oneself requires a commitment to self-development and realizing one’s potential (George et al., 2017).

**Accountability for the Christian, Authentic Leader**

A *Forbes* article suggests that accountability breeds trust and “is probably the single most important element fueling truly successful organizations” (Gleeson, 2016). The Christian, authentic leader holds himself accountable to both earthly and heavenly entities such as the Triune God and authority figures (venture philanthropist, school founder, board members, government, etc.). The Christian, authentic leader who receives a multi-million-dollar investment accepts a great responsibility. The leader who is faithful in little must also be faithful in much (Luke 16:10). He is an authentic leader of trust, transparency, and integrity and therefore walks securely (Proverbs 10:9). Picardo and Slaughter (2016) state that Christian leaders must live integrity-filled lives, practice sound financial stewardship, and answer to earthly and heavenly
authorities (p. 13). The Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (n. d.) teaches ministry leaders that “Accountability to God is vital, but people form their impressions of both people and organizations by looking at the outward appearances (1 Samuel 16:7).”

Christian, authentic leaders live a Christ-like life and are quick to acknowledge their sin. Scripture teaches that if a leader says he has no sin, he deceives himself, and the truth is not in him or her (1 John 1:8). Ecclesiastes 7:20 complements the previous verse and states, “For there is not a righteous man on earth who does only good and refrains from sin” (Modern English Version, 2014). Thus, accountability for the Christian leader in both his professional and personal life must be present. Bob Andringa is an expert on board and CEO relationships and governance. He is also the author of The Nonprofit Board Answer Book and Good Governance for Nonprofits (Lee, 2020). In a Christianity Today article, Andringa states that leadership accountability lacks when the leader can recommend too many board members who are often loyal friends. Andringa adds, “when it comes down to crunch time, those friends have more loyalty to the CEO than they do to the mission of the whole organization” (Lee, 2020).

Andringa states that it is the board’s job to hire, compensate, nurture, guide, monitor, and evaluate the organization’s leader (Lee, 2020). A Christian, authentic leader submits himself to these board actions to prevent organizational and leadership dysfunction. Andringa offers the following board strategy for leadership accountability:

One of my favorite strategies for a board is to say to the CEO, “If you ever are aware of anything, that if made public, would hurt our mission and our brand, you are obligated to let the chair or the executive committee know immediately. And if not, it could lead to suspension or termination." Then there could be a whistleblower policy, where you’re saying to the staff, “If you see things that are hurting, in your opinion, our functioning as a Christ-centered ministry, here’s how you go about informing us.” (Lee, 2020)

Proactiveness and prevention of leadership dysfunction stem from the soul care of the Christian leader. Soul care is achievable when the leader surrounds himself with an accountability group of
at least three people who provide biblical counsel. The leader is also encouraged to seek outside professional counseling to discuss professional pressures, spiritual struggles, or personal sin. It is advantageous for the leader to be accountable to a third or “outside” party who will not be influenced nor intimidated by the leader.

The Christian, authentic leader prays, “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer” (Psalm 19:14). Accountability to both man and God is prevalent in the life of a Christian, authentic leader and plays a valuable role in venture philanthropy. It is why authentic leadership must arise in today’s world and every leadership platform fueled by money. Christian ministry is not exempt from the call for authentic leaders as it solicits and manages money received in the form of tithes, offerings, or donations. Christian ministry leaders also steward a resource far more valuable than money – the souls of people.

**Venture Philanthropy Success and the Authentic Team**

In 1998, Palo Alto venture capitalist John Doerr founded the New Schools Venture Fund. His goal was to provide seed capital for promising for-profit and non-profit organizations that had the potential to impact public education (Frumkin, 2003). Doerr supported organizations that had “strong leadership that could have a direct impact on school achievement” and had a “concept that could be brought to scale” (Frumkin, 2003, p. 11).

Authentic leadership employs the attributes needed for organizational effectiveness and growth (George, 2003). Authentic teams produce superior results for the ministry and its constituents through the influence of their authentic leader. Additionally, studies show that authentic leadership also positively correlates with satisfied and committed employees (Darvish, 2011). “As authentic leaders go about building their companies, an interaction occurs between
the leader and the organization that enables each to grow from interacting with the other” (George, p. 58).

Leaders traditionally seek to influence their teams. However, an authentic leader also allows his employees to influence and shape him. This exchange helps the leader and employees to become more effective in their roles (George, 2003) and fuels one another’s development into an authentic member of the organization. Authentic leaders allow life to develop their beliefs and values, “which in turn leads to the development of followers through their modeling” and “self-development of future authentic leadership” (Avolio et al., 2004; Walumbwa et al., 2008 as cited by Wilson, 2018, p. 207). This development allows the authentic team and leader to build the legacy of a “healthy organization that can endure both crises and changes in leadership” (George, 2003, p. 58). The following five characteristics of the authentic organization achieve effectiveness and growth – two elements needed for VP success:

- Purpose: Mission and vision
- Values: Company values
- Heart: Empowering employees to serve customers
- Relationships: Enduring and committed organization
- Self-Discipline: Results for all stakeholders

As discussed below, the byproduct of authentic leadership is profitable to a Christian school (George, 2003).

**Purpose.** Christian schools have three categories of constituents:

1. Those who are the target and beneficiaries of the mission – students and society
2. The supporters who fund and advance the mission – donors and philanthropists
3. Those who execute the mission of the organization – leaders and employees

In Christian organizations, both the leader and employees strive to work heartily for the Lord (Colossians 3:23). The authentic team pursues its mission and purpose consistently and unrelenting, which creates more excellent value for constituents of an organization (George,
Purpose motivates authentic team members and allows them to feel that they are creating something worthwhile (George, 2003). The cyclical power of a mission-driven and values-centered organization motivates employees to become innovative and provide superior customer service (George, 2003). Furthermore, successful philanthropic support of the Christian school’s purpose and mission will likely increase workplace morale.

**Values.** Authentic organizations value their constituents (customers, employees, donors, community supporters, shareholders) and measure their success by the extent to which they fulfill their constituents’ needs (George, 2003). An authentic organization’s values include honesty at the internal and external level and guide the daily actions of employees and business (George, 2003). The authentic leader earns his followers’ trust when transparency is a central value of the organization. “A lack of transparency can ultimately lead to the leader’s downfall” (Bennis, 2009, p. 356). Transparency, trust, and truth are complexly interrelated ethical and organizational concepts (Bennis et al., 2008). Transparency is also “an integral part of integrity.” (George, 2003, p. 71). The authentic leader who is open to admitting mistakes and being vulnerable will enable him to bond deeply with colleagues and followers and establish mutual trust (Bennis, 2009). “When leaders preach one thing and practice another, commitment is quickly lost, and employees become doubly cynical. Leaders may spend a decade building that trust and lose it all in a single act” (George, 2003, p. 75).

Scholars discuss below how the authentic leader’s actions heavily influence his followers’ decisions and actions.

Observing that their leaders are authentic and ethical, followers aspire to learn from their leaders, elevate their confidence in confronting ethical dilemmas, make moral decisions, and commit moral actions. It is argued that authentic leaders, through authentic words and deeds, self-awareness, positive psychological capital, moral and authentic behavior, the leader’s positive moral perspectives, and positive modeling, significantly and
continuously motivate and transform their followers into being more authentic. (Avolio et al., 2004 as cited by Zhu, pp. 33-34)

Ministries and organizations are not immune to failure. Still, failure is as an opportunity for the authentic leader to influence teammates on how to respond appropriately. The authentic leader heavily influences the team, so the leader must exude values and morals in times of pressure. “People are watching what you do, but the real tests are when things aren’t going your way. If you can stay true to your values, then people will believe you. If you violate them, then it’s going to take you a while to earn that (trust) back” (Bennis et al., 2015). George (2003) adds that showing consistency is the most important value of the authentic leader and authentic team (George, 2003). Consistency is “the steadiness with which the values of integrity, stewardship, collaboration, and inquiry are practiced. Leaders emulate these values in the day-to-day conduct of business” (George, pp. 71-72).

**Heart.** The authentic team reaches success through the heart of its team members. Hard work is at the heart of ministries that desire improvement and success. However, dedication and passion within authentic team members impact their level of success. The authentic team aligns around a mission and values; and then collaborates toward a common goal (George, 2015). Authentic leaders can influence their team to make competition external and not internal. “By appealing to the hearts of employees, leaders can inspire them to create results that vastly exceed those obtainable by organizations that treat employees as people doing work that just uses their heads and their hands” (George, 2003, p. 141). Collaboration is crucial for the authentic leader and his team as it is the real power behind the organizational success (George, 2015).

**Relationships, Self-Discipline, and Results.** Creating an authentic organization extends past the employees and leaders and into the board of trustees. Authentic leaders have the self-discipline to consistently practice good governance, which provides an appropriate balance of
power for management. Boards must transform themselves from within and have a dedication to excellent governance and taking its responsibilities very seriously (George, 2003). The board should make sure the leader does not take excessive risks for short-term gain, which will serve constituents well in the long run (George, 2003). Leaders and boards should also establish clarity over roles, trust, and open communication over ideas (George, 2003). Positive relationships and chemistry between the board, leader, and team members are elements of a healthy organization.

Scripture teaches to look not only to one’s interest but also to the interest of others (Philippians 2:4); the same is true within an authentic team. Organizations that put their customers first will provide growth in shareholder/constituent value than organizations who simply give lip service to their constituents (George, 2003). Authentic leaders are people-focused and guided by heart qualities such as passion and compassion (George, 2019). It is why authentic team members treat one another and their customers well, just as the leader treats his team members well (George, 2003). “The leader’s job is to provide an empowering environment that enables employees to serve their customers and provides them the training, education, and support they need. If leaders treat their employees well, employees will treat customers well” (George, 2003, p. 155). Authentic leadership and authentic teams can lead to fulfilling social, financial, or performance criteria – crucial elements in venture philanthropy success.

**Balanced Processing.** The AL element of balanced processing (Avolio et al., 2005) opens the door for organizational success. The authentic leader welcomes talented people from diverse backgrounds and seeks to establish an organization that operates in a collaborative manner (George, 2003). The authentic leader also recognizes the strength and stability of differing opinions and diverse life experiences (George, 2003). George adds that authentic organizations possess a spirit of inquiry and a desire to fully understand issues and challenge
people to develop their full potential. The authentic leader desires to know his employees’ hearts, passions, and desires so he can make a difference through their work (George, 2003).

“Companies that link the passions of their employees to the generation of innovative ideas will have the capacity to sustain their growth for decades. Growth itself creates a virtuous cycle that motivates employees through its success and provides funds to sustain expansion” (George, p. 134). This growth requires the authentic leader to be open-minded to his employees’ ideas.

An authentic leader can avoid work failures by encouraging transparency and high communication within the organization. A 2016 (Gunter et al.) article discusses the use of behavioral plasticity theory. It proposes that authentic leadership reduces silence within a team and encourages employees who are low on proactive personality to speak up. An authentic team’s communication can be enhanced through an authentic leader who consistently solicits and listens to suggestions (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012 as cited by Gunter et al. 2016) and input receives fair and ethical treatment (Janssen & Gao, 2015 as cited by Gunter et al., 2016).

Theoretically, authentic team members perceive themselves as having a strong voice “when leaders signal to employees ‘that they are interested in and willing to act on subordinate voice’” (Detert & Burris, 2007, p. 870 as cited by Gunter et al., 2016).

The authentic leader solicits his team’s direct feedback and ensures that middle-management does not kill employees’ innovative and creative ideas. A culture of innovation will lead to a ministry’s transformation, but a tone of trust and psychological safety must first be established. A study in 2016 (Meng et al.) states that AL positively predicts employee creativity through an atmosphere of team trust and psychological safety. The study adds that an atmosphere of team trust and psychological safety positively affected teams’ knowledge sharing and, in turn, creativity. Subsequently, employee creativity enhances organizational advancement, innovation,
effectiveness, and endurance in the competitive market (Amabile, 1996; Nonaka, 1991 as cited by Zubair & Kamal, 2015). Organizational advancement, innovation, and effectiveness achieve venture philanthropy success as it helps meet social, financial, or performance criteria.

**Elements of Venture Philanthropy and Authentic Leadership Development**

Many seek the favor and friendship of a generous man (Proverbs 19:6), and venture philanthropists have an abundance of candidates as potential recipients of his or her investments. However, this researcher believes that venture philanthropists should seek authentic leaders of Christian, K-12 schools to produce successful results for stakeholders. The five AL dimensions by George (2003) (purpose, values, heart, relationships, and self-discipline) reflect the Christian leader who lives called according to God’s *purpose* (Romans 8:28), lives by Christian *values*, has a *compassionate heart* and God’s love for others (Mark 12:31, Romans 12:9), values connectedness in *relationships* (1 Peter 3:8), and consistently exercises *self-discipline* (Galatians 5:23).

The Christian school, authentic leader operates in AL developmental elements (passion, behavior, compassion, connectedness, consistency) to achieve VP success. The authentic leader pursues (social and financial) performance standards and the school mission with *passion* and *self-discipline*; maintains *connectedness* in the funder-fundee relationship; shows *compassion* toward his constituents; and does not deviate from Christian *values*. Christian school venture philanthropists invest with the social mission to raise a new generation of Christians who can transform the world, while Christian school leaders set forth and communicate the school vision to those who can fund it. The vision is a picture of the desired future that “should appeal to the values, hopes, and ideals for organizational members and other stakeholders whose support is needed. The vision should emphasize distant ideological objectives rather than immediate
tangible benefits” (Yukl, 2006, p. 242). In achieving this vision and mission, the Christian, authentic leader who remains loyal to God, himself, and his organization’s constituents is arguably the most desirable candidate for Christian venture philanthropy.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study explored the influence of authentic leadership on venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools. This researcher examined and was guided by the VP theory (Onishi, 2015), AL theory (Avolio et al., 2007), and the AL concept (George, 2003). Understanding the VP theory must first begin with an understanding of venture capital, which this section will discuss. Different definitions of VP have emerged since the turn of the millennium. However, this study was guided by Onishi’s theory as his research is recent and concluded the most common VP practices by 124 nonprofit funders. The AL theory was developed and advanced at the turn of the millennium by Avolio, Gardner, and Walumbwa (2005). Their AL theory emphasizes four elements: transparency, balanced processing, ethics/morals, and self-awareness. This section will also discuss the AL concept (George, 2003) that emphasizes passion in one’s purpose, proper values, compassion, relationship connectedness, and self-discipline/consistency.

**Venture Philanthropy**

Venture philanthropy, similar to venture capital, provides performance-based development finance to organizations to help them expand their social impact (Rob, 2006). VP prioritizes a social return over a financial return, while venture capital prioritizes a financial return over a social return (Onishi, 2015). Venture philanthropy “builds into the philanthropy process a surer way to achieve scale” (Frumkin, 2003, p. 9). A VPT assists his chosen nonprofit in their “efforts to construct and execute strategic plans that will lead to substantial growth and broad social impact” (Frumkin, p. 9). Frumkin adds that the VPT “draws on many of the ideas
and practices of a corporate strategy focused on growing companies.” A venture philanthropy model in the Christian school setting is shown below (Figure A1).

**Figure A1**

*Christian School Venture Philanthropy Model*

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**Venture Philanthropy and Venture Capital**

Venture capital in the United States developed in the mid-1900s (Ganti, 2020b), while venture philanthropy developed significantly in the U.S. in the mid-1990s. Venture philanthropy provides performance-based development finance to organizations to expand their social impact (Rob, 2006). Pepin (2005) states that VP is:

> Human resources and funding invested as donation in the charity by entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, trusts and corporations in search of a social return on their investment. It involves high engagement over many years with fixed milestones and tangible returns and exit achieved by developing alternative, sustainable income. (abstract)

As discussed below, VP is modeled on venture capital and investments in the technology boom of the early 1990s (Saltman, 2010).

Venture capital is a form of private equity and a type of financing that investors provide to startup companies and small businesses that have long-term growth potential. Venture capital generally comes from well-off investors, investment banks, and any other financial institutions. However, it does not always take a monetary form; it can also be in the form of technical or managerial expertise. (Chen, 2020)
VP organizations like Venture Philanthropy Partners (n. d.) build strategic investment portfolios and “truly invest to help more leaders do more good for children and youth.” The VP organization states that the distinction between venture capital and venture philanthropy is the end goal. Venture Philanthropy Partners board member Will Dunbar states:

> When we’re making an investment in a company, we go in thinking about how we’re going to get out of the investment. Specifically, we’re expecting the company to go public or be sold. What is the market for this kind of company going to look like at the time we’re planning to sell it? That’s a big factor in our investing decision process, but that’s not really part of the philanthropy world. We’re trying to build capacity and add value and help the nonprofit do a better job at what they’re doing. (Venture Philanthropy Partners, 2019)

Dunbar and his associates conduct site visits with their nonprofit organizations (recipients) to see the results and meet the people who benefit from their work. Their school site visits involve meeting with students, administrators, and the school director. Dunbar states the most crucial element in venture capital and venture philanthropy is leadership.

> It’s always about leadership. There’s a joke in the venture capital industry: Every venture capitalist under 40 years old says, “It’s markets, markets, markets,” and everyone over 40 says, “It’s management, management, management.” It’s about the team, the people they’re able to recruit, the board they get to advise them and guide them. So that leadership would be the biggest thread and is important to investors in both kinds of organizations.

The interrelating elements of venture capital and Christian school VP are the interest in a healthy organizational leadership, investment by a high-net-worth individual, and managerial expertise (Ganti, 2020b). “Venture capitalists look for a strong management team, a large potential market, and a unique product or service with a strong competitive advantage. They also look for opportunities in industries that they are familiar with, and the chance to own a large percentage of the company so that they can influence its direction” (Ganti, 2020a, para. 5).

> The angel investing model is similar to venture capital as it provides capital for startup businesses in return “for ownership equity or convertible debt” (Ganti, 2020b, para. 4). However,
“Angel investors are focused on helping startups take their first steps, rather than the possible profit they may get from the business. Essentially, angel investors are the opposite of venture capitalists” (Ganti, para. 3).

Venture philanthropy treats giving to a non-profit organization as a social investment that begins with a business plan, involves quantitative measurement of efficacy, and influences spending in ways compatible with the strategic donor (Saltman, 2010). Saltman identifies the main components of venture philanthropy and their references as:

- Grants = Investments
- Donors = Investors
- Impact = Social Return
- Evaluation = Performance Measurement
- Grant Reviewing = Due Diligence

Venture philanthropists are profoundly involved and interested in the success and improvement of the beneficiary, educational organization from finance to administration, and from pedagogy to the curriculum (Saltman, 2010). “Rather than cut a check and run, venture philanthropy believes that the work only begins once a financial commitment is made. Given that the commitment is long-term, the new funders have set out to connect directly with the organizations in their portfolios” (Frumkin, 2003, p. 11). One potentially intimidating factor in the funder – fundee relationship is the concept of the venture philanthropist serving on the board of the non-profit organization. Interviews conducted by Onishi (2015) reveal that most investors do not push the recipient organizations to follow their goals but rather help the organization meet its own goals.

**Venture Philanthropy Definitions**

This research was guided by the VP theory by Dr. Tamaki Onishi, who conducted studies on VP in 2015 and 2019. Onishi (2015) surveyed 124 nonprofit funders that engage in
venture philanthropy and states that the core elements or practices of venture philanthropy are:

1. Use of various (philanthropic and market-based) funding instruments
2. Provision of strategic assistance through a close-funder-fundee relationship
3. Taking seats on the boards of funded organizations
4. Use of blended (social and financial) performance criteria

Pepin (2005) describes venture philanthropy as “Human resources and funding invested as a donation in the charity by entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, trusts, and corporations in search of a social return on their investment. It involves high engagement over many years with fixed milestones, tangible returns, and an exit achieved by developing alternative, sustainable income” (p. 166). Pepin (2005) outlines a more specific VP model as:

1. The creation of VP funds
2. Long-term financing and volunteering commitment over (3-5 years)
3. Getting involved by:
   a. Assisting in business planning, development, and implantation of the negotiated and agreed-upon project
   b. Giving management and growth advice
   c. Potentially serving as a board of trustee member
   d. Playing a role in the recruitment of senior managers
4. Agreeing to, monitoring, evaluating the business plan
5. Creating an exit strategy, as part of the business plan, that enables the organization to be more sustainable and independent within a reasonable period

Gordon (2014) conducted four case studies and interviews with venture philanthropists and determined common patterns of activity. She discusses the eight stages of venture philanthropy as the following:

1. Deal sourcing: Proactive targeting of potential investees through formal and informal networks (social entrepreneurs who have a social intervention that can be scaled up).

2. Relationship building, screening, and information gathering: The development of a mutually beneficial working relationship where both parties have the opportunity to conduct due diligence on each other. This involves early screening and information gathering where the philanthropy team gathers contextual information on the potential investee (individuals, leadership, the organization, the social innovation, and the potential to scale-up).
3. Co-creation: The shaping of social innovation and investment proposal by the philanthropy team and the investee.

4. Early decision-making criteria: Criteria used to conduct in-depth screening and information gathering.

5. Circular reasoning: Extended process of circular reasoning that leads to the creation of investment proposal and blueprint of social intervention.

6. Decision-making and deal structuring: The decision to invest or not is made by the foundation board. In some cases, resubmission of a revised proposal is requested: developing a blueprint for the investment, how capital will flow and on what basis.

7. Post-investment aftercare: Continued element of co-creation and co-evolution of programs to support a flexible and adaptive approach to successful delivery. Iterative learning continues.

8. Disengagement and return: Long lead-in times to planned exit. The philanthropic investment buys a specific, measurable return that benefits society. (p. 91)

A study by Grossman et al. (2013) identifies VP as the following process:

1. Grants supporting growth and core operations
2. Long-term commitment and grant size
3. Continued funding tied to measurable results
4. Due diligence on potential grantees
5. Scale of impact as a criterion for investment
6. Funding and approach
7. Management support
8. Strategic exit from a sustainable investment

The Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF), formerly known as “The Center for Venture Philanthropy” (CVP), describes a VP process cited by VP scholars (Onishi, 2015; Moody, 2008). SVCF/CVP (n. d.) states that a successful VP practice hinges on the application of the following elements:

1. Investment in a long-term (3-6 year) plan for social change
2. A managing partner relationship
3. An accountability-for-results process
4. Provision of cash and expertise
5. Exit strategy
SVCF/CVP states that these elements together increase the odds of achieving specific social goals that might be otherwise unattainable.

**Authentic Leadership**

Authentic leadership integrates “earlier ideas about effective leadership with concerns for ethical leadership” and “emphasizes the importance of consistency in a leader’s words, actions, and values” (Yukl, 2013, p. 351). AL is “at the root of positive forms of charismatic, transformational, and/or ethical leadership” (Zhu, 2006, p. 13). AL scholars Avolio et al. (2004) state that authentic leaders:

> Are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others’ values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character. (p. 4)

The AL theory (Avolio et al., 2007) and the AL concept (George, 2003) guided this study’s interview protocol, which explored the Christian school leader’s attributes and abilities through the perspective of the VPT. The AL theory that primarily guided this study is by authentic leadership scholars Bruce J. Avolio, William L. Gardner, and Fred O. Walumbwa (2007), who measure AL based on the following elements (Figure A2):

_Figure A2
Authentic Leadership Theory Model_
• Self Awareness: The degree to which the leader is aware of his or her strengths, limitations, how others see him or her, and how the leader impacts others.
• Transparency: The degree to which the leader reinforces a level of openness with others that provides them with an opportunity to be forthcoming with their ideas, challenges, and opinions.
• Ethical/Moral: The degree to which the leader sets a high standard for moral and ethical conduct.
• Balanced Processing: The degree to which the leader solicits sufficient opinions and viewpoints before making important decisions.

Avolio et al. (2007) provide additional commentary on authentic leadership’s four components:

**Self-Awareness**

Self Awareness refers to demonstrating an understanding of how one makes meaning of the world and how that understanding process impacts the way one views himself or herself over time. It also refers to showing an understanding of one’s strengths and weaknesses and the multifaceted nature of the self, which includes gaining insight into the self through exposure to others and being aware of one’s impact on other people. The awareness component refers to having awareness of, and trust in, one’s motives, feelings, desires, and self-relevant thoughts. It includes, but is not limited to, being aware of one’s strengths and weaknesses, personality characteristics, and emotions. As individuals’ function with greater authenticity, they are aware that they possess multifaceted aspects, and they use this awareness in their interchanges with others and with their environments. (Avolio et al., 2007, p. 4)

**Transparency**

Transparency refers to presenting one’s authentic self (as opposed to a fake or distorted self) to others. Such behavior promotes trust through disclosures that involve openly sharing information and expressions of one’s true thoughts and feelings. In relationships, authenticity involves endorsing the importance for others to see the “real you” – both the positive and negative aspects. Toward that end, authentic relationships involve a selective process of self-disclosure and the development of mutual intimacy and trust. Authentic leaders communicate to others their true intentions and desires. They say exactly what they mean. (Avolio et al., 2007, p. 5)

**Ethical/Moral**

Moral perspective refers to an internalized and integrated form of self-regulation. This sort of self-regulation is guided by internal moral standards and values versus externally derived standards such as those from one’s social group, work organization, or the current society in which one lives. Ethical/Moral behaviors provide evidence showing decision making and behavior that is consistent with internalized values. (Avolio et al., 2007, p. 6)
Balanced Processing

Balanced processing refers to leaders who show they go through the due diligence to objectively analyze all relevant data before coming to a decision. Such leaders also solicit views that challenge their deeply held positions. Balanced processing is represented by leaders who can take input from diverse points of view and consider how those views may fairly and objectively shape their interpretation and decisions regarding a particular challenge or opportunity. (Avolio et al., 2007, p. 7)

Additionally, in *Authentic Leadership Theory and Practice: Origins, Effects, and Development*, Avolio et al. (2005) state that authentic leaders are leaders who:

- Know who they are and what they believe in
- Display transparency and consistency between their values, ethical reasoning, and actions
- Focus on developing positive psychological states such as confidence, optimism, hope, and resilience within themselves and their associates
- Are widely known and respected for their integrity (p. xxiii)

This study was also guided by the AL concept by Warren Bennis and Bill George (2003). In their book, *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value*, Bennis and George state that authentic leaders:

- Demonstrate passion in their purpose
- Behave with proper values
- Lead with a compassionate heart
- Establish connectedness in relationships
- Consistently demonstrate self-discipline (p. 18)

The AL theory and concept both underscore values/ethics, relationships, heart, consistency, and accountability. AL theory scholars Avolio and Gardner (2005) state that authentic leaders “build enduring relationships, work hard, and lead with purpose, meaning, and values” (p. 329).
Developing Authentic Leadership

George (2003) discusses the five essential dimensions of authentic leaders – purpose, values, heart, relationships, and self-discipline. As shown in Table A2, each dimension of AL requires a developmental quality for leaders to be effective (George, 2003, p. 36):

Table A2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AL Dimension</th>
<th>AL Developmental Quality</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Passion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Connectedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-discipline</td>
<td>Consistency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Commentary on AL Components

Peter G. Northouse (2006) reviews the AL theory components in his book, Leadership: Theory and Practice. Northouse discusses self-awareness as reflecting on your core values, identity, emotions, motives, goals, and coming to grips with who you are at the deepest level. Internalized moral perspective, the second self-regulatory behavior and component, is when authentic leaders are guided and controlled by their internal moral standards and values and not outside pressures (Northouse, 2006). Balanced processing, the third AL component and self-regulatory behavior, happens when leaders are “open about their perspectives but are also objective in considering others’ perspectives” (Northouse, p. 202). Relational transparency, the fourth AL component, is when the leader presents one’s true self to others, whether it be positive or negative aspects of themselves (Northouse, 2006). This component is self-regulatory because individuals can control their transparency with others (Northouse, 2016).

Authentic leaders have the capacity to open themselves up and establish a connection with others. They are willing to share their own story with others and listen to others’ stories. Through mutual disclosure, leaders and followers develop a sense of trust and closeness. (Northouse, p. 198)
The Authentic Leader’s Emotions

Authentic leaders are people-focused and guided by heart qualities such as passion and compassion as much as they are guided by the mind’s qualities (George, 2019). Scholars define authentic leaders as:

Those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others’ values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths. They are aware of the context in which they operate and are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character. (Avolio et al. 2004, p. 4)

Luthans and Avolio (2003) state that the exhibited positive behavior of the authentic leader “positively transforms associates into a leader themselves” (p. 243). Behavioral and personality tests (e.g., DISC, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Four Temperaments Test) affirm how each leader and person has a unique, God-given temperament that “affects how they influence followers” (Malphurs, 2003, p. 77). A leader who desires to be self-aware must understand his weaknesses, strengths, personality type, and temperament that the above tests can reveal. Self-awareness allows leaders to “realize their unique values, identity, emotions, goals, knowledge, talents and/or capabilities” (Zhu, 2006, p. 19). When leaders have a clear sense of who they are and what they stand for, they have a secure anchor for their decisions and actions (Gardner et al., 2005).

