

THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIAN *PAIDEIA* FOR CAREER CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN
EDUCATORS: A HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGY

by

Binnie J King

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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APPROVED BY:

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Abstract

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology was to discover the essence of Christian *paideia* for career classical Christian educators who make daily curricular decisions at a classical Christian online academy that serves a 2nd-12th grade international student body. A qualitative research design was used to gather data on the experiences of classical Christian educational practitioners when making curricular decisions. The theory that guided this study was Mezirow's transformational learning theory (TLT), as all manner of teaching and learning attempts transformation to a higher ideal. A hermeneutic phenomenology was employed through the interpretive framework of critical realism to discover the essence of Christian *paideia*. The participants included thirteen current career CC educators with a minimum of three years teaching in an online global CC academy in the 6th through 12th grades known as the logic and rhetoric/dialectic stages of CCE. The semi-structured interview, archive observation, and focus group were the data collection methods chosen to answer the central research question: What is the essence of Christian *paideia* for career CC educators within their lived experiences of online global curricular decisions? Data collection, analysis, and synthesis followed van Manen's (2016) hermeneutic phenomenological reflection and Saldaña's (2021) analytic memoing, in vivo, process, and value coding, and theming the data. Results included the following themes: *understanding the nature and character of God, building holistic connections, forming Christian character, and leading Christian culture*. A point of structure (van Manen, 2016) was also revealed: *everything God intended anchored in history*.

Keywords: Christian *paideia*, classical Christian education, online education, globalization, transformational learning theory, curriculum theory, critical realism

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Dedication

I dedicate this research and writing to all of those who came before me, who sought God's will for their lives and poured into the lives of others. As the threads continuously weave into this incomplete tapestry, many names will go unmentioned, but by God's grace, you will know you have been a loving and faithful servant.

I dedicate this research and writing to Erin [REDACTED] the very first person who took a chance on hiring me, a Christian educator unaware of how secularism had permeated my thoughts and actions in classroom planning, instruction, and assessment. Thank you for your willingness to provide learning opportunities such as the [REDACTED] test and biblical worldview training, I am eternally grateful for your mentorship in understanding a biblical worldview approach to curriculum and instruction. Thank you for your continued encouragement and for using the Bible to increase my foundational knowledge in classical Christian education, and especially for your commitment to training new teachers and providing essential support. You are a wonder, a beautiful reminder of God's design for humanity!

I dedicate this research and writing to my family. First, to my dear husband [REDACTED], thank you for being God's servant in leading me to Jesus, for your daily support, and for picking up the pieces when my efforts failed. To my daughter, [REDACTED], you are my ultimate cheerleader. Thank you for completing mommy jobs throughout the course of this project. I love you a bushel, and a peck, and a hug around the neck! To my earthly father, Harry [REDACTED], who passed away prior to seeing me achieve this goal, but you always had faith that God would answer our prayers. I love you Dad, and I will see you soon. To

my mother, Anna [REDACTED], thank you for enduring trials with patience and perseverance as only a mother can. Where would the world be without mothers?

I dedicate this finished work to God, my eternal father, through whom all good things flow. For knowing me before I knew you and for calling me by name, and for preparing my way and providing saints to help guide my steps; I have been forever changed. I thank God for making me part of His story, however small, that this work may reflect His glory and bring clarity, understanding, and insight to Christian educators everywhere.

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I thank the extensive contributions of my participants. Several members of my cohort struggled with finding and maintaining a strong participant base for their research study, but my group of career classical Christian educators welcomed the opportunity to participate in a research study that could benefit our field through a close examination of Christian *paideia* in an online CC classroom. I am grateful for their willingness, their honesty, their sincere reflections on their classroom practices, and their love for God and His calling on their lives as Christian educators. These esteemed educators have made all the difference, and this project would not have been possible without their willing participation and ease of accessibility. My words are simply not enough to convey my admiration of each participant, my awe in how God has worked through each one of them, and my amazement at the faithfulness of their journeys, however unique, to redeem a global Christian culture for Christ. Their stories are inspiring and a testament to His story.

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List of Abbreviations

Association of Classical Christian Schools (ACCS)

Classical Christian (CC)

Classical Christian Education (CCE)

Critical Realism (CR)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Reformed Critical Realism (RCR)

Transformational Learning Theory (TLT)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The ideal of education to transform culture is at the center of the Greek word *paideia* (Jaeger, 1945; Lockerbie, 2005; Säfström, 2019). Christian *paideia* is also a central, albeit abstract (van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021), concept for curriculum framing in American classical Christian education (CCE) (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020). The “Good Soil” report published in 2020 empirically establishes the success of CCE’s pedagogical approach to restoring Christian *paideia* in the United States (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020). With the pedagogical aim of Christian *paideia* (ACCS, n.d.), CCE has the potential to inform curriculum theory and the development of pedagogy for global Christian education of the 21st-century learner (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020; Richardi, 2022). Chapter One provides the historical, social, and theoretical background of *paideia* and its relation to CCE and the 21st-century online Christian learner, leading to the current problem of novice classical Christian (CC) educators’ understanding of Christian *paideia* while engaging the curriculum during instruction. A research proposal is presented for a hermeneutic phenomenology of a CCE school comprised of an international student body. This hermeneutic phenomenology aims to discover the essence of Christian *paideia* for career CC educators during operational curriculum as it contributes, either intentionally or unintentionally, to their curricular decisions that promote the transformation of culture. The significance of the study, research questions, and definitions finalize this chapter, providing a clear outline of the overall research proposal.

Background

The phenomenon of Christian *paideia* began before Christ with the Greek *paideia* ideal but connects to Christ through His temporal teachings and later through the Christian church and

Christian literature (Jaeger, 1945, 1961). Christian teachers who have been educated through secular institutions (Vaughan, 2019) by educational theories void of any truth claims or value/moral imperatives (Wilson, 1991) have limited frames of reference (Aboytes & Barth, 2020) to realize Christian *paideia* in an online classroom. Ambivalence towards Christianity by the social science field (Kern, 2021; Scimecca, 2019) has also assisted in fragmenting the Christian community (Kern, 2021), a fundamental premise for understanding the connection between educating the individual for the education of a Christian community (Jaeger, 1961). Christian *paideia* is a social construct that requires an educational commitment to cultural transformation (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020; Jaeger, 1961). While modern educational systems individualize instruction and center pedagogy on the student's own productivity and skills (Zovko & Dillon, 2018), CCE pedagogy centers on Christ for the transformation of students that shapes Christian culture and God's earthly kingdom (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020; Wilson, 2019).

Historical Context

Western civilization began with the Greeks and the Greek educational ideal of *paideia* (Jaeger, 1945, 1961; Zovko & Dillon, 2018). Greek *paideia* was determined by applying acts of consciousness that transformed civilization through the culture of humanity (Horn, 2018; Jaeger, 1945, 1961). Protagoras chose man as the measure of all things, as the standard for education with a lifelong goal of a political culture (Jaeger, 1945; Lockerbie, 2005). Plato challenged Protagoras and sophistic education by claiming that the measure of all things was God (Jaeger, 1945; S. J. Smith, 2020). Both connected the concept of *paideia* to humanism but differed on whether humanism was technical or spiritual, physical or metaphysical, relative or absolute (Jaeger, 1945). Though the object of humanism was never settled in ancient Greece, Greek *paideia* continued as a universal enculturation tying together every facet of being (Jaeger, 1945;

Säfström, 2019). The battle between philosophy and religion subsided when the Greco-Roman world accepted Christianity in late antiquity (Jaeger, 1945) and the works of Clement of Alexandria (Jaeger, 1961) and Augustine of Hippo integrated philosophy with Christianity (Edwards, 2021; S. J. Smith, 2020).

During the early age of antiquity, the ancient Athenians consciously built culture through the study of poetry, law, and justice displayed in ancient texts and mythology (Jaeger, 1945) and later through the educational aim of intellectual *arête* in mind, body, and spirit (Haralson, 2020; Jaeger, 1945; Säfström, 2019). This cultural aim encapsulated *paideia* (Säfström, 2019). Moving from artistry to logic, Greek *paideia* explored the freedom and form of universal ideals (Jaeger, 1945) such as the true, the good, and the beautiful (Lockerbie, 2005; S. J. Smith, 2020; Turley, 2014), and how these ideals govern the self and therefore the broader community (Alt & Eberly, 2019; Jaeger, 1945). Greek *paideia* grew to demonstrate the significance of educating the whole self (Alt & Eberly, 2019; Säfström, 2019; S. J. Smith, 2020) in transforming society (Jaeger, 1945). The inherent value of the individual self, a contribution of 1st century Christianity (Jaeger, 1945), joined Christianity to *paideia* in the building of character (Alt & Eberly, 2019) through understanding the relation of the self within a broader community (Jaeger, 1945).

For the Greeks, the *paideia* ideal was synonymous with the culture of education to transform the culture of the educated populace (Jaeger, 1945). Plato's inquiry into the physical and the metaphysical, his questioning of the worldly and other-worldly, contributed to the philosophical mindset of *paideia* (S. J. Smith, 2020). With Plato's *Republic* (2008), philosophy became the cornerstone of *paideia* (Edwards, 2021), even though *paideia* involved an action-oriented rhetorical education of the *polis* (Edwards, 2021; Jaeger, 1945). Plato's influence upon *paideia* deepened the meaning of education to include general, liberal, and rational standards

(van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021) needed to teach virtue and transform character (S. Little, 2021). Aristotle's views on compulsory character education and the importance of the natural world also informed *paideia*, and it was not until the Roman epoch that classical *paideia* was brought about by specific sequencing, structure, and style (S. Little, 2021).

The merging of cultures is an extensive process and normally culminates in a new entity (Jaeger, 1943). When the concept of Greek *paideia* merged with a Roman militaristic and imperial worldview, a Roman-Hellenistic *paideia* evolved (Edwards, 2021; van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021), without which Christianity would not have been able to spread so far so quickly (Jaeger, 1945, 1961). The sequencing, structure, and style of a civic-minded education propagated Roman minds with a liberal education in humanities for the formation of character (van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021). This historical setting demonstrates life during Jesus' time when he taught according to the essence of *paideia*, teaching his disciples through meanings of connotations and developing concepts through metaphors (Jaeger, 1961). This was also the time when Paul exhorted the Ephesians to raise their children in "the *paideia* of the Lord" (ESV, 6:4; Lockerbie, 2005; van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021; Wilson, 2019), a call for Christian children to receive a Christian education (Lockerbie, 2005; Wilson, 2019).

For approximately fifteen hundred years, Christian *paideia* unified thought in diverse sub-cultures, political realms, and educational institutions (Jaeger, 1961; Kern, 2021). Even with different sects and denominations throughout the ages, Christianity maintained its unifying features (Kern, 2021) through God's grace (ESV, 2 Cor 9:8, 2001/2016) and man's creeds and confessions (Kern, 2021). The epoch of Enlightenment advocated the dismantling of Christian *paideia* by replacing Divine Truth with scientific and observed truth (Kern, 2021), although secularization in the form of established boundaries of religion should not be viewed as

occurring only in a linear manner. Education during the seventeenth to twentieth centuries championed secularization aided by Deism (Calvert, 2018; Kern, 2021), a primary belief of those who established America's public educational system (Calvert, 2018; S. J. Smith, 2020). The delineation of the science fields and the differentiation of epistemologies promoted the global secularization of education while prominent philosophers, literary authors, and artists of modernity rebelled against their Christian upbringing (Kern, 2021). The Christian faith that had informed public culture for millennia (O'Callaghan, 2017) was replaced with Nietzsche's "God is dead" pronouncement (Kern, 2021). Modernity's rejection of Christian *paideia* in public spaces (O'Callaghan, 2017) resulted in a fragmented culture (Kern, 2021) of individualism and isolation (O'Callaghan, 2017).

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw rapid growth in technology, transportation, and governments that spread secularization (Kern, 2021) and encouraged changes to educational objectives (Parkay et al., 2014; S. J. Smith, 2020) and curriculum criteria (Parkay et al., 2014). Since curriculum, at its foundation, asks the question what is most worth knowing (Parkay et al., 2014), curriculum and hence, education, changes with the tide of culture (Jaeger, 1943; Parkay et al., 2014). Throughout the twentieth century, the advancement of progressive ideals provided a response to the question of what is most worth knowing, and educational reform in the West focused on a pragmatic and democratic education (S. J. Smith, 2020). Two world wars increased the importance of nationalism in schools, while a skills and technology-based criteria dominated curriculum design (Parkay et al., 2014; S. J. Smith, 2020). At the end of World War II, Dorothy Sayers (1948) presented a speech at Oxford University calling for education to return to the medieval curriculum (Wilson, 1991), a time when the curriculum was grounded in Christian *paideia* (Jaeger, 1943) and not the self-interests of nations and individual freedoms that further

fragmented social structures with a secular *ethos* (O'Callaghan, 2017).

Social Context

Education is a social process, for it is only the genius who can educate himself (Jaeger, 1945). The *paideia* of antiquity embodied this social process as an emergence of ideas for an improved and universal community (Jaeger, 1961). The *paideia* ideal represents complete education through the enculturation of society's valued and universal laws (Jaeger, 1945; Wilson, 2019) and is the sum of many interrelated aims of cultural transformation (Zovko & Dillon, 2018). The concept of *paideia* gave birth to philosophy, rhetoric, democracy, ethics, and many privileges enjoyed today through the sustaining nature of the liberal arts and the medieval curriculum (Jaeger, 1943). Since curriculum answers the question of what is most worth knowing (Parkay et al., 2014), Sayers's (1948) call to return to teaching students how to think and not what to think (Fitzpatrick, 2022; Wilson, 1991) is a call to replace what people value within society. If society values industry, then educational objectives focus on technical knowledge and expertise in trade areas like capitalism, financial systems, vocations, and skills training (Miedema, 2017). Thus, if the value of a society is secularism, then educational objectives focus on all knowledge as separated from God (Calvert, 2018; Hedges, 2019).

So, culture informs education, and education informs the culture of a whole lived experience within a community (Jaeger, 1945). When community becomes completely individualized as it has in post-modernity (O'Callaghan, 2017) acting through a secularized authority, what is left of the *paideia* ideal to transform a universal culture that is representative of the whole? When the values and character formation within a modern *paideia* have become completely fragmented and secularized (O'Callaghan, 2017; Scimecca, 2019), what prohibits Jaeger's third humanism from becoming Hitler's Third Reich (Horn, 2018)? These are critical

social questions for twenty-first-century educators as technological advancements in online education and ongoing globalization continue to bring people together from diverse cultures with differing values of humanity. The re-emergence of literature on the Greek ideal of *paideia*, its Latin equivalent of *humanitas*, and its German counterpart *bildung* (Miedema, 2017) brings to light an academic search for answers to these sociological questions (Horn, 2018).

Twenty-first-century pedagogy and the teaching of future educators can reinstitute the classical and medieval curriculum (Klauke, 2019) called for by Sayers (1948) to help rebuild fragmented communities (O’Callaghan, 2017) and recover the art of pedagogy based on transforming culture through rhetoric, critical thinking, and the liberal arts (Jaeger, 1943; Klauke, 2019; Sayers, 1948; Wilson, 1991). Worldview and religious teacher training programs should be advancing in America’s higher education institutions (Gardner et al., 2017) to help pre-service teachers understand how *paideia* and worldview are connected (Hadzigeorgiou, 2019). The diminished concept of Greek *paideia* during the high secularism of twentieth century America could once again be employed to shape the culture of community (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020; Jaeger, 1943), intent on realizing the trivium curriculum’s truth, goodness, and beauty (M. Joseph, 2002) of social living. In theory, van der Walt and Oosthuizen’s (2021) question, “Can the *Paideia* Ideal Form Part of a Christian Pedagogical Aim in the 21st Century?” has already been answered by the implementation of CCE in America over thirty years ago and its corresponding published empirical data (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020; Haralson, 2020; Richardi, 2022; Vaughan, 2019), but more scholarly research is needed to understand how the phenomenon of Christian *paideia* is operationalized within curriculum and instruction of CCE schools (Squires, 2019; Richardi, 2022) to inform curriculum theory and the development of international pedagogy for the online classroom of the 21st century.

Theoretical Context

The difficulty of understanding Greek *paideia* is the position of the modern educational researcher as separate and far removed from the historical account (Jaeger, 1945). According to Jaeger (1945), scholars can only understand history by reading primary documents written from the specific epoch of inquiry. Even then, today's scholars are products of educational modernity (Calvert, 2018), what Paulo Freire (1970) calls a banking system of education and are limited in the intellectual arete required to understand different epochs of history. The twentieth century mind has not developed a sense for reasoning, discovering, and wondering (Turley, 2014) through life-long learning because twentieth century education mostly focused on vocational training (Adler, 1984; Wilson, 1991), and the reductive personality of modern science (Miedema, 2017) has portrayed any spiritual or personal experience as unnecessary for the education of youth (Turley, 2014).

Dorothy Sayers (1948) was one of the first academic scholars to speak openly about the decline of the holistic *paideia* ideal in education when she presented her essay "The Lost Tools of Learning" during a summer education course at Oxford University (Wilson, 1991). According to Sayers (1948), public education in England produced children skilled in subjects instead of skilled learners. Her thesis was to revitalize classical education using the medieval curriculum, to teach students how to learn and love learning as a means to its own end (Wilson, 1991). Medieval curriculum theory proposed layers of development through a *humanitas* syllabus structured within the trivium and quadrivium (Sayers, 1948). Sayers (1948) demonstrated how medieval curriculum theory and development aligned with God's divine formation of man. Piaget's (1954) developmental learning theory supported Sayers's (1948) thesis of the various stages of learning (Vaughan, 2019), and social psychologist Vygotsky (1998) provided empirical

evidence that the form of thinking works upon development and biological maturity while the content of thinking requires cultural and social contexts. Sayers's (1948), Piaget's (1954) and Vygotsky's (1998) learning theories establish a theoretical context for classical Christian education, born from classical *paideia* (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020),

Pedagogical theories supporting whole child formation (Miedema, 2017), discovery learning, and liberation theology (S. J. Smith, 2020) as well as the creation of critical theories that, in part, call for global awareness of oppressive educational systems (Schunk, 2020) demonstrate educational reforms during the time when Doug Wilson (1991) published *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning*. Religious education was marginalized as post-modern sociological theory (Scimecca, 2019) continued to support the secularization of education (Miedema, 2017) and reduced epistemology to power relations (Scimecca, 2019). However, Wilson's (1991) publication proposed that education without religion is no education at all (Turley, 2009), and sociological theory must recognize that religion is a part of every culture and cannot be isolated from the study of social or human sciences (Scimecca, 2019). The abstract concept of Christian *paideia* consciously formulates (Jaeger, 1943) the education of the whole person (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020) as part of one body of God's earthly kingdom (*ESV*, Romans 12, 2001/2016), and online education could aid in the transformation of God's earthly kingdom if online Christian educators have a comprehensive understanding of *paideia*.

Problem Statement

The problem is that the Greek word *paideia* is universally understood as child-rearing or education (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020; Jaeger, 1961; van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021), but as a broad pedagogical aim for Christian education (Lockerbie, 2005) and more specifically a purposeful pedagogical aim for CCE (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020), Christian *paideia* functions as

an abstract concept with unilateral curricular and instructional design implications (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020; Wilson, 2019) that novice CC educators find difficult to understand and apply toward the transformation of the Christian student (Vaughan, 2019). Pre-service Christian teachers who graduate from American secular universities are untrained in biblical worldview education and classical pedagogical theory (Beech, 2019; Prior, 2021; Vaughan, 2019). Many have not been educated through the liberal arts because progressive education in the U.S. has naturally devalued the humanities, the civic, and the fine arts (Calvert, 2018). When these Christian teachers are employed at a CC school, it is likely their only understanding of *paideia* comes from the universally accepted definitions of child-rearing or education (Jaeger, 1961; van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021), limiting their ability to conceptually base their curricular decisions on the abstract ideal of Christian *paideia*.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology is to discover the essence of Christian *paideia* for career classical Christian (CC) educators who make daily curricular decisions at a CC online academy that serves a 2nd-12th grade international student body. At this stage in the research, Christian *paideia* is generally defined as the enculturation of a Christian community through transformative lifelong learning.

Significance of the Study

My hermeneutic phenomenological study joins the twenty-first century conversation on religious education's role in public spaces for a post-secular world (Balukh et al., 2022; Biesta & Hannam, 2020), adds to the literature concerning *paideia*'s role in education (Säfström, 2019; van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021), and contributes to the noticeable absence of research on CCE's curriculum design and delivery in relation to the pedagogical aim of Christian *paideia*

(Dernlan, 2018; Squires, 2019; Vaughan, 2019). In 2018, Dernlan's research implications discussed a need for intentional curriculum in CCE schools, which this study explored by interpreting the intentional and unintentional curricular decisions described by online career CC educators and explicating the essence of Christian *paideia*. New thematic nomenclature and connections between being, perspective, and action exposed during the study can expand CC curriculum theory and novice pedagogical development for the global Christian educational community through a thorough understanding of Christian *paideia*.

Theoretical

Twentieth century educational research has only more recently identified curriculum theory as its own branch of education science (Gordon et al., 2019; Richardi, 2022). Curriculum theory connecting empirically supported learning theories with classical pedagogical theory centered on the culture of a Christian community is extremely limited in scholarly publications and non-existent in secular scholarship. At least fifty dissertations have been defended on the topic of CCE in American education, but only one dissertation addressed Christian *paideia* of CCE students (Squires, 2019). Another dissertation used curriculum theory to frame the study of CCE (Richardi, 2022). One dissertation advanced to publication in an academic journal revealing research on the exemplary SAT scores of CCE schools (Vaughan, 2019), and a fourth dissertation completed its publication in a book on spiritual formation in modern versus classical Christian education (Dernlan, 2018). This study informs curriculum theory and new teacher development by discovering the essence of Christian *paideia* for career CC educators within their lived experiences of online curricular decision-making. The study was grounded in Mezirow et al.'s (1978) TLT, which highlights the educational philosophy of the CC educators in relation to their curricular decision making. In other words, educator actions are directly tied to

their educational philosophy as delivered through either a conscious or unconscious paradigm (Mezirow et al., 1978). For CCE, Christian *paideia* is the paradigm that enables CC educators to embody the transformation that they wish to see in their students.

Empirical

Since research in CCE is limited (Dernlan, 2018; Fitzpatrick, 2022; Vaughan, 2019) and studies into Christian *paideia* are paramount to recovering classical pedagogical theory within the Christian educational paradigms (Gruenwald, 2016; Squires, 2019), this qualitative study provided important data for the future of international online CCE and added to the existing body of international literature on the essence of a Christian *paideia* approach for a holistic education that transforms the student and the Christian culture (van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021). The empirical significance of this study relied on hermeneutic writing to make meaning from the described experiences of Christian *paideia* for CC career educators during the lifeworld of curricular decision-making in the online classroom (van Manen, 2014). Additional empirical data was revealed in researcher identified themes of Christian *paideia* (Saldaña, 2021) discovered in CCE educators' curricular decisions in the online classroom. These themes illuminated teaching philosophies, pedagogical assumptions, and online teaching methodologies of online career CC educators. This phenomenology was also designed to provide additional data for van der Walt and Oosthuizen's (2021) research into the *Paideia Ideal* and whether the abstract concept of *paideia* can help to develop pedagogical aims for 21st-century international Christian education.

Practical

The practical application of my research included the possibility of revealing the attributes of Christian *paideia* that account for the notable success of CCE to transform a culture for Christ (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020). Identifying congruent themes during the layers of

curriculum (Lalor, 2016) was also possible but remained elusive because of the multiple ways participants defined curriculum. A few layers of curriculum (Lalor, 2016) demonstrated where Christian *paideia* reveals itself in different areas of teaching and learning. While conducting a hermeneutic phenomenology does not reduce a phenomenon to best practices (van Manen, 2016), doing phenomenology can inform professional practices (van Manen, 2014). Therefore, this research study also identified exemplary CCE teaching practices. New teacher training programs in CC schools benefited from the hermeneutic writing of Christian *paideia* (van Manen, 2016). Interpretations of Christian *paideia* offered recommendations for ongoing research studies in cultures of religious curriculum by denoting the relationship between *paideia* and the lived curriculum (P. B. Joseph, 2021).

Research Questions

Central Research Question

What is the essence of Christian *paideia* for career CC educators within their lived experiences of online global curricular decisions?

Sub-Question One

How do career CC educators make meaning and understand Christian *paideia*?

Sub-Question Two

In what ways do career CC educators consider Christian *paideia* when making curricular decisions for an online global classroom?

Sub-Question Three

How does the online global classroom platform impact CC educators' experiences of Christian *paideia*?

Sub-Question Four

How do career CC educators reflect on the transcendence of Christian *paideia* for the global Christian community?

Definitions

Werner Jaeger (1945, 1943, 1986) published a three-volume tribute on *paideia* as a Greek ideal, demonstrating the insurmountable task of succinctly defining *paideia* for the purpose of this study while also revealing the current need for this study. Instead, the ACCS (n.d.) definition of Christian *paideia* is included to better understand the connection of the Greek ideal with Christianity (van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021) and American CCE (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020). Additional terminology relating to CCE is also included.

1. *Christian Paideia* – “The blueprint of thought, affections, and narrative through which every one of us views everything. Because it is the building block of culture, it determines the future of [the Christian] people [and is] transferred through education” (ACCS, n.d.).
2. *Culture* - Man’s common engagement with the world outside of self and within relative groups and subgroups (Mackey, 2020; O’Callaghan, 2017).
3. *Cultures of Curriculum* - A conceptual model for understanding how educational philosophies, pedagogical aims, educator assumptions, and societal change influence the way curriculum is conducted within daily practice (P. B. Joseph, 2021).
4. *Curriculum* – For modernity, the “what and how” of classroom teaching (Ruzgar, 2018) comprised of many layers which can be referenced systematically as either formal, operational, taught, assessed, or learned (Lalor, 2016). For antiquity and the medieval era, curriculum answers many more questions for education including what the current

culture is educating for (Mackey, 2020).

Summary

The historical, social, and theoretical background of Christian *paideia* demonstrated the need for additional phenomenological research into the essence of Christian *paideia* as the stalwart “blueprint” (ACCS, n.d.) of a recovered Christian educational movement. The “Good Soil” report (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020) revealed empirical data supporting the enculturation of Christian education through classical pedagogy and curriculum theory and development established within the blueprint of Christian *paideia*. While *paideia* has recently emerged in the literature of educational and curriculum theory (Säfström, 2019; van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021), many American Christian educators are unaware of the pedagogical significance of *paideia* and what it offers Christian students through a classical education.

The research problem apparent in academic literature is the common interpretation of the Greek word *paideia* to mean child-rearing or education (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020; Jaeger, 1961; van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021) when Christian *paideia* as a long-term goal of CCE is a much more dynamic concept with unilateral curricular and instructional design implications (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020; Wilson, 2019). Unfortunately, novice CC educators, many of whom graduate from secular universities’ teacher training programs, lack the comprehensive understanding of *paideia* necessary for aiding in the transformation of the Christian student (Vaughan, 2019).

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology was to discover the essence of Christian *paideia* for career CC educators who make daily curricular decisions at a CC online academy that serves a 2-12 grade international student body. The study’s aim was to interpret the essence of Christian *paideia* during lived curriculum to enhance CCE curriculum theory, to demonstrate

purposeful pedagogy for the CC educator, and to establish common themes of Christian *paideia* through reflective writing (van Manen, 2016), coding, and memoing (Saldaña, 2021). By providing an in-depth data analysis through hermeneutic writing, the essence of Christian *paideia* for the online global CC educator was discovered, revealing gems of meaning that further illuminated Christian *paideia*'s essential curricular connections.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

A review of the literature is conducted to explore the dynamic and abstract concept of *paideia* (Jaeger, 1943, 1945, 1986; see also Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020; Säfström, 2019; van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021) and Christian *paideia* (Lockerbie, 2005; van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021; Wilson, 2019) as a pedagogical aim of CCE (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020; Wilson, 2019). Chapter Two presents a review of the current literature related to the phenomenon of *paideia* as it has recently resurfaced in educational research (Säfström, 2019; van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021). The theoretical framework guiding this phenomenological study is transformational learning theory (Mezirow et al., 1978) and is discussed along with the interpretive framework of critical realism (Hiebert, 1999; Naugle, 2002; Scimecca, 2019) in the first section. The next section presents current academic literature concerning curriculum theory, biblical worldview, and CCE as these relate to *paideia* as a pedagogical aim for transforming culture through educational curriculum. Several educational crises are part of this literature review along with CCE's potential to assuage the crises with continued research and exploration of Christian *paideia* for religious education in the twenty-first century.

Theoretical Framework

The transformation of the whole person requires much more than pedagogy (McEwen, 2012) as it requires changes to frames of reference (Mezirow, 2009). The transformation of the whole person also begins, is sustained, and ends with God (Nelson, 2020). With the pedagogical aim of restoring a Christian *paideia* (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020; Wilson, 2019), American CCE exists to transform students' hearts and minds (Miller & Beazley, 2018), or frames of reference, through the holistic teaching of the trivium curriculum from a Protestant Christian worldview

within the Christian community (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020; Wilson, 2019). As transformational learning theory recognizes continued growth of adults through formal and informal experiences (Hockett, 2018; Kegan, 2009), CC educators' lived experiences of Christian *paideia* can be examined through Mezirow et al.'s (1978) transformational learning theory (TLT) and include the spiritual growth of the educators, as well (Piercy, 2013).