Developing positive relationships and influence is key in authentic leadership. AL does not exist without the act of communication, and “leaders spend more time communicating than any other single activity” (Blanchard & Waghorn, 1997, p. 94). Emotion can be detected in a leader’s verbal and non-verbal communication, which can have adverse or positive effects in setting the mood or climate for a ministry (Malphurs, 2003). “A leader must develop emotional well-being that fosters a positive, healthy ministry culture” (Malphurs, p. 64).
The emotions of the Christian school leader are critical to the spiritual well-being of the leader, his followers, and other constituents (Malphurs, 2003). Emotionally unhealthy people, whether a staff member or the leader, negatively affect a ministry and must be dealt with accordingly (Malpurs, p. 85). An authentic leader’s emotions are contagious; that leadership quality identification makes the AL theory unique as that quality is not explicitly considered by the transformational, charismatic, servant, and spiritual leadership theories (Avolio, 2005).

**Related Literature**

For the purposes of researching AL’s influence on VP in Christian K-12 schools, theological and theoretical foundations have been considered. This literature review will also include a discussion on how the Christian school leader’s gender may influence the perception of the leader by others, motives of venture philanthropists, and AL elements in the context of fundraising.

**Gender and Authentic Leadership**

Studies support the concept that authentic leadership influences an organization’s employees to develop and practice authenticity. As this study discusses, AL leads to organizational effectiveness, which helps fulfill the VP element of performance criteria. ACSI conducted a 2019 survey on 746 member schools and found that 56 percent of its heads of school are male, and 44 percent are female (Swaner & Ferguson, 2020). The survey also reports that 57 percent of next-tier administrators (e.g., principals, directors) are female (Swaner & Ferguson, 2020). Thus, female authentic leaders in Christian schools warrants discussion in this study.

Studies discuss how female, authentic leaders who strive to earn their associates’ trust face a challenge, unlike their male, authentic co-leaders. A 2005 study (Eagly) states that even those women who convey the conventional values of a community (sense of belonging) may find
that they still do not receive their associates' trust and identification. Female leaders should remain true to themselves and not epitomize inauthentic behavior as it may compromise her effort of gaining followers’ identification (Eagly, 2005). As discussed below, female leaders in education experience the challenge of their behavior being compared to male leaders.

Ely and Rhode (2010) noted that women holding traditionally male roles often feel that they cannot be true to themselves and face trade-offs between being perceived as competent (i.e., successful) and being likeable. Similarly, research by Eddy and Cox (2008) observed that female community college presidents were often penalized for acting in ways that were not expected of them as women, yet they were simultaneously judged against male leadership norms. (Longman & Anderson, 2016, pp. 26-27)

Female authentic leaders face the problem of remaining true to themselves while leading alongside their male counterparts in highly assertive behavior. Some members of Christian ministry leadership may not promote females possessing full authority over a ministry. This mentality may be in credit to passages like 1 Timothy 2:11-12, which state, “Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet” (English Standard Version, 2001). The Apostle Paul reiterates this in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, which says:

The women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. (English Standard Version, 2001)

Christian ministries that base their leadership selection on the exegesis of the above texts are Christian ministries that expect assertive, female authentic leaders to be inauthentic by negating their innate leadership style and assertive personality. A male leadership mindset of assertiveness and competitiveness are the predominant masculine leadership behaviors, which leads others to question a woman’s authenticity if she is too agentic (ambitious and self-confident) or not agentic enough (too helpful or friendly) (Hopkins & O’Neil, 2015). Female authentic leaders
who are genuinely assertive and do not have a “quiet” demeanor will help create a culture of communication (speaking up), transparency, proactiveness, and ultimately effectiveness that creates greater value for constituents and the VPT.

**Venture Philanthropy Motives**

This study and its qualitative interviews explored how AL influences VP and the motivations behind venture philanthropists’ generosity toward Christian schools. This study prompted this researcher to contact and interview Schuyler Lehman, CEO of *Mission Advancement*, a Texas nonprofit fundraising consultant firm. Lehman, who has helped more than 1,000 nonprofits raise a collective total of more than $6 billion, states that philanthropists do not always give with pure motives. As a result, venture philanthropy is *not* welcomed at a small number of Christian schools that he advises.

I know of a school in Texas that does not welcome venture philanthropy because they believe a person who gives a large sum of money will unduly influence their mission. The vast majority of venture philanthropists are good, but some seek to control and community approval with their giving. Leaders may have philanthropists who are high maintenance donors and want recognition. In my interviews with philanthropists, I never have and never will hear them confess to giving because they want the community to know they are wealthy. (personal communication, July 17, 2020)

Katherine Fulton (2018) has advised strategic (venture) philanthropists for decades and observed the following pattern:

Strategic philanthropy can be a toxic mix of arrogance and ignorance, lacking critical understanding of the context, treating grantees not as partners but as mere instruments of a funder trying to meet a goal. In this kind of environment, it is never safe enough to give real input or feedback to those in power. This is a problem, because the brutal truth about philanthropy is that those with the power to make decisions are often those who have the least direct knowledge about the problems or opportunities being addressed.

Fulton suggests that philanthropists empower “a capable leader” so he “can learn his way to success.” She adds that “trust and relationships are as important as the strategy itself” in efforts of co-creating a better future for the organization. However, discernment is critical when
considering a philanthropist and school board member since impure motives will endanger the school’s mission.

Bob Andringa, author of *The Nonprofit Board Answer Book and Good Governance for Nonprofits*, states that a philanthropist on a school board who desires control of the nonprofit organization can cause a drift in the mission (Lee, 2020). Therefore, the board must establish clarity on organizational goals, expectations, decision-making rituals, and the role of board members. “Synergy and alignment of interests is part of the secret sauce” to a successful venture philanthropy partnership (Bildner et al., 2020).

This study’s focus on venture philanthropists’ motivations leads this researcher to consider *The Seven Faces of Philanthropy* by Russ Alan Prince (2016). Prince identifies the following seven motivations and types of philanthropists:

1. The Communitarian: The most common wealthy donor personality. For them, doing good just makes sense. Communitarians are part of the local environment and are often business owners. They strongly focus on how to make their community a better place to work and live.

2. The Devout: This type of philanthropist does God’s will. Their religious convictions motivate them to financially and personally support non-profits. For them, giving is a religious act. As God has blessed them with wealth, they see it as only right to share this blessing with others. Along the same lines, giving is a moral obligation.

3. The Investor: This type of philanthropist sees charitable giving as good business. For them, there is a very apparent dual purpose in giving. On the one hand, they want to help charitable causes. On the other hand, they want to be very tax-wise about their giving. Investors are looking to support nonprofits that understand both these sets of concerns.

4. The Socialite: This type of philanthropist finds that they can help nonprofits and have a good time doing so. They accomplish this through social functions – ones they produce and ones in which they participate as guests. Socialites look to multiply their giving by leveraging their relationships with friends and family. Their social network is a significant determinant of the nonprofits they support.

5. The Altruist: This type of philanthropist is what people often associate with affluent donors. They give out of a sense of moral imperative. Their generosity is a function of “doing the right thing.” Moreover, they tend to be modest and are most likely to give anonymously.
6. The Repayer: This type of philanthropist tends to be a former recipient of a nonprofit’s services, or sometimes people close to them have received those services. Subsequently, they give back by supporting the same or aligned nonprofits. Repayers tend to concentrate their giving on medical and educational causes. They give out of a sense of gratitude.

7. The Dynast: This type of philanthropist, in contrast to the other philanthropic personalities, has usually inherited his or her wealth. Growing up with money, Dynasts are socialized to the value and justness of supporting worthwhile causes. Giving is a quality that resonates within their family, and they are expected to support nonprofits.

The goal of philanthropy “in its broadest sense is improvement in the quality of human life” (Bremner, 1988, p. 3). The Christian venture philanthropist may likely attribute his giving to the majority of the above motivations. The Christian, venture philanthropist:

1. Seeks to do the right thing (Altruist)
2. Bless the Christian school through his financial resources (Devout)
3. Makes an investment for a social return (Investor)
4. Gives back to Christian education as he or his children may have received a Christian education (Repayer).
5. Desires to make an impact at the local, national, and/or global level (Communitarian)
6. Gives as a result of a fellow Christian or bible-study member inviting him to give or attend a fundraising event (Socialist).
7. Giving a portion of inherited family wealth as an expectation from family upbringing (Dynast).

Motivations behind venture philanthropy can be discovered and discerned in the context of a strongly connected relationship between the authentic leader and venture philanthropist.

**Authentic Leadership in Fundraising**

**Self-Awareness.** The authentic leader understands his or her “weaknesses, strengths, and the nature of self” (Zhu, 2006, p. 19). A leader’s self-awareness helps him fully and authentically realize his “unique values, identity, emotions, goals, knowledge, talents, and capabilities” (Zhu, p. 19). Self-awareness holds much value in authentic leadership as it allows the leader to continuously develop and improve in all facets of life and leadership. This AL element allows the Christian school leader to identify his weaknesses and strengths that may be a detriment or benefit to the school’s fundraising (development) efforts.
Nonprofit fundraising expert Dr. F. Duke Haddad (2020) states that development officers must also understand their leader’s strengths and weaknesses to encourage the leader to become more engaged in the fundraising process. The development officer aims for the leader to become engaged in the fundraising process through strategic fundraising planning and strategy sessions. That authentic leader is also willing to be coached on fundraising techniques and be held accountable by the development officer for the leader’s engagement in organizational fundraising (Haddad, 2020). The authentic leader is mindful of areas within himself and the organization that require improvement to reach fundraising success.

**Transparency.** The authentic leader practices transparency and communication about his organization’s financial needs and successes. A 2018 study on high-net-worth donors shows that “despite a strong belief that their giving can have a great impact, 54 percent of high-net-worth donors do not know if their giving has the impact they intended – pointing to an opportunity for nonprofit organizations to communicate the effect of their donors’ generosity more fully” (U.S. Trust & Indiana University, 2018, p. 7). The authentic leader’s communication with donors assures them that all or a portion of their gifts fulfill their intended purpose.

Authentic leaders practice transparency by sharing quantitative measures of progress and results through charity watchdog platforms such as GuideStar or Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA). GuideStar allows the authentic leader to display his organization’s current revenue and expense data, Forms 990, annual reports, and full listings of board members (GuideStar, n. d.). ECFA sets seven standards of responsible stewardship that includes transparency, (Christian) doctrinal issues, governance (5-plus individuals), financial oversight, compliance with laws, and integrity in both leader compensation and related-party transactions (ECFA, n. d.). The seventh standard, stewardship, requires the leader to: 1) be
truthful in donor communications, 2) honor the giver’s intent, 3) provide timely gift
acknowledgments, 4) act in the best interest of the giver, and 5) not base staff compensation on a
percentage of charitable contributions.

Nearly three-quarters of wealthy donors make charitable contributions influenced by their values (U.S. Trust, 2018), and donors want to know that the charities they support are working as effectively as they possibly can. Onishi (2015) surveyed 124 nonprofit funders, with 45 percent of the respondents funding $1 million - $10 million in a nonprofit organization. Onishi’s survey also revealed that 32.3 percent of the funders invested more than $10 million. The survey shows that what venture philanthropists value the most is aligning with the organization’s social mission, followed by “meeting the needs of target beneficiaries” (p. 75). Hence, the need for leaders to communicate with donors on how their gift has impacted and will impact the mission.

**Relationships.** Relationships are a crucial component of Christian, authentic leadership. They should reflect Ephesians 4:16, which says, “From whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (*English Standard Version*, 2001). The Apostle Paul teaches that unity and love facilitate growth, a desirable quality in venture philanthropy. Fundraising is a team effort and a responsibility that the leader, board members, and development director collectively shoulder. The board must own the big goals, collaborate with key staff on strategies, and depend on them to create the tactics that support the strategy (Lehman, 2017). Each team member must help:

- Identify prospective donors
- Cultivate prospective donors
- Advocate for the nonprofit
- Ask for support from donors
- Recognize donor contributions
- Engage donors deeply in the mission (Haddad, 2020)
“Since major donors especially want and demand to see the CEO, the leader’s role as ‘chief fundraising officer’ is critical to fundraising success” (Haddad). McLaughlin (2018) echoes the same point and says, “The chief fundraising officer in your organization is your CEO” (p. 67).

A close relationship between the venture philanthropist and the organization’s leader is a core element in VP practice (Frumkin, 2008). In his book, *Major Donor Game Plan*, McLaughlin (2018) encourages Christian leaders to visit the philanthropist’s home to discuss how their partnership has helped and how future gifts can help the mission. He adds that Christian ministry leaders can strengthen the relationship by praying for the philanthropist.

Praying specifically for your major donors requires intimacy. Getting to know your donors on a personal level requires your time and interest. Some executive directors only view major donors as a source for funds, and not as personal friends. That’s too bad, because a major donor has so much more to offer than money – and you have so much more to offer than a tax receipt. If you want to take your donor relationships to the next level, start praying for them.

McLaughlin’s research with major donors shows that an organization’s cause or mission came second or third to the top reason behind a major gift – relationships. “It is, in fact, *all about relationships*. Relationship to a trustee, staff member, key volunteer, service recipient, or other major involved in the project carried a lot of weight in the decision-making process” (p. 65).

McLaughlin provides the following list of questions that determine how well a Christian ministry leader knows his or her major donor. This researcher believes that these questions also measure the relationship connectedness between a major donor and the Christian, non-profit leader.

1. Have you dined with them in the last 90 days?
2. Have you been in their homes, or have they been in your home in the last year?
3. Do you know their children by their first names?
4. Do you have their cell phone numbers? Do they have yours?
5. What is their area of passion, or what gets them excited? (p. 66)
In addition to the relationship between a Christian leader and the VPT, no single *internal* relationship is more important than the relationship between the leader and the development director (Haddad, 2020). Haddad argues below how the Christian school development officer serves as a valuable partner in achieving organizational success.

One carries the responsibility of leading the organization in achieving its mission, and the other must find money to make it possible. In many ways, these two individuals should be joined at the hip. A CEO is the team’s quarterback, and the chief development officer is the team’s offensive line. One cannot achieve maximum results without the other.

**Ethical/Moral.** The Christian, authentic leader embodies transparency, trust, and truth, complexly interrelated ethical and organizational concepts (Bennis et al., 2008). The Christian, authentic leader also practices integrity and uprightness (Psalm 25:21), which he reflects in his management of the organization. According to U.S. Trust and Indiana University (2018), a donation will surely come with specific expectations.

Donors have high expectations of the organizations they support. Today’s wealthy donors want the organizations they support to demonstrate sound business and operational practices, spend only a reasonable amount on general administrative and fundraising expenses, and honor and protect their privacy. (p. 7)

A Christian school leader who practices integrity and kindness can attract high-net-worth individuals. Proverbs 22:11 affirms this and states, “He who loves purity of heart, and whose speech is gracious, will have the king as his friend” (*English Standard Version*, 2001).

MacQuillan and Sargeant (2015) discuss England’s Code of Fundraising Practices that includes not accepting commission-based payments, telling the truth, not exaggerating facts, and not trying to persuade a donor to switch their donation from one charity to another. CFRE International (n. d.), an organization dedicated to setting standards in philanthropy, emphasizes transparency, accuracy, and dignity in all fundraising professionals. The Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) (n. d.) promotes “high ethical behavior in the fundraising
profession.” AFP states that its members must “practice their profession with integrity, honesty, truthfulness and adherence to the absolute obligation to safeguard the public trust.” Haas (2020) emphasizes trust and transparency in donor relations.

The trust we develop with our ministry partners is built over years of keeping our word. Do what you say you will do. If you indicate you will use their gift for a certain project, don’t shift their funds to something else without asking their permission. It’s difficult to repair the damage caused by broken trust. Sometimes we keep our donors in the dark about our ministry plans. Treating your donors as friends means you genuinely care for them and communicate openly and honestly about your needs. Your transparency will earn you the opportunity to ask for their help.

Fundraising experts agree that trust, transparency, and truth are foundational to nonprofit development. Dishonesty is an abomination to God (Proverbs 6:16-19) and breeds distrust between the leader and venture philanthropist. “Major donors give to people they know and trust. The more confidence they have in you and your ministry, the more likely it is that your organization will rise to the top of their giving list” (McLaughlin, 2018, p. 83).

**Balanced Processing.** Balanced processing by the authentic leader enhances and strengthens the funder-fundee relationship. Balanced processing is a self-regulatory behavior that refers to an individual’s ability to analyze information objectively and explore other people’s opinions before making a decision (Northouse, 2006). The Christian, authentic leader acknowledges that “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice” (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Proverbs 12:15). Leaders who practice balanced processing are seen as authentic because they are open about and objective in considering others’ perspectives (Northouse, p. 202). The authentic leader solicits, understands, and respects the ideas and opinions that the development officer brings to the table (Haddad, 2020). Haddad adds that “The competition is fierce and working closely together is the only way you can be competitive in the fundraising arena.”
The Apostle Paul encourages leaders to avoid divisions and be united in the same mind and judgment (1 Corinthians 1:10). To achieve this unity, communication, clarity, and balanced processing must be present between the non-profit leader and venture philanthropist. Onishi (2015) interviewed seven venture philanthropy organizations and found that tension is avoided with the funded organization through practicing open communication. Consistent communication can also allow the venture philanthropist to avoid close involvement in all areas of the funded organizations’ operations as the leader proactively provides the VPT with progress updates.

**Rationale for Study and Gap in the Literature**

This study used multiple case studies to explore the influence of authentic leadership on venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools. Christian, K-12 schools face financial needs in reaching capital campaign goals or operating budget demands (Crowe, 2013). Major funds for Christian school budgets will not come from “cookie sales or silent auctions” but rather from the capital or annual fund campaigns that promote a “culture of giving” (Crowe, 2013). Scripture teaches that Christian leaders who launch a capital campaign should first speak to major donors just as Moses and Aaron did in building the Tabernacle (Exodus 35) (McLaughlin, 2018, p. 35). These major gifts “represent investment from a donor into a mission with an expectation of some return. The return might be seeing the direct impact of his/her giving, or any other result that brings the donor satisfaction and joy” (Mission Advancement, 2020). Major funds typically come from relationship-based fundraising (Lehman, 2017), which led this researcher to explore how the leader’s relationship connectedness with the venture philanthropist influences VP success.

Before this study, the desired AL attributes in a Christian school leader with VP success remained in question. This writer identified a literature gap on authentic leadership attributes of

Given the above research gap, this researcher interviewed venture philanthropists to determine if authentic leadership influences venture philanthropy. The rationale for this study was to explore the AL attributes of a Christian school leader with VP success, the most desired AL attributes among these Christian school leaders, and the perceived influences of AL attributes on VP success. The results of this study offered valuable insight and suggestions for both venture philanthropists and Christian school leaders who seek the fundamentals of VP success.

**Profile of the Current Study**

Numerous studies exist on authentic leadership, but very few exist in the context of distinctly Christian organizations or schools. This study is of significance to research as it studies the influence of authentic leadership on venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools. A 2017 study by Eicher focused on the influence of transactional, transformational, and distributive leadership styles on fundraising in three independent Appalachian schools. However, Eicher’s study did not research venture philanthropy, authentic leadership, or fundraising in the Christian school setting. Eicher found that the heads of school with fundraising success “utilize both transformational and transactional leadership behaviors and characteristics” (p. 3).

A 2015 study by Dr. Tamaki Onishi researched current VP practices among 124 nonprofit funders. Onishi found that “highly business-influenced practices (e.g., use of equity, taking seats on the board, evaluation methods seeking financial performance) continue to be employed” (p.
This study was guided by Onishi’s VP definition and the AL theory and concept (Avolio et al., 2003; George, 2003), which framed the research and interview questions. This study’s findings suggest that authentic leadership influences venture philanthropy at Christian schools. This study filled a literature gap and supplements Eicher’s study by discussing *authentic* leadership and *venture* philanthropy in *Christian, K-12* schools. This researcher conducted qualitative interviews with venture philanthropists to explore why they invest millions of dollars in a Christian school and if the leader’s AL attributes influenced their venture philanthropy.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This researcher identified a gap in research on the influence of authentic leadership (AL) attributes on venture philanthropy (VP) in Christian, K-12 schools. This gap led this researcher to study the proposed problem in a multi-case study approach. The researcher used qualitative interviews with venture philanthropists to determine why they invest more than $1 million in a Christian school and if the leader’s AL attributes influenced their venture philanthropy. This chapter discusses the research components and processes for this study.

Research Design Synopsis

The Problem

Christian schools compete with several other Christian schools for financial support from philanthropists. A Christian school leader is the face of his or her organization and oversees its institution’s financial success. If the Christian school leader fails to do so, the school cannot continue its mission. The Christian, venture philanthropist entrusts the Christian leader and his school with a portion of his or her God-given wealth to impact society and God’s kingdom. Thus, Christian K-12 school leaders who are VP recipients must reflect biblical qualities and practice God’s commandments, underpinned by authenticity and truth in Christ (John 14:6).

Recent research exists on school leadership styles and their influence on fundraising success (Eicher, 2017). However, there is a gap in research on authentic leadership in Christian schools and its influence on venture philanthropy. Thus, this researcher interviewed venture philanthropists at Christian, K-12 schools to determine if AL influences VP. The researcher conducted qualitative interviews to determine the attributes and abilities that venture philanthropists seek in a Christian school leader, the most desired AL attributes among these Christian school leaders, and the perceived influences of AL attributes on VP success. The
researcher also sought the participants’ advice for other Christian philanthropists and Christian leaders on the elements of a successful VP partnership. The study briefly summarizes the venture philanthropist’s practices at the Christian school, including advisory services, measuring performance and social impact, and collaborating with other capital providers (John, 2006). The study’s primary focus explored the AL attributes in a Christian, K-12 school leader that influences venture philanthropy.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of these multiple case studies was to explore the influence of authentic leadership on venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools. In this study, venture philanthropy support at a Christian school was defined as a collective gift total of $1 million or more in cash assets. Venture philanthropy scholar Dr. Tamaki Onishi (2015) conducted a study on VP practices at several organizations. Onishi (2015) surveyed 124 nonprofit funders, and nearly half (45 percent) reported a funding amount that ranges from $1 million to $10 million (p. 69). Thus, this study classified venture philanthropy funding as $1 million or more in cash assets.

Rob John (2006) conducted a study on high engagement venture philanthropy in Europe. From a nonprofit perspective, John defines VP success as “the ability to influence the grant-making practices of traditional capital providers and bring in new funders and skills for growing entrepreneurial social purpose organizations” (p. 24). Through the perspective of a VPT, Frumkin (2006) defines VP success as building the capacity of the nonprofit, improving nonprofit strategy through management consulting, and seeing a social return on investment.

The theories guiding this study were the AL theory as defined by Bruce J. Avolio, William L. Gardner, Fred O. Walumbwa (2007), and the VP theory as defined by Dr. Tamaki
Onishi (2015). Avolio et al. (2007) measure authentic leadership as four components:

- Self-Awareness: To what degree is the leader aware of their strengths, limitations, how others see him or her, and how the leader impacts others?
- Transparency: To what degree does the leader reinforce a level of openness with others that provides them with an opportunity to be forthcoming with their ideas, challenges, and opinions?
- Ethical/Moral: To what degree does the leader set a high standard for moral and ethical conduct?
- Balanced Processing: To what degree does the leader solicit sufficient opinions and viewpoints before making important decisions?

This study also incorporated the AL concept by authors and AL experts Bill George and Warren Bennis (2003). George and Bennis (2003) state that authentic leaders demonstrate the following five attributes (p. 18):

- Understand their purpose
- Practice solid values
- Lead with heart
- Establish connectedness in relationships
- Demonstrate self-discipline

Research Questions

RQ1. What attributes do venture philanthropists seek in a Christian school leader before giving to the Christian school?

RQ2. What abilities do venture philanthropists seek in a Christian school leader before giving to the Christian school?

RQ3. What are the most desired authentic leadership attributes among these Christian school leaders?

RQ4. What are the perceived influences of authentic leadership attributes on venture philanthropy success?

Research Design and Methodology

This study was qualitative in design as the researcher sought to explore what AL attributes and abilities venture philanthropists seek in a Christian school leader. Qualitative interviews with venture philanthropists allowed the researcher to have an in-depth
understanding of their philanthropy and “make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011 as cited by Eicher, 2017, p. 101). Qualitative interviews allowed the researcher to conduct video conference and in-person interviews with participants. These interviews involved “structured and generally open-ended questions” that were “intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants” (Creswell, 2018, p. 186). The qualitative interviews for this multiple case study were video or audio recorded in addition to the researcher making handwritten notes (Creswell, p. 189).

Setting

The study’s setting was five accredited Christian schools in the United States, all located in metro areas. Private schools in highly populated cities attract philanthropic entities like The Walton Family Foundation (n. d.) that has invested $210 million in K-12, autonomous, private education according to their 2018 annual report. The foundation’s goal is to “have the greatest impact on the most students” and “grow high-quality, autonomous schools that will spur improvements across all schools in a given city.” The researcher believes that Christian school philanthropy in cities can reach more students and help spread the gospel across a large, local population.

The Christian schools in this study are accredited institutions ranging from PreK-12 grade levels. The schools are distinctly Christian, reference the Christian faith in their mission, and provide education from a biblical worldview. The schools are recipients of venture philanthropy and have received a collective minimum total ranging from $3.5 million to $20 million. Onishi’s (2015) study of 124 nonprofit funders reveals that the average amount of funding was $23.97 million over the three years before the survey year. Forty-five percent of his survey respondents had a funding amount ranging from $1 million to $10 million.
Participants in this study were venture philanthropists at Christian, K-12 schools governed by a board of trustees or “school board.” The venture philanthropist participants live near the Christian schools in which they have invested. The participants also practice the following VP elements (Onishi, 2015): 1) Use of various (philanthropic and market-based) funding instruments, 2) Provision of strategic assistance through a close funder-fundee relationship, 3) Taking seats on the boards of funded organizations, and 4) Use of blended (social and financial) performance criteria (pp. 70-71).

**Participants**

This study explored the influence of authentic leaders on venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools in the United States. The study participants were venture philanthropists who donated a collective total of $1 million or more to a Christian school. The Christian schools supported by the participants identify their education as Christ-centered and reference the Christian faith in their mission or vision statement. These Christian schools are independent and not operated by a church that helps fulfill school budget needs.

This study’s data collection is of value as it was collected from individuals who are highly knowledgeable and active participants of the research aim – venture philanthropy. This study conducted purposive sampling, also called judgment sampling, a nonrandom technique (Etikan et al., 2016). In this study, the researcher decided what needed to be known and found participants who could provide the information by knowledge or experience (Bernard, 2002 as cited by Etikan et al., 2016). Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to select a small number of participants who could provide valuable information for the research questions under examination (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The population this study sought were venture
philanthropists who have given a minimum of $1 million – a practice not found in all Christian, K-12 schools.

The research participant pool was five Christian school venture philanthropists located in the United States. The researcher conducted interviews with the venture philanthropists via video conference, phone, and in-person interviews. Participants were selected based on their ability to meet the researcher’s aim by answering research questions and supplying sufficient data (Saunders, 2012). The researcher sought qualifying participants for the study by contacting friends and colleagues in the Christian ministry, fundraising consulting, and foundation fields.

**Role of the Researcher**

This researcher possesses a great interest in the research problem as she works in Christian school fundraising (development). This researcher was inspired to conduct a study on VP in Christian, K-12 schools as her employer is a recipient of VP and a collective contribution of $3.5 million from its venture philanthropist. The VPT supporting her employer met this study’s participant criteria as he practices a funder-fundee relationship, implemented an accountability-for-results process, supplies a provision of cash and expertise, and is a board member of the Christian school.

In 2019, the researcher engaged in informal discussions with her school’s VPT to study the motivating factors behind his monetary support. These discussions inspired the researcher to perform an in-depth study on venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools. It is worth noting that this researcher is a witness to both VP success and failure. Her employer (school) enrolled 39 students from a local Christian school whose venture philanthropist terminated multi-million-dollar funding that led to its school closure. Thus, venture philanthropy success and Christian school authentic leadership became topics of interest for this researcher.
Past experiences with the research problem include the researcher’s interaction with philanthropists and the researcher’s work experience in Christian school fundraising. The assumption that the researcher brought to the study was that venture philanthropists seek authentic leadership attributes in leaders before contributing a collective total of $1 million or more. The implications of this researcher’s role in the data collection and analysis were her limit in discussions about personal experiences so that they would not override the importance of the study’s content (Creswell, 2018, p. 184). The researcher was also mindful of her connection to her school’s venture philanthropist (study participant) so it would not unduly influence her interpretations (Creswell, p. 184).

**Ethical Considerations**

The collection of research data was handled with privacy and aligned with Internal Review Board (IRB) policy. Per IRB mandates, the researcher submitted her recruitment letter, recruitment follow-up letter, consent form, and interview questions as part of her IRB application. These documents are located in the dissertation’s appendices section. Although Christian, K-12 schools were a topic in this study, students did not serve as participants. Participant confidentiality was maintained at all times and was not shared with a third party. Pseudonyms were used to honor the confidentiality of the venture philanthropists participating in the study.