Critical realism (CR) is joined with TLT to allow educational researchers and pedagogues to erase the polarity between theology and the social sciences (Guthrie, 2019). CR operationalizes a Christian researcher's ability to view reality as both objective and subjective, providing common ground for academic research and discussion during advancing globalization (Guthrie, 2019; Hiebert, 1999; Naugle, 2002; Stutchbury, 2022). A CR interpretive framework also looks for causal explanations of social phenomenon (Stutchbury, 2022) like an educational researcher might look to understand the causes for successful transformation of Christian *paideia* through the curriculum of CCE schools (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020). Knowing true reality and the basis of self in reality is a central theme of Greek *paideia* (Jaeger, 1943, 1945, 1986), and critical realism frames objective reality outside of self (Guthrie, 2019; Naugle, 2002) while the transformation of the self occurs in subjective reality through critical reflection (Mezirow, 2009; E. Taylor, 2000).

Transformation Learning Theory

TLT is a sustained educational theory of adult learning (Aboytes & Barth, 2020; Nelson, 2020) that examines the perspective with which people see the world (Mezirow, 2009, p. 92). Mezirow (1978) first introduced TLT through the publication of "Perspective Transformation" within the field of adult learning (Aboytes & Barth, 2020; Kegan, 2009; Mezirow, 2009; Nelson, 2020, 2022). Scholars from diverse disciplines recognized the appropriate application of TLT to

their fields (Hoggan, 2016; Mezirow, 2009), causing Mezirow (2009) to expand on perspective as holding frames of reference consisting of “two dimensions: a habit of mind and resulting points of view” (p. 92). Mezirow’s (2009) TLT frames this hermeneutic phenomenology of career CC educators lived experiences by aiding the researcher’s examination of the participants’ habits of mind and points of view of Christian *paideia* during pre-reflected attitudes, lived classroom experiences, and community critical reflections (van Manen, 2016).

Mezirow et al.’s (1978) Theory and Practice

Mezirow et al.’s (1978) TLT encourages the advancement of critical reflection through understanding frames of reference and analyzing systems that influence the way people think. Earlier theories like “Friere’s ‘conscientization,’ Kuhn’s ‘paradigms,’ [and] the concept of ‘consciousness raising’” all influenced Mezirow et al.’s (1978) TLT and the application of critical reflection (Mezirow, 2009, p. 90). In 2009, Mezirow authored an article defining two analytical elements of TLT as critical reflection and dialogic discourse. TLT naturally frames phenomenological research because TLT initiates critical reflection and dialogic discourse (Mezirow, 2009) while a phenomenological design employs critical reflection (Moustakas, 1994) and dialogic discourse (Saldaña, 2021; van Manen, 2016).

Critical Realism

From a philosophical premise that arose in the twentieth century (Fletcher, 2016; Zhang, 2023), Christian researchers have relied on the interpretive framework of CR for their research studies in the field of social sciences (Scimecca, 2019). CR began as Roy Bhaskar’s (1975/2008) transcendental realism, and in its fledgling philosophical state created common ground between positivism and relativism (Scimecca, 2019). Christian sociologists like Margaret Archer (2004) and Christian Smith (2009) included Bhaskar’s (1975/2008) CR in advancing general sociology

theory, which deters extreme relativism from obscuring matters of religious belief (Scimecca, 2019). For the Christian researcher, the application of CR as a frame or filter (van Manen, 2016) during research requires a commitment to certain presumptions that make it distinct from secular CR (Edlin, 2020). God as the author of truth and the Bible as the living word of God are quintessential presumptions for applying CR as a filter when researching Christian education (Archer et al., 2004; Edlin, 2020; Naugle, 2002).

TLT and CR Synthesis

Both TLT (Mezirow et al., 1978) and CR (Bhaskar, 1975/2008) began as secular frameworks that helped the reemergence of academic research into the spiritual part (Hoggan, 2016; Nelson, 2022) of the human form (Charaniya, 2012; Kegan, 2009). TLT frames this hermeneutic phenomenology on the essence of Christian *paideia* for career CC educators by offering focused interpretations within the participants' frames of reference during curricular decision-making. Since presuppositions of a phenomenologist are laid aside during research (Moustakas, 1994), CR also acts as a interpretive filter (van Manen, 2016), providing discernment for hermeneutic data collection and analysis of participant experiences of spirituality as they connect to the essence of Christian *paideia*.

Related Literature

Christian *paideia* is a pedagogical aim of American CCE (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020; Wilson, 2019), but *paideia* is an abstract and dynamic concept that is difficult to define (Jaeger, 1943, 1945; van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021) and measure (Vaughan, 2019). Current research trends in social science literature reference *paideia* without referring to it by name (van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021), and different languages use alternate words for what is essentially *paideia* (Horn, 2018). In Christian education, Christian *paideia* often goes unrecognized during Christian

teachers' curricular decision making and is labeled as the integration of faith and learning (Lockerbie, 2005), biblical worldview, or spiritual formation. With *paideia*'s often abstract (van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021), dynamic (Jaeger, 1943, 1945, 1961), and ambiguous interpretations (Hrachovec, 2018), *paideia*'s connection to global pedagogy and curriculum methodology is challenging for contemporary educators to explain, and more so to understand (Horn, 2018).

Curriculum Theory

Curriculum theory is a 20th century educational science (Gordon et al., 2019; Richardi, 2022) and a highly debated field of study marked historically by Schwab's (2013) 1969 reference to the curriculum field as moribund (Deng, 2018; Ruzgar, 2018; Tahirsylaj, 2019) and more recently by Deng's (2018) empirical observation of the 21st-century curriculum crisis as surpassing Schwab's (2013) original declaration. The conceptual framework of curriculum is also debated by academics who find continuous disagreement on a universal definition, an aspect that slows down curriculum theory in general (Beauchamp, 1982). Parkay et al. (2014) provide several commonly accepted definitions by educational practitioners and then surmise that none of these definitions fully encompass what is meant by school curriculum. Instead, Parkay et al. (2014) define curriculum as everything a student experiences during an educational program to meet goals and objectives according to educational research, theory, practice, and the needs of society. Still others, including Beauchamp (1982) and Schwab (2013) would disagree with Parkay et al. (2014), stating that curriculum theory does nothing more than confuse the practical application of curriculum.

A theory, in general, is a set of presupposed laws and concepts of a phenomenon that can be further supported by empirical data (Beauchamp, 1982). So, if curriculum is the phenomenon,

then curriculum theory is the presupposition of constructs that make up the curriculum and are supported by data (Beauchamp, 1982; Parkay et al., 2014; Schwab, 2013). Speaking in general terms of curriculum theory brings theorists together from different disciplines (Beauchamp, 1982; Parkay et al., 2014), but it is the presuppositions underlying curriculum theory that are widely contested and keep debate over curriculum unresolved (Beauchamp, 1982; Deng, 2018; Lalor, 2016; Parkay et al., 2014; Schwab, 2013). These presuppositions deal with values, ethics, social structures, politics, knowledge, learning, and teaching, to name a few (Beauchamp, 1982; Lalor, 2016; Schwab, 2013), and these beliefs build the basic framework of contemporary curricula (Lalor, 2016) without ever talking about curriculum as its own science (Deng, 2018). The absence of curriculum science produces curriculum frameworks from various presuppositional perspectives (Deng, 2018), providing the answers of what to teach and how to teach (Beauchamp, 1982; Lalor, 2016; Parkay et al., 2014; Ruzgar, 2018) from outside the field of education (Deng, 2018; Garcia-Huidobro, 2018; Tahirsylaj, 2019). In his examination of published literature concerning the curriculum crisis, Tahirsylaj (2019) questions who has ownership of the crisis. Does curriculum belong to the field of education or does education and its curriculum belong to other fields like sociology, psychology, and the like (Tahirsylaj, 2019)?

Sociology, in particular, has claimed education as a significant and ubiquitous social public function and has made theoretical contributions to public education throughout the twentieth century (Tahirsylaj, 2019). The social science field has expanded curriculum development to include who to teach (S. J. Smith, 2020), and contributions from political (Deng, 2018) and cultural (Garcia-Huidobro, 2018) theories have pushed the boundaries of why to teach (Deng, 2018). Leading into the twenty-first century, a reconceptualization of curriculum in a postmodern turn has occupied curriculum theorizing (Garcia-Huidobro, 2018) as curriculum

studies have seemingly morphed into cultural studies (Deng, 2018), a change that Deng (2018) cites as a truly dying time for curriculum theory. Supporters of radicalized curriculum theory known as reconceptualization agree with Deng (2018) because reconceptualists believe the twenty-first century is a time for curriculum understanding, not curriculum theorizing.

Curricular Cultures

Twenty-first century educational theorists have stated that education does not exist in a vacuum (Benson, 2021; Biesta, 2020; Biesta & Hannam, 2020), and social forces continuously inform pedagogy, curriculum theory and development, and instructional practices (Garcia-Huidobro, 2018; Klauke, 2019; Parkay et al., 2014; S. J. Smith, 2020; C. Taylor, 2007; Valk et al., 2020). Gordon et al. (2019) present a philosophically based historical view of forces that have affected America's curriculum and instruction since 1650 but caution educators to realize that philosophies are cyclical and reappear during different ideological movements. Joseph (2021) concurs and states that external forces create cultures of curriculum that change according to the widely accepted ideologies of the epoch (P. B. Joseph, 2021; Klauke, 2019). Because educational philosophies create shared visions (P. B. Joseph, 2021) and educational aims (Gordon et al., 2019; P. B. Joseph, 2021), cultures of curriculum are directly tied to objectives of education and the primary curriculum presentation of what is most worth knowing (P. B. Joseph, 2021). Any current state of curriculum theory and development is in a symbiotic relationship with the current ideologies of social philosophy, educational philosophy, psychology, learning theories (Gordon et al., 2019; Jaeger, 1943, 1945), political theory, human studies, environmental studies, (Deng, 2018; Jaeger, 1943, 1945) and technological advancements (Deng, 2018).

Educational Philosophies. Considering educational curriculum in public and private institutions is heavily influenced by prevailing ideologies (Deng, 2018; Garcia-Huidobro, 2018; Gordon et al., 2019; P. B. Joseph, 2021; Klauke, 2019; Parkay et al., 2014; Ruzgar, 2018) to the point that some people groups and ideals will be marginalized (Miedema, 2017; Säfström, 2019; S. J. Smith, 2020) and historical events such as war and immigration also propel changes in ideology (Ruzgar, 2018; S. J. Smith, 2020), it is important to examine the dominant educational philosophies and their connection to global school curriculum theory and development (P. B. Joseph, 2021) during widely viewed historical changes (Gordon et al., 2019). For America, education from colonial times to independence and the establishment of public education for all children required the compilation of many voices and ideals as the era of Enlightenment changed the notion of divine truth to empirical truth (Baker, 2020; S. J. Smith, 2020). The late nineteenth and early twentieth century educational philosophies included Dewey's (1916) progressive education and an essentialist movement with nationalistic tendencies (Gordon et al., 2019; Parkay et al., 2014). While the Enlightenment stemmed from European philosophers, international education did not always experience the same tide of educational philosophies. Instead, two world wars fought on home and neighboring soil resulted in emergency curriculum inquiry and response (S. J. Smith, 2020), and poli-social forces informed curriculum. Within the educational philosophy of reconstructionism, schools were used to change societies (Gordon et al., 2019) as well as to impart knowledge and construct human ideals disassociated from traditional beliefs (Baker, 2020). Teacher colleges, laboratory schools (Null, 2020), and specialized teacher training (Ruzgar, 2018) helped inform the profession of teaching (Null, 2020) for teacher training programs through empirical research (Ruzgar, 2018) produced by prevailing educational philosophies (Gordon et al., 2019; Ruzgar, 2018).

American Education. The education of children during colonial times of the early Americas followed a European perennialist philosophical approach to curriculum theory and development (Calvert, 2018; S. J. Smith, 2020) as well as adhering to the principles of essentialism (Gordon et al., 2019). While schooling was localized and some colonies organized learning communities and private schools decades before other colonies (S. J. Smith, 2020), all colonial curriculum was based on the liberal arts tradition (Agresto, 2017; Calvert, 2018), reliant on an educational philosophy from the Greco-Roman world (Calvert, 2018; Gordon et al., 2019) and centered on Judeo-Christian values (S. J. Smith, 2020) that looked to God as the source of all truth (Calvert, 2018; S. J. Smith, 2020) while seeking to maintain traditional culture (Gordon et al., 2019). A liberal arts curriculum that taught from a mono-theistic perspective cultivated the hearts and minds of students (Calvert, 2018) through an intensive intellectual course of study in grammar, logic, and rhetoric (Gordon et al., 2019) known as the trivium (Hadzigeorgiou, 2019; M. Joseph, 2002; S. Little, 2021; Zovko & Dillon, 2018). The course of a perennialist education relied on the educational philosophies of Socrates (Zovko & Dillon, 2018), Plato, Aristotle, (Gordon et al., 2019), Augustine, and Aquinas to answer the primary questions of curriculum theory and development (S. J. Smith, 2020). From 1635 to 1824 (Gordon et al., 2019), the core content of colonial education was to understand truth and knowledge in relation to God and humanity (Calvert, 2018; S. J. Smith, 2020).

The establishment of American universities like Yale and Princeton presents the clearest view of colonial education (S. J. Smith, 2020). The curriculum of America's first colleges followed the design of the medieval university (Klauke, 2019; S. J. Smith, 2020) which had already undertaken years of lengthy debates on educational philosophy, curriculum theory and development, and implementation of a classical liberal arts curriculum (Klauke, 2019). The

writings of Hugh of St. Victor (1120s) and John of Salisbury (1159) present a finalized view on the significance of education carried out through the liberal arts, stating that the seven sciences first aligned by the ancients were the optimal curriculum for preparing the mind of the individual for understanding oneself and one's role in connection to society and natural laws (Klauke, 2019). However, Smith (2020) comments that the initial founding of American universities was also influenced by American sensibilities of "republicanism and Calvinism" (p. 60) and an inclination to man's usefulness, offering a blend of perennialist and essentialist philosophies (Gordon et al., 2019) even though Glanzer (2021) discusses colonial curriculum at Yale having prioritized man's training in virtue in relation to man being made in the image of God rather than the usual European curriculum which was based on Aristotle's (385) *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Philosophical ideologies, social forces, and wars continued to impact early American education, and curriculum theory and development changed to meet the needs of society (Parkay et al., 2014; S. J. Smith, 2020). The Enlightenment, the founding fathers, and the First and Second Great Awakening were instrumental in establishing America's common school movement for all children (S. J. Smith, 2020). Ideologies of moral (Glanzer, 2021) and civic education still supported the liberal arts tradition while the expansion of education challenged the premise of the common school movement to include Blacks and Native Americans (S. J. Smith, 2020). Europe's age of Enlightenment also expanded to America, questioning humanity's understanding of truth, reason, and intellect (Legg, 2020; Parkay et al., 2014; S. J. Smith, 2020). Essentialism grew as the primary educational philosophy of the common school movement (Gordon et al., 2019), and the Christian doctrine that underpinned American education diminished even though many prominent educational leaders like Benjamin Rush and Horace Mann advocated for the Christian Bible to be read in public schools as late as the mid-nineteenth

century (Calvert, 2018; S. J. Smith, 2020). Throughout America's expansion, industry exploded, population grew, the needs of society changed (S. J. Smith, 2020), and Darwinian and Marxist theories impacted education heading into the twentieth century (Calvert, 2018; Legg, 2020).