The qualitative interviews presented a sensitive matter of the venture philanthropist analyzing, measuring, or critiquing the Christian school leader’s attributes and abilities. The researcher did not withhold reporting of results or responses by any participant, including her employer’s venture philanthropist. The researcher developed a multi-case study database of evidence such as video/audio recordings and interview transcriptions and will destroy the
database three years from the study’s completion. Copies of the dissertation’s final draft were made available to participants upon their request (Creswell, 2018).

Guidelines by Creswell (2018) and Yin (2018) and the IRB policies guided this researcher in her study. The Internal Review Board (IRB) policies and procedures ensure that student research is “done in accordance with federal regulations and university policy” (Liberty University, 2020). The IRB Conflict of Interest Policy refers to a professional conflict of interest between the researcher and a participant, such as this researcher and her Christian school’s venture philanthropist. Therefore, the researcher reported, “all real and potentially conflicting interests that may compromise the integrity of the research in the appropriate section of the IRB application” (Liberty University, 2020).

**Data Collection Methods and Instruments**

This researcher used multi-case study methods and qualitative interviews with participants to explore the influence of authentic leadership on venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools. The research participants were venture philanthropists who spoke to the motivations and attracting qualities of a Christian school and its leader that facilitated VP. The interviews allowed the researcher to ask a series of questions to learn their perspective on the research topic (Brown & Hale, 2014, p. 146). In this study, the researcher decided what needed to be known and found people who were “willing to provide the information by knowledge or experience” (Bernard, 2002 as cited by Etikan et al., 2016). The researcher conducted purposive sampling, which is a nonrandom technique defined as “selecting a relatively small number of units because they can provide particularly valuable information related to the research questions under examination” (Etikan et al., 2016; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009 as cited by Eicher, 2017).
VP is a relatively recent approach to supporting social enterprises (Mair & Hehenberger, 2014 as cited by Mityushina et al., 2019). Dr. Tamaki Onishi conducted studies on venture philanthropy in 2015 and 2019 and stated that VP “has rarely been discussed as a worthy topic for scholarly investigation except for a few notable studies (Moody, 2008 & 2009)” (Onishi, 2015, p. 67). Furthermore, internet and academic database search results do not reveal scholarly sources or scientific studies on VP in Christian, K-12 schools. As a result, this researcher assumes that venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools is limited in population size.

The Christian school venture philanthropists in this multi-case study were not randomly chosen as “case studies have a limited population and sample size” (Eicher, 2017, p. 132). “A larger sample size makes the results more accurate. However, a large sample is not always possible. A smaller sample size is acceptable when the population size is limited” (Brown & Hale, 2014, p. 123). Creswell (2018) states that there is no specific requirement for the number of participants in qualitative research. Still, from a review of many qualitative research studies, case studies should include “about four to five cases” (p. 185). This researcher’s case study research “does not readily allow for broad generalizability since the population selected and the sample size is not an important factor in case study analysis” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Yin, 2014 as cited by Eicher, 2017, p. 41).

**Collection Methods**

The researcher created a database for each case study that contains evidence such as notes, documents, interview transcripts, and video and audio files (Yin, 2017). The six common sources of evidence in doing case studies are: 1) direct observations, 2) interviews, 3) archival records, 4) documents, 5) participant-observation, and 6) physical artifacts (Yin, 2012, p. 10). Yin (2017) states that a case study database markedly increases the reliability of the entire case
study. Audiovisual and digital materials in this study included websites, school social media content, and phone and email communication related to the study. These sources of data supplemented information gleaned from participant interviews and deepened her understanding of the participants and schools related to the study.

**Instruments and Protocols**

In addition to collecting evidence for the multi-case study database, the researcher used the qualitative interview method for data collection. The interviews were conducted via video conference and phone interview, while one participant was interviewed in person. The researcher framed the interview questions from her research on authentic leadership (Avolio et al., 2007; George, 2003) and venture philanthropy (Onishi, 2015).

**Interview Protocol**

As suggested by Creswell (2018), the researcher used an interview protocol (see Appendix B) that consisted of:

- An introduction of the researcher and participant
- Statement of interview length, structure, recording, and confidentiality of the interview
- Opportunity for the interviewee to ask questions before the interview begins
- Questions to “ice-break” and collect background information on the venture philanthropist (i.e., career, education, any prior venture capital or venture philanthropy experience)
- Questions to understand the venture philanthropy practice and success at the school
- Questions to help determine the study’s research questions:
  - RQ1. What attributes do venture philanthropists seek in a Christian school leader before giving to the Christian school?
  - RQ2. What abilities do venture philanthropists seek in a Christian school leader before giving to the Christian school?
  - RQ3. What are the most desired authentic leadership attributes among these Christian school leaders?
  - RQ4. What are the perceived influences of authentic leadership attributes on venture philanthropy success?
The researcher’s career experience as a print and broadcast journalist has allowed her to portray realities, meanings, stories, and opinions from thousands of interviewees. This experience assisted her in conducting in-depth, professional interviews that adhered to IRB mandates. As Creswell (2018) suggests, the researcher opened the interview with “ice-breaker” questions on the interviewee’s career and educational background (Creswell, p. 190). The researcher then asked “content questions” or the research sub-questions, which covered different facets of the central phenomenon (Creswell, p. 190). Probing questions expanded interview duration and gained further information or clarification (Creswell, p. 190). Examples of interview questions that sought clarification to an interviewee’s response were (Boyce & Neale, 2006, p. 5):

- Would you give me an example?
- Can you elaborate on that idea?
- Would you explain further?
- Is there any further information that you would like to share that we have not covered? (Creswell, p. 191)

The researcher closed the interview by thanking the interviewee for his or her time. As Creswell (2018) suggests, and at the participants’ request, the researcher sent the study’s findings after the conclusion of the research.

**Interviews**

This study employed a qualitative, multi-case study method. Interviews are most commonly found in case studies, which are conversational and guided by the researcher’s agenda and research questions (Yin, 2017). In-depth interviews are a form of qualitative research that involves “conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation” (Boyce & Neale, 2006, p.
3). Thus, the researcher conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews that sought the perspective of venture philanthropists.

The advantage of qualitative interviews is that it collects detailed information to answer the research questions, gives the researcher direct control over the flow of the process, and allows the researcher to clarify certain issues during the process if needed (Dudovskiy, 2018). The criticism of an interview format is that there is a “risk of interviewee bias during the primary data collection process, and this would seriously compromise the validity of the project findings. Some interviewer bias can be avoided by ensuring that the interviewer does not overreact to responses of the interviewee” (Dudovskiy, 2018). As a result, the interviewer withheld her personal opinions, and her role was primarily that of a listener (Woods, 2017).

**Semi-structured Interviews**

The study conducted semi-structured interviews, which offered “sufficient flexibility to approach different respondents differently while still covering the same areas of data collection” (Noor, 2008, p. 1604). “In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer prepares a set of same questions to be answered by all interviewees. Additional questions are asked during interviews to clarify and/or further expand certain issues” (Dudovskiy, 2018). After the interview, the researcher emailed each participant the interview transcript for their revision and additional comments.

The researcher verbalized her questions in a conversational, friendly, and unbiased manner to serve the needs of her line of inquiry (Yin, 2017). The interviews lasted in the one-to-two-hour range in a single sitting. The interviewees were asked about their Christian school leaders’ abilities and authentic leadership attributes and their insights, explanations, and
meanings to their venture philanthropy practice (Yin, 2017). The interview transcripts were then organized and categorized to determine themes and interrelating themes (Yin, 2017).

The researcher used recording devices in the interview to collect accurate data (Brown & Hale, 2014). The researcher utilized the Zoom (video conference) software with the participants and created a “local recording” that saved the recorded interview to her computer. As a backup method, the researcher used a mobile application or “app” to record the interview audio. The participants were informed of the video and audio recording and had permission to terminate the interview at any point.

**Case Study**

This researcher conducted a multiple case study, which “enables the researcher to explore differences within and between cases. The goal was to replicate findings across cases. Because comparisons were drawn, it was imperative that the cases were chosen carefully so that the researcher could predict similar results across cases, or predict contrasting results based on a theory (Yin, 2003)” (Baxter and Jack, p. 548). A case study is not intended as a study of the organization but rather a particular issue (Noor, 2008, p. 1602) and allows the researcher to understand a particular problem or situation in great depth (Patton, 1987 as cited by Noor, 2008, pp. 1602-1603.)

The case study method seeks to “define cases and explore a setting in order to understand it” (Cousin, 2005 as cited by Gustafson, 2017, para. 5). Researchers conduct a case study to “collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time” (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009, 2012, 2014 as cited by Creswell, 2018, p.12). Case studies receive criticism due to their lack of scientific rigor and reliability and the method not addressing the issues of generalizability (Johnson, 1994 as cited by Noor, 2008, p. 1603). However, case
studies enable the researcher to “gain a holistic view of a certain phenomenon or series of events” (Gummesson, 1991 as cited by Noor, 2008, p. 1603).

In a case study, Yin (2017) defines its reliability as “the consistency and reliability of producing a case study’s findings” (p. 353). This researcher’s goal was to have the majority of cases in her study show consistent themes and similar findings that are reliable. If such replication is found in multiple cases, the researcher can have more confidence in the overall results (Noor, 2008, p. 1604). A multiple case study “allows the researcher to analyze within each setting and across settings” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 550). A multiple case study also allows the researcher to examine “several cases to understand the similarities and differences between the cases” (Baxter & Jack, p. 550). The cases in a multiple-case study may be “selected to either predict similar results (direct replications) or to predict contrasting results for anticipatable reasons (theoretical replications)” (Yin, 2012, p. 8). The evidence created from multiple-case studies “is considered robust and reliable” (Baxter & Jack, p. 550).

**Procedures**

**Approach and Case Selection**

This researcher employed the multiple case study approach to explore multiple cases of venture philanthropy at Christian, K-12 schools. Case studies allow for detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and reports a case description and case-based themes (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). Second, the researcher must identify the participants and cases. This study researched venture philanthropy cases at Christian, K-12 schools in the United States and chose its venture philanthropists as the participants. VP in these settings were defined as a venture philanthropist who employs VP practices (Onishi, 2015) and has contributed a collective gift total of $1 million or more to the Christian school.
The researcher submitted an application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to review and approve the study. After obtaining approval from both the dissertation committee and IRB, the researcher began soliciting participants in September 2020. The researcher conducted purposive sampling, which is a nonrandom technique defined as “selecting a relatively small number of units because they can provide particularly valuable information related to the research questions under examination” (Etikan et al., 2016; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009 as cited by Eicher, 2017).

**Data Collection**

The in-depth data collection involved multiple sources of information, such as field notes, interview files, audiovisual materials, and biographies of the venture philanthropists and Christian school leaders. Audiovisual and digital materials included websites, school social media content, and phone and email communication related to the study. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with all VP participants, which sought details on the VP process and success at the Christian schools. The qualitative interviews also discussed AL attributes of the Christian school leader through the lens of the venture philanthropist. The researcher’s experience as a print and broadcast journalist has proven that questions provided to the interviewee before the interview allow the interviewee to develop pre-determined and potentially “scripted” responses. Thus, this researcher informed participants of the interview *topics* and did not email interview questions in advance. This strategy allowed the qualitative interviews to be less rigid and more conversational. Lastly, the researcher conducted follow-up interviews or “member-checking” to gather participants’ feedback on the findings and enhance the study’s credibility.
Data Analysis

The researcher utilized NVivo computer software for her qualitative data analysis. NVivo allowed the researcher to “classify, sort, and arrange information; examine relationships in the data; and combine analysis with linking, shaping, searching, and modeling” (LU Information Services, n. d.). The researcher reviewed all of the data to determine the general ideas and tones of the participants’ responses (Creswell, p. 192).

Analysis Methods

Segments of the data were coded by assigning a “Node” to represent a category (Creswell, 2018). These nodes written were “based in the actual language of the participant (called an in vivo term)” (Creswell, p. 192). The nodes represented multiple perspectives from the participants (Creswell, 2018, p. 195) and tied together with the main points of the case studies. Themes (nodes) and sub-themes appeared and were supported by diverse quotations and specific evidence (Creswell, p. 195). These themes and sub-themes were organized in a table format by the researcher and are used as headings in the findings section of this dissertation (Creswell, p. 193). This study also contains a narrative passage that conveys the analysis findings that discusses the themes and any interconnecting themes (Creswell, p. 193). The researcher followed “Tesch’s Eight Steps in the Coding Process,” as shown in the following table (1990 as cited by Creswell (2018, p. 194).
**Table A3**

*Tesch’s Eight Steps in the Coding Process*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Get a sense of the whole. Read all the transcriptions carefully. Perhaps jot down some ideas as they come to mind as you read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Pick one document (i.e., one interview)—the most interesting one, the shortest, the one on the top of the pile. Go through it, asking yourself, “What is this about?” Do not think about the substance of the information but its underlying meaning. Write thoughts in the margin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>When you have completed this task for several participants, make a list of all topics. Cluster together similar topics. Form these topics into columns, perhaps arrayed as major, unique, and leftover topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Now take this list and go back to your data. Abbreviate the topics as codes and write the codes next to the appropriate segments of the text. Try this preliminary organizing scheme to see if new categories and codes emerge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Find the most descriptive wording for your topics and turn them into categories. Look for ways of reducing your total list of categories by grouping topics that relate to each other. Perhaps draw lines between your categories to show interrelationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Make a final decision on the abbreviation for each category and alphabetize these codes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Assemble the data material belonging to each category in one place and perform a preliminary analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>If necessary, recode your existing data.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The coding process involves segmenting, taking apart data, and putting it back together (Creswell, p. 189). Tesch’s fourth step of the coding process is when new categories and codes may emerge in the data. This researcher also sought to disconfirm evidence from the data.

Disconfirming (negative) evidence occurs when the researcher establishes preliminary themes or categories and then searches “through the data for evidence that is consistent with or disconfirms these themes” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). Creswell and Miller added that a search for disconfirming evidence provides further support of the study’s credibility.

The researcher also conducted data interpretation, which involved “summarizing the overall findings, comparing the findings to the literature, discussing a personal view of the findings, and stating limitations and future research” (Creswell, p. 196). This interpretation
involved suggesting future research that studies can address to advance the literature (Creswell, p. 198). Interpretation also suggested limitations in the project and discussed the study’s weaknesses (e.g., difficulty in recruitment) “so that future studies will not suffer from the same problems” (Creswell, p. 198).

**Trustworthiness**

This study sought five case studies of venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools in the U.S. to establish trustworthiness. Creswell (2018) states that while there is no specific answer to the number of required participants, case studies typically include four to five cases (p. 185). The researcher also developed a case study database, which markedly increases the reliability of the entire case study (Yin, 2017). The database compiled all data (notes, audiovisual files, transcripts, etc.) from the case study representing all sources of evidence (Yin, 2017). The six common sources of evidence in doing case studies are: 1) Direct observations, 2) Interviews, 3) Archival records, 4) Documents, 5) Participant-observation, and 6) Physical artifacts (Yin, 2012, p. 10).

The researcher’s multi-case study methods adhered to Creswell (2018) and Yin’s (2017) scholarly protocols and procedures establishing trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is “the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study” (Polit & Beck, 2014 as cited by Connelly, 2016). Establishing trustworthiness means employing credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability, and authenticity (Polit & Beck, 2014 as cited by Connelly, 2016). The following overview briefly discusses this criterion and its application in the study.
Credibility

Credibility is the confidence in the study’s findings and is the most essential criterion (Polit & Beck, 2014 as cited by Connelly, 2016). The researcher’s qualitative multiple case studies used standard and unvarying procedures in typical multi-case studies. The researcher conducted peer-debriefing, member checking, reflective journaling, examining the data, and exploring alternate explanations to establish credibility (Polit & Beck, 2014 as cited by Connelly, 2016). The researcher incorporated member checking “to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings” (Creswell, 2018, p. 199) and emailed participants their interview transcripts for revisions or clarifications to their responses. The researcher also sent participants the major findings, themes, and case analysis and requested their comments (p. 199).

The researcher also conducted peer debriefing to enhance the credibility of the account (Creswell, 2018, p. 199). Peer debriefing involves “locating a person who reviews and asks questions about the qualitative study so that the account will resonate with people other than the researcher” (p. 199). The researcher conducted peer debriefing through a dissertation supervisor and second reader before conducting field research. Peer debriefing is critical in establishing credibility as it collaborates with external reviewers to provide feedback and constructive criticism to the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 129).

In this qualitative study, the researcher was engaged in a “sustained and intensive experience with participants,” which introduces a range of strategic, ethical, and personal issues” (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2013 as cited by Creswell, p. 182). Therefore, this researcher conducted reflexivity, creating reflective notes on past experiences with the research problem, participants, or setting that help the reader understand the researcher and study’s connection (Creswell, 2018). Achieving good reflexivity requires the researcher to record notes during the
research process, reflect on her personal experience, and consider how her personal experiences, beliefs, values, biases, and social, cultural, or historical forces may shape the interpretation of results (Creswell, p. 183; Creswell & Miller, 2000). The researcher’s past experiences with Christian philanthropists and school leaders can shape the themes and conclusions by the researcher. However, the researcher did not allow this to unduly influence her interpretations.

Reflexivity is crucial as the researcher has experience with venture philanthropy at her place of employment. The researcher also has a four-year work relationship with one participant in her study, referred to as “backyard” research (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992 as cited by Creswell, 2018). This type of research involves studying the researcher’s immediate work setting, which may compromise “the researcher’s ability to disclose information” (Creswell, p. 183). However, “backyard” research is essential for this study, and multiple strategies for validation were used to demonstrate the accuracy of information (Creswell, p. 183). In summary, this study’s strategies for validation include triangulation, member checking, detailed description of findings, clarifying researcher bias, and peer debriefing (Creswell, p. 199).

**Dependability**

Dependability is “the stability of the data over time and over the conditions of the study” (Polit & Beck, 2014 as cited by Connelly, 2016, n. p.) and is “determined by checking the consistency of the study processes” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 6 as cited by Eicher, 2017, p. 130). The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with all participants and had an extensive discussion with all participants on venture philanthropy and authentic leadership. In addition to participants referencing their investment amounts in the interviews, the researcher collected supporting documents (990-PF forms, emails, school publications) as additional evidence of venture philanthropy practices and multi-million-dollar investments at the Christian
schools. The researcher provided “data sets and descriptions that are rich enough so that other researchers are able to make judgments about the findings transferability to different settings or contexts” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 6 as cited by Eicher, 2017, p. 130). While this study focused on authentic leadership and venture philanthropy, it can benefit secular non-profit entities and Christian parachurch organizations.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability is when the findings are consistent and could be repeated (Polit & Beck, 2014 as cited by Connelly, 2016). “Qualitative researchers keep detailed notes of all their decisions and their analysis as it progresses” (Connelly, n. p.). The notes by this researcher were reviewed with her dissertation supervisor. “These discussions prevent biases from only one person's perspective on the research” (Connelly, n. p.). Researcher bias refers to “assumptions a researcher brings to the research process which may influence the outcomes of the research in a way that distorts reality” (Brown & Hale, 2014, p. 139).

To fortify the study’s confirmability, the researcher conducted member checking with participants (Connelly, n. p.) to see if further clarification was needed to confirm a finding. Member checking occurs when data or results are returned to participants to check for accuracy with their experiences (Birt et al., 2016, abstract). It is important to note that member checking is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314 as cited by Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). Additionally, the researcher ensured that participants did not dictate the findings, which is a detriment to the credibility of qualitative research (Brown & Hale, 2014).
**Transferability**

Transferability is “the extent to which findings are useful to persons in other settings” (Connelly, 2016, n. p.). The researcher provided a detailed description of the context, setting, participants, and analysis of data (Connelly, n. p.) “so that other researchers are able to make judgments about the findings’ transferability to different settings or contexts” (Eicher, 2017, p. 130). Venture or “strategic” philanthropy “is an assumption that making a strategy is a rational process, controlled inside an organization or by a donor, to craft a unique philanthropic contribution” (Fulton, 2018).

Each venture philanthropy practice and Christian school setting is vastly different, which warrants its own unique, detailed story in the researcher’s study. However, this study may provide additional insights into fundraising concepts that can enhance the Christian school leader’s fundraising practices at both the K-12 and post-secondary levels. Leaders of secular non-profit entities and Christian parachurch organizations may benefit from this study as it provides insight into desired AL attributes in a leader. This study is also beneficial to Christian, venture philanthropists considering investing in Christian, K-12 education. The responses from the participants reveal what leadership attributes and abilities have proven successful in Christian school, venture philanthropy practice.

**Authenticity**

Polit & Beck (2014) add authenticity as a criterion for trustworthiness in scientific research. Authenticity “represents the advantage of qualitative research to portray fully the deep meaning of a phenomenon to increases readers' understanding” (Connelly, 2016, n. p.). “Authenticity is the extent to which researchers fairly and completely show a range of different realities and realistically convey participants' lives” (Polit & Beck, 2014 as cited by Connelly).
This element of authenticity instructs this researcher to provide a comprehensive report of each case regardless of data and findings that may oppose this researcher’s proposition. The study disclosed all results, whether positive or negative and reported “the full range of findings, including findings that may be contrary to the themes” (Creswell, 2018, p. 94).

**Chapter Summary**

The researcher used the multi-case study method and conducted qualitative interviews with venture philanthropists to explore the influence of authentic leadership on venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools. This chapter discussed the methods and procedures that allowed the researcher to conduct a credible qualitative inquiry and reliable findings. The methods and procedures in this study aligned with guidelines by research scholars Creswell (2018) and Yin (2017) and the Internal Review Board. The researcher sought to establish credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability, and authenticity to enhance the trustworthiness of the study’s findings.
CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter presents and reviews the results of the qualitative data analysis using NVivo computer software. The purpose of this multi-case study was to explore the influence of authentic leadership on venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools. The researcher followed qualitative interview practices outlined by Creswell (2007 & 2018) and Yin (2012, 2015, 2017). The researcher interviewed five venture philanthropists at their respective Christian, K-12 school to determine the attributes and abilities they sought in a Christian school leader before giving to the Christian school, the most desired authentic leadership attributes among these Christian school leaders, and the perceived influences of authentic leadership attributes on venture philanthropy success.

Demographic and Sample Data

Participants

To recruit participants, the researcher contacted a total of 20 leaders at Christian schools and Christian organizations (e.g., school accreditation agencies, fundraising consulting firms, leadership coaching firms, foundations). Of these 20 schools, five venture philanthropists who met the participant criteria responded to the researcher and agreed to a qualitative interview. The participant criteria included serving in a board or advisory role, contributing a collective cash total of $1 million or more, providing strategic assistance through a close relationship with the school leader, and implementing social and/or financial performance criteria. All five participants fulfilled the study’s criteria and have contributed collective amounts ranging from at least $3.5 million - $20 million. The researcher confirmed this range based on published 990-PF
forms on the participants’ foundations and conversations with the school leaders and participants.

The researcher recruited all five participants through professional networking. The researcher personally recruited the Texas participant as the venture philanthropist at her Christian school (employer). The CEO of a Christian foundation referred the researcher to two participants (Austin and Jeff). The vice president of a Christian fundraising consulting firm referred the researcher to a participant at a PreK-12, Catholic school in Minnesota. The researcher’s coworker referred her to a Christian high school in Colorado as she once lived near the school. The table below uses pseudonyms and summarizes the participant pool in this multiple case study.

Table A4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Career Background</th>
<th>School Role</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>School Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austin</td>
<td>Founder &amp; CEO/Investment Company</td>
<td>Founder &amp; Board Chairman</td>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff</td>
<td>Retired CEO/Transportation Company</td>
<td>Advisor to Board &amp; Head of School</td>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madeline</td>
<td>Executive/Advertising</td>
<td>Board Member</td>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>PreK-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken</td>
<td>Founder &amp; CEO/Engineering</td>
<td>Board Member</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>PreK-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane</td>
<td>Executive/Mutual Fund Investment</td>
<td>Co-Founder, Member of Founders Board, Director of Finance &amp; Operations</td>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The research participants consisted of two women and three men whose ages ranged from middle to older adulthood. Their wide range of career backgrounds and VP investment amounts enhanced the diversity of the participant pool. Each participant also lives a life that is firmly rooted in the Christian faith, which was foundational and influential in their path to Christian school venture philanthropy. The interview excerpts below introduce each participant and
relevant details that led to their radical generosity and heart for Christian school venture
philanthropy. The following stories offer context to help readers understand the attributes and
abilities the venture philanthropists desire in a Christian school leader.

Austin

Austin resides in Kansas and was raised by a farmer and a schoolteacher. His mother
desired that Austin would become an orthodontist, but that did not go as expected –
foreshadowing evidence that God had a different purpose for him. “In my Junior year of college,
I took a finance class to learn how to invest all the money I would make as an orthodontist. Two
weeks into the course, I knew I would be a business guy and not an orthodontist.” Austin
graduated with a business degree, and at the age of 30, started an investment banking company.
He candidly states:

The first four years of that were difficult, but God blessed me despite my incompetence. Ten years after that, I started my business. I woke up and understood that I was successful, but not significant. At that point, I began a new journey in life. A couple of godly mentors introduced me to the idea of stewardship versus ownership, and that rocked my world.

After the September 11 attacks, Austin faced a crisis that changed the way he looked at
generosity. He details how his definition of stewardship transformed.

Cash went to zero, and I looked at God and said, “Don’t you understand what I’ve done for You?” At that point, and with a little more coaching from my godly mentors, I began spending time in God’s word. My wife was very instrumental in that, and I decided to do business differently one more time.

Fortunately, I ran into four other entrepreneurs who were struggling with the same thing. They were Christians who wanted to be generous, but we had not quite figured it out. We began meeting together every year. After meeting for a year or two, we were at a conference, and the speaker asked us the question, ‘How much was enough?’ It stunned all of us because I wanted to be a 90/10 guy.

I wanted to make a lot of money so that my 10 percent to God was big. However, if our giving is not large enough to test our faith, our giving is not large enough. Stewardship is determining how much is enough, and it’s not from a net worth number. If you can
generate wealth, you should steward that as well as you can and generate as much wealth as you can.

Austin is an author, speaker, founder, and chairman of a successful investment company focusing on the energy, manufacturing, banking, and education sectors. His success and financial blessings have allowed him to advance Christian education. Austin has pursued a life of stewardship and committed to living a middle-class lifestyle regardless of his business’ success. He credits his Christian accountability partners for his stewardship discipline.

For the last 25 years, we have met three times a year and share our living expenses. We share our net worth and hold each other accountable for living a middle-class lifestyle. Our businesses have excelled, but our lifestyle has stayed the same. Doing so has created a massive amount of dollars to either reinvest in the business or give away.

In the 1990s, Austin and his wife searched for a premiere high school for their then sixth-grade children. He was serving on the board of a church-owned, Christian K-8 school. After asking the board to consider constructing a Christian high school, the board refused. That dilemma led Austin, his wife, and two other families to consider founding a high school.

In the Fall of 1992 and the Spring of 1993, we said, “Lord, we've done everything we can do. We did all the surveys, work, business plan, whatever. Lord, open the door for us if you want us to do it.” We received a call two weeks later from the church that had the K-8 school. A philanthropist had given them a $500,000 piece of land specifically for a Christian high school. They said they were not going to do the high school but would give us the land. That was, like I said earlier, one of many stories of God working miraculously, not just coincidentally.

Substantial gifts continued to come from Austin and his fellow founding families. Between selling a business and having profitable years, the families would contribute six-figure gifts toward building the school. Austin credits the opportunities to be generous to a generous God who answered their prayers.

There was another entrepreneur in our three founding families. We had a board meeting where we were figuring out how we would fund the school, knowing we would have some losses those first few years. He came to the meeting and said, “Guys, you're not going to believe this. My business has been losing money, and I had planned on shutting
it down. I had a guy walk in my door and offer me a million bucks for that business.” He then gave the school $500,000. So, one year, I would sell a deal and would give it to the academy. The next year, one of the other families would have a good hit and throw in $200,000, $300,000, or $400,000. It was just one of those unique things.

The school opened in 1994 as a ninth – twelfth-grade school. Austin and his fellow founding families needed 40 students to break even in their costs of operating a high school. They each prayed diligently for an enrollment of 60 students. When the school opened in August, a total of 61 students were present. Austin describes how the miracles of God continued to bless their generosity and what he calls “radical giving.”

Our Christian academy is so special because it has shown me the miraculous way God works. We had just started the school, and after three or four years, we were growing rapidly. The church we were in wanted us gone, and we needed to build a new building. My wife and I had this little portfolio of companies, and one of them made us money hand over fist. My wife suggested that I sell it to build the academy. I said, no, that would be killing the goose that laid the golden egg. We argued about it over the weekend, and I had a couple of public companies chasing me, wanting to buy the business. I gave them a price, and in a week, I had an all-cash offer and took it since I needed the cash to give to the school.

Two weeks after we closed and signed the agreement, the company we were selling our business to was in the health care industry. Keep in mind that 90 percent of our revenues came from the government from Medicare. The government cut our tax reimbursements by 40 percent. The company that bought us ultimately went bankrupt, and the same thing would have happened to me. We were supposed to close on May 1, but we couldn’t since the company president was on vacation. We ended up closing on May 8. As God would have it, Congress passed a reduction in the capital gains tax rate in October and made it retroactive to May 8 – saving us $41 million in taxes. I can tell you ten stories like that as to how God directed our steps.

Reflecting on the events leading up to the school’s opening, Austin confidently states that part of his life’s purpose is to advance Christian, K-12 education. He hopes that venture philanthropists who want to build a Christian school will heed the words of wisdom that he once received.

We received the wisest advice from another high school that didn’t have any interest in joining our high school. This person at that school said, “If you are starting a Christian high school for your kids, don’t do it; but, if you are called to Christian education, do it.”
We all went home, and for a couple of months, we asked, “Are we doing this for our kids, or are we called to Christian education?” When we made that commitment and prayed through the calling, that anchor has been there in the greatest storms. I know I am called to this, so I know we will make it through. If I had done it for my kids, I would have given up so many times, so I think that our calling to philanthropy is huge.

Austin and his wife desired to expand the school to grades K-8. In 2016, those grades were added with a new building constructed near the high school campus. The independent school has received exemplary accreditation and continues to thrive with a current enrollment of 550 students in grades K-12.

Ken

Ken resides in Texas and has bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees in Mechanical Engineering. He is a founder and CEO of a company that specializes in complete engine control solutions. Ken is also the CEO of a privately held, global technology company with a number of international facilities. He is outspoken about his passion for Christian education and supporting future Christian leaders and missionaries. Similar to Austin, Ken is the entrepreneurial type who dreamed of building a Christian school. Ken describes how his dream was fulfilled much sooner than expected thanks to a friendship with a school board member.

I was in a Bible study with a board member from the school, and we got to be friends in that venue. The Bible study was a group of four guys who didn’t know each other. A Christian business-Bible study facilitator in town put us together. The board member heard about my desire to engage in a Christian school or build a Christian school. A little less than a year later, I learned that the school where he was a board member was hosting its annual banquet. He asked me to be his guest, and the Bible study was literally across the street from the school. I said, “Great! That would be super.”

Ken is unique from the other four participants in that he discovered the Christian school decades after it was constructed. Ken’s arrival at the school and its banquet in 2016 was well-timed. In the Summer of 2015, the school was informed that its owner, a neighboring church, would no longer support it. The church gave the school one year to either close, relocate, obtain
the property to build new school facilities or raise funds to purchase the school property. In the Fall of 2015, the school announced that it would separate from the church and become a 501(c)(3) incorporated entity. The school became financially independent from the church in the Summer of 2016 and launched a capital campaign to purchase the school buildings and property. In the Fall of 2016, the school hosted an annual banquet to promote its campaign, which left a lasting impression on Ken.

The banquet was an amazing experience; the kids, the atmosphere, the superintendent, just the entire thing was over the top. At the end of the banquet, my wife turned to me and said, “Why are you going to build a school? It’s right here.” I said, “You know, you're right.” So that is how I started engaging in the school and ultimately becoming a board member at the school.

Ken was impressed by the school’s authenticity that he says was not “Christian by name only or its weekly chapel.” He states that the desired elements of the Christian school he envisioned were already present in this K-12 campus.

I thought most Christian schools had swerved left or right off the path, and I didn't want to go in and have something be a fix-up job. Suddenly, I bump into this school that has it all right, and God is just thriving in the kids’ hearts, the halls, and the teachers. It's everywhere. This school is the real deal, and I didn't know that existed in this city. I thought that I would have to build a school from scratch, so that banquet was a pretty amazing experience.

Ken states that his Christian faith dominates his giving, and he committed a long time ago to focus on financially supporting Christian causes solely. His investments have allowed the school to expand its property and open Pre-K and infant care facilities.

Jeff

Jeff is unique from the other four participants in that he does not serve as a board member or chairman but rather an advisor to the school board and leader. Similar to Austin and Ken, Jeff is an entrepreneur with a successful business background. After completing two years of college, the Army veteran knew he preferred the workforce instead of the college classrooms. He worked
for an employee-owned transportation company for 44 years and served as the company CEO for its latter 25 years. The company went public in 1997 and, at that time, had more than 200 offices around the world and thousands of employees. Jeff served as chairman for another four years and then as board chairman before retiring in 2006. In 2000, Jeff and his wife formed a foundation and gave much thought to how they can receive the greatest return on their investment.

We struggled for a while as to how we could have the largest impact in whatever area we were going to invest. Finally, we decided that Christian education gave us the best return on our investment. If we made wise choices about the people in the organizations that we supported, we could impact young people early on in their careers and life. We just felt that it was by far the best investment we can make.

Except for investing in the Museum of the Bible, our investments would go to K-12 Christian education and Christian colleges. We give a number of scholarships at the college level for young people going into Christian education. We were led down the path of Christian education since God put it in our hearts.

Jeff began his Christian school philanthropy at his grandchildren’s school in Texas before an investment opportunity became available at a Christian school in Minnesota where his grandchildren lived. Like Austin, Jeff’s family was coming to a high school level, and a quality high school campus was not available.

At that time, the Christian high school was in a warehouse, and it was a very small school of about 175 students. We started to work with their school board and were deciding whether we would build a new high school or support an existing one. We got together with their school board, and we were able to build the school in Minnesota. Our oldest grandson in Minnesota was there two years in the warehouse, and then he spent two years in the new building.

We struggled with the question, can you get a great Christian education in a warehouse, or do you need a better facility? The answer is both ways. You can get a marvelous Christian education in a warehouse, but to build a bigger, stronger, better place, we decided to make an investment and build the Christian high school.

The high school is more than 125,000 square feet and has an enrollment of more than 400 students. It is currently making plans to add another gymnasium. Jeff and his family foundation
are also heavily involved with and grant several scholarships to a Christian inner-city school of 500 students in Minnesota.

Diane

Diane resides in Colorado and serves in a unique position that is uncommon to many Christian, K-12 schools. In 2020, her board of trustees was dissolved, and a voting (founding) members class was created. A governing board remains but is referred to as the Board of Education (directors).

The Board of Education (directors) is our governing board, and our Board of Trustees, which most other schools consider their governing board, is more of a fundraising or advancement board. This year, we modified our bylaws and added a new layer of organizational structure to our school, a class of voting members. Our bylaws have essentially created a provision for the school's four founding couples to serve in this role as voting members. There are certain decisions that the school would need to seek the voting members' approval. This is a new structure for us as we enter into this school year.

Before Diane invested major gifts into Christian education, she practiced investing through a small mutual fund investment company. Diane and her boss handled the buy and sell orders. She met her husband through her company, which hired him as a research analyst. Her boss and CEO supported her educational pursuits, and she eventually earned a general business administration degree. Diane and her husband became parents to three children, which led to the couple becoming founders of a Christian high school.

Diane was an active volunteer at her kids’ elementary school, which was part of a school system that hired a new superintendent. His first challenge was stemming the tide of declining enrollment, especially at the high school. The superintendent launched a “kindergarten tea” event and recruited school parents, like Diane, to volunteer. Her active volunteerism at the school left her unenthused about taking on yet another volunteer role. Diane declined to lead or coordinate
the event but loyally filled the volunteer role that no one wanted – a parking lot greeter in Colorado’s winter climate.

It was interesting because this superintendent happened to be the next point of contact where I would direct families. The day we hosted this tea was one of the coldest days in February. It was snowing and frigid outside. He would recall that day and say, “You know, any person who would stand out there in the cold and greet these moms is someone I want to get to know.” That simple act of saying yes to being the parking lot greeter at a kindergarten tea somehow caught his attention, and he asked if I would be willing to serve in a board position at the school.

Diane’s care and passion for her school motivated her to serve on the board’s executive committee. She joined a task force that would discuss a new high school entity in their south metro area. After town hall meetings and months of work between the two organizations, Diane and her task force members saw the idea fall apart and deserted by both organizations.

After things settled down, there was a handful of us left. Our primary venture philanthropist was so encouraging, and she said to me one day on the phone, “We have come this far; why stop now? What do we have to lose?” It was a huge step of faith. We were going to venture out on our own and see if we could figure out what it would be like to start a Christian high school that would honor God and does not compromise in terms of excellence in all.

Diane is humored by God using her parking lot greeter role to have her become one of four founding families of a Christian high school. She and her husband have invested multiple seven-figure-gifts into constructing the school and enhancing its programs. Today, Diane and her husband continue to financially support the mission of faith-based organizations and further God’s kingdom.

There seem to be fewer individuals in this world who are willing to commit their resources to advance Kingdom initiatives. We have always purposed in our hearts that Christian organizations would be the ones that we choose to generously support, and our Christian high school has been the primary recipient of our resources.

Diane discusses how faith and obedience to God allow her to use her financial resources to advance Christian ministry. She believes the spirit of giving and generosity is rooted in the
biblical principle of tithing and “being faithful in little before you can be faithful in much” (Malachi 3). Diane describes how her practice of stewardship began during her teenage years.

The tithing principle has been instilled in me since I was in high school. I remember times before I was married when I was on my own and didn't have much. I was trying to go to school and was truly living paycheck to paycheck. There were times when I would balance the checkbook at the end of the month, and I had less than a dollar in there until my next paycheck two weeks later. But it was during those times when I still chose to give, when the giving hurts, that God proved Himself faithful.

I believe it goes back to that principle of tithing because if it is part of who you are and ingrained in your nature that God can do more with your 90 percent than you can do with your 100 percent. As God offers His blessings in terms of financial resources, the principle remains the same. The dollars may change, but the principle doesn't.

Diane’s path to radical giving is similar to that of Austin. Her view of generosity reached a pivotal moment after hearing a sermon series, “The Blessed Life” by Pastor Robert Morris.

Diane was convinced that it is impossible to outgive God.

One of the principles (the pastor) subscribes to is rather than follow the traditional tithing model when you give God 10 percent and live on the 90 percent, you become a truly radical giver by giving God 90 percent and living on the 10 percent. That was just something that stuck with me.

We have made investments in many ministries over the years, but certainly not to the extent we have with our Christian high school. At the time that this opportunity presented itself, it was truly an act of obedience to God. We fully trusted Him that if we were going to invest this money and it didn't work out, that was okay because He would still take care of us.

The investments by Diane and her husband worked out as they had hoped. In 2007, the high school opened to ninth and tenth grades and welcomed 155 students. The 35-acre school has reached enrollment capacity at 1,200 students (300 per grade). It has received exemplary accreditation and, in 2015, was named a U.S. Department of Education National Blue Ribbon School.
Madeline

Madeline resides and was raised in Minnesota. Since 2004, she has served as a board member at a Catholic, PreK-12 academy. Considering her Lutheran upbringing, Madeline discusses how her support of a Catholic institution is a story that only God could write. She was influenced by her father’s animosity toward Catholics.

My dad was vehemently anti-Catholic and even spanked my 17-year-old brother for dating a Catholic girl. The amount of anti-Catholicism was palpable in my home. I don’t know what was behind that because Lutherans and Catholics, theologically, are not that far apart.

However, Madeline’s discovery of the academy would change her perception of Catholicism. In keeping with family tradition, her then kindergarten daughter attended an elite secular school. The school began teaching an anti-Biblical curriculum that forced Madeline to withdraw her daughter. A fellow school parent also withdrawing his student from the secular school informed Madeline about a newly built Roman Catholic college-preparatory academy and its upcoming open house.

Given that there are no coincidences and this whole story just reeks of God, I had this school founder as a client about 15 years earlier. He hired me out of nowhere to write and produce radio commercials. To this day, I still don’t know how he found my name. Now, 15 years later, I hear he started a school, and he happened to have moved into my neighborhood.

Madeline initially hesitated over her daughter attending a Catholic school stating that the idea “terrified” her. However, the school’s open house convinced her that the school had the curriculum she desired for her daughter. Still, Madeline made one last attempt to remove Catholicism from the school to appease her Lutheran convictions.

On the academy’s first day of existence, I went to their new headmaster and said, ‘I like what you’re going to be doing here. I am thrilled to have an option of a school like this. However, I’m wondering if we could just eliminate the little Catholic thing.’ The headmaster asked me if I wanted to learn Catholicism. I said that I already knew what it was because I had gone to a Lutheran college.
He said, “Well, we're going to have some classes starting next Monday that you can attend.” I agreed to go thinking that I can explain that Catholicism is lame and that they don't need to be Catholic. I even sat in the front row because I knew everything. It was a five-week course, and by the second week, I was in deep trouble because everything I knew about Catholicism was wrong, which frightened me to my core.

Although met with countless hours of research and internal debates, Madeline's spiritual journey to the Catholic faith resulted in her becoming a self-proclaimed “head cheerleader” of the school.

The enthusiasm and passion shown by Madeline and her then-second-grade daughter inspired Madeline’s husband to make an unannounced $3 million gift. She adds, “He came home and told me about it afterward. It was more of a gift of gratitude by him; he was having fun being generous.” Madeline’s father-in-law and husband were blessed with “workable philanthropic money” after the family sold their successful advertising agency and acquired a group of banks. Before attending the academy, Madeline says the idea of her family giving money to a Catholic school was “preposterous,” but the evidence her husband saw was unignorable.

My husband saw me fall in love with the academy, and it was a highly generous thing for him to give a substantial gift. He and the founder hit it off. It wasn’t that my husband was only supporting the founder; he supported the school that my daughter attended. My husband saw the value of my daughter’s education. She was able to skirt all the traumas of her childhood, thanks to the academy, so much that my husband successfully encouraged three of his grandchildren to attend the academy.

The gift that Madeline and her husband made in 2003 helped construct the high school. After the school founder, the couple is the school’s second-highest donor. She says, “The founder was in the process of building the high school and did not anticipate anyone helping him. He was astonished when my husband showed up, and he didn't even ask him for help.”

In 2004, Madeline was asked by the founder to join the school board that currently consists of nine members. The accredited, PreK-12 college preparatory academy is constructed on a 42-acre property home to 850 students. As discussed in the following sections, the
researcher will examine how authentic leadership influenced the venture philanthropic practices of Madeline, Diane, Ken, Jeff, and Austin.

**Interview Protocol**

Using purposive case sampling (Etikan et al., 2016), five participants were chosen for the study. The researcher emailed four participants (Madeline, Diane, Jeff, Austin) located outside of Texas. All five participants reviewed and signed the Consent Form (Appendix A) before the interview. The researcher used Zoom video-conference software to conduct and record the interviews of three participants. The interview with one participant (Madeline) was audio-recorded after a brief Zoom interview failed due to a poor internet connection. The interview with the Texas participant was audio recorded as the interview was conducted in person. The Texas participant requested an in-person interview as he lives in the same city as the researcher. The five interviews were conducted from October 4 – November 21, 2020 and lasted from 50 minutes to 120 minutes. Member checking and follow-up interviews were conducted in February 2021.

The researcher implemented the interview protocol (Appendix B), divided into four sections of questions (warmup, authentic leadership, venture philanthropy, closing). After reading introductory statements, the participants were asked the following warmup questions:

1. Please tell me about both your career and educational background.
2. Please tell me about any prior venture capital or venture philanthropy experience.
3. When and how were you introduced to the Christian school?
4. Does your Christian faith influence your generous giving, and if so, how?

The researcher used four warmup questions to learn more about the participant and to allow them to become comfortable with the interview and researcher. The following two sections focused on the study’s two focal points – authentic leadership and venture philanthropy. The semi-structured interviews allowed for casual conversation and follow-up questions rather than a rigid exchange.
between the researcher and participants. The following key interview questions were generated from and grounded in AL and VP literature.

**Authentic Leadership Questions**

1. What attributes or elements of one’s personality or character did you seek in the Christian school leader before giving to the Christian school?
2. What abilities or elements of one’s work performance did you seek in the Christian school leader before giving to the Christian school?
3. Was trust in the leader influential in your decision to support the school financially? How did that trust with the leader evolve?
4. The authentic leadership theory and concept in my study emphasizes self-awareness, balanced processing (soliciting other opinions), transparency, proper ethics/values, self-discipline, a compassionate heart, relationship connectedness, and demonstrating a passion for one’s purpose. Concerning Christian school leaders, are any of these elements a priority for you and why?

**Venture Philanthropy Questions**

1. Do you believe your venture philanthropy experience at the Christian school is a success?
   a. If so, why is it successful, in your opinion?
   b. What are the unique qualities making the venture successful?
2. Do you have a close relationship with the school leader to whereby you can offer advice or direction in regard to the school’s budget and operations?
   a. If so, what elements are in place that help make the relationship successful?
3. Have you implemented social or financial performance criteria?
   a. If so, could you please describe those standards?
   b. How important is sound financial management of the organization in determining whether money is given to a nonprofit Christian school?
4. There is a certain risk factor with venture philanthropy. What prejudgments do you use to determine organizational success with the money you give?

**Compilation Protocol and Measures**

The researcher employed Tesch’s steps in the coding process. After the interviews concluded, the researcher uploaded the video/audio files to YouTube to auto-generate an interview transcript. The videos were set to “Private” so only the researcher had access to the videos. The interview transcripts were reviewed for mistakes and “polished” to remove punctuation and grammar errors and filler words (i.e., uh, like, right, so). After carefully
reviewing the transcripts, the researcher made field notes of general thoughts and relevant scripture pertaining to participant responses.

The researcher then sent the participants their transcripts for revisions (Creswell, 2018). Three of the participants did not make revisions after reviewing their transcripts. Two participants made minor revisions (i.e., re-wording statements, deleting or adding a sentence to enhance or better communicate a point). The researcher also conducted member checking by sending the participants the study’s major findings and soliciting their comments. The participants agreed with the findings and felt that the attributes and abilities reflected a quality leader worthy of their investment. As reflected in chapter five, participants either reiterated or added to their responses in their follow-up interviews.

The researcher imported the approved interview transcript files into NVivo. The researcher created “nodes” or codes that aligned with the interview question topics. Examining the data from all five interviews allowed the researcher to “build a coherent justification for themes” or codes (Creswell, 2018, p. 199). Codes were “established based on converging several sources of perspectives” from participants, which added validity to the study (p. 199). The codes were then reduced by grouping topics that relate to each other (Creswell).

The researcher assembled data into its appropriate code, and after preliminary analysis, recoded data where necessary. The researcher continually compared data with codes to avoid drift in the codes’ definition or meaning during the coding process (Creswell). Reviewing the data revealed frequently used words. The following table describes the 10 most used words (nouns and verbs) in the interviews. The words below include stemmed words (e.g., invest, investment, invested, investing, investments) and are reflected in the following data analysis.
Table A5

Data Word Frequency

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Data Analysis and Findings

The data from the qualitative interviews produced dense and rich data. The researcher winnowed the data and coded content relevant to the study’s focus (Creswell, 2018). This qualitative study aimed to focus on participants’ perceptions, experiences, processes, and outcomes (Creswell). Researchers are particularly interested in understanding how things occur (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990; Merriam, 1988 as cited in Creswell, 2018), and this study sought to discover authentic leadership elements that influence venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools. Data was analyzed numerous times to satisfy the following research questions. It is worth noting that when referring to the “Christian school leader,” some participants used the term to refer to their fellow founding members, school board members, superintendent/headmaster/head of school, or a combination of the three roles.

Research Question 1

What attributes do venture philanthropists seek in a Christian school leader before giving to the Christian school?
Jeff

**Transparency & Self-Awareness.** Jeff’s entrepreneurial background helped him evaluate the school leaders by “trying to read their minds, instincts, and the direction and desire they have to run a good organization.” Jeff describes how he expects transparency and self-awareness when meeting with Christian leaders seeking his investment.

You should have a business plan and presentation where you touch on areas where you’re strong and where you need some help. Be honest about the whole process. To me, it's a business plan, and you lay out your strengths and know what your organization is. If I'm investing, I want to see that they know what they're doing financially.

**Excellence.** Excellence is a common theme among the venture philanthropist participants. Jeff discussed his expectations of excellence and said:

Our thought was that if we're going into this thing, we are going to be successful and build an excellent Christian high school that will have an impact on the community, students, and parents. It seems to me whether it's a business, a charity, or a Christian organization, you have to have people there who want to do God's work in a great way and have a spirit of excellence.

We have excellent management in the school, which is the key to our investing. You have to have really qualified people who are running these institutions. If we made wise choices about the people in the organizations that we supported, we could impact young people early on in their careers and life.

**Vision, Christian Values & Ethics.** When meeting with potential VP recipients, Jeff considers whether the leaders have the right values/ethics and vision for Christian education.

It was a combination of things we considered, like who they were, how they said it, and their vision of Christian education. You have to feel as if the people you're talking to want to accomplish the same things you're trying to accomplish to run a great and strongly Christian school with strong values.

**Mission-Focused, Passion, Self-Discipline & Commitment.** Jeff discusses how the leader should pair self-discipline with passion for the school’s mission and principles.

You can be passionate about bad things. You have to have passion, but it has to be directed and focused on the right area. When we throw huge amounts of dollars into brick and mortar for schools, we want that brick and mortar to be teaching the same principles
25 years from now. One of the things that scare me to death about putting money into brick and mortar is what happens to that, and it could be a great institution at this time, but what happens 25 years down the road? Is there a drift from the values and mission?

When investing in a Christian school, Jeff expects the leaders and board to avoid mission drift.

Christian schools are no stranger to new ideas by board members. However, Jeff states that Christian school leadership must remain committed to the mission.

The only way you two cannot have a drift in the organization is to have the board of directors and their leadership committed to holding the line. As you well know, in today’s crazy world, there are a lot of people who come at you with all kinds of crazy things. You cannot compromise, and you've got to hold the line.

**Relationship Connectedness & Empowering.** Jeff discussed relationship connectedness extensively. He states that a critical element to his VP success is a strong relationship with the school leaders. Jeff makes it a point to speak with them every other week, which allows for fellowship and mentorship.

You form those relationships over a period of time through phone calls with them, in-person visits, entertaining them, or inviting them to your home. I try to invite the school leaders to my house for a get-together and try to expose them to a broader area of the Christian community with other leaders in town. I’m a big proponent of having them get out of their environment and their element and get them exposed to other leaders to expand their vision and confidence. You have to build them up and have fellowship, so they know they're not in it alone.

Jeff adds that the Christian school leader must work well with constituents and show respect.

I think (leaders) have many responsibilities and areas where they have to be very efficient if they're going to run a very successful Christian school. You have parents, school board, students, and contractors – all of that has to work. You have to be a multi-talented person to interface with all those people on a successful basis.

It’s about (a leader’s) personality, entrepreneurialism, their drive, how they treat people and respect themselves and others around them. One of the significant parts of the leadership we look for is if the person can empower others to accomplish their goals. In other words, are they a dictator, a top-down leader, or are they a bottom-up leader? I like bottom-up leaders who empower people and respect people.
**Trust/Confidence.** Trust is a deciding factor in whether Jeff will continue to invest in the Christian school. For him, trust is earned over a period of time and from meetings and seeing results.

(Trust) evolves through meetings, telephone calls, meeting with the board, being at the school, and seeing how they interact with the students. Some people probably give money and then never show up; that's not our style. I came out of the business world, so I expect results and a return. It’s not about good feelings; it's about accomplishing goals and educating kids in the right way. If (the school leaders) are successful and show leadership qualities, we'll continue to invest in that organization so it will grow.

We invest slowly in this process. We don't put a whole bunch of money down and hope that the leadership is there. We try to go in and start with a school on a smaller basis, and then when we gain confidence, we grow with them, manage the process, and help them through some of the areas where they need help.

When asked what advice he would give first-time Christian school venture philanthropists, Jeff stresses the importance of confidence in investing.

Go slow and make a number of smaller investments. Some people get caught up in the idea that they will make one large investment, and then they’re going to be done with it. We didn't approach it that way. Go in with your eyes open and with expectations of what you want to accomplish. Keep track of what they're doing, and when you have confidence and believe they're doing a good job, you continue to invest.

Jeff discussed how he withheld his investment for years due to a lack of trust and confidence in the school leaders.

I think a lot of it is gut instinct, the Lord, and a lot of praying. We met with the board at our Christian high school for about three years before we decided that we were really going to do this thing. We turned it down, and then they changed the management and part of the board leadership, but when we first started to talk to the school, I was not convinced that this was the right kind of investment because I didn't think they were committed to being a successful organization. I can remember meeting with them for three or four years before we decided to go, and when we went, they had people in place who were on the same type of wavelength as us.

**Concluding Thoughts.** In Christian school leadership, Jeff values transparency, self-awareness, mission-focused, commitment, excellence, passion, self-discipline/consistency, Christian values/ethics, vision, relationship connectedness, empowering, and trust/confidence.
These attributes help achieve the social impact that Jeff wants to make – seeing future Christian leaders who can successfully defend their faith. He argues how producing an excellent Christian education demands an excellent staff.

I want Christian people coming out of our schools as CEOs, politicians, and leaders in the community. They have to have a solid background from family, Christian, and academic standpoints, and you have to have good institutions to teach students how to defend their faith. Some parents want their children in Christian schools because of the environment, and they want to protect them from the world. That is a false deal. We need to expose these young people to what they're going to find out in the world but give them the ability to defend their faith when they go to college.

They're going to come under some severe environments there, and they should know how to defend their Christian beliefs. The way you deliver a good product is to have marvelous teachers, and if you have that, you're going to have to pay them well. We're going to provide a marvelous Christian product, and we're going to prepare your student to face the world. We've been successful with that.

Austin

**Relationship Connectedness.** Of all authentic leadership elements, Austin spoke the most on relationship connectedness. Austin says that one of the four qualities he looks for in a leader is a “connector” who serves people. The other three qualities are honoring God, being excellent, and being a good steward. For the past 27 years, Austin has had multiple headmasters that were either task or relationship-oriented. He believes there are few leaders “who do both well.” Austin adds:

We're getting better at hiring more well-rounded people versus just people-oriented or just task-oriented. It helps because we are balancing our leadership team by making sure we have all of those characteristics. We have become better at figuring out what a person's personality is and whether they will be a leader or a manager.

Austin’s relationship connectedness with his leaders allows him to hold them accountable regarding school operations and finances.

There are one of four things we are trying to do when we communicate, which is we are collaborating, clarifying, critiquing, and caring for each other. I think that administrators have to understand tough love, and that is what the philanthropist can bring along with
accountability and encouragement. It's this duality of roles and personalities of speaking the truth in love.

One surprising statement that the researcher documented was Austin’s time spent at the academy connecting with the school leader. Having a leader who equally values that relationship is vital.

My most significant contribution to the academy is not my money; it’s my time. I have averaged about 500 hours per year at the academy. Doing the math in my head, that is one-fourth of the 2,000 workable hours in a year. Every Friday, I spend probably two hours with the headmaster or the president. We talk several times a week, so that time is really important.

I am a big fan of having a weekly meeting. I ask how things are going, any issues, and how the leader is doing. About once a month, I try to zero in on their personal life. I know what week of the month I need to ask him about his wife and kids. Once a month, there is more of an agenda around the school's business, the budget, planning, and finding out if we are on track to get things done.

The relationships developed among the school board and Austin are instrumental. Austin’s fellow board members spend two to three hours per week on school business matters. He adds, “It has been terrific, but let me tell you, we get down to business. All of us are best friends, and all of us get red-faced if we have to, but we come up with the best solution every time.”

**Christian Values & Ethics, Passion & Commitment.** Commitment and character are two of the five elements that Austin seeks in a Christian school leader. He also desires a leader who is committed to honoring God and pursuing his God-given purpose. Austin adds:

Honor God; If you live by that value, we believe you will become a person of character. Stewarding capital or resources well will drive you to commitment. The non-negotiable elements we look for are character and commitment in leaders; you either have them or don’t.

The priority is the purpose and character. Does the leader truly love Jesus? Is the leader living a life that honors God and in a way that is so ‘sold out’ that they are willing to take risks?

Austin stressed the importance of ethics and fulfilling promises made to school constituents (i.e., students, parents, vendors, staff/board).
If we say one of our values is to honor God or serve people, how do we do that? For instance, we make promises to our employees, and we promise that our job is to help you become everything that God wants you to become. I want to know if we challenge employees, have the needed tools and training, and if I help them along and live up to my promise.

Promises put feet and action to your principles or your values. We look at those principles, and then we make promises that force us to fulfill them. In one sense, they are a key performance indicator as to how well we are living up to our principles.

Austin adds that the philanthropist and administrator must agree on the school’s purpose, strategies, and values so that the leader is “passionate” and “committed.”

**Mission-Focused.** Maintaining loyalty to and focus on the school’s mission is imperative for Austin. As other participants mentioned, donors should not sway them from their mission. Austin shares, “You would think that that would never happen in a Christian school, but it does. We have turned down several major gifts because it did not fit the mission.”