The twentieth century made prominent use of John Dewey's (1916) progressivism (S. J. Smith, 2020). The primary curricular question of what is most worth knowing found its answer in a pragmatic education centered on democratic ideals (S. J. Smith, 2020) and framed around the whole child (Gordon et al., 2019) instead of a moral and virtuous education centered on Judeo-Christian principles (Glanzer, 2021; S. J. Smith, 2020). Dewey's (1902) pedagogy placed the child as the starting point and developed curriculum using an inside-out design where the inside represents children who then experience education by reaching out from the mind (Gordon et al., 2019). Didactic learning changed to an action-oriented approach as the field of psychology provided learning theories (Bekh et al., 2021) that supported progressivist ideology (Gordon et al., 2019). Still, essentialism continued to provide the basic framing of curriculum development, and social forces of settling communities along with ideals of democracy, personal freedoms, and religion kept essentialism, progressivism, and perennialism in tight tension (Gordon et al., 2019; Parkay et al., 2014) as two world wars gave new importance to curricular questions (Sayers, 1948), and political (Hedges, 2019) secularization streamlined the framework of educational institutions in America (Glanzer, 2021) and abroad (Kern, 2021).

Global Education. Prior to the two world wars, the secularization of public education already had a foothold in some European countries because of historical events like the 1789 Revolution in France (Hedges, 2019) and the growth of social phenomenon like humanism which began during the Renaissance (Little, K. C., 2021; Zovko & Dillon, 2018). Even as the separation of church and state was adopted across the continents, countries such as Germany and

Finland embraced a Christian-nationalist approach to education and emphasized character development through morality and ethics, resembling a perennial philosophy based on Christian truths (S. J. Smith, 2020). Historically throughout Europe, general knowledge was learned through a liberal arts and *humanitas* curriculum (McMullan, 2021; Zovko & Dillon, 2018) that contributed to a deeper understanding of ways to think about knowledge, truth, and language, and content areas emerged for the advancement of learning (McMullan, 2021).

During the first half of the twentieth century, two world wars enormously impacted international education (S. J. Smith, 2020) but there is little consensus among researchers when educational philosophies began to fail (Bekh et al., 2021). The process of education was disrupted as children from declared countries had to train to fight or evacuate while other countries remained neutral and felt little educational impact (S. J. Smith, 2020). Some countries housed refugees, and additional resources were required to educate the influx of the neighboring nations' children (S. J. Smith, 2020). Primary ideologies of wartime created social forces that required immediate responses to primary curricular questions (S. J. Smith, 2020) of what to teach and how to teach (Beauchamp, 1982; Lalor, 2016; Parkay et al., 2014; Ruzgar, 2018; S. J. Smith, 2020) while having a long-term effect on technological and scientific knowledge (Ruzgar, 2018). Educational philosophy shifted from its traditional core, and the curriculum field sought answers from scientists (Ruzgar, 2018) of behaviorism and psychology (Bekh et al., 2021).

Teacher Education. Teacher education around the globe followed the scientific and technological pacing of the world wars when answering the bigger questions of curricula (Ruzgar, 2018) and separation of church and state schools further secularized teacher training programs (Bekh et al., 2021). Hedges (2019) compares the nuances of teacher training in France with the *laïcité* model of freedom from religion to America's freedom of religion concept.

Teacher Colleges like Columbia in New York City with its newly designed liberal arts teacher training courses were immediately dismantled and replaced with teacher training for the “new science” (Ruzgar, 2018). A focus on the “new science” (Ruzgar, 2018) contributed to the curriculum content while behavioral, constructivist, and cognitive learning theories contributed to curriculum methodology (Schunk, 2020; Setran & Wilhoit, 2020). University enrollment in America rapidly expanded at the same time because of the G. I. Bill, and American ideals changed because of recent international experiences, leading to educational reform discussions from government to the local levels (Null, 2020; S. J. Smith, 2020).

American ideals prior to World War II produced competing perspectives on teacher training (Null, 2020) and education in general (Null, 2020; S. J. Smith, 2020). Teacher colleges like Columbia (Ruzgar, 2018), once called normal schools, had been developed for the sole purpose of training teachers (Null, 2020; S. J. Smith, 2020) based on the patterns of teacher training schools in France and teacher training seminaries in Germany to deliver curricula through a blended form with moral and intellectual imperatives (Null, 2020). At the same time, laboratory schools in education like the one at the University of Chicago (Null, 2020; Ruzgar, 2018) developed with different aims for teacher training. The post-war era prevailing perspectives of teacher training incorporated empirical research (Gordon et al., 2019) with forms of curriculum inquiry including reconceptualization (S. J. Smith, 2020) and post-modernism (Garcia-Huidobro, 2018) leading to Schwab’s (2013) initial recognition in 1969 of the crisis in the field of educational curriculum (Deng, 2018; Ruzgar, 2018; Schwab, 2013; Tahirsylaj, 2019).

Postmodernism

Hicks (2019) states that education is created and challenged more by philosophy than politics. In the journal *Postmodern Openings*, Bekh et al. (2021) propose that education is a

person's way into a shared life with others, but how can people share life when the way they think about life, their philosophy, is entirely without commonality? Gruenwald (2016) recognizes that sharing life with others relies on normative standards. Postmodernism's twentieth century contribution to philosophy, and thus, education (Hicks, 2019) has been the absence of truth, normative standards, and an educational ideal (Bekh et al., 2021; Gruenwald, 2016; Hicks, 2019). Ironically, according to Veith (1994), postmodernism's contribution is the absence of agreeable truth and normative standards as the educational ideal. Without truth or, at most, relative truth (Veith, 1994), what is knowledge?

Like Francis Bacon (1595), postmodernism answers that knowledge is power (Hicks, 2019), and all normative standards have been deconstructed to determine the relationship of power that lies beneath (Muller & Young, 2019; Setran & Wilhoit, 2020). Muller and Young's (2019) conceptual review of powerful knowledge and knowledge of the powerful attempts to expand the criteria of both concepts to offer substance to twenty-first century curriculum theory. Peters et al. (2022) provides a comprehensive review of power theory in relation to educational philosophy, stating that postmodern deconstruction stems from critical theory (Peters et al., 2022). Critical pedagogy (Gray, 2021) aligns with critical theory to reduce all principles of truth to power relationships, providing epistemological presuppositions for curriculum theory and the shaping of curriculum culture in 21st-century global education (Garcia-Huidobro, 2018). According to Zhang (2023), not all critical theory relies on the relative and subjective ideas of postmodernism and concepts of power when he identifies critical realism as holding an objective ontology based on the research of Archer et al. (2004) and Smith (2010).

Secularization

Current research recognizes that the Enlightenment thinkers were not as anti-religious as once believed (Scimecca, 2019). Nonetheless, scientific truth usurped Divine truth while scientific realism became the epistemological foundation of the modern era's pedagogical systems (Balukh et al., 2022; Veith, 1994). Philosophers from the East and West focused on naturalism's functional forms and reduced knowledge down to cause-and-effect relationships (Balukh et al., 2022). Scientific organizational patterns minimalized God in education and made man the top reasoner of universal values (Balukh et al., 2022). Smith (2020) discusses the Deism of America's founding fathers that separated God from man because Deists believed God was not involved in the day-to-day experiences of men's lives. Balukh et al.'s (2022) research discusses how the separation of church and state in former soviet states created two great homelands for children and later, aggressive secularization established anti-values as truth throughout eastern Europe while postmodernism contributed to further marginalizing Christian education.

Gowan and Miner (2021) affirm similar marginalization of Christian education in Australia. In their case study into staff perceptions of student formation at Excelsia College, Gowan and Miner (2021) refer to secularization as rising and the Christian student market as diminishing. To counter these effects, Excelsia College has implemented curriculum to aid professors in facilitating faith in the classroom and develop mentorships with students beyond the classroom. The curriculum encourages Christian educators to take part in students' spiritual development and build the students' belongingness to community. Although the study found the wholistic model of integration of faith and learning from a Christian worldview helped create supportive staff perceptions on student formation in relation to the school's mission statement,

Gowan and Miner's (2021) case study revealed two difficulties for an international school of higher education: Students whose first language is other than the host nation's language create a barrier for student formation within the classroom, and a plurality model of curriculum is needed to foster Christian spiritual formation in an international setting.

In the Netherlands, pluralism has also challenged religious and non-religious school environments as religious diversity has challenged secular ideology (Bertram-Troost et al., 2018). Bertram-Troost et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative study at eight participating Protestant-affiliated higher education institutions to describe professor recommendations for dealing with challenges and tensions created by differing worldviews within the classroom. Because their research concerned diversity of personal beliefs, Bertram-Troost et al. (2018) were not surprised to find diverse recommendations. One respondent recommended for the formal and lived worldview of the institution to be the same while another felt respect for one's privacy was needed. These recommendations expose underlying tensions in domains of liturgical practices, biblical curriculum, school identity, and organizational decisions that illuminate the complexity of secular and religious education during globalization in the twenty-first century (Bertram-Troost et al., 2018).

Consequently, Balukh et al. (2022) examine the sources of pedagogy for the education and upbringing of the twenty-first century student and determine that pedagogy is at a crucial point. Their research analysis reveals that secularism treats life as if the world is temporary, and education in a secular paradigm ignores the spiritual realm and responds with curriculum based only on the observable. They find religious education approaches life as multi-dimensional with a focus on this life and the afterlife. Balukh et al.'s (2022) recommendation is a third source which they call Christocentric built on earlier research of Bekh et al. (2021), which treats all of

life as biblical eschatology (Balukh et al., 2022). They reference dozens of research articles that call for a moral-spiritual curriculum to be instituted during advanced globalization but that continue to treat Christianity superficially and insincerely. The solution, according to Balukh et al. (2022), is not worldview or religious education for a post-secularized world, but a Christocentric education worked out as bible eschatology.

Worldview or Religious Education

Worldview is a commonly used concept employed throughout scholarly research to indicate the way one perceives the world (Cooling, 2020; Gardner et al., 2017; Young, 2023), and worldview is impacted by overarching ideologies like postmodernism or secularization and peripheral ways of being within culture as community and individualization (Potgieter & van der Walt, 2014; Valk et al., 2020). van der Kooij et al.'s (2017) research supports this view, stating that worldview is not only separated by secular and religious paradigms but also by organizational and personal ways of being. They contend trending educational research sometimes neglects to consider organizational or personal worldviews within the scope of religious education (van der Kooij et al., 2017).

As previously reviewed, presuppositions underlying curriculum can be based on worldviews (Deng, 2018; Parkay et al., 2014) within organizational structures (van der Kooij et al., 2017). The answers to primary curriculum questions have been reconceptualized (Garcia-Huidobro, 2018) in connection with cultural studies (Deng, 2018) that stem from worldviews (van der Kooij et al., 2017). Empirically, educational researchers have examined sweeping ideological movements (Gordon et al., 2019; P. B. Joseph, 2021; S. J. Smith, 2020) and transforming worldviews to understand how organizational systems (van der Kooij et al., 2017) such as private or state schools (Deng, 2018; Garcia-Huidobro, 2018; Gordon et al., 2019; P. B.

Joseph, 2021; Klauke, 2019; Parkay et al., 2014; Ruzgar, 2018) and higher education institutions (Gardner, 2019; Ruzgar, 2018) have impacted curriculum studies (Deng, 2018; Garcia-Huidobro, 2018; Gardner, 2019; Gordon et al., 2019; P. B. Joseph, 2021; Klauke, 2019; Parkay et al., 2014; Ruzgar, 2018; van der Kooij et al., 2017). Furthermore, Gardner et al. (2017) and Ruzgar (2018) have directly connected worldview to influencing the hearts and minds of students around the globe.

Teacher Training

Because of teacher influence through their personal ways of perceiving the world (Gardner et al., 2017; Ruzgar, 2018), teacher training in and understanding of worldview has been openly discussed and theorized by both European and American educational scholars for several decades (Cooling, 2020). However, worldview has proven difficult to define (van der Kooij et al., 2017) and understand (Hannam, 2020) as curriculum itself (Beauchamp, 1982; Parkay et al., 2014). Naugle (2002) provided a thorough conceptual analysis of worldview with his publication in 2002, but since September 11th, 2001, the perception and approach to religious worldviews has changed (Hannam, 2020; Jackson & O'Grady, 2019; Schultz & Swezey, 2013) and is now overly politicized (Hannam, 2020). While constitutional governments have recognized a value in training teachers in worldview and religion (Biesta & Hannam, 2020; Hannam, 2020), totalitarian governments have not (Dancák, 2021). International educational philosophies and curriculum theory can no longer ignore the spiritual aspect of individuals (Biesta, 2020; Biesta & Hannam, 2020; Cooling, 2020) when considering what kind of world one wants to inhabit (P. B. Joseph, 2021) during this epoch of rapid globalization and technological advancement (Deng, 2021).

Since September 11th, 2001, the Council of Europe, comprised of 47 member states, has strengthened their commitment to religious and intercultural education while further discerning appropriate language when teaching about religion as a “cultural fact” (Jackson & O’Grady, 2019). Three teacher training initiatives developed over the next decade including a teacher handbook, a research center, and *Signposts*, a teacher training module, which have been criticized for underpinnings of secular humanism and marginalizing religions holding truth claims (Jackson & O’Grady, 2019). Jackson and O’Grady (2019) provide a content analysis response to these criticisms. Both Joseph (2021) and Biesta (2020) ask the question what educational leaders and teachers are educating for, and Jackson and O’Grady (2019) reply with the “four pillars of education outlined in the UNESCO’s (1996) Delors Report – learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be” (p. 255). Jackson and O’Grady’s (2019) response is not supported by Bakker and ter Avest (2019) who state that teacher training in religious education (RE) in the Netherlands, a member nation of the Council of Europe, is overly focused on the lack of knowledge students hold on religious traditions.