**Balanced Processing.** Austin practices what he preaches on Christian school leaders soliciting input. He formed advisory boards that actively solicit feedback.

We have an education board, a spiritual life board, and an athletic board commissioned by the executive board. The advisory boards meet four or five times a year, sometimes six or seven times a year. We tasked them to discuss what they want to change, and then we task them with bringing us a solution.

The executive board is very efficient, and we drive down the ownership to probably 40 or 50 key parents. If their major recommendations are good, then it gets the board’s stamp of approval, so those advisory boards know they have an impact. The advisory boards are how we keep a pulse on our customers – the parents and students.

Austin urges leaders to solicit more than just a major investment. Likewise, he encourages venture philanthropists to do more than write seven-figure-checks.

The leader should not just look for the philanthropist’s money or treasure; he should also look for his expertise, time, and talent. The donor should not only give his money to make decisions; he should give his money so that he has an outlet to provide expertise to the leader.
His giving should be a way for him to be generous beyond writing a check. There may be some or many venture philanthropists who would not spend nearly as much time or talent as my wife and I do at the academy. We have received great benefit from it, and I think the academy has too because of some of the great things we talked about early on in this conversation and the business acumen I’ve brought to the table as to how we should run the school.

About 70 percent of the gifts that my wife and I make are legacy or investment gifts, and there are just a handful of those types of gifts. So, we give time, talent, and treasure. We give time and serve on the board, we write a check, and we're involved in the ministry, so we understand what's going on.

**Self-Awareness.** Austin also urges venture philanthropists and school leaders to be self-aware of their negative tendencies and weaknesses. He believes that within school leadership, both leaders and managers must be present. Austin says, “We can balance ourselves out by finding our alter ego and teaming up with him. If I am a leader, I need to find a good manager.” He describes how self-awareness prevents one’s areas of weakness from becoming a detriment to the school. Austin recalls a school leader resigning from his position after acknowledging his weakness in being relationship-oriented. He states, “We quickly realized that we needed a people person to grow the business. He saw that, and he resigned, knowing that we needed more of a salesman.”

**Transparency.** Austin believes that transparency gains the trust and support of school supporters. He and his leadership team reflect transparency in their school financial records.

The best thing we do is our annual stakeholders' luncheon for anybody who gives $10,000 or more. At the event, we treat it like they are on the board, and we are giving them a 30-minute board report. We discuss operations and extracurricular activities. When we discuss the financials, we provide them with a copy of our balance sheet and our income statement. They get to see the inner workings, and we tell them what we are thinking for the year or two ahead, things that are not public yet. We then have a Q&A for 15 minutes. It’s a powerful thing.

Austin adds that relationship connectedness, transparency, and communication by school leaders allow major donors to appreciate the impact of their investments.
It’s a good idea for leaders to pick them up and take them to the fine arts drama play or the football game. Give them free tickets, so they're constantly seeing what's going on at the school. What you are doing is getting them close to the customer because what they're buying or funding is the results, and when you show them the results, it is a powerful thing.

**Excellence and Self-Discipline.** Excellence is one of the academy’s four values. Austin and his school leaders “are constantly pushing buttons to make (the school) better” so they can remain competitive with other schools. He adds that:

Excellence honors God and inspires people. Pursuing excellence will drive you to be a person of competence. Every time we make a decision, we ask four questions. For example, should we build a new football stadium? We ask the four questions: Does it honor God, does it serve people, can we do it with excellence, and are we good stewards? It starts with those four questions and then starts breaking them down into very minute detail. When we start answering those questions, it makes it simple.

Austin describes how self-discipline helps his leadership team achieve the school’s mission, goals, and expectations.

Let's be as excellent and precise as we can with the budget numbers, ACT scores, staff evaluations, or whatever and agree on the expectation. As we go through our excellence checklist, we can say, “We're weak here, we're strong there, and we need to improve here.”

**Trust & Vision.** Austin spoke extensively to the elements of trust and relationships. He says, “The absolute key thing is the relationship between the head of school and the philanthropist; do they trust each other?” Austin adds that accountability is crucial in venture philanthropy.

The leader has to be comfortable with the philanthropist and know that he's not a control freak and will not run the school. However, the leader can't just say, ‘Give me the money and don't interfere with what I’m doing, or I don't want any accountability. When there is accountability, it doesn't mean that there is no trust; it just means that the gift comes with expectations, and that is discussed and understood between the leader and philanthropist.
Trust is strengthened between Austin and the school leader when he visits with school constituents. In those conversations, Austin casts the school’s vision, which is a core element of his strategic plan.

I am at nearly every home football and basketball game and theater production. I am there to talk to people so I can cast vision and find out how we are doing as a school. I believe the philanthropist can develop trust in the leader more by talking to the constituents. Talk to the people and make sure you are staying close to the customer. You have to stay close to the customer.

Austin also uses meetings with the school leader as a platform to strengthen trust and their relationship.

I think of the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. That is where trust is important because when I give you those talents, it demonstrates my trust in you to make something of those talents, whatever it may be. It boils down to, am I going to let the authentic leader do his job, or am I going to micromanage him? Do I trust you to do it, or do I require you to check in with me several times a day because I don’t trust you? Are you meeting with the leader to control him and tell him what to do, or are you meeting so that they know they can come to talk to you? So, the trust thing is huge. There has to be a balance there.

Austin’s quarterly meetings with the leader typically focus on expectations and standards – both met and unmet.

Quarterly, we do a fairly extensive review of our quarterly and annual plans. This review is where expectations are important because we lay those out and learn what you can or can’t do. We have this saying: ‘A promise made creates hope, a promise kept creates trust.’ If you do not meet expectations, that will breed distrust. Suppose you and I are meeting, talking, adjusting, defining, and understanding those expectations. In that case, my job is to come alongside and help you and not criticize you for not living up to the expectation.

**Concluding Thoughts.** When asked what advice Austin has for first-time Christian school venture philanthropists, he stressed the importance of a long-term strategic plan that lays out performance standards.

The key tool that will make the leader and the venture philanthropist track and work well together is the long-term strategic plan; this planning document says this is our vision, and these are our principles and promises. We have four parts of our strategic plan:
1. The purpose, which is *why* we are in business as a school.
2. The strategy, which is answering the question of *who* we are serving.
3. The operational tool, which defines *how* we are serving.
4. The execution tool, which says *what* our impact is.

We have four questions: Why, who, how, and what? If you have that plan and the venture philanthropist and the leader agree on that, I think that is a foundational document. That strategic plan is the essence of laying out our responsibilities and our expectations.

In Christian school leadership, Austin values passion, Christian values/ethics, commitment, relationship connectedness, mission-focused, balanced processing, self-awareness, transparency, self-discipline, excellence, vision, and trust. These attributes allow him and his school leaders to experience venture philanthropy success and a growing, Christ-centered school.

**Ken**

**Excellence.** Excellence was the first quality that Ken noticed about the Christian school and its annual banquet, which he describes as “An amazing experience; the kids, the atmosphere, the superintendent, just the entire thing was over the top.” Ken recalls the moment when he first discovered the school.

Suddenly, I bump into this school that has it all right, and God is just thriving in the kids’ hearts, the halls, and the teachers. It's everywhere. It's not a school that is Christian by name only or its weekly chapel. This school is the real deal.

**Relationship Connectedness & Trust.** Trust between Ken and the superintendent “evolved through a few meetings” and spending time together. He adds, “It was pretty quick. Like anybody, you size people up pretty quickly, and the leader was easy to size up.” Given that relationships were the conduit to Ken’s introduction to the Christian, PreK-12 school, connecting with others is imperative in Christian school fundraising. As Austin and Ken discussed in their interviews, board members and school leaders must network with donor prospects to grow the school’s supporter base. Ken advises Christian school leaders to:
Leverage your network of fellow Christians and leverage the connectedness with the Christian community to reach out to lots of folks. It is why networking is so important. It is taking people that you have direct connections to and then reaching out like a pyramid scheme. You connect with and network to the next layer and then have those people reach out to the next layer. It’s how our board member got to me and invited me to the banquet. Our school leader engaged the board member who engaged with me, and that’s an example of leveraging your connections and networking.

We tell our board members that if they want to join our board, they need to help us by bringing people in their circle to the banquet. That’s what I am trying to do when I bring thirty of my friends to that banquet. I’m trying to expand that network, and maybe they'll want to invite someone. The hit rate is not high, but we may get two or three people who want to help, which is far better than zero.

**Love, Christian Values & Ethics.** In order of rank or priority, the number one element that Ken looks for in a Christian school leader is strong Christian values. Ken encourages Christian leaders looking for a VP investment to “stay on your knees and prays earnestly.” He states, “The number one attribute is a leader absolutely sold out for Christ and a born-again believer.” The third (ranked) element that Ken looks for in a leader is one who loves and disciplines students out of God’s love.

First, I believe that our school leader unconditionally loves those students. Number two, he can be tough and when they get out of line, do what's required. Tough, but not hardened. It's like how God is tough and says, “Hey, I love you. Period. No questions asked. But I'm also tough and expect you to do the right things. When you don't, you have to come back only through My Son, Jesus, and I am going to forgive you.” That is tough, and many people do not think of God that way; they think of God as just real gushy. He is love and tough.

**Passion & Self-Discipline.** The second (ranked) element that Ken looks for is passion. He states, “Number two is passion. There is no way you're going to be an effective leader of a bunch of young people if you're not passionate; it’s just not going to happen.” Ken also emphasized the importance of the leader practicing self-discipline and passion for staying focused on the mission.
**Balanced Processing & Self-Awareness.** Ken spoke extensively about balanced processing as it compares to intelligence. Ken, who has earned a doctorate in mechanical engineering, values all of the authentic leadership elements more than intelligence.

All of those (AL) elements really resonate with me, and from what I've learned about leading anything, those elements are all absolutely crucial. What is noticeably absent from that list, which is interesting, is I.Q. (intelligence quotient). Emotional intelligence (E.Q.) is all over that list – self-awareness, transparency – that is all E.Q. However, I.Q. is absent from that list. I believe that I.Q. was once highly valued, but the reality is that all that other stuff is so much more important. All you really need is an adequate level of I.Q., not an extraordinary I.Q.

People used to get that upside down and say, ‘This guy will be so good at this job because he is so brilliant or so smart,’ but the reality is that if he is self-aware, passionate, transparent, and all that other stuff, it is so much better than just being smart. Based on my observation, balanced processing is essential, and if you're not soliciting others’ opinions through a desire for self-awareness, how are you really going to know anything at all?

In many cases, I.Q. is not nearly as important as all those (AL) elements. It can be a detractor and trick you into thinking you know better than others. So, I think that (AL elements) list is perfect.

Ken compliments his school leader for soliciting board members’ input to strengthen his knowledge on school finances. The school was still making efforts to balance its budget when Ken discovered the school. However, that did not deter him from investing millions of dollars.

The church used to complain often about how much the school was costing them. The church was pumping lots of money into the school, and the school was not accounting for it correctly. Even after the school became independent from the church, it took a while for all of the expenses to be fully understood. Before and after it became independent from the church, there were many accounting misses and things they did not understand.

Their world had kind of been flipped upside down, so, according to the school leader, they didn’t understand their financial world, but they eventually did. There was a process to go through, to get all that straightened out, get your arms around what the real cost structures were in the school, what the actual ongoing costs were going to be, and that took time. But kudos to the school leader for listening to board members and being the real force for getting it straightened out. He continues to be that, and it’s terrific.
Commitment. Ken’s investment in the school required a commitment from the leadership team to steward school funds properly. Ken states, “I was pretty tough at school board meetings and was pretty tough with the school leader face-to-face. I said, ‘We've got to get this right immediately. We have to have a path to get us there.’” Ken complimented the leader on his commitment to fulfilling Ken’s request. He states, “I have been impressed with our school leader’s response.”

Mission-Focused. Ken's investments in the school are fueled by his love for God’s mission work. He enthusiastically supports the school because it develops missionaries and leaders for Christ. Ken exclaims:

Christian school philanthropy is about the mission work and what you do with the population at a young age. No higher efficiency or high effectiveness dollars can be given on a per-hour return basis to God’s mission work. I used to do a lot of full-time missionary funding and still do some of that now, but I am focused on schools and these youth organizations, both of which are full-time missionary efforts right here in our own country and communities.

Ken adds that leaders must practice self-discipline and passion for the school’s mission and not lose focus. He stated that he had seen leaders “be passionate about things and not be focused. The results of that were not terrible, but they were not great either.”

Ken desires Christian school leadership that encompasses excellence, trust, relationship connectedness, love, Christian values/ethics, passion, self-discipline, balanced processing, self-awareness, commitment, and being mission-focused. He believes these attributes contribute to his current VP success and the school’s mission for students to know and spread God’s word.

Diane

Christian Values & Ethics. Christian values and ethics are the top authentic leadership elements for Diane. She describes how it is essential to receiving God’s blessings.
The ethics and values are so important to me because I don't feel that God can fully bless and honor the work you're doing if there is no firm foundation in Christian ethics and accountability to God. If we do not conduct ourselves in a manner that honors God, then there is no way that He can pour out His blessings on us. Ethics and values are important and the key element.

There have always been two primary criteria on which our school makes decisions: does it honor God, and is it in the best interest of our students? The board, leadership, and the employees continue to adhere to those two decision criteria.

Diane adds that Christian values were strongly present in her head of school and school board.

We could certainly tell based on their Christian witness. We also saw that in their personal and professional conduct. The unselfish, sacrificial nature of our founding board was inspiring. (Our head of school) came from a legal background, so we always felt that the school would be well protected in that way, but more than anything, he just had a deep and abiding faith (in God).

**Trust/Confidence.** Diane spoke extensively on trust and confidence as determining factors in whether she and her husband would invest. Diane states:

Certainly, our head of school we had been working with to lead this project was a brilliant individual in whom we had an enormous amount of confidence. But the true leadership came from the board, and I respected and honored them so much.

In the early days, the board was a group of nine individuals. I had so much confidence in those individuals. I’ve always put far more confidence in our board as opposed to just one particular individual. So, I would say that confidence in the board led us to have great confidence in our investment.

**Commitment.** For Diane, trust developed over time and by seeing her fellow founding families’ hard work and dedication. Diane states that their “level of commitment” contributed to their success in founding a school.

Working with someone day in and day out on this project naturally allowed me to get to know them and see what they’re really like under pressure, especially during the early days. The more time I spent with these individuals and our head of school, the more I admired, respected, and grew to love them. They were the people I wanted to be in the foxhole with, so it absolutely influenced our decision.

If I had had the opposite experience and developed no respect for these individuals or felt that they were motivated by selfish ambitions, it would have definitely influenced our
decision. Our trust, honor, and respect for them had a lot to do with the resources we were willing to commit to this project.

Trust between Diane and the head of school allowed her to transition from being his supervisor to being his employee.

What helped make it successful was his idea of inviting me to step off the board to work for him as the CFO. It was his choice to have me serve in this role because we had worked together for many years, and he had a level of trust in me that he didn't have in other people.

**Visionary.** Diane describes how she holds great respect for her head of school’s vision-driven talent.

I think it was mutual respect, trust, and admiration for each other's skills and abilities. We're very different people, and I think we complemented each other for all of these years. He is very much a visionary, and my leadership style is more on the execution side, so it was a good balance. We've had an amazing leadership team over the years.

**Excellence.** The Christian high school was founded on a vision of excellence and a great step of faith. In Diane’s narrative, she stated:

We were going to venture out on our own and see if we could figure out what it would be like to start a Christian high school that would honor God and does not compromise in terms of excellence in all. If there was one of the driving forces behind this school, it was the concept, at least in our state, that there aren't many schools that can be both excellent and Christian at the same time. We didn't feel that being mediocre was honoring to God; excellence is what honors God, and there's no reason why you can't be excellent in everything because it's a reflection of Him.

We believed we needed to be a high school of 1,200 students (300 per grade) to have enough students to be excellent in all things. We wanted to have the depth and breadth in academics, arts, athletics, and service and outreach. Each year that the kids come to school, we want to have something new that makes their experience a little more exceptional.

Diane believes that running a school of excellence does not necessarily have to come at a cost. She says, “We have a saying that ‘excellence doesn't always cost money.’ You can do excellent things that don’t have a price tag associated with them.”
**Passion & Self-Discipline/Consistency.** When asked what authentic leadership elements are the most crucial, Diane stressed the importance of passion in purpose. Passion fueled the disciplined and consistent efforts of her board members in founding an excellent high school.

They were such Godly men and women who were very passionate about this project. Passion is pretty inspiring when you're able to sit around the table with people hour after hour, day after day, week after week, month after month, working on something. If there was no passion for our purpose, and there was not a level of commitment that each person felt, I don't believe that the project would succeed to the level it has today. Eventually, it might get there, but this passion truly drives us, this relentless purpose to our school's vision, to prepare tomorrow's leaders to transform the world for Christ. There is an enormous amount of passion and energy just around that simple statement, which was also absolutely crucial.

Diane compliments her head of school for consistently raising the bar and exuding passion and self-discipline.

From the early days, he was incredibly sacrificial in his time and energy to see this project succeed. He was passionate and believed in this project. There has never been a point where he has been satisfied with where we were and knew we could always do better. It is the same pursuit that we call our students to, so we have to walk the talk and hold ourselves to the same standards. He has been so steadfast and faithful in calling all of us to higher levels of excellence every year. There has never been a point where he has been satisfied with where we were and knew we could always do better.

**Mission-Focused.** Holding firm to the vision and mission of the school is crucial to Diane and the school leadership. She and her husband feel strongly about using their “God-given resources to support the mission and vision of various faith-based organizations.”

The board has maintained its core principles that they care deeply about and guard against mission drift. There was such a focus on working together to ensure progress on the school's mission and vision. The ultimate goal is to make sure every person who sets foot on that campus hears the truth of Christ. We trusted in God and believed that if we honored Him with our decision, remain true to our mission, and continued to act in ways that brought glory to His name, then He would take care of the rest, and He has.

**Compassion & Love.** Like Ken, Diane discussed the importance of students experiencing God’s love and compassion from staff and administrators.
What makes us special is that we have hired some amazing people who pour into and mentor our students. They give selflessly to make sure these kids are known and loved. They want to help them navigate these four years of high school. We believe in this generation and a desire to make sure that they are known, loved, and mentored when they are here.

**Relationship Connectedness.** Diane spoke intently about her strong relationship with her school leader, which positively influenced her decision to work for him.

My 15-year working relationship with him is coming to an end in the next couple of months. It is a little bittersweet for me because he is probably one of the most brilliant men I have ever had a chance to serve alongside. I have appreciated the opportunity to learn from him. I think he would say that it has been a good partnership as well. I have had a great working relationship with him and admire him and his family tremendously.

Like the other participants, Diane emphasized the importance of relationship connectedness with school donors.

Relationships with your donors are important. Find ways to honor them and thank them not because of what they can do for you but because it is the right thing to do under God. I think it goes beyond the kind of traditional thank you card or acknowledgment after you make a gift. It is more so the school desiring to be in a relationship with this person. It would be nice as a donor to get updates on the school just for no reason other than to say, “I was thinking of you knowing that you care deeply about this project. Let me tell you about how your gift has made an impact on these kids’ lives.”

As a school, we are working on ways to honor our donors at a higher level than what we have done in the past, so I guess it goes more towards the relationship with the individual. The motivation has to be beyond what the donor can do for the school but truly because you care about them.

**Concluding Thoughts.** As described above, Diane desires Christian school leadership that embodies Christian values/ethics, trust/confidence, commitment, visionary, excellence, passion, self-discipline/consistency, mission-focused, relationship connectedness, and compassion and love. She believes these attributes have created a successful VP experience and a Christian high school that is excellent in academics, arts, and athletics. As discussed in Diane’s story, founding a high school demands much effort. Of the countless tasks involved in founding a school, Diane says seeking God should be at the top of that list.
Seek God on this decision and this investment because if you are a venture philanthropist, you can change the course of history for some of these schools. You can make transformational gifts that can be so impactful to the young people who will benefit from it. There are so many worthy organizations and schools that could be deserving of such a gift. I would encourage them to seek God and His direction, guidance, and wisdom in this area.

**Madeline**

**Relationship Connectedness.** A pivotal moment in Madeline’s spiritual life came in the context of a flourishing friendship with the headmaster. Madeline states that the headmaster’s shepherding and connectedness helped ignite her desire to convert to Catholicism.

I asked the headmaster to help me, and he was so kind by letting me ask all the questions I wanted. In time, I went back to him and was scared to death as I told him that I might have to become a Catholic. The headmaster shepherded me through my conversion experience. He was my sponsor, and if I came into the church, he was my rock.

The headmaster and the founder felt like family almost instantly. We started doing bible study during the second year of the school, and the Bible became profoundly richer. When I put it together with the Catholic faith, it lit up the Bible in a way that it never been lit up before.

Meanwhile, her husband’s friendship with the school founder quickly thrived as they had mutual interests.

The founder moved four doors away from us, and the friendship that he and my husband developed was so unlikely. They were both successful businessmen who got a kick out of each other and making investments.

**Christian Values & Ethics.** Madeline did not hesitate to praise the headmaster and the school founder for their character and conduct. She comments, “We learned right away that they were really good eggs. They were just really good people. If anything, we were concerned we didn’t measure up because of their devotion to the faith and everybody.”

**Passion.** Madeline compliments her school founder for his relentless work in constructing the academy and not anticipating “anyone helping him.” She states that the school
founder leaving and returning to the Catholic faith fueled his passion for the school even more.

Madeline continues this line of thinking in the following statement:

Once the founder returned to the Catholic church, he had a dream of starting this school. There was nothing more lit up than a Catholic convert, so they were just putting their money where their mouth is everywhere you went. With the founder, it was a continual raising of the bar of what he was doing. He kept wanting to do more, and then he would do it. He loves to make something happen.

**Excellence.** Madeline frequently spoke about the success and superiority of the academy from its inception. She adds:

The goal was to be a fully Catholic school and academically superior to all of the old blue blood prep schools in the area. A couple of years ago, we had one student from Kenya who was accepted into eight ivy league schools. The founder and the headmaster did what they said they would do and have just killed it.

**Balanced Processing.** Constructing a high school in addition to the academy’s K-8 school spurred the founder to solicit the input of others. Madeline states, “The founder had this dream, and he wanted to see it through, so he wanted our support, input, and advice.” As shown below, the founder’s balanced processing helped the academy weather an economic downturn.

**Commitment, Mission-Focused & Visionary.** The COVID-19 pandemic attracted more students to the academy that was committed to keeping their doors open. According to Madeline, the school enrolled 300 new students in 2020 after planning for a decrease of 100 students.

We are committed to having the kids in school. While other kids are doing two days a week or some sort of hybrid thing, we're saying, “Hey, bring them in, and if they get sick, we'll send them home.” We’re just letting God guide that, and we have had no problem.

The school founder’s vision of a premier college preparatory school extended beyond the academic realm. As Madeline explains, the founder was committed to sending a bold message to the outside culture and had a mission of creating a school for students of all socioeconomic backgrounds.
When he built the school, one of the founder’s goals was to keep the culture out of the school. He put up an iron fence around the property and with a gate at the front. It was an architectural symbolism of keeping the culture out. It allowed my daughter to show up every day in eighth grade with a uniform identical to all the other girls in the class. It meant that the girls weren’t competing with wearing Abercrombie or other brand names.

That’s just one small example of how he kept the culture at bay and allowed God to teach our children what really mattered. It helped because some students were wealthy while other students were just getting by. We all had a higher priority of serving a God who didn’t care about that stuff.

Madeline viewed her daughter’s character and premier education as proof of the school’s mission being fulfilled.

We had a living example of what the academy does, so that sealed the deal. It was really watching our daughter grow. We started seeing our grandchildren grow, and our daughter started to guide them with the values, principles, and faith that the academy had given to her.

**Self-Discipline/Consistency & Trust/Confidence.** Madeline’s trust for the school leaders developed when their words consistently matched their actions. She went on to say:

They told us what they were going to do, and they did it. We absolutely trusted them. To use an analogy, when (President) Trump came down the escalator, most of the world kind of rolled their eyes, but in time, Trump put his money where his mouth is in a way that we did not expect. Our founder and headmaster are the same way, and there is nothing more trustworthy than that. Our founder said he would build a Catholic prep school not attached to the church or archdiocese, and he did it and did it well. They totally sold me on a product I did not want whatsoever.

Madeline correlated authenticity with a leader’s actions and words being consistent with his true self. She attests to her school founder’s authenticity and says:

It wasn’t popular for our founder to build that fence and keep the culture out. There were a lot of people who wanted to be able to drive their Range Rover to the front curb to drop their little darlings off. That fence decision wasn't supported nor celebrated by people, so our founder was authentic even when it was unpopular. The founder and the headmaster did what they said they would do and have just killed it.

When asked what advice she had for Christian school leaders seeking a venture philanthropist, Madeline reiterated the importance of authenticity and consistency between one’s words and
actions. She commented, “Be who you say you’re going to be. Let your word be your bond, and let your bond be your contract. Build it, and they will come.” When asked what advice she had for first-time venture philanthropists looking to invest in a Christian school, Madeline continued:

Look for a school you believe in to have a little conversion experience tossed in there just for quality. If you are considering a specific school, is it authentic? Are they doing what they say they're going to do, especially when it might be unpopular?

**Concluding Thoughts.** Based on Madeline’s responses, she values Christian school leaders who embody relationship connectedness, Christian values/ethics, passion, excellence, self-discipline/consistency, trust/confidence, balanced processing, commitment, mission-focused, and vision. Her enthusiastic support stems from the school leaders surpassing her expectations for the Catholic, college-prep academy.

**Research Question 2**

What abilities do venture philanthropists seek in a Christian school leader before giving to the Christian school?

**Austin**

**Stewardship.** Austin believes that “Stewarding capital or resources well will drive you to commitment.” He adds, “We think that stewardship equals leadership plus managership because you steward the resource of people, processes, or products. We're looking for a leader who can do both.” Austin confesses that the greatest “heat” he has received from parents is over a no-debt policy.

The school will not borrow money. If God doesn't fund it, we don't do it. Every March, at our stakeholders' meeting, I stand up in front of them and show them a balance sheet with $25 million of assets and zero debt. These people are asking, ‘How does that work?’ We tell them that we're just not going to do the debt thing. That has been one of the best things we have ever done.
**Competence.** Competence is one of the five desired elements that Austin seeks in a Christian school leader.

Pursuing excellence will drive you to be a person of competence. The other two, competence and connection, typically fall into the areas of you being a task-oriented person or a people-oriented person.

Competence and stewardship allow Austin and his school leaders to honor God by contributing their resources to the Christian school. Whether it is in business or Christian education, Austin believes that all resources belong to God and must be handled using these two abilities.

**Jeff**

**Stewardship.** Similar to Austin, Jeff views Christian schools as a business and believes that many schools around the country are not operating as one.

(Stewardship) is a must and a necessity. I know business has got a bad connotation in the Christian community and all that, but you have to have standards. You have to understand that you can do this or that and have the revenue. They must have a good sound financial model because when they go out to an investor and ask them to donate or be involved in the process, they're going to ask questions about how you perform on a financial basis. I call it a business, and maybe some people might object to that, but it is, and you have to manage the process.

**Competence.** Jeff adds that his school headmaster has experienced a dramatic increase in financial savviness in the last decade. Jeff discusses how competence is key in school operations.

As we've worked with him and he's worked with others through this whole process, we've built up $25 million worth of brick and mortar. The business side of that includes having an understanding of contractors and developers. Most of these Christian school leaders don't have a business background, but they need to have an understanding of it. They need to understand it, and I think it's the same thing with pastors.

I've talked to seminaries about teaching the pastors how to communicate from a financial standpoint. I have a broad background in working with people and hiring the right kind of people, so having a financial background or understanding of finances is extremely important in these Christian organizations. And if you don't have that extensive background, it's okay. At least acknowledge it and know where to go for help. They should have mentors in areas where they need help.
Jeff uses his God-given talent of business acumen to bless the Christian school’s operations and budget management. Stewardship among his Christian school leaders is enhanced through his mentorship and guidance.

Ken

Stewardship. In addition to joining the board, Ken implemented financial standards with his venture philanthropy practices at the school. Ken’s financial blessing came with a directive of sound stewardship by school leadership.

That is something I hit pretty hard when I joined the board. When I joined the board, there were two problems. The first problem was all the building purchases from the church that we talked about earlier. The other problem was that the school was not running a balanced budget, and there was a deficit situation. There were some cost problems, and in the face of needing to get a bunch of capital together to buy buildings, the school was operationally not where it needed to be.

I was pretty tough at school board meetings and was pretty tough with the school leader face-to-face. I said, ‘We've got to get this right immediately. We have to have a path to get us there.’ It was and still is a struggle, but we're pretty much there thanks to the school leader’s efforts and focus on balancing the budget. Now, with COVID-19, it obviously has been interesting. We're kind of there – break even – which is where we needed to be, because before it was an ‘operating in the red’ situation, which was sucking up capital for building purchases.

Competence. Ken highly desires competence in a Christian school leader and has great confidence in his superintendent’s abilities to oversee the students’ education.

He knows what he's doing. He's an educator. He's not just a leader or just a Christian. I know a lot of ministers and pastors who are those things, but they're not educators. Our school’s leader is an educator and competent in Christian education and education in general.

Ken values the superintendent’s experience in Christian education, which has allowed the school to excel. His school leader continues to solicit Ken’s guidance and strengthen his skills in school finance management.
Diane

Stewardship. Diane emphasizes the importance of managing the school’s funds in a manner that honors God. She describes below how it is an expectation for her school’s leaders.

Financial stewardship is a critically important factor for my husband and me personally. It is also critical from a biblical stewardship standpoint. Sound financial stewardship is also a way to bring honor to the other venture philanthropists and givers who support our school. Our decisions we make must be in the best interests of our students and honor God.

Mismanaging our funds would be a dishonor to God, and we want to do as much as we can with the resources that we have and continuously look at ways to be more creative and save money. We’re always trying to look for ways to maximize our budget and our resources. We want to live within our means.

Competence. Diane, her fellow school founders, and the head of school did not have career experience in education. However, their business decisions in starting a Christian high school were confidently made with spiritual discernment and competence. Diane adds:

We wanted God to show us how He wanted things done. We started with a blank sheet of paper. We didn’t have to reinvent the wheel for everything, but we also knew we didn’t have to do things the way schools always do them. From the beginning, we tried to function on sound business principles, such as: balancing our budgets, charging and assessing what it costs to operate the school, paying employees competitively to attract the top talent, taking judicious risks when necessary, and allowing people to have creative freedom and an entrepreneurial spirit within their areas.

Diane placed a heavy emphasis on stewardship as it is one of the most important ways to honor God. The stewardship and competence practiced by Diane and her fellow school leaders give her confidence to continue to invest millions of dollars.

Madeline

Competence. Madeline admires her school founder’s talents, who applies his engineering skills to school expansion projects. Madeline praises him by saying, “The founder is a genius; he is an engineer and invents all sorts of gizmos. He has not only built the academy but invented a lot of the electrical and HVAC stuff. He is a remarkable man.”
**Stewardship.** According to Madeline, the school’s financial stewardship has required a dose of balanced processing between her husband and the school’s leadership. With his investment, Madeline’s husband requested that the school would have no debt.

The founder was sort of new to business, investing, endowments, and making money grow, but my husband is knowledgeable about those things. He felt it was critical to start an endowment, which helped us during the 2008 economic crisis. It helped keep our cart on the rails, and now we have zero debt. My husband made a gift to help the school retire its debt. He wanted to get an oath from the leadership to not get into debt ever again.

Our operational money is entirely the headmaster managing that, and on occasion, my husband will advise that we’ll be in a better position by doing something in particular. He doesn’t tell, he suggests. When he makes his donations, there aren’t strings or standards attached. The headmaster is doing a good job managing the budget.

**Delegating.** The art of delegation is a desired ability of Madeline and her fellow board members. Speaking to the issue, Madeline states:

Our Founder guides it all since it is his boat. Sometimes we have to tell him, ‘We’re not going to do that.’ To a fault, he wants to drive even when he has been driving for 24 hours, and he is tired. He needs to sit in the backseat for a while. The Founder and the headmaster have that in common. We are coming upon a time when we need to have them both take a little break.

The founder tends to find rejuvenation in his work, but he also doesn't think he can let go of any of his responsibilities when he can with some of them. With special events, fundraising, curriculum, he just takes on all of it, and delegating some of it would be really helpful. He just needs to let go of some stuff and hire people that he can trust to do it rather than having people around as support staff.

As shown above, Madeline is concerned for her school leaders and wants them to delegate more. She hopes that her leaders will hand over duties to employees so they can focus on leadership-level matters.

**Research Question 3**

What are the most desired authentic leadership attributes among these Christian school leaders?
The participants collectively ranked passion, self-discipline, relationship connectedness, and Christian values/ethics as the most desired authentic leadership (AL) attributes among their Christian school leaders. It is important to note that while all AL attributes can be valuable in Christian school leadership, the term “Most Desired AL Attributes” was determined by the attributes the participants gravitated toward or mentioned first in the interviews. Participants value these elements in leadership roles such as superintendents, board members, and school founders. The research data revealed that all five participants desire a school leader who embodies Christian values and ethics, remains closely connected to the venture philanthropist (VPT) and school constituents, practices self-discipline and consistency, and is passionate about the school mission and the leader’s God-given purpose.

The second-most popular AL attributes are balanced processing and self-awareness. The third-most-popular AL attributes are transparency and compassion/love. Although two participants specifically spoke to showing students the love of God, all five participants discussed their strong desire for the school leader to embody Christian values. These Christian values teach leaders to practice several attributes, including compassion and love (Colossians 3:12-13, 1 John 3:17). Interestingly, the research data also revealed a range of desired attributes and abilities outside the AL theory and concept scope, which this researcher calls “AL-Adjacent.” The data indicated that the most desired AL-Adjacent attributes and abilities are commitment, mission-focused, excellence, competence, stewardship, and a leader in whom the venture philanthropist can have trust and confidence.
Table A6

**Most Desired AL and AL-Adjacent Attributes & Abilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Desired AL Attributes &amp; Abilities</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
<th>Most Desired AL-Adjacent Attributes &amp; Abilities</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mission-focused</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Connectedness</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Values &amp; Ethics</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Trust/Confidence</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Discipline/Consistency</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Excellence</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced Processing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Awareness</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Stewardship</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassion (Love)(^b)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Delegating/Empowering</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: “Most Desired” AL and AL-Adjacent Attributes were determined by what attributes the participants gravitated toward or mentioned first in the interviews. “AL-Adjacent” refers to elements outside the AL theory and concept scope. \(^b\) In this study, “love” is paired with “compassion” as compassion cannot exist without embodying God’s love (1 John 3:17).

**Research Question 4**

What are the perceived influences of authentic leadership attributes on venture philanthropy success?

All five participants described their Christian school, venture philanthropy experience as a success and frequently underlined the AL elements of passion, self-discipline/consistency, relationship connectedness, and Christian values/ethics. The participants describe self-discipline/consistency and passion as attributes that fuel the Christian school leader to focus on fulfilling the school’s mission. Relationship connectedness allows the venture philanthropist to discover if the leader possesses passion, self-discipline, Christian values/ethics, and other attributes and abilities. It also allows the venture philanthropist and Christian school leader to sharpen and influence one another in their respective fields of expertise (Proverbs 27:17). The Christian school leader also uses his relationship connectedness to network and garner financial supporters of the school.

The leader’s values and ethics are special prerequisites for a venture philanthropy investment. The Christian leader who has proven himself faithful with little will likely be faithful with much (Luke 16:10). The leader’s Christian values and ethics are evident in his character and
conduct in the professional, personal, and spiritual sense. His or her Christian values and ethics are essential in gaining the venture philanthropist’s trust and confidence.

The remaining desired authentic leadership (AL) attributes (self-discipline/consistency, balanced processing, self-awareness, transparency, compassion) influence venture philanthropy (VP) success as the leader:

1. Solicits input from the VPT and key constituents (balanced processing)
2. Is aware of weaknesses that may negatively impact the VP process (self-awareness)
3. Is self-disciplined/consistent, so the VPT knows what to anticipate
4. Is transparent so the VPT can see all facets of the organization and make sound judgments regarding his investment
5. Shows compassion to school constituents’ needs, which enhances their experience

The data suggest that AL-Adjacent attributes also contribute to VP success. The study finds that all participants desire six AL-Adjacent attributes and abilities: mission-focused, commitment, excellence, competence, stewardship, and a leader in whom the venture philanthropist can have trust and confidence. The participants and venture philanthropists desire to invest millions of dollars with trust in a competent and committed leader. The participants have confidence in the leader to help the VPT receive a return on their investment. This return on investment is Christ-centered leadership that fulfills a school mission with excellence. A review of the five school mission statements shows that each school has a mission to develop Christian leaders and disciples through a Christ-centered education.

Financial stewardship maximizes the return on the venture philanthropy investment and is critical in achieving the above school mission. Lastly, four participants discussed the importance of a Christian school leader having a vision (AL-Adjacent) of a better school future. Two participants spoke about the significance of delegating or empowering staff members. The practice of delegating and empowering (AL-Adjacent) allows the school leader to focus on leadership-level tasks and empower subordinates to perform their job well.
Evaluation of the Research Design

This qualitative study used purposive sampling to select five participants, all of whom met the study’s criteria on venture philanthropy. The qualitative method gathered details that a quantitative research study could not and provided relevant insight and content. Hence, the purpose of this study to fill a gap in research and literature. The interviews allowed the participants to provide more significant details, stories, and a thick description of their experiences. The NVivo qualitative interview software allowed for the fluid organization of data and proper coding. The researcher’s thematic analysis resulted in repeated terms or codes, which developed this study’s themes and interrelating themes.

In considering other research designs, a mixed methods design in this study would allow surveys to be administered to the participants. These surveys can facilitate numerical data on extents of “agree” or “disagree” from respondents (Choy, 2014). In the survey, the venture philanthropist/participant can make additional comments regarding AL and AL-Adjacent elements. For example, when the participants gauge the school leader on the self-awareness scale, they can document examples of when the leader exuded this attribute and also add their input on self-awareness. Additionally, the school leaders can take the ALQ survey to confirm or challenge the participant/venture philanthropist’s perspective.

A weakness of the qualitative interview method is that the researcher designs the interview protocol and interprets the results, threatening validity based on the lack of objectively verifiable results (Choy, 2014). Also, the interview process, reviewing of transcripts, and coding of data is significantly time-consuming. A researcher in this qualitative study must secure ample time for coding and a thorough review of data. Member-checking and peer-debriefing are critical to strengthening the trustworthiness and validity of the findings.
The researcher’s development (fundraising) background allowed for reflexivity in the study and for the researcher to be better attuned to participant responses (Rosenthal, 2020). The researcher’s career background in Christian school, venture philanthropy allowed for a better interpretation and assessment of participant responses through a more intellectual and comfortable conversation. The chosen VP and AL theories and concepts served as the framework for the study and interviews. These theories allowed for a thorough interview protocol that excited participants as it allowed them to discuss their passions – Christian school, venture philanthropy and leadership. As expected, a qualitative interview returned several responses of great length and depth. However, the researcher’s selection of participant responses highlighted the most relevant themes and quotations (Rosenthal, 2020).

The confidentiality of participants, school names, and the city allowed for more transparent and honest responses in the interview. Virtual interviews allowed participants to be interviewed in the comfort of their homes and at a time that was convenient for their schedule. Using a video-conference format also allowed the researcher to reach a participant pool in other regions of the country and avoid the risk of COVID-19 from close contact or traveling to conduct the interviews. The participant pool represented two women and three men, one Catholic school and four non-denominational schools, and various career backgrounds. This diverse pool presented unique personalities and perspectives. As a result, this qualitative study provided the researcher with dense and rich data on a Christian school leader’s influence on venture philanthropy (Rosenthal, 2020).

In conclusion, and as noted above, this multiple case study revealed expected and unanticipated themes (surprising codes) on authentic leadership and venture philanthropy. The list of desired AL and AL-Adjacent attributes and abilities results from an adequate sample size
of “four to five cases” in qualitative research (Creswell, 2018, p. 185). It is worth noting that the interviews did not have a firm time limit, which allowed participants sufficient time to ponder and make additional thoughts not covered in the interview. At the end of the interview, participants were allowed to make other comments or discuss different topics not covered in the interview. The participants had a second opportunity to supply additional data upon receiving their interview transcripts for approval or revision.

It is worth noting that a researcher has an “adequate sample” when “fresh data no longer sparks new insights or reveals new properties” (Charmaz, 2006 as cited in Creswell, 2018, p. 185). However, a sixth or seventh case study may reveal a new theme closely related to the AL and AL-Adjacent elements. Factors contributing to this possibility include the participant's personality, career background, venture philanthropy experiences and philosophies, and spiritual or personal convictions.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

The purpose of the study was to explore the influence of authentic leadership on venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools. This chapter reviews the research purpose, research questions, research limitations, research conclusions, implications, applications, and suggestions for further research. This chapter will also review the researcher’s interpretations of the data and how it impacts Christian leaders regarding venture philanthropy in their organization.

Research Purpose

The purpose of the study was to explore the influence of authentic leadership on venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools. The researcher interviewed five venture philanthropists about their respective Christian, K-12 school to determine the attributes and abilities that venture philanthropists seek in a Christian school leader before giving to the Christian school, the most desired authentic leadership attributes among these Christian school leaders, and the perceived influences of authentic leadership attributes on venture philanthropy success.

Research Questions

**RQ1.** What attributes do venture philanthropists seek in a Christian school leader before giving to the Christian school?

**RQ2.** What abilities do venture philanthropists seek in a Christian school leader before giving to the Christian school?

**RQ3.** What are the most desired authentic leadership attributes among these Christian school leaders?

**RQ4.** What are the perceived influences of authentic leadership attributes on venture philanthropy success?
Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications

This section reviews the conclusions of the study’s research questions, theoretical, empirical, and practical implications, research limitations, a suggestion for further research, and a summary of the study and its findings.

Conclusion

RQ1. What attributes do venture philanthropists seek in a Christian school leader before giving to the Christian school?

Participants (venture philanthropists) in this study seek authentic leadership (AL) and AL-Adjacent attributes. It is worth noting that AL-Adjacent attributes in this study refer to elements outside the AL theory and concept scope. Regarding AL attributes, a venture philanthropist seeks a Christian school leader who exudes passion, maintains relationship connectedness, embodies Christian values, and makes ethical decisions. This leader is also self-disciplined, and his or her actions are consistent with their words. He or she also solicits others’ input (balanced processing), is self-aware of strengths and weaknesses, is transparent, and shows compassion and God’s love. Regarding AL-Adjacent attributes, all participants seek a Christian school leader in whom the venture philanthropist can have trust and confidence. All participants also desire a leader who is mission-focused, committed, competent, and pursues excellence. Lastly, four participants discussed the importance of school leadership casting the vision of a better future for the Christian school.

RQ2. What abilities do venture philanthropists seek in a Christian school leader before giving to the Christian school?

Stewardship. All five venture philanthropists seek a Christian school leader who is a proper steward of the school budget and venture philanthropy funds. Christian school leaders
who acknowledge that they are not financially savvy can seek their venture philanthropist's
guidance on business management.

**Competence.** All five participants look for a Christian school leader competent in Christian education and Christian school management. The Christian school leader may not be an expert in all facets of school management. Still, he can rely on key individuals (i.e., venture philanthropist, administrators, consultants, board members) to contribute their skills and knowledge in areas where the leader is professionally weak.

**Delegating/Empowering.** Jeff and Madeline discussed how they desire a leader who can delegate tasks and empower others. Delegating avoids burnout of the leader and allows him to wisely spend his time focusing on leadership level tasks that contribute to venture philanthropy success. The Christian leader uses the organizational hierarchy chart to his or her advantage by allowing directors or administrators to be the primary supervisor of their department tasks.

In a follow-up interview to discuss the research findings, Madeline reiterated the importance of delegating and “knowing when to move a task off of your desk and onto someone else’s desk.” As Jeff discussed in his interview, the Christian leader should empower employees to perform their job well. He added that leaders should “Have the ability to hire the right kind of people and empower them to do their job.”

**RQ3.** What are the most desired authentic leadership attributes among these Christian school leaders?

All five venture philanthropists in the study desire Christian values/ethics, passion, self-discipline/consistency, and relationship connectedness in a Christian leader. Three participants (sixty percent) discussed the importance of a leader who solicits others’ input (balanced processing) and is self-aware. Two participants (forty percent) emphasized the importance of the
Christian school leader being transparent and showing love and compassion. It is worth noting that “Christian values” was a “most-desired” authentic leadership attribute by all participants, and a leader with Christian values intentionally displays love and compassion daily.

**RQ4.** What are the perceived influences of authentic leadership attributes on venture philanthropy success?

The conclusions drawn for this research question derive from participant responses. The findings show that a Christian school leader who embodies all authentic leadership attributes is a prime candidate worthy of their venture philanthropy and creates successful or excellent results. The findings suggest that venture philanthropists desire authentic leadership as it offers predictability in return on investment. The desired return on investment is God-honoring leadership and a fulfilled school mission in a premiere school setting with excellent programs.

All participants discussed excellence in their standards and vision for the Christian school. For Diane’s high school, a student enrollment of 1,200 students allows for “excellence in all things” such as academics, arts, athletics, and service and outreach. She added, “There is no reason why you can't be excellent in everything because it's a reflection of Him.” Similarly, Jeff believed that a larger campus could offer more excellent student programs than the warehouse where the Christian school was previously located. Jeff stated, “You can get a marvelous Christian education in a warehouse, but to build a bigger, stronger, better place, we decided to make an investment and build the Christian high school. We have gone from 175 to over 400 kids now. With good leadership, we're impacting many more students because the facilities and sports and debate programs draw people.” The end goal for Jeff was to “be successful” and to “build an excellent Christian high school.” The same goal was behind Madeline and her
husband’s investments, which were for the school to be “academically superior to all of the old blue blood prep schools in the area.”

Excellence is always at the forefront of Austin’s mind. He discussed how he and his school leaders continuously strive to make the school better. He added, “We do what we do because we love our family, love Christian education, and it is about how we can serve them better.” Excellence at the school helped attract Ken’s venture philanthropy. He felt that the school was already thriving in its programs but helping secure the school buildings from its previous landlord positioned the school for a more successful future.

**Passion.** The participant responses suggest that a leader’s *passion* fuels him to achieve the standards set forth by the VPT and motivates the leader to fulfill the mission with excellence. Diane discussed how passion inspired her, her head of school, and Diane’s fellow school founding members to build an excellent Christian high school. She stated, “He was passionate and believed in this project. From the early days, he was incredibly sacrificial in his time and energy to see this project succeed. We were acting out of obedience to God, but God had put a strong leader in place as well.” Madeline discussed how her leaders’ passion motivates them to work tirelessly. Madeline stated, “With the founder, it was a continual raising of the bar of what he was doing. He kept wanting to do more, and then he would do it. The founder tends to find rejuvenation in his work. To a fault, he wants to drive even when he has been driving for 24 hours, and he is tired. The founder and the headmaster have that in common.”

Passion is the second element Ken looks for in a Christian school leader before deciding to invest. He discussed how effectively leading a school of young people requires passion. Passion or “drive” is what Jeff requires in a leader in addition to his Christ-like character, entrepreneurialism, and how well he treats others. For Austin, passion is synonymous with
commitment, and if a school leader lacks this attribute, the school’s mission will suffer. Austin added, “The non-negotiable elements we look for are character and commitment in leaders; you either have them or don’t.”

Christian Values & Ethics, Compassion & Love. The participants discussed how a leader who embodies Christian values and ethics would honor God in all his ways. One of these ways includes showing compassion and God’s love to others, especially school constituents. According to the participants, these elements are foundational to Christian school leadership and a requirement for their investment. Ken stated, “In priority order, it is those three leadership elements: loving God, being passionate, and being tough with love.” Christian character or embodying Christian values and ethics is one of the five non-negotiable elements that Austin requires in a leader. He added, “Honor God; if you live by that value, we believe you will become a person of character.” Jeff emphasized the leader showing his Christian character in both his personal and professional life. Jeff stated, “You have to be a well-rounded person. I believe their family background is very, very important. Also, how they treat people and interact with their students and parents is important.”

Madeline complimented her school leaders for exuding Christian character through how they treat others. “They were just really good people. We absolutely trusted them. If anything, we were concerned we didn’t measure up because of their devotion to the faith and everybody.” Diane discussed how values and ethics are the most important leadership elements in her opinion. She stated, “Ethics and values are so important to me because I don't feel that God can fully bless and honor the work you're doing if there is no firm foundation in Christian ethics and accountability to God.” Diane also expects these values to be evident among all employees, so it positively influences students. She adds, “We want our staff and our faculty to live such
compelling Christian lives that our students can't help but ask, ‘What is it that gives you this joy, hope, and peace?’ We have hired some amazing people who pour into and mentor our students. They give selflessly to make sure these kids are known and loved.”

**Relationship Connectedness.** The *relationship connectedness* between the Christian school leader and the VPT ensures that expectations, progress, and concerns are communicated. To achieve performance standards, the Christian school leader must also have relationship connectedness with his employees, key donors, vendors, parents, and students who collectively help fulfill the school’s mission. Jeff placed a great emphasis on the leader’s relationships with school constituents and said, “You have parents, school board, students, and contractors – all of that has to work. You have to be a multi-talented person to interface with all those people on a successful basis.” Jeff stated that he has an ongoing, close relationship with the school leadership to assess their progress and contribute his mentorship. He added, “You form those relationships over a period of time through phone calls with them, in-person visits, and inviting them to your home. I’m a big proponent of having them get out of their environment and their element and get them exposed to other leaders to expand their vision and confidence. You have to build them up and have fellowship, so they know they’re not in it alone.”

Relationship connectedness is imperative for Austin in both his businesses and the Christian school. He even refers to the school’s constituents as customers and relies on their feedback to measure the school leader’s effectiveness. Austin added, “Talk to the people and make sure you are staying close to the customer. You have to stay close to the customer.” Austin spends nearly 25 percent of his time talking on the phone or meeting with the school leaders. “I ask how things are going, any issues, and how the leader is doing. We talk several times a week, so that time is really important. My most significant contribution to the academy is not my
money; it’s my time.” In a follow-up interview, Austin described how relationship connectedness and communication are crucial in establishing the school’s direction. He said, “There must be communication where we all understand what the purpose, vision, mission, and values are and strive for that.”

Madeline’s relationship connectedness with the school’s headmaster was pivotal in her conversion to the Catholic faith. She said, “The headmaster shepherded me through my conversion experience. He was my sponsor, and if I came into the church, he was my rock.” That relationship and conversion process was influential in her enthusiastic support for the school that inspired her husband’s multi-million-dollar investment. Madeline added, “My husband saw me fall in love with the academy, and it was a highly generous thing for him to give a substantial gift.” Diane described how her relationship connectedness with the school founders and head of school influenced her desire to invest millions into the Christian high school. She stated, “The more time I spent with these individuals and our head of school, the more I admired, respected, and grew to love them. They were the people I wanted to be in the foxhole with, so it absolutely influenced our decision.” Ken also stressed the importance of a Christian school leader having relationship connectedness with God and the Christian community to achieve VP success. He said, “Stay on your knees and pray earnestly. Leverage your network of fellow Christians and leverage the connectedness with the Christian community to reach out to lots of folks.”

**Self-Discipline/Consistency.** The participants discussed how the leader’s self-discipline and consistency contribute to their school’s success and excellence. The authentic leader (i.e., venture philanthropist, school founder, superintendent) practices *self-discipline* in all facets of school management. He also keeps his promises and is one whose words are consistent with his actions. Austin builds his business and Christian school management on promises and key
performance indicators. He stated, “At our school, we make promises to parents, students, vendors, and each other. We make promises and say this is what we're going to do in our business. Promises put feet and action to your principles or your values.” Austin discussed self-discipline in the leadership’s management of the school budget and performance. He stated, “Let's be as excellent and as precise as we can with the budget numbers, ACT scores, staff evaluations, or whatever and agree on the expectation. If management brings the budget to the board and the board approves it, then the board expects management to stick to that budget.”

Jeff discussed how his investments grow with his confidence in the Christian school leader. He stated that he is willing to wait years to assess the leadership’s performance, self-discipline, and consistency. Jeff said, “Keep track of what they're doing, and when you have confidence and believe they’re doing a good job, you continue to invest.” Ken, Jeff, and Austin stressed the importance of the school leaders having the self-discipline to avoid mission drift and remain consistent and committed to the school mission. Ken stated, “If I had to build the school, I would have made my investment contingent upon board membership rules and criteria not changing or being watered down.” Austin echoed Ken’s sentiments and said, “You would think that that would never happen in a Christian school, but it does. We have turned down several major gifts because it did not fit the mission.” Jeff stated that when he invests in a school, he wants it to “be teaching the same principles 25 years from now.”

Consistency is critical for Madeline and Diane. Madeline shared how a leader whose words are consistent with his actions is the most trustworthy attribute. She added, “Our founder said he would build a Catholic prep school not attached to the church or archdiocese, and he did it and did it well. The founder and the headmaster did what they said they would do and have just killed it.” Madeline asserted how leaders must match their actions to their words and keep their
promises. She said, “Be who you say you're going to be. Let your word be your bond, and let your bond be your contract.” Diane complimented her school founders and head of school on their consistent, arduous efforts in founding the school. That experience allowed her to see their true character and self-discipline. She stated, “Working with someone day in and day out on this project naturally allowed me to get to know them and see what they're really like under pressure, especially during the early days. The more time I spent with these individuals and our head of school, the more I admired, respected, and grew to love them.”

**Self-Aware, Transparency, and Balanced Processing.** A *self-aware* Christian school leader is *transparent* with the venture philanthropist regarding all facets of the organization. The leader is aware of and open about his strengths and weaknesses that may hurt or help the VP process and school performance. This self-awareness allows the leader to delegate tasks to capable, talented team members and seek input (balanced processing) from individuals who are gifted in areas where the leader is professionally weak or lacks experience. For example, a leader who is aware of his lack of fundraising skills will solicit guidance from his development director or a fundraising consultant on effective fundraising practices. Similarly, an authentic leader who struggles to balance the school budget will seek input from the entrepreneurial venture philanthropist, business savvy board members, and the chief financial officer. Ken shared how his school leader attempted to balance the budget after years of “many accounting misses.” He complimented his leader “for listening to board members and being the real force for getting it straightened out.”

Jeff’s school leader solicited his mentorship, which has dramatically increased the school leader’s financial knowledge. Jeff said, “In the last 10 or 12 years, we have been working with our headmaster at our Christian high school. His knowledge in the financial sense has
dramatically increased.” Jeff also described the importance of a transparent and self-aware attitude in school leaders who ask for a major donation. He said, “You should have a business plan and presentation where you touch on areas where you're strong and where you need some help. Be honest about the whole process.”

Madeline’s school founder sought her husband’s input, given his expertise in financial investments. She said, “The founder was sort of new to business, investing, endowments, and making money grow, but my husband is knowledgeable about those things.” Madeline’s husband confidently made his first gift of $3 million, knowing the school leadership was receptive to his suggestions. She adds, “My husband made a gift to help the school retire their debt. He wanted to get an oath from the leadership to not get into debt ever again. My husband will advise that we'll be in a better position by doing something in particular. He doesn’t tell, he suggests.” This type of two-way communication is essential to Austin, who meets weekly with the school leader. These meetings allow Austin and the school administrators to discuss areas of underperformance and how Austin can contribute his expertise. Austin stated, “If you do not meet expectations, that will breed distrust. Suppose you and I are meeting, talking, adjusting, defining, and understanding those expectations. In that case, my job is to come alongside and help you.”

Diane, her fellow school founders, and the head of school did not have an extensive education background and practiced balanced processing with God. In a transparent approach and self-aware mindset, the group acknowledged their area of weakness and relied on God for knowledge and wisdom. Diane added, “It has to be (God) because there's not one of us coming to the table that says, ‘Oh, I've done this before. Oh, I know exactly how this is supposed to work.’ The only person we can truly rely on is God himself, and that is how we had to approach everything.”
As shown in the statements above, balanced processing, transparency, and self-awareness are critical to strengthening weaknesses and achieving venture philanthropy success. Self-discipline and consistency will also contribute to the school’s excellence, while relationship connectedness between the Christian school leader and the venture philanthropist allows for accountability, communication, and guidance. A leader who embodies Christian values and ethics honors God in his character and conduct and is one who shows God’s compassion and love. Lastly, a leader’s passion and self-discipline contribute to meeting the venture philanthropy performance standards and fulfilling the school mission with excellence.

**Theoretical Implications**

The two theories employed in this study are authentic leadership (Avolio et al., 2005; George, 2003) and venture philanthropy (Onishi, 2015). The researcher applied these two theories to the Christian, K-12 setting to argue that authentic leadership (AL) influences venture philanthropy (VP) in Christian, K-12 schools. As discussed earlier in the study and as reflected in participant responses, VP and AL have interrelating elements of accountability, self-discipline, integrity (ethics), transparency, relationship connectedness, and successful organizational outcomes. Thus, an authentic leader is predisposed to VP success as AL embodies self-discipline, integrity (ethics), transparency, and relationship connectedness. Furthermore, scholars and practitioners recognize that AL is required for desirable outcomes in organizations (George, 2003; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Avolio & Gardner, 2005). The findings reflect these interrelating elements and suggest that Christian school, authentic leaders influence venture philanthropy.

A thorough study of the theories, related literature, and participant research data validates and expands the study’s thesis. This study finds that authentic leadership influences venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools. Additionally, the byproducts of authentic leadership
contribute to venture philanthropy success. The findings reveal that the most desired authentic leadership attributes are passion, self-discipline/consistency, Christian values/ethics, and relationship connectedness. The researcher finds that these AL attributes can contribute to the most desired AL-Adjacent attributes and abilities – stewardship, being mission-focused, and earning the trust and confidence of the venture philanthropist. Additionally, competence, commitment, and excellence are the most-desired AL-Adjacent elements. As explained below, *all* participants highly value these ten attributes and abilities.