Academic literature on worldview throughout Europe remains contentious as to the hierarchical understanding of worldview and religion (Cooling, 2020). Even with the final report of The Commission on Religious Education (CoRE) (2018), scholarly debates in academic journals continue to question which content area will hold the primary position (Cooling, 2020; van der Kooij et al., 2017). A current call for further research concerns whether teachers are ultimately responsible for the educational telos of religion or worldview in a pluralistic society (Cooling, 2020; van der Kooij et al., 2017), and how this answer impacts teacher training around the globe (Gardner et al., 2017; Potgieter & van der Walt, 2014).

With advancing technologies and the potential for transformative digital curriculums (Choppin & Borys, 2017), teacher training programs of democratic nations must address the research and development of a worldview curriculum often termed worldview or religious literacy (Gardner et al., 2017). Gardner et al. (2017) postulate that shortcomings of worldview literacy in America and Canada are linked to the lack of knowledgeable teachers because teacher training programs in North America are not adequately preparing teachers “to discuss and teach about religion in the context of K-12 education” (p. 244). Null’s (2020) research affirms this claim and calls for a commitment from universities to provide “high quality teacher education” (p. 24) that serves the public good. Biesta and Hannam (2020) raise the concerns of how unreligious teachers can teach religion from the outside with merit when the spiritual aspect of one’s personhood is lived from the inside. Biesta and Hannam’s (2020) compilation of articles on religious education has clarified a crucial point in that worldview training counters social forces that create curriculum cultures. Worldview literature supports a more integrated approach to educating future teachers and in turn, future students for living peaceably in a pluralistic world (Gowan & Miner, 2021) than what currently exists in the dominant ideologies creating separate cultures of curriculum (P. B. Joseph, 2021).

Christian Education

In a series of lectures, two key scholars, Gaebelein (1954) and Sayers (1948), responded to the dominant ideologies (Squires, 2019; Horner, 2020) fragmenting society (Baker, 2020; Scimecca, 2019) seventy years ago. The educational philosophies of essentialism and progressivism had already marginalized a liberal arts curriculum intent on educating the whole person (Gray, 2021), and Sayers (1948) addressed this decline of liberal education with her observation of schools producing doers and not thinkers. Sayers’s essay “The Lost Tools of

Learning” (1948) clearly demonstrates how limiting a liberal arts tradition in England’s schools led to a decline in critical thinking and language skills. Noll (1994) reiterated Sayers’s concern for America when he claimed, “The scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind” (p. 1). Also, the poli-social ideals of postmodernism and secularization continued to marginalize the spiritual self (Balukh et al., 2022). In turn, Gaebelein (1954) addressed Christian educators on the merits of the integration of faith and learning (Setran & Wilhoit, 2020). The separation of church and state based on the French notion of *laïcité* (Hedges, 2019; Jackson & O’Grady, 2019) had created a dichotomous sense of being throughout western education (J. Miller, 2020), separating the hearts and minds of students in North America and Europe (Calvert, 2018; J. Miller, 2020).

Speaking at Stony Brook School for Boys, Christian educational theorist Gaebelein (1954) (Setran & Wilhoit, 2020) drew attention to the difficulty of integrating Christian faith with learning, not only for students but also for faculty members who have specific views on pedagogy and instructional practices (Kim, 2020). Horner’s (2020) research on integration of faith and learning through Bible courses offered at 36 Council on Educational Standards and Accountability (CESA) schools demonstrates the complex relationship between faith and learning for the 21st-century student. Further complications for integrating Christian faith with learning exist in the definition of the concept (Horner, 2020; Kim, 2020), in the semiotics of interpretation (Strand & Legg, 2019) mirroring the confusion of the previously reviewed concepts of curriculum (Beauchamp, 1982; Parkay et al., 2014) and worldview (Hannam, 2020; van der Kooij et al., 2017).

For Christian education, the goal should be to lessen the confusion by creating a common language that addresses the whole person (Gowan & Miner, 2021). Rather than worldview, some

Christian educationists prefer to discuss the imaginary or social imaginary based on C. Taylor's (2007) *A Secular Age* (Green, 2021), drawing to mind how secularization has created a dichotomous way of being and the way a spiritual self may reconcile this dichotomy (Calvert, 2018; J. Miller, 2020; C. Taylor, 2007; Veith, 1994). Whether worldview or social imaginary, Christian educational institutions hold educational philosophies and enact mission statements focused on the spiritual formation of the student (Miller & Beazley, 2018; Setran & Wilhoit, 2020; Young, 2023), and administrators who invest in curriculum and professional development desire to measure the effects in relation to organizational ideologies (Ruzgar, 2018).

Biblical Worldview Measurement in Christian Education. Christian education claims that students receive an education from a biblical worldview (Beech, 2019). The conceptual layers of a biblical worldview have been applied to pedagogy in Christian education and used to create mission statements, develop curriculum, write objectives, and enact educational aims without also implementing the necessary measurements to assess biblical worldview development (Schultz & Swezey, 2013; D. I. Smith, 2018). Many schools use Christian curriculum like ABEKA or Bob Jones while offering little more than Christian curriculum in the lifeworld of a secular classroom, or worse, from a secular worldview (Horner, 2020).

Currently, the formal measurements for biblical worldview discussed in the academic literature include the Religious World Views Scale (RWV), the PEERS test, the Creation Worldview Test (CWT), and the Three-Dimensional Concept of Worldview (TDC) (Deckard et al., 2003; Deckard & Sobko, 1998; Dernlan, 2018; Schultz & Swezey, 2013). Due to the dynamic definition of biblical worldview and different religious educational objectives, creating a comprehensive biblical worldview instrument has proven problematic (Deckard & Sobko, 1998; Dernlan, 2018; Schultz & Swezey, 2013).

The Nehemiah Institute (2013) created the PEERS measurement as a standardized biblical worldview test covering five constructs of a student's belief system: Politics, Economics, Education, Religion, and Social Issues (Deckard & Sobko, 1998; Dernlan, 2018). The CWT which correlates .79 with the Nehemiah Institute's (2013) PEERS test measures a biblical worldview based on young earth or old earth theories related to creation according to the Bible and evolution according to Darwin, respectively (Deckard et al., 2003). The RWV test developed by McLean in 1952 rates participants on a spectrum moving from naturalist to Orthodoxy but offers no reliability or validity information (Deckard & Sobko, 1998). Based on reliability and validity statistics for the Likert scale questionnaires, current Christian educational researchers are developing their own instruments to evaluate private school objectives (Dernlan, 2018; Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020). Schultz and Swezey (2013) developed a three-dimensional concept of worldview to provide language for measuring worldview in the areas of propositions, behaviors, and heart-orientations that was further studied by Morales (2013) in a doctoral dissertation.

Christian Teachers' Biblical Worldview. Minimal research currently exists on how best to train Christian teachers to teach from a BW (Prior, 2021). Factors that complicate this research include Christian pre-service teachers' attendance at secular institutions (Lawrence, 2007) and a lack of support systems for biblical worldview training within school systems (Beech, 2019; Prior, 2021). While post-secondary educational institutions were once the pinnacle of Christian scholarship in the United States, their current position after decades of modernity and post-modernity is the seat of high secularism (Green, 2021; Lawrence, 2007). Because many Christian teachers attend secular institutions, they are not in the position to be trained in teaching from a biblical worldview perspective (Lawrence, 2007). Even during the growth of worldview teaching positions like Canterbury University's "Professor of Religions and Worldviews"

posting (Flanagan, 2020, p. 332), worldview education is decreasing globally, and Gardner et al. (2017) cite an urgent need to address secular and worldview literacy through teacher preparation courses in worldview training.

Classical Christian Education's Answer to 21st-Century Crises

Academic scholars, researchers, and practitioners have published extensively on many crises facing twenty-first century religious education and spiritual formation during this time of advanced globalization (Bekh et al., 2021; Biesta, 2020; Cooling, 2020; Deng, 2018; Garcia-Huidobro, 2018; Gardner et al., 2017; Horner, 2020; Miedema, 2017; Ruzgar, 2018; Säfström, 2019; S. J. Smith, 2020; Tahirsylaj, 2019). The current curriculum crisis is based on presuppositions that underpin curriculum theory (Beauchamp, 1982; Horner, 2020; Lalor, 2016; Schwab, 2013) and the hermeneutical semiotics of curriculum (Deng, 2018; Ruzgar, 2018; Tahirsylaj, 2019). Marginalizing educational philosophies (Miedema, 2017; Säfström, 2019; S. J. Smith, 2020) have limited the shared lifeworld available to diverse cultures brought together through external political and social forces (Ruzgar, 2018; S. J. Smith, 2020) and technology advancement, and higher education teacher training programs have been unable to provide a quality response to contemporary crises (Aada, 2020; Hedges, 2019; Null, 2020).

Even though social forces from the Enlightenment to secularization have replaced divine truth with scientific truth (Baker, 2020; Calvert, 2018) and the last seventy years of postmodernism has availed relative truth as the truth (Veith, 1994) leading to fragmented social communities and isolation (Kern, 2021; O'Callaghan, 2017; C. Taylor, 2007), Christians around the world recognize Jesus Christ as the way, the truth, and the light (*ESV*, 2001/2016, John 14:6). How Christians respond to the ontology of God's providence depends on divine grace (Balukh et al., 2022; *ESV*, 2 Cor 9:8, 2001/2016; Nelson, 2020) and social constructs that promote personal

ways of being like culture or community (Potgieter & van der Walt, 2014; Valk et al., 2020; van der Kooij et al., 2017).

Wilson (1991) and other educational leaders accepted Sayers's (1948) challenge to recover the classical model of education (Haralson, 2020), and in the early 1980s, American CCE developed to transform America's Christian culture through an intentional educational community (Wilson, 1991). Classical Christian schools, homeschools, and co-ops opened around the country to enact a *paideia/humanitas* approach to teaching, learning, and living that consisted of layers of curriculum and the liberal arts taught holistically and developmentally in appropriate stages (Dermlan, 2018; Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020; Klauke, 2019; Squires, 2019; Vaughan, 2019; Wilson, 1991). The pedagogical aims of CCE are many, but they are all aiming for the same place – the *paideia* of the Lord (Wilson, 2019).

The Paideia Ideal

The formal educational institutes of ancient Greece were the first organizational systems to contemplate the culture of the time and the culture they would like to become (Hadzigeorgiou, 2019; Klauke, 2019). The ancient Greeks referred to this thinking as *paideia* (Jaeger, 1945), and they believed culture could be created by educating man to his highest form (Jaeger, 1945; van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021). Whether man's form was transformed through the learning of knowledge, virtue, or useful skills was never settled (Hadzigeorgiou, 2019). Today, the educational system of American CCE recognizes the Greek *paideia* ideal as the way to transform Christian culture (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020) from its marginalized and fragmented state (Kern, 2021; O'Callaghan, 2017) to one body with many members (ESV, 2001/2016; Romans 12:4-5; Wilson, 2019), providing a response to van der Walt and Oosthuizen's (2021) question of Christian *paideia* as a possible pedagogical aim for twenty-first century Christian education.

van der Walt and Oosthuizen's (2021) question maintains its validity because the *paideia* ideal emerged during a time of high paganism with the first philosophers of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Isocrates (Jaeger, 1943, 1945). While Plato held the highest form of man to include the spiritual (van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021), Aristotle placed reason as the pinnacle of the human form, and Isocrates ideal form focused on man's usefulness in solving society's problems (Alt & Eberly, 2019; van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021). However, according to Jaeger (1945), the Greek philosophers all agreed that education was connected to and supported by one universal law. In Jaeger's (1961) *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia*, he demonstrates how one universal law of Greek *paideia* enabled those living at the time of Christ to make meaning of His testimony and spread the Gospel news to others. In Jaeger's (1943, 1945, 1986) tri-volume series, he examines the nuances of *paideia* that are not available to the English language through translation. For the Greeks, *paideia* transformed their mindset, their *ethos* from which developed their meaning-making of the world (Jaeger, 1943, 1945, 1961, 1986; Turley, 2014).

Christian Paideia. For CCE, the pedagogical aim of Christian *paideia* transforms the way Christian students make meaning of the world (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020; Turley, 2014). Goodwin and Sikkink's (2020) the "Good Soil" report defines the concept of *paideia* as more than pedagogy or curriculum methodology but as the *ethos* of a school's culture to raise children holistically under the Lord's authority. For their comparative study, Goodwin and Sikkink (2020) identified seven life outcomes related to the pedagogical aims of CCE member schools of ACCS and conducted a survey of 300 participants who graduated from these schools. Of the seven life outcomes, four reflect an observable pedagogical aim of *paideia*: outlook on life, Christian practices, Christian life, and influences in community. Across the four life outcomes (p. 4), ACCS schools scored well above the median and higher than the other secular or religious

school groups including homeschools, evangelical schools, Catholic schools, private preparatory schools, and public schools (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020). Dernlan's (2018) quantitative study (Appendix M) reinforces CCE schools' transformational ability to enculturate a Christian *paideia* throughout America. While measuring spiritual formation only constitutes one part of Christian *paideia*, Dernlan's (2018) research substantiates the "Good Soil" report (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020) because spiritual formation and Christian *paideia* are interrelational and sometimes used interchangeably in academic literature (van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021).

Holistic Education. The dynamic and abstract concept of *paideia* is a way of educating the whole person (Alt & Eberly, 2019; Jaeger, 1943, 1945; van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021; Zovko & Dillon, 2018). A holistic education extends beyond the pragmatic and utilitarian forms of progressive education and envelopes the whole meaning of being human (Gowan & Miner, 2021; Gruenwald, 2016; Miedema, 2017). Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Isocrates were teachers who operationalized *paideia* in their instructional environments and considered the making of thoughtfully minded people with civil and community awareness as educational objectives (Alt & Eberly, 2019; Jaeger, 1943, 1945; Klauke, 2019; van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021). The narrative of Greek culture moved toward a common conclusion, and all educated citizens carried an awareness of the end of the story (Dancák, 2021; Doner, 2018; Säfström, 2019; Wilson, 2019).

In ancient Greece, *paideia* created a deep love for reason and intellect (Jaeger, 1943, 1945). In Roman times, *paideia* was also applied with the same intentions as the Greeks and in turn, created what the Romans determined was the whole meaning of being human, a deep love of militaristic order (van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021). In addition, Antoniazzi (2019) points out that the Romans interpreted *paideia* to mean a literary and rhetorical education that was the

only available instrument able to cross the same social barriers created by the military order. Citizens needed to learn how to be citizens so they could operate as citizens within a community. The community succeeded or failed together (Jaeger, 1945).

van der Walt & Oosthuizen (2021) point out this dynamic and abstract term *paideia* is used only six times in the Bible and is most often interpreted as education or child-rearing. CCE's use of Christian *paideia* as a pedagogical aim does not interpret a single meaning of *paideia* but explores the extended meanings in every area of life to understand Paul's exhortation in Ephesians 6:4 when he commands fathers to bring up their children in the *paideia* of the Lord (ESV, 2001/2016; Wilson, 2019). Wilson (2019) explains that *paideia* includes formal education, but the contemporary understanding of education is only a subset of Greek *paideia*, meaning the Greeks of Antiquity had a much broader understanding of education than what is denoted by an English translation. Biesta (2020) demonstrates a similar phenomenon in German. The German "‘ausbildung,’ ‘bildung,’ and ‘erziehung’" (p. 11) have three precise meanings for education in the original language but only one translation in English. To utterly understand Paul's command to the Ephesians and to all Christian parents since then, one would need a comprehensive understanding of the Greco-Roman world (Jaegar 1943, 1945), including the time of Christ (Jaegar, 1961). To understand Christian *paideia* would be to understand a holistic education as living toward, within, and about the life of Christ (Jaegar, 1943, 1945, 1961; Wilson, 2019). In other words, to educate in search of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful with Christ and His word the standard (Turley, 2014).

Spiritual Formation. Spiritual formation is an essential element within Christian *paideia* and therefore, an important variable in CCE research. Dernlan's (2018) quantitative study on CCE schools investigates the relationship between instructional methods (modern vs classical)

and spiritual formation of students attending both Christian education and CCE schools as surveyed in the 4th, 8th, and 12th grades. According to Dernlan (2018), operational spiritual formation includes three factors: knowledge, action, and belief. The results revealed an increase in the desire to live as a Christian as students grew within a CCE environment and a decrease in wanting to live as a Christian as students developed within a non-classical Christian environment. Dernlan's (2018) results demonstrate how the pedagogical aim of Christian *paideia* implemented through a classical education could encourage spiritual formation and lifelong Christian *paideia* (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020).

Comparable results of living life as a Christian were revealed by Goodwin and Sikkink (2020) where 300 ACCS alumni ages 24 – 42 from CCE member schools scored three times more likely to live out their faith when compared to homeschool, evangelical, Catholic, private schools, and public-school sectors (Appendix M). While different data were collected to study spiritual formation, both studies show a positive influence on spiritual formation when intentionally employing a classical curriculum centered on the Word of God (Dernlan, 2018; Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020). As teachers at Highlands Latin School, Miller and Beazley (2018) support the positive correlation between classical Christian education and spiritual formation.

The Classical Education

Because the term classical is another dynamic and abstract concept with its meaning making connected to a distant historical era (Jaegar, 1945; Turley, 2014), it is necessary to review the literature regarding classical curricula specific to today's CCE (Agresto, 2017; Turley, 2014). Educational researchers who study formal classical curriculum inquiry leverage common terms throughout the literature such as humanities (van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021), liberal arts (Agresto, 2017; Klauke, 2019), liberal education (Hicks, 2019), rhetorical education

(Antoniuzzi, 2019), virtue education (S. Little, 2021), and the *Paideia* Program, which includes the great books curriculum of Western Civilization (Adler, 1984), but not all common terms broadly align with American CCE or specifically align with a pedagogical aim of Christian *paideia*. Joseph (2021) explains that curriculum orientations are synonymous with curriculum culture. As formal classical education is operationalized (Lalor, 2016) through separate sub-cultures (P. B. Joseph, 2021), the content and purpose may not be truly classical with the same original intention (Turley, 2014) as initially implemented through the Greek *paideia* ideal (Jaeger, 1943, 1945, 1986).

Classical Christian Pedagogical Aim. The transcendental element of *paideia* is necessary for classical Christian education (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020; Jaeger, 1943, 1945, 1986; Turley, 2014; Wilson, 2019) in American CCE schools (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020; Turley, 2014; Wilson, 2019), but *paideia* has transcended itself beyond Plato’s original form (Turley, 2014; Wilson, 2019). Since the incarnation of Christ (Turley, 2014; van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021), man has been given the pinnacle of transformation for the body, mind, and soul (Jaeger, 1961). Christian *paideia* became the pedagogical aim for the transformation of Christian culture millennia ago (Jaeger, 1943, 1945, 1961; Turley, 2014; Wilson, 2019) as research into the writings of ancient Christian literature has demonstrated with writings from the patriarchal fathers (da Silva, 2020; Edwards, 2021; Rhodes, 2019), and Christian *paideia* is supported by Paul’s letter to the Ephesians when he commands Christians to bring their children up “in the *paideia* of the Lord” (ESV, 2001/2016, Ephesians 6:4).

Classical Christian Curriculum and Instruction. The sequential framework of classical education for K-12th grade CCE schools is the trivium, which includes the stages of grammar, dialectic, sometimes called logic, and rhetoric (Sayers, 1948; Vaughan, 2019; Wilson,

1991). Academic literature covering the liberal arts assumes the use of the trivium although that is not always the case (Ruzgar, 2018). In Ruzgar's (2018) interview with Ian Westbury, Westbury points out that the liberal arts are not synonymous in design or purpose with general liberal education even though the terms have been used interchangeably. The trivium systematically advances a student's education according to developmental stages (Sayers, 1948; Wilson, 1991), like Piaget's (1954) theory of development (Vaughan, 2019), for appropriate growth in character (S. Little, 2021) and the reasoning ability of the mind (Ruzgar, 2018). Interdisciplinary knowledge, skills, and training in virtue are purposefully sequenced within and throughout the trivium (S. Little, 2021; Turley, 2009).

Depending on the stage of the trivium, different instructional methods are employed (S. Little, 2021). In the grammar stage, the stage when children enjoy repetition (Sayers, 1948; Wilson, 1991), the pedagogue's practice includes imitation and concept building (S. Little, 2021). During the later years of logic and rhetoric, the pedagogue crafts Socratic dialogue and *disputatio* (S. Little, 2021), cultivating the students' minds so they can form judgments (Zovko & Dillon, 2018). Akinde's (2015) study established that Socratic dialogue also encourages creativity, the highest level of Bloom's revised taxonomy. Throughout every stage of the trivium, literature and stories with heroes engaged in virtuous actions (Jaeger, 1943, 1945; S. Little, 2021; Turley, 2014) are chosen as exemplars of the true, the good, and the beautiful (Jaeger, 1943, 1945; Turley, 2014), enculturating children in the *paideia* of the Lord (Turley, 2014; Wilson, 2019).

Joseph (2021) speaks about cultures of curriculum and Mezirow (2009) writes about frames of references in TLT. Joseph (2021) and Mezirow (2009) share common ideas connected to their theories including the intentionality of educational aims and the deliberate action of

consciousness raising that transform students' ways of perceiving the world (P. B. Joseph, 2021; Mezirow, 1978, 2000, 2009). American CCE encapsulates this same ideology but for a different purpose (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020; Vaughan, 2019; Wilson, 2019). The purpose is not utilitarian or economical like progressive education (S. J. Smith, 2020), and it is not social or political like twenty-first century education (Baker, 2020; Gordon et al., 2019; Tahirsylaj, 2019), although those purposes are aided by CCE (Hicks, 2019). CCE is a liberal education for the freeing of students' minds of all earthly systems and constraints (Agresto, 2017; Hicks, 2019) in recognition of the *paideia* of the Lord (Turley, 2014; Wilson, 2019). However, the question remains: After being raised in a postmodern era and being educated in secular institutions, how can CCE teachers transform their frames of references to consider the pedagogical aim of Christian *paideia* when making curricular decisions in the lifeworld of an online global classroom?

Summary

Mezirow et al.'s (1978) TLT functions as the theoretical framework for this qualitative study. TLT aided in understanding (Mezirow, 2009) the transformative nature of CCE's pedagogical aim of Christian *paideia* (Dernlan, 2018; Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020; Turley, 2009, 2014; Wilson, 2019) and the intentional or unintentional delivery of the formal and operational curriculum (P. B. Joseph, 2021; Lator, 2016) of the trivium (Dernlan, 2018; S. Little, 2021; Sayers, 1948; Turley, 2014; Vaughan, 2019; Wilson, 1991) to reveal multiple frames of references that impact worldview (Gardner et al., 2017). In this time of advanced globalization (Deng, 2018), educational philosophies are heavily impacted by postmodernism (Bekh et al., 2021; Hicks, 2019; Veith, 1994) and secularization, limiting the development of curriculum theory (Garcia-Huidobro, 2018) and holding influence over CCE classroom teachers' frames of

reference (Aboytes & Barth, 2020; Guthrie, 2019; Naugle, 2002). CR supports the framing of the study of CCE teachers understanding of Christian *paideia* when making curriculum decisions (Archer et al., 2004; C. Smith, 2010; Zhang, 2023) within a liberal arts education (Mackey, 2020; Turley, 2009, 2014) and through the trivium (M. Joseph, 2002; S. Little, 2021), so the researcher could observe, gather, and reflect on data (van Manen, 2016) while recognizing that absolute truth exists beyond the physical realm in the presence of God and within the physical realm through common and divine grace (*ESV*, 2 Cor 9:8, 2001/2016; Naugle, 2002; Nelson, 2020; Trentham, 2019a, 2019b).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 2016) is to discover the essence of Christian *paideia* for career classical Christian (CC) educators who make daily curricular decisions at a CC online academy that serves a 2-12 grade international student body. This chapter details the hermeneutic phenomenological research design according to van Manen (2016) and demonstrates the alignment of research methodology with the intention of the study. The central research question and sub-questions are stated, and the participants and setting of the study are described. A critical piece of any phenomenological research design is the position of the researcher (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; van Manen, 2016), and researcher positionality is explained in the following pages. Three rigorous data collection plans are laid out along with their corresponding analysis and a final synthesis. Chapter Three ends with a section on trustworthiness and a final summary of the research methodology.

Research Design

When a researcher desires to investigate the personal experiences of practitioners, such as CC teachers' lived experiences of Christian *paideia* when planning and delivering online instruction, a qualitative method can be used to explore the essence of the lived experience (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014, 2016). While some qualitative research methods are designed to find answers, phenomenology is a qualitative method designed to ask questions (van Manen, 2014). Phenomenology, propelled by *pathos*, goes in search of the wonder bound within the lived experiences of others (van Manen, 2014). To be guided by questions and led down a path of discovery where meaning and understanding first meet is the genesis of phenomenology.

Specifically, hermeneutic phenomenology asks questions through reflective writing (van Manen, 2014). Because I have personal experience with the phenomenon, the hermeneutic phenomenological design propelled me into the exploratory nature of research through interpretation and reflection while abstaining from integrating my own presuppositions (van Manen, 2014). A hermeneutic phenomenological research method also aligns with data collections designed to reveal empirical revelations, including the hermeneutic interview. van Manen (2014) suggests the interview as one technique for gathering data during phenomenological research but separates the phenomenological interview from the hermeneutical phenomenological interview as specific forms of inquiry. For this hermeneutic-phenomenological study of career CC educators' lived experiences of Christian *paideia* when making curricular decisions in an online CC classroom, the hermeneutic interview was utilized as one of the data collections followed by an observation of a ninety-minute archived lesson and a final focus group that gathered a complete picture of the essence of Christian *paideia* as meaning met understanding during pre-reflective lived experiences.

Hermeneutic phenomenology data collection and analysis work together to reveal how meaning exposes itself pre-reflection (van Manen, 2016) and is root-bound to the early growth of transcendental philosophy (Moustakas, 1994). Renee Descartes (1985) believed that human scientific study wrongly focused on objects of space as the only empirical evidence and accentuated a separation between the mind and the body, eventually solidifying subjective experiences in the study of human science (Moustakas, 1994). Descartes (1985) laid the foundation for transcendental philosophers like Kant and Brentano to further explore the idea of science as a phenomenon experienced through the mind (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl (1964/2019) made several contributions through the study of essences, description of experiences, and how

people make meaning (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2016). Heidegger added the process of hermeneutics, meaning more than description but actual interpretation, which can abstract levels of understanding through analysis of language (van Manen, 2016). The study of semiotics is a key piece to understanding the meaning making of individuals (Turley, 2014).

Paideia is an abstract and dynamic concept of enculturation through education (Jaeger, 1943). Beginning with the Greeks, *paideia* was a whole-person approach to education in virtue training for free citizenship of the *polis* (Turley, 2009; Vibe, 2019). In the 21st century, Christian *paideia* has experienced a new birth as part of the recovery of CCE in America (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020) and in response to globalization and online learning around the world (Mackey, 2020; van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021). To interpret the participant's understanding of implementing curriculum guided by the Christian *paideia* ideal is best achieved in a hermeneutic phenomenological manner when meaning and understanding are first revealed to the participant's awareness (van Manen, 2014). Also, as Christian *paideia* is a pedagogical aim of CCE schools but is not defined as a set of objective criteria (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020), a hermeneutic phenomenology describing career CC educators' lived experience as they embody the Christian *paideia* ideal within their online environments helps to build understanding into Christian *paideia*, an abstract ideology foundational to CCE.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

What is the essence of Christian *paideia* for career CC educators within their lived experiences of online global curricular decisions?

Sub-Question One

How do career CC educators make meaning and understand Christian *paideia*?

Sub-Question Two

In what ways do career CC educators consider Christian *paideia* when making curricular decisions for an online global classroom?

Sub-Question Three

How does the online global classroom platform impact CC educators' experiences of Christian *paideia*?

Sub-Question Four

How do career CC educators reflect on the transcendence of Christian *paideia* for the global Christian community?

Setting and Participants

Classical pedagogy is a timeless educational tradition aimed at virtue training while searching to understand truth, beginning with Plato's (385 BC) establishment of the Academy (Dernlan, 2018; S. J. Smith, 2020). Many scholars attribute the field of philosophy to Plato (385 BC) and Christian philosophy's development through the Apostolic Fathers (Archer et al., 2004; Jaeger, 1961; Wilson, 2019) and in the thoughts and writings of Aurelius Augustine (S. J. Smith, 2020). The Christian church adopted classical pedagogy in the form of a liberal arts curriculum consisting of the trivium and quadrivium, and it positioned Christian theology as the queen science (Mackey, 2020; Turley, 2009, 2014). Throughout the Middle Ages, education continues in much the same format until a specialized public education becomes the prominent curriculum, ushering in 20th century progressive education (Sayers, 1948; S. J. Smith, 2020; Wilson, 1991). Both Sayers (1948) and Wilson (1991) reference the trivium's medieval curriculum and its queen Christian theology science as integral for recovering the lost tools of learning that progressive education has lain aside for at least a century. From the writings of Sayers (1948) and Wilson

(1991), along with many other impassioned family educators, CCE has been recovered in American K-12 schools through private and home school education (ACCS, n.d.; Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020).

Setting

The setting of this hermeneutic phenomenology to discover the essence of Christian *paideia* for career CC educators was an online CC academy founded by a member of the inaugural American CCE board. While the start-up school was initially housed in a brick-and-mortar location, the online version of the CC academy has been open for two decades. The successful growth and longevity of the school spoke to its professional organization, administrative leadership, community outreach, dedication of faculty and staff, and the setting's commitment to the continued recovery of CCE. The leadership structure of the setting included an executive team made up of the founding president and several vice presidents. One vice president also functioned as the headmaster of the online school. Following a traditional hierarchy, the headmaster was supported by two deans, a dean of academics and a dean of students, along with an administrative team. Fourteen academic advisors were available to assist full-time enrolled diploma students, and 170 faculty members are contracted to teach over 10,000 students worldwide.