**Relationship Connectedness (AL) contributes to Stewardship (AL-Adjacent).**

Relationship connectedness allows the Christian school leader to improve his stewardship practices. Jeff’s mentorship of his headmaster has resulted in his “dramatic increase” in financial savviness. Ken stated that relationship connectedness allows him to set financial standards, offer input, and hold the leader accountable regarding the school budget. Similarly, Austin noted that spending hundreds of hours meeting with the school leaders allows for accountability, strategic planning, and key performance indicators. Austin provided an example in which his leaders created a preliminary budget with a $300,000 surplus, but his review of the budget cut the surplus by 50 percent. Austin explained further and said:

I went in and found a couple of mistakes that got it down to $150,000 by talking it through. If we had not worked through it, my expectation would have been $300,000, and you would have performed at $150,000. Then you and I would have a rift in our relationship because I will come to you and say, ‘You didn't make it,’ and you say, ‘well, it is what it is.’

Similarly, Madeline shared how her husband’s friendship with the school founder allows him to make suggestions regarding its stewardship. Diane’s relationship connectedness and “sound business principles” among her fellow school founders were foundational in achieving venture
philanthropy success. The above statements propose that relationship connectedness contributes to the Christian school leader’s improvement in stewardship.

**Christian Values & Ethics (AL) contribute to Trust & Confidence (AL-Adjacent).** A school leader’s Christian values and ethics are imperative for the school to achieve its mission and earn the trust and confidence of the venture philanthropist. Jeff stated that the leader’s conduct with school constituents helped him develop confidence in the leader. Austin discussed how a leader who remains faithful to his promises would prove his Christian principles and values. He added that his trust in the leader comes from speaking with school constituents to determine if the leader is fulfilling his promises. Like Austin, Madeline says that her trust and confidence in the school leaders developed when they fulfilled their promises and “put their money where their mouth is.”

Christian values are the “number one attribute” that Ken looks for in a leader, and his trust in the school leader developed after seeing a Christian character worthy of his investment. Similarly, Diane shared that her school founders’ Christian values gave her confidence in her and her husband’s multi-million-dollar investment. The above statements indicate that the Christian school leader’s Christian values and ethics contribute to earning the venture philanthropist’s trust and confidence.

**Self-Discipline and Passion (AL) contribute to being Mission-Focused (AL-Adjacent).** Jeff discussed how a Christian school leader’s passion or “drive” contributes to achieving the school’s mission and venture philanthropy standards. Austin stated that a critical attribute in a school leader is his passion for his purpose and the school’s mission. Passion is what fueled Diane, the head of school, and her fellow board members in founding an excellent high school. She stated that success is unattainable without passion for the school’s purpose and
mission. Madeline stated that her school founder’s passion is what keeps him “wanting to do more.”

Passion is a critical element that Ken looks for in a leader. He believes that it is necessary to be an effective leader and fulfill the school’s mission. He added, “If you’re not passionate, it’s just not going to happen.” Ken also emphasized the importance of the leader practicing passion and self-discipline to stay focused on the mission. He stated that he had seen leaders “be passionate about things and not be focused. The results of that were not terrible, but they were not great either.” Ken believes that the “mission is the most important factor” when he considers investing; therefore, the leader should pair self-discipline with their passion for achieving the school’s mission. Jeff also believes that self-discipline must accompany passion and states, “You can be passionate about bad things. You have to have passion, but it has to be directed and focused on the right area. When we throw huge amounts of dollars into brick and mortar into schools, we want that brick and mortar to be teaching the same principles 25 years from now.” The participants’ statements above suggest that passion and self-discipline contribute to a leader’s focus on achieving the school mission.

**Commitment (A)—Adjacent.** A Christian school leader who embodies commitment will make every effort to meet venture philanthropy standards. The participants in this study sought commitment in various areas such as school operations, better stewardship, and the school mission. As discussed above, Ken, Austin, and Jeff required school leadership to remain committed to the school’s mission and avoid “mission drift.” Jeff stated, “The only way you two cannot have drift in the organization is to have the board of directors and their leadership committed to holding the line.”
Commitment contributed to Diane and her school founders’ success in opening a premiere Christian high school. She said if “there was not a level of commitment that each person felt, I don't believe that the project would succeed to the level it has today.” Ken required commitment from his school leaders to balance the school budget and improve on how they steward school funds. Ken stated, “I was pretty tough at school board meetings and was pretty tough with the school leader face-to-face. I said, ‘We've got to get this right immediately. We have to have a path to get us there.’” Similarly, Madeline and her husband required the school’s commitment to avoiding debt when they made their first investment. Based on the above participant responses, commitment is a desired element and critical for VP success.

**Competence (AL-Adjacent).** The participants discussed the leader or founder’s competence (skills or capability) and how it contributed to VP and the school’s success. Madeline discussed how her school founder’s engineering background allowed him to build an academy superior to the neighboring schools. The talents and skills of Diane and her fellow school leaders contributed to excellence in founding the school. Diane said, “We allowed people to have creative freedom and an entrepreneurial spirit within their areas.” Ken discussed his school leader’s giftings in Christian education and stated, “He knows what he's doing. Our school’s leader is an educator and competent in Christian education and education in general.”

Jeff discussed how competence is critical in operating a school with sound business practices. He stated, “Most of these Christian school leaders don't have a business background, but they need to have an understanding of it. They need to understand it.” Austin listed competence as one of his five desired elements and added, “Pursuing excellence will drive you to be a person of competence.” The statements above propose that competence in Christian education and Christian school operations leads to VP success.
**Excellence (AL-Adjacent).** All five research participants expressed their desire for excellence in their school and its leadership. Madeline stated that her school has become academically superior to area prep schools and said, “The founder and the headmaster did what they said they would do and have just killed it.” Diane’s school was founded on a vision of excellence in all areas, such as academics, athletics, and fine arts. She added, “We didn't feel that being mediocre was honoring to God; excellence is what honors God, and there's no reason why you can't be excellent in everything because it's a reflection of Him.”

Excellence is the first quality Ken noticed in the Christian school the night he decided to consider a major investment. He recalled that moment and said, “Suddenly, I bump into this school that has it all right.” Jeff stressed excellence as part of his criteria when investing. He refused to settle for mediocrity and said, “We have excellent management in the school, which is the key to our investing. Our thought was that if we're going into this thing, we are going to be successful and build an excellent Christian high school.”

Austin values excellence as one of his academy’s four values. He stated that when making a decision, the school asks, “Does it honor God, does it serve people, can we do it with excellence, and are we good stewards?” Austin also requires his leadership team to go through an “excellence checklist” to determine their strengths, weaknesses, and where they need to improve. He added, “I think (venture philanthropists) bring that analytical, problem-solving approach to excellence, and that is the greatest gift we can give to a school.” The responses above indicate that venture philanthropists desire excellence in all areas of their Christian school. Excellence honors the philanthropist’s hard-earned funds and is a desired return on investment.
As shown in the figure above, authentic leadership contributes to byproducts highly desired by venture philanthropists. As authenticated by participant responses, a Christian school leader who practices relationship connectedness can receive guidance and expertise from the venture philanthropist. For the leader, this can contribute to increased knowledge in financial stewardship and business acumen. The leader’s Christian values and ethics contribute to earning the venture philanthropist’s trust and confidence in his investment. Lastly, the authentic leader’s passion and self-discipline contribute to focusing on and achieving the school mission. When relationship connectedness, Christian values/ethics, self-discipline, and passion supplement competence (skills and abilities), commitment, and excellence, venture philanthropy success can
be achieved. In summary, the findings suggest that authentic leadership and its byproducts enhance venture philanthropy success in Christian, K-12 schools. This study’s literature and its results contribute to and fill the research gap on AL and VP in Christian, K-12 schools.

This research suggests that the VP theory can be applied to the Christian, K-12 school setting. This research also demonstrates that venture philanthropy success is achievable when a philanthropist partners with a Christian school, authentic leader. It is worth noting that several VP theories (Pepin, 2005; Ganti, 2020b; Gordon, 2014; Grossman et al., 2013; SVCF/CVP, n.d.) discuss an exit strategy, but no participant in this study alluded to terminating financial support or stepping down from their board or advisory role. As one participant (Austin) stated, “I’m in this for the long haul.” This study also expands on Eicher’s (2017) research by discussing authentic leadership elements desired by venture philanthropists in Christian, K-12 schools. Eicher’s study did not focus on AL or VP in distinctly Christian, K-12 schools.

This study sheds new light on the AL theory as it suggests that venture philanthropists seek authentic leaders in Christian, K-12 schools. AL scholars Gardner et al. (2005) propose that authentic leadership “is foundational for producing a virtuous cycle of performance” (p. 3), and AL experts (George & Bennis, 2003) argue that the authentic organization achieves effectiveness and growth – two elements needed for VP success. This study finds that all participants expect and have experienced excellence in their school, whether in student enrollment increase, academics, athletics, fine arts, student spiritual development, fundraising (development), school operations, or school accreditations – to name a few. All participants spoke extensively on their successful venture philanthropy experience as a result of their school’s excellence. This study authenticates the researcher’s argument on AL influencing VP in the Christian, K-12 school
setting. In conclusion, the findings suggest that authentic, Christian school leaders influence venture philanthropy success in Christian K-12 schools.

**Empirical Implications**

In this study on authentic leadership and venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools, the researcher observed that the participants embody AL attributes themselves. Interviews with the participants reveal their passion for Christian education, desire for relationship connectedness with the school leader(s), the practice of Christian values and ethics, self-discipline and consistency to achieve professional success, self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses, transparent character, love, compassion, and practice of balanced processing. Austin serves as a prime example of possessing AL attributes. His Christian values and passion for Christian education are overwhelmingly evident in his testimony. Austin is aware of his tendency to be “too involved or not involved enough” in school matters and transparently discussed this perceived weakness with the researcher. After the interview, the longtime and successful venture philanthropist practiced balanced processing and sought the researcher’s input on venture philanthropy. Austin and his fellow research participants embody AL attributes and are true to their self and Christian values.

Another observation by the researcher was the constructive relationships between the Christian school leaders and their venture philanthropists. As reflected in the interviews, both parties possess unique career backgrounds, strengths, weaknesses, and workplace philosophies. For example, Diane’s head of school is a visionary, while she prefers to focus on executing the vision. Another example is Madeline, who reminds her school leaders to delegate leadership-level tasks. Austin spoke on this contrast between venture philanthropists and school leaders. He
believes that Christian school leaders typically lead with the heart but should intentionally connect with the “head” of their business-minded venture philanthropist. He added:

We must have this open honest communication where the administrators know that if I am critical, I am doing that for the good. We have an administrator now who I can be very candid with, and he and I get right to the chase. I have had other school administrators who become mortified if I look at them funny because they're so feelings driven.

Austin believes that the school can achieve venture philanthropy success despite the differences between the leader and philanthropist.

The school leaders are ministers and are worried about the heart and soul of the organization. As a philanthropist, I'm worried more about the head, but together we create an unbelievable team. If we get the head of the philanthropist and the heart of the minister to be united, to me, that is the key.

This researcher asserts that authentic leadership helps bridge the gap between the world of ministry and entrepreneurship. Authentic leadership by the venture philanthropist and head of school leads both parties to acknowledge (self-awareness) and address weaknesses and use strengths for the school’s benefit. The two individuals have self-discipline and passion for achieving the school mission with excellence. The leader and venture philanthropist also stay closely connected (relationship connected), learn from each other’s ideas (balanced processing), have transparent discussions (transparency), honor God in their character and conduct (values/ethics), and show compassion, love, and even “tough” love with one another.

The researcher also observed that venture philanthropists with an extensive entrepreneurial background are results driven. This type of venture philanthropist is likely to apply his or her company philosophies to the Christian school setting. For example, Austin pursues excellence and applies high standards to remain superior to neighboring Christian schools. He said, “That is the expectation of me in business, and I’m trying to bring some of that expectation to the Christian school.” Jeff echoed Austin’s statement and said, “I came out of the
business world, so I expect results. It’s not about good feelings; it's about accomplishing goals and educating kids in the right way.”

Participants affirmed the value of AL attributes in the business industry and Christian school setting. After his interview, Ken stated the following to the researcher:

I am very impressed with a lot of these criteria that you have been talking about – this authentic leadership stuff. It is the stuff that has taken me a lifetime of leading the company to start to really understand, and you have it written out on a piece of paper walking in this evening, so that is pretty impressive.

Austin added, “I would strongly agree with those attributes that you went through. I’m anxious to get the final copy (of your dissertation) because I want to go through it with our leadership team.”

As the data suggests, venture philanthropists desire an authentic leader to significantly enhance their Christian school, venture philanthropy experience, relationship, and success. Proverbs 27:17 states that “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another” (English Standard Version, 2001). As reflected in each participant’s story, the partnership between an authentic venture philanthropist and an authentic Christian school leader allows the two to influence one another to achieve higher levels of authenticity and workplace performance.

**Practical Implications**

This study’s practical implications can make meaningful changes or confirmations involving Christian, K-12 school leaders and Christian school, venture philanthropists. This study focused on Christian schools that were either founded or discovered by venture philanthropists. These schools are home to award-winning academic and extracurricular programs and state-of-the-art facilities. While this massive financial or structural overhaul is a dream for several Christian school leaders, it demands authentic leadership attributes and specific abilities. As the research data substantiates, authentic leadership offers desirable
attributes and byproducts necessary for venture philanthropy. Christian school leaders can put authentic leadership attributes into practice in the following ways:

1. Passion: Develop a passion for the mission and your God-given purpose.
2. Relationship Connectedness: Stay connected to your top donors through meetings, home visits, text messages, phone calls, etc.
3. Christian Values and Ethics: Your thoughts, words, decisions, and actions honor God.
4. Self-Discipline/Consistency: Your actions match your words; you fulfill promises, work hard and stay focused on the mission.
5. Balanced Processing: Solicit critiques on school operations, workplace morale, student experience, etc. Conduct a survey or speak with staff, students, parents, board members, neighboring school leaders, and consultants to gain feedback and ideas.
6. Self-Awareness: Do you know your strengths and weaknesses? How do you come across to others through your words and actions?
7. Transparency: Be comfortable discussing weaknesses, thoughts, and opinions to improve the school and relationships.
8. Compassion: Do your students, donors, and staff feel your love and care?

The research data suggests that the leader’s Christian values and ethics contribute to earning the venture philanthropist’s trust and confidence. Additionally, the Christian school leader’s self-discipline and passion contribute to him fulfilling the school’s mission. Lastly, if a Christian school leader lacks financial savvy, his relationship connectedness with the business savvy venture philanthropist contributes to improvement in stewardship. This close relationship allows the venture philanthropist to hold the leader accountable in his leadership decisions and provide guidance on sound financial practices.

The leader’s Christian faith enhances authentic leadership development. Christian leaders should remember that God’s divine power has granted them all things pertaining to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3), and His power is made perfect in a leader’s weakness (2 Corinthians
Scripture teaches Christian leaders to practice passion (Colossians 3:23), relationship connectedness (1 Peter 3:8), Christian values/ethics (Romans 13:9-10), self-discipline/consistency (1 Corinthians 9:27), balanced processing (Proverbs 15:22), self-awareness (Psalm 139:23-24), transparency (Ephesians 4:25), and compassion (Colossians 3:12) – all of which contribute to authentic leadership.

Discovering authentic leadership in oneself requires a commitment to self-development and realizing one’s potential (George et al., 2017). AL elements are not manufactured by a leadership workshop or professional leadership consultants; they are qualities that come from a person’s heart rather than their leadership style (George, 2003). People can be born with natural leadership gifts, but they have to develop them fully to become outstanding leaders (George, 2003). “Authentic leaders use their natural abilities, but they also recognize their shortcomings and work hard to overcome them. Authentic leaders are dedicated to developing themselves because they know that becoming a leader takes a lifetime of personal growth” (George, 2003, p. 12).

It can be argued that Christian school leaders possess many or all AL attributes, but a more important focus is their level of each AL attribute. Authentic leadership attributes can be measured by taking the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ). The ALQ is constructed by AL scholars Bruce J. Avolio, William L. Gardner, and Fred O. Walumbwa (2007). The questionnaire also has the leader create an “Individual Development Plan (IDP)” that reflects what the leader should stop, start, or continue to see consistent, lasting improvement (p. 10).

Before investing, venture philanthropists should also consider that pseudo-authentic leaders temporarily present themselves as authentic but do so “for impression management purposes only” (p. 6). As pointed out in the participant interviews, some venture philanthropists
can quickly assess the school leader before investing, while others need more time and evidence of consistent authentic leadership attributes. One research participant (Jeff) reported that waiting three years for the proper management to be in place made his venture philanthropy experience successful. Like the participants, it is common for Christian venture philanthropists to use time, meetings, prayer, and discernment to determine if the leader is worthy of their investment.

Similar to the stock market or venture capital, high-net-worth individuals need confidence in their investment. However, a Christian school leader who struggles to balance the school budget does not always deter a venture philanthropist. In some instances, like Ken’s, this problem may attract the venture philanthropist to the school to implement necessary standards and effective financial strategies. In this instance, the authentic school leader must humbly practice self-awareness, transparency, and balanced processing. As one Christian school fundraising consultant says, “Pride comes before a fall (Proverbs 16:18). Be honest about where you are weak and surround yourself with people who are strong in those areas. Humility is the path to success” (Mission Advancement, personal communication, Nov. 9, 2020).

Developing and strengthening authentic leadership attributes is a noble pursuit that offers professional, spiritual, and personal benefits. As this study reveals, Christian school leaders who exude AL attributes position themselves and their venture philanthropist for an effective partnership. As a result, the Christian school’s mission will be fulfilled and give the venture philanthropist a return on his or her investment.

Research Limitations

The study's research limitations are influences that could not be controlled or overcome by the researcher. The study’s limitations include the design, analysis, sample, and lack of previous research studies on the research topic. The study’s sample consisted of individuals who
met the participant criteria and were available for a one-to-two-hour interview. These requirements significantly narrowed the field of qualified and available interviewee prospects. The researcher also lacked control of the gender, race, age, and location of the participants. Additionally, every school’s fundraising success and venture philanthropy philosophies, practices, and standards are unique and could not be controlled in the study.

The researcher sought to fill a research gap on authentic leadership influencing venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools and develop specific insights that can only come from a qualitative design. The qualitative interviews allowed the researcher to detect the participants’ tone, enthusiasm, and non-verbal communication regarding authentic leadership, venture philanthropy, and Christian, K-12 education. The study utilized a multiple case study method, which recruited a limited number of unique participants (Eicher, 2017). While the fifth participant (Madeline) produced new insights and opinions that were not reflected in the first four case studies, the researcher believes interviews with more participants may reveal new themes.

**Further Research**

Christian, K-12 school venture philanthropy presents a significant opportunity for further research. This study focused on Christian school leaders but unveiled expectations and standards placed on them and their schools. Therefore, a valuable contribution to research and literature would be a qualitative study on the most common venture philanthropy practices at Christian schools or parachurch organizations. An anticipated challenge in the study would be participant recruitment as venture philanthropists are a “hidden population” whose giving remains secret (Frank & Snijders, 1994, pp. 53-54). Recruiting these high-net-worth individuals should include
networking and communication with leaders in Christian organizations (e.g., fundraising consultants, foundations, school accreditation agencies).

This recommended multi-case study can employ four to six qualitative interviews with venture philanthropists in the Christian, K-12 school or Christian, parachurch setting. The study can be guided by Onishi’s (2015) venture philanthropy theory, which can serve as the interview protocol framework. This researcher’s study focused on the Christian school leader’s attributes and abilities, but further research can focus on the most common social, financial, or performance standards implemented by the venture philanthropists.

Summary

This study suggests that authentic leadership influences venture philanthropy at Christian, K-12 schools. The Christian school, authentic leader:

1. Embodies Christian values and makes ethical decisions
2. Has relationship connectedness with the VPT and key constituents
3. Solicits input from the VPT and key constituents (balanced processing)
4. Is self-aware of strengths, weaknesses, and how others view him or her
5. Shows transparency in his character and conduct
6. Exudes passion in his purpose and work conduct
7. Shows self-discipline, and his actions are consistent with his words
8. Shows love and compassion to school constituents

Additionally, the most-desired authentic leadership attributes (relationship connectedness, Christian values/ethics, self-discipline, passion) can contribute to three of the most desired AL-Adjacent attributes and abilities (stewardship, trust/confidence, mission-focused). As shown in Figure A3, the authentic leader’s self-discipline and passion contribute to achieving the school’s mission. Also, the leader’s Christian values and ethics help earn the venture philanthropist’s trust and confidence. Lastly, relationship connectedness allows the leader to receive guidance from the business-savvy venture philanthropist regarding school finances and business practices. This
relationship allows for accountability, communication of performance standards and progress, and the leader’s improvement in stewardship.

As discussed earlier in the study and as reflected in participant responses, venture philanthropy and authentic leadership have interrelating elements of accountability, self-discipline, integrity (ethics), transparency, relationship connectedness, and successful organizational outcomes. Additionally, scandals in the corporate, political, and Christian ministry arenas have led to a more significant push for integrity and authenticity in leadership (Shen, 2017; George, 2003). Therefore, ministry leaders who desire venture philanthropy should develop authentic leadership attributes to achieve venture philanthropy and organizational success.

A notable takeaway in this study is that venture philanthropists view Christian schools through an entrepreneurial lens. Entrepreneurs Jeff, Austin, and Ken, who have collectively invested tens of millions of VP dollars, stated that they view Christian schools as a business and its constituents as customers. Like owning a business, Christian school venture philanthropists demand results, excellence in customer service, and an accomplished mission.

Another key takeaway is that these philanthropists’ hearts are rooted in Christian values, radical generosity, and a love for Christ, kids, and their country. Each participant has become increasingly concerned with the young generation and the future of their country. The participants are passionate about funding a Christian education to instill biblical values in teens and toddlers. Their heartfelt desire is to see these future Christian leaders flourishing in all career fields.

Lastly, this study suggests that VP success is enhanced when an authentic Christian school leader partners with an authentic venture philanthropist. Multiple authentic leaders within
a Christian school can sharpen and influence one another to achieve higher authenticity levels. In conclusion, when authentic leadership meets Christian school venture philanthropy, success is inevitable.
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APPENDIX A

Consent Form

Title of the Project: The Influence of Authentic Leadership on Venture Philanthropy in Christian, K-12 Schools
Principal Investigator: Renee Cervantes, Doctoral Candidate, Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University

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<td>You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must serve as an active board member or in an advisory role at an independent, Christian, K-12 school and have contributed a cash total of $1 million as a venture philanthropist. Your venture philanthropy practice may also include, but is not limited to, provision of strategic assistance through a close relationship with the school leader and implementation of social and/or financial performance criteria.</td>
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Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take the time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

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<tr>
<td>The purpose of the study is to explore the influence of authentic leadership on venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools. The researcher will interview five venture philanthropists at their respective Christian, K-12 school to determine the attributes and abilities that venture philanthropists seek in a Christian school leader before giving to the Christian school, the most desired authentic leadership attributes among these Christian school leaders, and the perceived influences of authentic leadership attributes on venture philanthropy success.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>What will happen if you take part in this study?</th>
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</table>
| If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following:  
  1. Participate in a recorded video-conference interview that will take 45-60 minutes. You will receive a link to join the virtual interview 48 hours before the interview.  
  2. Review the transcription of the interview to provide comments, clarification, or corrections. The transcription will be emailed to you within one week after the interview. Please respond with any comments, clarification, or corrections within one week of receiving the transcript. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How could you or others benefit from this study?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. However, benefits to society include insight for Christian school leaders on the leadership attributes and abilities that influence venture philanthropists to contribute to Christian, K-12 schools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What risks might you experience from being in this study?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How will personal information be protected?

- Data will be stored on the researcher’s password-protected computer and may be used in future presentations, publications, or studies. The records of this study will be kept private, and only the researcher will have access to it. Digital research records will be stored securely in a database on the researcher’s personal computer, which is password protected. The digital database and all data and records will be destroyed three years after completion of the study.

- Participant names and school names will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. If other parties (i.e., school leader, students, board members) are mentioned by name, the researcher will assign those subjects fictitious names. The researcher will be able to link individual participants to the information they provide or are associated with, but the study will not disclose participant identities along with their responses.

- Video-conference interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation. Video conference interviews will be recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The interviews will be stored on the researcher’s password-protected computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?
The researcher has a professional connection to one of the participants. The researcher serves as a development director at a Christian school that is a recipient of a participant’s venture philanthropy. The researcher does not hold authority over this particular participant. To limit potential conflicts, the researcher will not withhold reporting of results or responses by any participants, including the venture philanthropist of her employer. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision of whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the Christian school where you practice venture philanthropy. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study
If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher. Should you decide to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?
The researcher conducting this study is Renee Cervantes. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her or the researcher’s faculty sponsor.

**Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

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. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515.

**Your Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy of the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

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

_____________________________________
Printed Subject Name

_____________________________________
Signature & Date
APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol for Participants

Introduction

Hello sir/ma’am. Thank you for participating in this interview for my dissertation research on the influence of authentic leadership on venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools. My name is Renee Cervantes, and I am a Doctor of Education candidate at Liberty University. Could you please state your first and last name?

Statement by Researcher

This interview will be video and audio recorded and should take 45-60 minutes. I will ask you a list of pre-determined questions, but I may ask additional questions for clarification purposes or to gather more information regarding a statement you made. Feel free to ask me to repeat a question and take as much time as you need to ponder your response. Your name will be kept confidential, and I will not release any personal, identifying information. You are free not to answer any question in this interview and you may terminate this conversation at any point. Do you have any questions before we begin this interview?

Warmup Questions

5. Please tell me about both your career and education background.

6. Please tell me about any prior venture capital or venture philanthropy experience.

7. When and how were you introduced to the Christian school?

8. Does your Christian faith influence your generous giving and if so, how?

Authentic Leadership

5. What attributes or elements of one’s personality or character did you seek in the Christian school leader before giving to the Christian school?
6. What abilities or elements of one’s work performance did you seek in the Christian school leader before giving to the Christian school?

7. Was trust in the leader influential in your decision to support the school financially? How did that trust with the leader evolve?

8. The authentic leadership theory and concept in my study emphasizes self-awareness, balanced processing (soliciting other opinions), transparency, proper values/ethics, self-discipline, a compassionate heart, relationship connectedness, and demonstrating passion in one’s purpose. With regard to Christian school leaders, are any of these elements a priority for you and why?

**Venture Philanthropy**

Venture philanthropy in my study is defined as the provision of a collective gift total of $1 million or more; the provision of strategic assistance through a close funder-fundee relationship; serving on the school’s board of trustees or in an advisory role, and the implementation of social and financial performance criteria. This definition leads me to ask the following questions:

5. Have you given at least $1 million to the school in cash assets?

6. Do you serve on the school board?
   a. How long have you been a member or officer?
   b. Did you join the school board before or after you made your first gift?

7. Do you believe your venture philanthropy experience at the Christian school is a success?
   a. If so, why is it successful in your opinion?
   b. What are the unique qualities making the venture successful?

8. Do you have a close relationship with the school leader whereby you can offer advice or direction in regard to the school’s budget and operations?
a. If so, what elements are in place that help make the relationship successful?

9. Have you implemented social or financial performance criteria?
   a. If so, could you please describe those standards?
   b. How important is sound financial management of the organization in determining whether money is given to a nonprofit Christian school?

10. There is a certain risk factor with venture philanthropy. What prejudgments do you use to determine organizational success with the money you give?

**Closing Questions and Statement**

1. What advice would you give to a Christian school leader seeking a venture philanthropist or major donors to make a social investment in the school?

2. What advice would you give to a first-time venture philanthropist who is considering investing in a Christian school?

3. Do you have any additional comments regarding authentic leadership or venture philanthropy?

Thank you again for your time. Your insight will greatly assist me in my dissertation research. This concludes our interview.
September 1, 2020

Greetings,

Thank you again for participating in an interview for my dissertation research. As part of my research process, I have transcribed our interview. Please review the attached transcription and let me know of any corrections, clarifications, or comments that you would like to contribute. Please do so within one week from the date of this correspondence. Your review of the interview transcription will help ensure the reliability and trustworthiness of my study. Thank you again for your time and for your generosity toward Christian education.

Sincerely,

Renee Cervantes
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University
APPENDIX D

Participant Recruitment Letter

Greetings,

As a doctoral student in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research to better understand authentic leadership influences on venture philanthropy at Christian, K-12 schools. The purpose of my research is to explore the attributes and abilities that venture philanthropists seek in a Christian school leader before giving to the Christian school, the most desired authentic leadership attributes among these school leaders, and the perceived influences of these attributes on venture philanthropy success. Therefore, I am writing to invite eligible participants, such as yourself, to join my study.