Since this hermeneutic phenomenology is designed to discover the essence of Christian *paideia* for career CC educators, speaking to practitioners who have worked in CCE for a number of years and at different times and locations was essential so that they could adequately articulate their lived experiences of Christian *paideia* during curricular decisions (van Manen, 2016). The chosen site was comprised of practitioners with advanced years and experience in CCE and one of the largest CCE online academies in the United States. With limitless borders of

the online classroom, the site and corresponding practitioners offered the additional dynamic of experience in the global classroom.

Participants

This study followed a purposeful sampling based on criteria alignment with the research purpose and design (Patton, 2002). To discover the essence of Christian *paideia* for career CC educators who make daily curricular decisions at a CC online academy required a purposeful sample of online career CC educators who could articulate the phenomena (van Manen, 2016). Participants were recruited (Appendix D and E) and screened (Appendix F) to match the terms for a purposeful sample (Patton, 2002). The purposeful sampling resulted in thirteen 6th-12th grade career CC educators who had been teaching at the online CC academy for a minimum of three years and who were currently experiencing the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The idea behind the purposeful sample was to achieve thematic saturation so 13 participants were acquired with the understanding that saturation could be achieved (Patton, 2002). According to van Manen's (2014) clarification of phenomenological samples, purposefully sampled participants are not generalizable, and the sample of CC educators who took part in this study are not considered a subset of all CC educators. Rather, phenomenological participants are an example representative of paradigm implications (van Manen, 2014).

Researcher's Positionality

In *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, Naugle (2002) describes the theoretical paradigm of critical realism as a way for researchers to consider reality as both objective and subjective. According to Bhaskar's (1975/2008) philosophy of critical realism, reality exists apart from any person who may be there to experience it (Scimecca, 2019). Naugle (2002) and other Christian scholars place the Triune God in the position of reality (Archer et al., 2004;

Scimecca, 2019), and persons take part in reality through the experience (Naugle, 2002) by applying signs and symbols that construct language and makes meaning (Strand & Legg, 2019). Meanings, therefore, are understood by people but are subjected to individual worldviews even though reality is still objective (Naugle, 2002). Neither objectivity nor subjectivity is more valuable than the other (Naugle, 2002), and open dialogue among researchers is paramount to understanding new knowledge and raising humanity's consciousness. I consciously placed myself within the paradigm of critical realism to employ a hermeneutic phenomenological approach when observing, documenting, interpreting, thematizing, writing, and reflecting (van Manen, 2016) throughout my study with the intention of understanding the human life world.

As a Christian researcher, it is important to identify how my biblical worldview may interact with my researcher positionality. Archer et al. (2004), C. Smith (2009), and Scimecca (2019) are contemporary Christian scholars who describe the symbiotic relationship of Christianity and critical realism. The ontology of critical realism relies on an objective reality that exists outside of oneself. Since God made the world and everything in it (*English Standard Version*, 2001/2016, Genesis 1), reality is objective and absolute as God intended it to be. Humanity is fallen and does not understand reality as God intended, so we internally build meanings about our experiences of reality through semiotics (Paolucci, 2021). Because we are made in the image of God (*ESV*, 2001/2016, Genesis 1), we have an inherent value, and our knowledge can be objective and truthful through God's grace, whether common or divine (Nelson, 2020; Trentham, 2019a, 2019b). We can experience God's reality, however darkly we see (*ESV*, 2001/2016, 1 Corinthians 13:12). Yet "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (*ESV*, 2001/2016, Romans 3:23), so we construct knowledge through our worldviews including biases and prejudices that we must learn to set aside, particularly as researchers. Fallen

man can be redeemed (*ESV*, 2001/2016, Colossians 1:13-14), which entwines another perspective within my interpretive framework. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit not only allows me to see the absolute truth of God's Word but also gives me guidance in the transformation of knowledge that leads to understanding and wisdom for God's glory and discipleship of others.

Interpretive Framework

Critical theories in the social science field reveal an imbalance of power in social constructs (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Similarly, critical realism developed within sociology against the backdrop of the Enlightenment and its effects on the social sciences (Scimecca, 2019). Following an argument of Heidegger (1962), Bhaskar (1975/2008) called for the social sciences to recognize transcendent reality as a place for researching objects that do not inhabit space in time (Scimecca, 2019). Heidegger's (1962) frustration with philosophy's slide of ontology into epistemology was a preemptive strike against empiricism (van Manen, 2014) that Bhaskar (1975/2008) continued with his philosophy of CR.

Bhaskar (1975/2008) produced a theoretical framework for researching abstract objects at the system level, allowing for a structured reality of emergence and change (Archer et al., 2004; Scimecca, 2019). I employed Bhaskar's (1975/2008) framework of CR throughout my research to discover the essence of Christian *paideia*, an abstract concept with a timeless existence. An attempt at revealing essences requires the development of an abstract object, like Christian *paideia*, at the system level (Bhaskar, 1975/2008). The system level for my study is the online curricular decision making experienced by the participants. Throughout the study, I was able to frame the participant experiences within a structured reality of CR.

Philosophical Assumptions

Since Heidegger's (1962) ontological phenomenology and Bhaskar's (1975/2008) critical

realism, the human science field has recovered a sustained form of research in the philosophically abstract. Research into what it means to be a person (Bhaskar, 2020; C. Smith, 2010) developed systematic processes like hermeneutic phenomenology that enable researchers to interpret participants' transcendent spaces to discover how they see the world (van Manen, 2014). Through bracketing and critical reflection, phenomenologists lay aside their personal worldviews and subjective experiences to clearly observe and interpret data (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2016). However, since our personhood has been developing since birth, it is impossible to recognize and lay aside every subtle nuance of assumption that may infiltrate a researcher who is acting as a human tool during research. Philosophical assumptions must be laid bare and are comprised of ontology, epistemology, and axiology.

Ontological Assumption

Philosophers define ontology as the nature or state of existence (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 2014). Even though the nature of reality has been debated since ancient times (Naugle, 2002; S. J. Smith, 2020; Turley, 2014), it is essential for researchers to specify their ontological assumptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a Christian researcher, I recognize God as creator and sustainer of ultimate reality that exists in His truth, goodness, and beauty (Turley, 2014). As fallible man and apart from the Holy Spirit, I can only perceive reality through a dark glass (*ESV*, 2001/2016, 1 Corinthians 13:12); therefore, it is possible for people to experience multiple realities (Naugle, 2002).

Bhaskar's (1975/2008) philosophical ontological assumption of critical realism will frame my inquiry holding the view that reality can be both objective and subjective. Reality exists outside of oneself (Scimecca, 2019) and is objective while being interpreted through human hearts and minds makes reality subjective (Couch, 2022; Naugle, 2002). Critical realism

allows me to regard biblical principles as absolute truth while understanding people's worldviews are transformed by their experiences (Naugle, 2002). The ontology of critical realism as the transcendence of the knowledge (Archer et al., 2004), also allows me to dialectically reflect (Scimecca, 2019) on my own positions and biases while engaged in research and employ the processes of hermeneutic phenomenological reflection and writing (van Manen, 2016).

Epistemological Assumption

To be in search of the true, the good, and the beautiful inevitably means that human knowledge can expand to understand both the physical through the senses and the metaphysical through emotional and spiritual enlightenment. In other words, a Christian epistemology understands man as *imago Dei* (Nelson, 2020; Trentham, 2019a, 2019b), made in the image of God who is the Alpha and the Omega (Archer et al., 2004), the beginning and the end of all knowledge (ESV, 2001/2016, Genesis 1). However, humanity can never know all that God knows, but we do have the unique ability to apply symbols and signs to construct language and make meaning (Paolucci, 2021). Words are an essential part of gaining knowledge as *logos* was present with God in the beginning (ESV, 2001/2016, 1 John 1). Wisdom, which is knowledge supreme, was also present with God in the beginning (ESV, 2001/2016, Proverbs 8:22-31). My epistemological assumption considers the trinity of God as the beginning of all knowledge and *imago Dei*, complete with mind, body, and soul, as the vehicle we use to grow in knowledge. This epistemology was helpful during my study of Christian teachers' understanding of *paideia* in the classical classroom. Since a holistic education built in community for the good of community is the essence of *paideia*, my epistemological view enabled me to interact with research participants in a respectful and appreciative manner. I was also able to critically interpret their responses and reflections of Christian *paideia* during curricular decision-making in

an online global classroom to draw out themes during data analysis.

Axiological Assumption

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative researchers must recognize that studies can be value-laden and discussing researcher axiological assumptions is important to maintaining neutrality and credibility during the research process. My values center on biblical principles which aided my understanding of research participants' perception of Christian *paideia* in a CC classroom. I am also a colleague of my research participants who all signed a Statement of Faith about their belief in the triune God, their recognition of the Bible as God's word without error, and their commitment to relying on the *Westminster Confession of Faith* when man disagrees on biblical interpretations. Having signed the same Statement of Faith, my research participants were aware of my values, as well. Additionally, the ontological premise of critical realism respects the interconnected relationships of communities and encourages open dialogue to raise the consciousness of the community (Naugle, 2002). Because the online research setting was a community, open dialogue about values was encouraged and respected.

Researcher's Role

It is the researcher's role to function as a human instrument during hermeneutic phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2016). According to van Manen (2014), a researcher cannot be restricted by interpretive frameworks without losing some credibility of gathering authentic living data. As a human instrument, it was my responsibility to capture the phenomena as it was happening pre-reflectively and using only an interpretive framework could cause unintended restrictions on living meaning (van Manen, 2014). While critical realism is an interpretive framework, it offers a critical approach to interpreting data through reflection that corresponds with hermeneutic phenomenological reflection and writing. However, to execute a

research paradigm of only critical realism could have confined the phenomena by boundaries that were potentially unrelated to the phenomenon. Therefore, I systematically leveraged the interpretive framework of critical realism along with a reformed biblical worldview and transformational learning theory, which Nelson (2020, 2022) terms redemptive transformational learning (RTL), as foils during the destructive, reduction, construction phases (van Manen, 2014) of my hermeneutic phenomenological research, reflection, and writing while leaving the boundaries open for emergent descriptions of the essence of Christian *paideia*. The bracketing of assumptions (Moustakas, 1994) and *époche* of reduction (van Manen, 2014) during hermeneutic phenomenological research aided my efforts in acting as an unbiased research instrument used to study the essence of Christian *paideia* for CC educators in an online global classroom.

I have been professionally involved in CCE for the past 13 years and am personally invested in understanding the essence of Christian *paideia* and its pedagogical relationship with CCE. I taught composition classes at the research site for four years and all of the participants were known to me. Because the research site is an online educational environment, I did not have the opportunity to foster relationships with my colleagues even though I met six of the thirteen participants personally in the past. I have never held a leadership position at the school and did not have influence over the participants. Any assumptions I had were bracketed (Moustakas, 1994) and *époche* of reduction (van Manen, 2014) was used during this hermeneutic phenomenology to aid my development as an unbiased research instrument so I could study the essence of Christian *paideia* for CC educators within their lived experiences of online global curricular decision making.

Procedures

In this section, action steps involved in conducting the actual research with human

participants are outlined, beginning with obtaining appropriate permissions to conduct the study. After all permissions were obtained, the recruitment process began for acquiring participants to take part in a hermeneutic phenomenology of Christian *paideia*. The accepted participants followed permission protocols prior to starting the study. Next, data collection ensued through individual interviews followed by classroom observations and finalized with split focus groups, one homogeneous and one heterogeneous. Since a hermeneutic phenomenology research design is an emergent design, data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously (van Manen, 2016). Reflective writing was sustained throughout the study and fulfilled data collection, analysis, and synthesis steps of the design (van Manen, 2016).

Permissions

Informal discussions with administrators from the chosen research setting occurred first. Then, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was completed and filed through Cayuse, a secure online platform at Liberty University (LU). LU's IRB approved the hermeneutic phenomenology and provided permission to conduct the qualitative study (Appendix A). The application for LU's IRB included original forms for site consent (Appendix B), participant recruitment (Appendix D), participant recruitment flyer (Appendix E), screening questions for participants (Appendix F), consent form (Appendix G), demographics questionnaire (Appendix H), and study instruments. After IRB permission was obtained, formal permission from the research setting was approved (Appendix C) and recruitment of career CC educators who had worked at the online global CCE school for at least three years began with participant recruitment emails.

Recruitment Plan

The sample pool of the research setting included 170 teachers, 65 of whom had been at

the online academy for at least three years. Based on the research design, experienced CC educators were required to be able to accurately express their experiences when making curricular decisions in the CC online global classroom (van Manen, 2016). Additionally, understanding personal motivation, inclinations, and worldview impact upon curriculum and instruction in the classroom required an expert educator. A sample pool of 65 expert online CC teachers was an acceptable size to query a sample size of 12-15 participants. Liberty University required at least 10 participants in the sample, so the plan to acquire between 12 to 15 participants to sustain the study in case of member loss was manageable. With the amount of writing and rewriting involved in hermeneutic circling (van Manen, 2016), any more than 15 participants would have made data collection and analysis too cumbersome.

After receiving permission from the headmaster of the research setting, an email announcing my intended study was sent to all 65 career CC educators contracted by the online school. Attached to the email was the participant recruitment letter (Appendix D). The email asked for a response within seven days, and eleven initial interest emails were received by the third day. Screening documents were sent to the eleven volunteer participants via email (Appendix E). These questions ensured that the potential participants met the participant requirements for my study, and ten volunteers passed the initial screening. On day four of seven, a recruitment flyer was posted on the school's faculty course page to encourage any outstanding volunteer participants to respond in a timely manner (Appendix E). One more volunteer participant responded via email, was sent screening, and was accepted into the study, making eleven total participants.

To reach my goal of 12-15 participants, I purposefully recruited two additional participants via email. These participants were recruited based on their insight and ability to offer

a global perspective because they were non-US citizens. To truly discover the global essence of Christian *paideia* for career CC educators during curriculum decision-making, recruitment of specific participants was a necessary and acceptable technique for qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002). Both participants accepted the invitation to participate, were screened, and admitted into the study, creating a final participant count of thirteen.

The 13 research participants were congratulated on their acceptance into the study and emailed a consent form (Appendix G) and a demographic questionnaire (Appendix H), which they completed and returned at intermittent times. The participants were asked to take part in an online individual interview, grant researcher access to an archived online classroom lesson, and attend an online focus group with five or six of their peers. Scheduling of the individual interviews happened immediately through Microsoft TEAMS, and the recruitment plan took a total of two weeks.