Participants must currently serve in a board member or advisory role at the Christian, K-12 school where they have contributed a collective cash gift total of $1 million or more. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in a video-conference interview discussing their venture philanthropy activity at the Christian school and the authentic leadership attributes of the Christian school’s leader. Your name will be requested as part of your participation, but I will not disclose your identity in my dissertation. Participants will be emailed the transcription from their interview and asked to provide confirmation, clarification, or additional comments as needed. It should take 45-60 minutes to complete the interview, and the participants will receive their interview transcript one week after the interview.

In order to participate, please contact me to schedule an interview. A consent document that contains additional information about my research is attached to this email. If you choose to participate, you will need to type your name and the date on the document and return it to me via email. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Renee Cervantes
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University
Greetings,

As a doctoral student in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. My study seeks to explore the influence of authentic leadership on venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools. I recently emailed you a letter inviting you to participate in my research study. This follow-up email is a friendly reminder of my request for your participation. The deadline for participation is October 31, 2020.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in a video-conference interview discussing your venture philanthropy activity at a Christian school and authentic leadership attributes of its leader. Participants will be emailed transcriptions of the interview to provide clarification, corrections, or additional comments. It should take 45-60 minutes to conduct the interview and one week for the participant to receive the interview transcription. Participant names will be kept confidential, and no personal, identifying information will be released by the researcher.

In order to participate, please contact me to schedule an interview. A consent document is attached to this email and contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to type your name and the date on the document and return it to me via email. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Renee Cervantes
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University
APPENDIX F

IRB Application

Date: 9-5-2020

**IRB #:** IRB-FY20-21-26  
**Title:** The Influence of Authentic Leadership on Venture Philanthropy in Christian, K-12 Schools  
**Creation Date:** 7-16-2020  
**End Date:**  
**Status:** Approved  
**Principal Investigator:** Renee Cervantes  
**Review Board:** Research Ethics Office  
**Sponsor:**

---

**Study History**

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<th>Initial</th>
<th>Review Type</th>
<th>Limited</th>
<th>Decision</th>
<th>Exempt - Limited IRB</th>
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</table>

**Key Study Contacts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Gary Bredfeldt</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Co-Principal Investigator</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Renee Cervantes</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Principal Investigator</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Renee Cervantes</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Primary Contact</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Initial Submission

IRB Overview

Application for the Use of Human Research Participants

Before proceeding to the IRB application, please review and acknowledge the below information:

Administrative Withdrawal Notice

*This section describes the IRB’s administrative withdrawal policy. Please review this section carefully.*

Your study may be administratively withdrawn if any of the following conditions are met:

- Inactive for greater than 60 days and less than 10% of the app has been completed
- Duplicate submissions
- Upon request of the PI (or faculty sponsor for student submissions)
- Inactive for 90 days or more (does not apply to conditional approvals, the IRB will contact PI prior to withdrawal)

☑ I have read and understand the above information.

Study Submission & Certification
This section describes how to submit and certify your application. Please review this section carefully. Failure to understand this process may cause delays.

Submission

- Once you click complete submission, all study personnel will need to certify the submission before it is sent to the IRB for review.
- Instructions for submitting and certifying an application are available in the IRB’s Cayuse How-tos document.

Certification

- Your study has not been successfully submitted to the IRB office until it has been certified by all study personnel.
- If you do not receive a “submission received by the IRB office” email, your study has not been received.
- Please check your junk folder before contacting the IRB.

✓ I have read and understand the above information.

Moving through the Cayuse Stages

In Cayuse, your IRB submission will move through different stages. We have provided a quick overview of each stage below.

In Draft

- The In Draft stage means that the study is with the study team (you). In this stage, the study team can make edits to the application.
- When the IRB returns a submission to the study team, the submission will move back to the In-Draft stage to allow for editing.
Awaiting Authorization

- Each time a study is submitted, it will move from In-Draft to Awaiting Authorization.
- During this stage, the submission must be certified by all study personnel listed on the application (PI, Co-PI, Faculty Sponsor). This ensures that every member of the study team is satisfied with the edits.
- Please note, the IRB has not received your submission until all study personnel have clicked “certify” on the submission details page.

Pre-Review

- When your application is submitted and certified by all study personnel, your study will move into the Pre-Review stage.
- Pre-Review means the IRB has received your submission. The IRB review occurs during the Pre-Review stage.
- Once received, an IRB analyst will conduct a cursory review of your application to ensure we have all the information and documents necessary to complete a preliminary review.
- If additional information or documents are needed to facilitate our review, your submission will be returned to you to request these changes.
- Your study will be assigned to an analyst once it is ready for review.
- Preliminary and any subsequent reviews may take 15–20 business days to complete.

Under Review

- Studies will move into the “Under Review” stage when the analyst has completed his or her their review and the study is ready for IRB approval.

✓ I have read and understand the above information.
Finding Help

The IRB has several resources available to assist you with the application process. Please review the below information, or contact our office if you need assistance.

Help Button Text (?)

• Some questions within the application may have help text available.
• Please click on the question mark to the right of these questions to find additional guidance.

Need Help? Visit our website, www.liberty.edu/irb, to find:

• Cayuse How-Tos
• FAQs
• Supporting document templates

Contact Us:

• irb@liberty.edu
• 434-592-5530
• Office Hours: M-F; 8:00AM-4:30PM

✓ I have read and understand the above information.

Acknowledgement

Please acknowledge that you have reviewed and understand the above information. You can refer back to this information at any time.

✓ I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information. Take me to the IRB application.
What type of project are you seeking approval for?

Please make the appropriate selection below.

✓ Research

- Research is any undertaking in which a faculty member, staff member, or student collects information on living humans as part of a planned, designed activity with the intent of contributing relevant information to a body of knowledge within a discipline.

Archival or Secondary Data Use Research ONLY

- Archival data is information previously collected for a purpose other than the proposed research. Examples include student grades and patient medical records.
- Secondary data is data that was previously collected for the purpose of research. For example, a researcher may choose to utilize survey data that was collected as part of an earlier study.

Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Scholarly Project

- This option is specific to doctor of nursing practice (DNP) students' evidence-based practice scholarly projects.

Please indicate the primary purpose of this project:
Why is this project being proposed?

✓ Doctoral Research

*Note: Students must enter themselves as PI and their faculty sponsor under Co-PI/Faculty Sponsor.

Have you passed your dissertation proposal defense?

Doctoral candidates may not submit their project for IRB review until they have successfully passed their proposal defense.

Yes
✓ No

N/A

Masters Research
Undergraduate Research
Faculty Research
Class Project
Other

Study Personnel

Please fill in all associated personnel below.

Please note: All study personnel must complete CITI training prior to receiving IRB approval.

• IRB Training Information
• CITI Training Website
Primary Contact

The individual who will receive and respond to communication from the IRB should be listed as the primary contact. For student projects, the primary contact will be the student researcher(s). For faculty projects, the primary contact may be the researcher or a student(s), administrative assistant, etc. assisting the faculty member. The same individual may be listed as the primary contact and the principal investigator.

Name: Renee Cervantes
Organization: School of Divinity Dept
Address: 1971 University Blvd, Lynchburg, VA 24515-0000
Phone: 
Email: 

Principal Investigator (PI)

The principal investigator (PI) is the individual who will conduct the research or serve as the lead researcher on a project involving more than one investigator.

Name: Renee Cervantes
Organization: School of Divinity Dept
Address: 1971 University Blvd, Lynchburg, VA 24515-0000
Phone: 
Email: 

Co-Investigator(s)

Co-investigators are researchers who serve alongside the principal investigator and share in the data collection and analysis tasks.

Faculty Sponsor

Projects with students serving as the PI must list a faculty sponsor, typically a dissertation or thesis chairperson/mentor.

Name: Gary Bredfeldt
Organization: School of Divinity Dept
Address: 1971 University Blvd, Lynchburg, VA 24515-0000
Phone: 
Email: 

Will the research team include any non-affiliated, non-LU co-investigators?
For example, faculty from other institutions without Liberty University login credentials. Note: These individuals will not be able to access the IRB application in Cayuse, however, the information provided below allows the LU IRB to verify the training and credentials of all associated study personnel.

Yes

✓ No

Conflicts of Interest

This section will obtain information about potential conflicts of interest.

Do you or any study personnel hold a position of influence or academic/professional authority over the participants?

For example, are you the participants supervisor, pastor, therapist, teacher, principal, or district/school administrator?

Yes

✓ No

Do you or any study personnel have a financial conflict of interest?

For example, do you or an immediate family member receive income or other payments, own investments in, or have a relationship with a non-profit organization that could benefit from this research?

Yes

✓ No

Funding Information

This section will request additional information about any funding sources.
Is your project funded?

Yes
☑️ No

Study Dates

*Please provide your estimated study dates.*

**Start Date**

09/01/2020

**End Date**

10/31/2020

Use of Liberty University Participants

*Please make the appropriate selection below:*

I do not plan to use LU students, staff, and/or faculty as participants.

☑️ *Note: Use of LU students, faculty, or staff also includes the use of any existing data.*

I plan to use a single LU department or group.

* You will need to submit proof of permission from the department chair, coach, or dean to use LU personnel from a single department.
I plan to use multiple LU departments or groups.

- If you are including faculty, students, or staff from multiple departments or groups (i.e., all sophomores or LU Online) and you have received documentation of permission, please attach it to your application. Otherwise, the IRB will seek administrative approval on your behalf.

Purpose

Please provide additional details about the purpose of this project.

Write an original, brief, non-technical description of the purpose of your project.

Include in your description your research hypothesis/question, a narrative that explains the major constructs of your study, and how the data will advance your research hypothesis or question. This section should be easy to read for someone not familiar with your academic discipline.

The researcher will conduct multiple case studies to explore the influence of authentic leadership on venture philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools. The researcher will interview five venture philanthropists at five Christian, K-12 schools to determine the attributes and abilities that venture philanthropists seek in a Christian school leader before giving to the Christian school, the most desired authentic leadership attributes among these Christian school leaders, and the perceived influences of authentic leadership attributes on venture philanthropy success.

At this stage in the research, venture philanthropy at a Christian school will be defined as a provision of a collective, gift total of $1 million or more; provision of strategic assistance through a close funder-fundee relationship; the venture philanthropist serving on the school’s board of trustees; and implementation of social and financial performance criteria. The authentic leadership theory and concept emphasizes self-awareness, balanced processing (soliciting other opinions), transparency, proper ethics and values, self-discipline, a compassionate heart, relationship connectedness, and demonstrating passion in one's purpose.

Investigational Methods
Please indicate whether your project involves any of the following:

Does this project involve the use of an investigational new drug (IND) or an approved drug for an unapproved Use?

Yes
 ✓ No

Does this project involve the use of an investigational medical device (IDE) or an approved medical device for an unapproved Use?

Yes
 ✓ No
Participant Information

Participant Criteria

Please provide additional information about your participants.

What characteristics make an individual eligible to be in your study (i.e., your inclusion criteria)?

- For example, do your participants have to be 18 or older? Must they work in a specific career or field? Do they have to be part of a specific racial or ethnic group?
- If you will have multiple participant populations/groups, like a teacher group and an administrator group, please list the populations/groups separately and provide the inclusion criteria for each.

The participants must be individuals who have (to date) given a collective total of $1 million or more in cash assets and serve in a board member or advisory role at the Christian school.

Will your participant population be divided into different groups (or different procedures)?

(i.e., experimental and control groups)

Yes
✓ No

Are you related to any of your participants?

Yes
✓ No

What characteristics make an individual ineligible to be in your study (i.e., your exclusion criteria)?

For example, will you exclude persons under 18 years of age?
Participants are excluded if their $1 million + contribution is in the form of a pledge as pledges have the potential to be unfulfilled. The participant must also give to a Christian, K-12 school that is independent and not owned by a church.

Types of Participants

Who will be the focus of your study? (Check all that apply).

✓ Adult Participants (18-65 years old)
  Minors (under 18 years)
  Seniors (65+)
  College or University Students
  Active Duty Military
  Discharged or Retired Military
  Inpatients, Outpatients, or Patient Controls
  Pregnant Women
  Fetuses
  Individuals with Cognitive Disabilities
  Individuals with Physical Disabilities
  Individuals Incapable of Giving Consent
  Prisoners or Institutionalized Individuals
  Specific Ethnic or Racial Group(s)
  Other Potentially Elevated Risk Populations

Please provide a rationale for selecting the above groups(s).

(i.e., Why will these specific groups enable you to answer your research question? Why is the inclusion of these groups necessary?)

The participants knowledge and experience in venture philanthropy can provide information valuable to the study’s research questions.

Provide the maximum number of participants you plan to enroll for each participant group and justify the sample size.
You will not be approved to enroll a number greater than the number listed. If at a later time it becomes apparent that you need to increase your sample size, you will need to amend your protocol prior to doing so.

There will be five participants in this study. A sample size of five is acceptable as the Christian school venture philanthropy population size is limited. John Creswell (2018) states that there is no specific requirement on the number of participants in qualitative research. Still, from a review of many qualitative research studies, Creswell states that case studies should include about four to five cases.
Recruitment of Participants

This section will collect additional information on the recruitment of potential participants.

How will you contact potential participants to recruit them for your study?

- Be specific. Examples include email, a phone call, social media, snowball sampling, flyers, etc.
- If you plan to use phone calls or emails, please describe how you will obtain the phone numbers/email addresses (e.g., publicly available, list will be provided to you, personal acquaintances, etc.).
- Please state whether the same recruitment template will be used for all recruitment methods. For example, if separate recruitment templates are required (e.g., one for email and one for social media), please attach both below.
- If you will follow-up with participants (phone, email, etc.) please say so in your below response.

The researcher will email, call, or text organizations, individuals, and consultants who are knowledgeable of philanthropy in Christian, K-12 schools. These organizations, individuals, and consultants include Mission Advancement, Timothy Group, National Christian Foundation, and ACSI South Central Regional leaders (Drs. Edward Bunn and Vernard Gant). After the researcher receives leads to potential participants, she will first contact the school leaders (recipients of venture philanthropy) through their emails and phone numbers listed on their school website. The researcher will inform the school leader of the study and ask the leader to reach out to the venture philanthropist to inform them. Then, depending on each philanthropist’s preference, the school leader can provide the researcher’s recruitment information to the philanthropist or provide their contact information to the researcher. If attempts to reach the participant through the school leader are unsuccessful, the researcher will contact the participant(s) directly through LinkedIn or their email address if it is available.

Describe the location and timing of recruitment.

Unless you are recruiting at a specific event, please refrain from listing an exact date (you can provide a general estimate, or simply state "recruitment will begin upon IRB approval.").

Recruitment will begin upon IRB approval.

How and when will you ensure that participants meet your study criteria?
For example, a screening survey or verbal confirmation that participants are 18 or older.

The researcher will seek a verbal or written confirmation through the school leader and the venture philanthropist that the participant has given a collective total of $1 million in cash assets to the school. The school website often lists the names and photos of the school board members including the venture philanthropist. In the event that the school board members’ names are not published on the school website, the researcher will seek a verbal or written confirmation from the school leader that the participant serves in a board member/advisory role.

Attach your recruitment documents as separate Word documents* here.

*If you are using a proprietary screening tool (e.g., PAR-Q), it can be submitted as a PDF.

Depending on your above responses, you may need to attach multiple documents:

- Screening Survey/Instrument
- Email(s)
- Letter(s)
- Social media post(s)
- Flyer(s), etc.

Sample documents: Recruitment (Letter/Email), Recruitment (Follow-up), Recruitment (Flyer)

Note: If any recruitment documents will need to be provided in a different language, those documents should be attached here.
Determination of Consent Waiver Eligibility

The below questions will help us determine if your project qualifies for a waiver of consent, consent elements, or signed consent.

Does your project involve deception?

Deception may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Withholding the full/true purpose of the study.
- Withholding information about experimental/controls groups.
- Audio/video recording or photographing participants without their knowledge.

Yes
☑ No

Does your project involve anonymous data collection methods?

Yes
☑ No

Does your project involve a participant population where signing forms is not the norm?

Yes
☑ No

Obtaining Parental Consent and Child Assent

This section will gather details about the parental consent and child assent processes.
Does your study require parental/guardian consent?

If any of your participants are under 18 years of age, parental consent is most likely a requirement.

- Yes
- ✅ No

Is child assent required for your study?

Assent is required unless the child is not capable of assenting due to age, psychological state, or sedation OR the research holds out the prospect of a direct benefit that is only available within the context of the research.

- Children under the age of 13 should receive a separate child assent form written at their grade level that they can read or that can be read to them.
- Children between the ages of 13 and 17 can provide assent on the parental consent form.

- Yes
- ✅ No

Obtaining Consent

This section will gather details about the consent process.

How and when will you provide consent information to participants?

For example, will consent be provided as an attachment to your recruitment email, as the first page participants see after clicking on the survey link, etc.? Consent information will be provided to participants as an attachment to the recruitment email.

How and when will signed consent be obtained?
For example, participants will type their names and the date on the consent form before completing the online survey, participants will sign and return the consent forms when you meet for their interview, etc.

If your study is anonymous and qualifies for a waiver of signed consent, please state the following in the below box: “A waiver of signed consent has been requested.”

The interviews will be performed via video conference and not in person. Therefore, participants will print, sign, scan or photograph, and return the consent forms to the researcher via email or text message.

Please attach your consent form(s) as separate Word documents.

If you have multiple participant groups, you may need to submit a consent form for each group.

Sample documents: Consent, Consent (Medical)

Note: If any documents written in a language other than English will need to be provided to potential participants, those documents should be attached here.
Study Design

This section gathers additional information about planned procedures.

Will your study involve any of the following?

Check the applicable boxes. If none apply, select “N/A.”

- Extra costs to the participants (tests, hospitalization, etc.)
- Alcohol consumption
- Protected Health Information (from health practitioners/institutions)
- VO₂ Max Exercise
- Pilot study procedures (which will be published/included in data analysis)
- Use of blood
- The use of rDNA or biohazardous material
- The use of human tissues or cell lines
- Fluids that could mask the presence of blood (including urine/feces)
- Use of radiation or radioisotopes

✓ N/A

Procedures

This section will gather additional information about all planned study procedures.

In an ordered list, please describe the procedures for each participant group.
Be concise. Please include time estimates for each procedure. For example:

1. Online survey. 10 minutes.
2. Interview. 30-45 minutes.

If different participant groups are involved, you must also specify which procedures correspond to each group. For example:

1. Online Survey. 15 minutes. (All participants).
2. Focus Group. 45 minutes. (4-5 participants from Group A).
3. Recorded Interview. 30 minutes. (3 participants from Group B).

1. Participate in a recorded video-conference interview. 45-60 minutes.
2. Review the interview transcript and reply with necessary comments, clarification, or corrections within one week of receiving the transcript.

Please attach all of your data collection instruments as separate Word documents*.

*If any of your data collection instruments are proprietary/validated instruments, you may submit them as PDFs.

Possible attachments may include:

- Survey/Questionnaire questions
- Interview questions
- Observation protocols
- Session outlines
- Prompts
- Checklists
- Educational handouts, etc.

Interview Protocol for Participants.docx

Note: If any documents written in a language other than English will need to be provided to participants, those documents should be attached here.

Compensation
Note: Certain states outlaw the use of lotteries, raffles, or drawings as a means of compensating research participants. Research compensation exceeding $600 per participant within a one-year period is considered income and will need to be filed on the participant's income tax returns. If your study is grant funded, the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) policies might affect how you compensate participants. Contact the IRB or OSP for additional information.

Will this project involve participant compensation?

Compensation may include gift cards, meals, extra credit, etc.

Yes

✓ No

Study Sites & Permissions

This section will gather information about study locations and any necessary permissions.

Please state the actual location(s)/site(s) at which the study will be conducted.

Be specific. Include the city, state, school/district name, clinic name, etc.
The recorded interviews will be conducted online via Microsoft Teams.

Will you need to receive conditional IRB approval before your study location(s) will grant permission?

The conditional IRB approval letter states that a study is ready for complete IRB approval once documentation of permission is received.

Yes

✓ No

Please submit any permission letters you have obtained.
• If you are still in the process of obtaining permission letters, they can be uploaded at a later time.
• If you would like us to review your permission request template(s) or permission letter template(s), please submit those here.

Sample documents: Permission (Request Letter), Permission (Example Letter)
Data Security

Privacy & Data Analysis

This section will collect additional information about how you plan to protect privacy and analyze your data.

Describe the steps you will take to protect the privacy of your participants.

- If you are conducting interviews, will you use a private setting where others will not overhear?
- If you plan to use online surveys, will they be anonymous or stored securely in an online database?
- If you plan to use hardcopy surveys, will the data be stored in a locked cabinet/desk?

The interviews will be conducted at the researcher's residence. No other individuals will be present at the time of the interviews nor have access to the researcher's data and computer at her residence.

Where will the data be stored and who will have access to the data?

I.e., a password-locked computer, a locked drawer, and locked filing cabinet, etc; only the researcher; the researcher/faculty committee.

The data will be stored on a password-protected computer and only the researcher will have access to the computer.

Will the data be destroyed after three years?

It is strongly advised that data be retained for a minimum of 3 years after the study has been completed.

✓ Yes

Describe how the data will be destroyed.

I.e., it will be deleted from the computer, paper copies will be shredded, etc.

Three years after the study's conclusion, the data will be deleted on the researcher's password-protected computer. The "Trash" files will then be permanently deleted.
No

How will the data be analyzed?

As applicable, describe the statistical methods to be used, any use of data analysis software/packages, whether you will use grouping or themes, etc.
The researcher will utilize NVivo computer software for her qualitative data analysis. According to LU Information Services, NVivo allows this researcher to "classify, sort, and arrange information; examine relationships in the data; and combine analysis with linking, shaping, searching, and modeling." The researcher will review all of the data to determine general themes that will be listed in the findings section of the dissertation.

What will be done with the data and resulting analysis?

Include any plans for publication or presentation.
The data and resulting analysis will be published in the researcher's doctoral dissertation and in a PowerPoint presentation for the researcher's doctoral defense. The data may also be presented in future presentations to relevant audiences such as Christian education leaders, Christian school boards of trustees, and philanthropists.

Will this project involve the use of archival data or secondary data?

- Archival data is information previously collected for a purpose other than the proposed research. Examples include student grades and patient medical records.
- Secondary data is data that was previously collected for the purpose of research. For example, a researcher may choose to utilize survey data that was collected as part of an earlier study.
- If you plan to collect documents from participants or an organization (meeting minutes, policies, syllabi, notes, etc.) please respond "yes."

Yes
✓ No
Media Use

This section gathers additional information about any planned use of media and/or audio/video devices.

Will this project involve any of the following?

Check the applicable boxes. If none apply, select "N/A."

- ✔ Audio recording
- ✔ Video recording
- Photography
- N/A

If a participant chooses to withdraw from the study, how will their recordings and/or photographs be disposed of?

The video and audio recording will be deleted on the researcher's password-protected computer, and the "Trash" files will be permanently deleted.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality means that the researcher can identify participants and link them to their data, but the researcher will not reveal participant identities to anyone outside of the study.

Based on the above definition, are any aspects of your study considered confidential?

- ✔ Yes
- No

Confidential Data Collection
This section will gather additional information about the confidential aspects of your project.

Can participant names or identities be deduced from the raw data?

Yes

Describe how names or identities could possibly be deduced and any steps to prevent this from happening:

The participants are high net worth philanthropists who likely own or lead a large company or corporation. The participants may mention his or her company name and its specialty, however the researcher will not reveal these specific details. For example, if a participant states that he "owns Alcon, a company in Ft. Worth, Texas that specializes in eye medical devices," the researcher will instead state that "the participant owns a Fortune 100 company in Fort Worth, Texas." If a similar statement is published on the Christian school's board of trustees webpage then the researcher will use more vague verbiage and say, "the participant is a business owner" in the DFW metroplex.

No

Will a person be able to identify a subject based on other information in the raw data (i.e., title, position, sex, etc.)?

Yes

Describe what may lead to the identification of a participant:

The raw data will state the participant's career background, job title, company name, and board of trustees officer title, but these specific details will not be revealed in the published study.

No

Describe the process you will use to ensure the confidentiality of the participants during data collection and in any publication(s).

For instance, you may be able to link individuals/oranizations to identifiable data; however, you will use pseudonyms or a coding system to conceal their identities.
Names of the participant, participant’s company or foundation, school, school leader, fellow board member(s), students, and any other individuals mentioned will be kept confidential. If individuals are mentioned in the interview, the researcher will assign pseudonyms.

Do you plan to maintain a list or code book linking pseudonyms or codes to participant identities?

✔ Yes

In the below box, state:

1. Where the list or code book will be stored.
2. Who will have access to the list or code book.

For example, in a locked cabinet or drawer; in a separate password-protected folder.
The pseudonym list will be stored on a document on a password-protected computer. Only the researcher will have access to the computer.

The researcher(s) affirm that the list or code book will be stored separately from the raw data.

Failure to store the list or code book separate from the data would defeat the purpose of providing pseudonyms or codes to participant identities, as one would be able to easily deduce participant identities.

✔ Yes

No

Anonymity

Anonymity means that although the researcher knows whom he or she invited to participate in his or her study, once the data is collected, the researcher cannot link individuals to their personal data. This means that no personally-identifying information can be collected in an anonymous study.
Based on the above definition, are any aspects of your study considered anonymous?

Yes

✓ No
Risks & Benefits

Risks

This section will gather additional information about any potential risks involved with your project.

Describe the risks to participants and any steps that will be taken to minimize those risks.

If the only potential risk is a breach in confidentiality if the data is lost or stolen, state that below. Remember:

- Risks can be physical, psychological, economic, social, or legal.
- No study is completely without risk.

There is a potential risk of a breach in confidentiality if the data is lost or stolen.

Will alternative procedures or treatments that might be advantageous to the participants be made available?

- Yes
- ✓ No

Is this project considered greater than minimal risk?

Remember, minimal risk means that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

- Yes
- ✓ No

Benefits
This section will gather additional information about any potential benefits involved with your project.

Describe the possible direct benefits to the participants. If participants are not expected to receive direct benefits, please state "No direct benefits."

Remember:

- Completing a survey or participating in an interview will not typically result in direct benefits to participants.
- Benefits are not the same as compensation. Do not list gift cards, meals, etc. in this section.

No direct benefits.

Describe any possible benefits to society.

For example, increased public knowledge on the topic, improved learning outcomes, etc.

Increased public knowledge on both venture philanthropy and authentic leadership in the Christian education and Christian non-profit fields.

Evaluation of Risks and Benefits

This section establishes whether or not the study is worth doing based on the risks and benefits described.

Evaluate the risk-benefit ratio.

Why is the study worth doing, even with any identified risks?
The study is worth doing as the risks are unlikely given that the researcher is the only one with access to the password-protected computer that stores a list of participant pseudonyms. In the event of a data breach that exposes participant names, there is no risk of physical or financial harm being done to the participants as the data does not contain social security numbers or home addresses. The benefits are great as they can benefit a substantial number of both Christian school
leaders seeking venture philanthropy and venture philanthropists seeking to invest in Christian education.
Human Subjects Training Documentation

Note: This upload is only required for non-affiliated, non-LU personnel. If you are affiliated with LU, we are able to view your CITI training report.

External Investigator Agreement

Note: This upload is only required for non-affiliated, non-LU personnel. If you are affiliated with LU, you are able to provide certification within the Cayuse system.

Proof of Permission to Use LU Participants, Data, or Groups

Note: If you are not using LU participants, data, or groups, you do not need to include an attachment here.

DNP Permission

Note: If you are not in the Doctor of Nursing Practice Program (School of Nursing), you do not need to include an attachment here.

Sample documents: Permission (Request Letter), Permission (Example Letter)
Recruitment

*Note: If you are strictly using archival data, you may not need to include an attachment here.*

Sample documents: [Recruitment Letter/Email](#), [Recruitment (Follow-up)](#), [Recruitment (Flyer)](#), [Recruitment Template Followup.docx](#)

Parental Consent

*Note: If your study does not involve minors, you will not need to provide an attachment here.*

Sample documents: [Parental Consent](#)

Archival Data Permission

*Note: If you are not using archival data, you will not need to provide an attachment here.*

Sample documents: [Permission (Request Letter)](#), [Permission (Example Letter)](#)

Data Collection Instruments

*Note: If you are strictly using archival data, you may not need to provide an attachment here.*

[Interview Protocol for Participants.docx](#)
Site Permission

Note: If you do not require external permission(s) to conduct your study, you may not need to provide an attachment here.
Sample documents: Permission (Request Letter) , Permission (Example Letter)

Child Assent

Note: If your study does not involve minors, you will not need to provide an attachment here.
Sample documents: Child Assent

Consent Templates

Note: If you are strictly using archival data, you may not need to provide an attachment here.
Consent-Templates.docxSample documents: Consent , Consent (Medical)

Debriefing

Note: If your study does not involve deception, you will not need to provide an attachment here.
Sample documents: Debriefing