Data Collection Plan

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 2016) is to discover the essence of Christian *paideia* for career CC educators who make daily curricular decisions at a CC online academy that serves a 2nd-12th grade international student body. Phenomenology appeals to researchers who are part of the experience and have something in common with the audience (Patton, 2002; van Manen, 2016). In fact, according to Patton's (2002) discussion on dissertation research, a doctoral candidate may be thought of as the primary audience, and van Manen (2016) highlights the researcher's personal experience as the starting point for data collection. I employed Patton's (2002) and van Manen's (2016) approach of considering my personal experience as a practicing career CC educator in an online global classroom when determining the best way to collect data.

The personal interview, observation of the archived lesson, and focus group are appropriate methods for achieving triangulation in phenomenological research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002; van Manen, 2016). I used all three data collection methods recommended by these established researchers beginning with personal interviews. Following van Manen's (2016) interpretation of observing the essence of the phenomena, a researcher's presence is needed in the field to document the moment when meaning first meets understanding. Placing the personal interview first allowed me to be present as the participants initially came to understand Christian *paideia* as part of their curricular decision making in an online global classroom. The second data collection method was an observation of the participants' online teaching via a recorded archive of the lesson taught directly after the personal interview. The intentional viewing of the participants' lessons immediately following our individual interview provided a glimpse of the embodiment of Christian *paideia* during live curricular decision-making in connection with the career CC educator's pre-reflective discourse that had occurred within the past few days. The third data collection was an online focus group over Microsoft Teams, and twelve out of the thirteen participants were able to attend the online discussion.

Individual Interviews

The individual interview was an open-ended semi-structured conversational interview that provided an atmosphere where participants openly shared their lived experiences of the phenomena Christian *paideia* (Patton, 2002; van Manen, 2016). The premise of the phenomenological interview was to encourage participants to share emotive anecdotes of the phenomenon as lived through (van Manen, 2016). Keeping the research question central to my investigation, I asked a series of questions to bring forth memories of lived experiences of Christian *paideia* (Patton, 2002; van Manen, 2016). The phenomenological interview was the

first step in gathering experiential material as data for the study and provided thick narratives of pre-reflective experiences and anecdotes.

The individual interview was completed online, which was a familiar way for online educators to communicate. Meeting virtually allowed for a feeling of comfort essential for phenomenological studies (van Manen, 2016). Microsoft Teams was available through Liberty University and was my choice for conducting individual interviews. Microsoft Teams enabled me to record the interview and offered a transcription service that reduced time when transcribing the data. One participant was unable to meet over Teams due to technical difficulties, so one interview was conducted over Zoom and the data manually transcribed from the recording.

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please describe your educational background and career through your pre-teacher training. CRQ

Question one is a basic demographic question that initiated my understanding of the world of the participant so I could look at the topic of research through their perspective. It also helped me to place the participant among the other participants of the study (Patton, 2002).

2. How did the idea of teaching at a classical Christian online school first arise? CRQ

Question two gathered more background information and acted as a natural segue into the topic of research while revealing the time frame for locating the participant as an expert CC educator.

3. Can you recount the moment when you first became aware of Christian *paideia* and what it meant? SQ1

Question three attempted to connect the meaning of Christian *paideia* with the participant's understanding and application of *paideia* within the educational environment. According to van Manen (2016), essence is when meaning meets understanding.

4. How do you define Christian *paideia* today? SQ1

Question four probed question three to further realize the exact understanding and application of *paideia* within the educational environment.

5. How would you describe the relationship between Christian *paideia* and classical Christian education? SQ1

Question five was the final probing of SQ1 to fully explicate the understanding and application of *paideia* within the educational environment.

6. What does Christian *paideia* have to do with the curriculum you teach in your classroom? SQ2

Question six combined background and knowledge into one concise question and chronologically moved the interview from past memories to present circumstances of the participant's curricular decisions.

7. Please describe a particular lesson when you consciously considered Christian *paideia* as a long-term objective while planning, presenting, and assessing a lesson or unit plan. SQ2

Question seven attempted to initiate anecdotal insight from the participant, a key benefit of phenomenological inquiry (van Manen, 2016).

8. How did preplanning with *paideia* in mind affect the overall facilitation of the lesson or unit plan? SQ2

Question eight searched for further explanation of the anecdote from question seven.

9. In what ways does an online global classroom change your consideration of Christian *paideia* during curricular decisions? SQ3

Question nine attempted to expand on the meaning of Christian *paideia* when considering globalization of the 21st-century student and Mezirow et al.'s (1978) transformational learning theory.

10. Please recount a classroom teaching experience where the online global classroom platform affected the pedagogical aim of Christian *paideia*. SQ3

Question ten tried to spark an anecdotal experience connecting the understanding and application of Christian *paideia* to environmental and cultural benefits and limitations. This anecdote further revealed the dynamics embedded within the concept of *paideia*.

11. How do you envision the ideal of Christian *paideia* making a transformative difference to the global Christian community? SQ4

Question eleven moved the participant forward in time to connect knowledge and experience with emotion, revealing the participant's hopes for the future achievements of students based on the transformative nature of the participant's classroom practices.

12. Reflecting on your previous answer, how would you describe the significance of Christian *paideia* to a first year CC educator employed at your school? SQ4

Question twelve probed deeper into the previous question and asked the participant for reflection, an essential component of phenomenological inquiry (van Manen, 2016). This question also initiated more emotive, anecdotal, and imaginative

responses to further expand on the understanding of Christian *paideia* for novice CC educators which is the research problem.

13. Please share any additional thoughts that you have on Christian *paideia*. CRQ

The final question allowed the participant to add additional meaning and interpretation to the research topic of Christian *paideia*.

Attaching meaning to understanding is the core experience within a phenomenological interview (van Manen, 2016). These semi-structured open-ended interview questions were written to encourage the meeting of meaning and understanding of the phenomenon Christian *paideia* (Patton, 2002; van Manen, 2016). Using the interpretive framework of CR, objective reality exists outside of man's thinking and is filtered through man's mind as thinking becomes language becomes communication (Naugle, 2002). Therefore, the participants' collective life experiences and worldviews become part of the meaning they ascribe to reality. Still, the value of their subjective reality is not more or less valuable than objective reality (Naugle, 2002). The participants' experiences of Christian *paideia* were invaluable to describing the phenomenon in the online global classroom and Christian *paideia*'s relation to the teaching and learning taking place within the classroom environment.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

The phenomenological interview was the first step in gathering data and the first opportunity that I had to document pre-reflective narratives of the participants (van Manen, 2016). While I audio/video recorded each participant's interview in Microsoft Teams or Zoom and utilized the transcription service to automatically email me the transcribed dialogue, data analysis simultaneously occurred along with the collection during the live interview sessions (Saldaña, 2021; van Manen, 2016). Open-ended questions were written to bring structure to the

lived experience of Christian *paideia* (van Manen, 2016), and researcher insights, connections, and realizations of the essence were captured in personal memos (Saldaña, 2021).

To analyze the experiential data revealed during each interview session, I immediately engaged in reflective writing post-interview. Phenomenological analysis is a process of writing, reflecting, and rewriting (van Manen, 2016), and Saldaña (2021) recommends analytic memoing as one way to reflect on living narratives. Aligning Saldaña's (2021) analytic memoing prompts with the central research question and sub-questions of my study, I chose several prompts for post-interview reflection. I reflected on my personal relations with the participants and wrote about the phenomenon they were expressing (Saldaña, 2021). I also reflected and wrote about "what [I found] intriguing, surprising, or disturbing" (Saldaña, 2021, p.63). I did not contain my reflective writing to these two prompts but allowed my writing to phenomenologically describe envisioned structures of the essence and kept circling back to what Husserl (1964/2019) calls the thing itself (van Manen, 2016).

The next step in analyzing the individual interviews was correctly formatting the transcription of each interview using Microsoft Word and engaging in member checks to ensure the accuracy of transcription with the reality of the interview. After member checks, I transferred the data into the qualitative data analysis software program Delve for preliminary coding. Preliminary codes were in vivo to keep the codes in the language of the participant (Saldaña, 2021), which is a significant part of my analysis protocol enacted to capture the essence of Christian *paideia* when meaning meets understanding (van Manen, 2016).

Experienced researchers debate the process of how-to code, whether as a lumper or a splitter (Saldaña, 2021). I used Delve to manage the proliferation of data and coded first as a splitter, moving line by line through each transcript and coding in vivo. Coding as a splitter

ensured a focused data collection, intentionally gathered to answer the four research sub-questions (O'Connor & Gibson, 2003). My second and third passes through each transcript, I worked as a lumper and leveraged in vivo codes to garner the essence of Christian *paideia* (Saldaña, 2021; van Manen, 2016). I attributed close to two hundred in vivo codes during preliminary data analysis after three cycles, once as a splitter specifically seeking answers and twice as a lumper in search of when the meaning of Christian *paideia* met the understanding of the participant during individual interviews.

Preliminary in vivo codes were compiled in Delve qualitative analysis online software, downloaded into Microsoft Word, and printed. Codes were cut, assembled, arranged, and rearranged to begin developing a picture of the essence of Christian *paideia* for career CC online educators. Based on the research of van Manen (2016) and Saldaña (2021), I chose to live within the data. I hung questions and codes around my thinking space. I drew pictures of each participant and placed them amidst their descriptions. I spent time reflecting and writing before moving to the next phase of data analysis.

van Manen (2016) recommends for the researcher to discover the motif or cogency of significance of the phenomenon and spiral back through the codes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña, 2021) to identify emerging themes (Saldaña, 2021; van Manen, 2016). Emerging themes give voice to a point of structure in the lived experience of the phenomenon (van Manen, 2016). After completing preliminary in vivo codes and spending time living within the data, I reread and questioned the corpus datum to “mine meaning” (van Manen, 2016, p. 86) and produced categories and themes. I followed the suggestions of van Manen (2016) for mining meaning and asked what was really going on within the lived experiences of participants, what were they revealing about Christian *paideia* and its relation to curricular decisions throughout

their narratives, and what was the notion of the essence. Emergent themes were documented and saved on posterboards in my thinking space, and the first cycle coding of the individual interviews was finished.

Observations

Traditionally, observations of instruction at the research setting are conducted via archives because of the nature of online instruction, and I employed the same protocol by observing a pre-recorded 90-minute lesson of each participant. The archived lesson met the criteria of representing the period immediately following the participant's individual interview and at the recommendation of the participant. The observation criteria were announced to the participants at the beginning of the study. van Manen (2016) recommends a close observation where the researcher becomes both a participant and an observer, but his recommendation would be more disruptive than helpful for observing Christian *paideia* come to life through instructional practices in an online environment. However, I still needed to shift perspectives from someone observing the phenomenon to someone experiencing the phenomenon to write an in-depth description of the practitioner's lived experience with the phenomenon (Patton, 2002; van Manen, 2016).

Observation Data Analysis Plan

From the ninety-minute archive of each participant's post-interview lesson, I conducted an observation data analysis. Unlike the personal interview where reflection initiated the realization of emerging themes, observation data collection observed emerging themes while they happened (van Manen, 2016). van Manen (2016) emphasizes the need for close observation, but observation according to professional practices of this research site was not conducive for live observations. Instead, I actively transcribed and reflected through different foils of a

phenomenological researcher while watching the archive (Saldaña, 2021; van Manen, 2014). Unfortunately, the timing of analyzing the observations did not work with my participants work schedule, so the actual analysis of observed archived lessons took place after the focus group data collections.

Having already established emerging themes through the individual interview and focus groups' hermeneutic cycles, my observation data analysis plan began with these codes, categories, and themes in mind and enabled an astute approach to the observation data analysis plan (Saldaña, 2021; van Manen, 2016) based on the following instrumentation:

1. Draw a picture of the opening Adobe Connect classroom layout and any new layouts that may occur during the ninety minutes of instruction.
2. Transcribe the participants' speech (dialogue), actions (techniques), and emotions (expressions) on a three-column Microsoft Word document.
3. Convert Microsoft Word observation transcription document from portrait to landscape and add three more columns: researcher responses, process coding, and emergent themes (Saldaña, 2021; van Manen, 2016).
4. Watch the post-interview archive of participants' class and document participant dialogue, techniques, and expressions on observation instrument (Appendix J).
5. Simultaneously, work one "lump" section at a time and respond in the fourth column to researcher questions posed by Saldaña (2021):
 - a. What are people doing? What are they trying to accomplish?
 - b. How exactly do they do this? What specific means and strategies do they use?
 - c. What do I see going on here?

- d. How is what is going on here similar to, or different from, other incidents or events recorded elsewhere in the field notes?
 - e. What is the broader import or significance of this incident or event? What is it a case of? (pp. 32-33)
6. After watching the full ninety-minute lesson, re-review researcher observations and responses and develop process codes accordingly (Saldaña, 2021), recording codes in the correct column.
 7. Complete one more spiral (Creswell & Poth, 2018) of analyzed data to further demarcate emerging themes that may give structure to the phenomena (van Manen, 2016).
 8. Save observation instrument accordingly.

After completing the observation instrument (Appendix J) for 13 participants, all cycles for observation data analysis were thoroughly exhausted (Saldaña, 2021), allowing for saturation (Creswell & Poth, 2018) of emerging themes (van Manen, 2016). I saved the hard copies of each participant's observation instrument within their personal folders and transferred quotes, observations, process codes, and emergent themes into a Microsoft Excel Data Synthesis Code Book.

Focus Group

A hermeneutic phenomenological approach to inquiry seeks to capture the phenomenon's essence pre-reflection, during experience, and through reflection (van Manen, 2016). By choosing the semi-structured interview and observation as the first two forms of data collection, the pre-reflection and emergent meaning making of the phenomenon was exposed. Essence-capturing of the phenomenon can occur through reflection (van Manen, 2014), so a follow up

focus group was chosen as the last step for data collection. At the same time, the focus group traveled beyond personal reflection and allowed the participants to observe how the other participants experienced the same phenomenon (Patton, 2002; van Manen, 2014). Also, to reveal language that embodied Christian *paideia*, the dynamic of the focus group aided the development of language through encouraged and guided discourse (van Manen, 2016).

Because of the size of the participant group, I split the group into two sub-groups so each participant would have enough time to respond and contribute to the overall group discussion (Patton, 2002). Emails were sent asking for participant availability. Participants responded and two separate groups were established based on feedback. While the participant pool already reflected a homogeneous group of online career CC educators, organization of the two focus groups added another layer of a homogeneous sub-group. Availability of participants aligned the two groups as such: the first focus group was comprised entirely of a single discipline in the field of humanities and the second focus group was comprised of multiple disciplines. This naturally occurring alignment allowed me to compare the essence of Christian *paideia* for the online career CC educator from the different perspectives of subject areas. One of the 13 participants was unavailable to attend the focus group, leaving a balanced number of participants in each homogeneous focus group.

The setting for the focus groups was the same as the individual interview and provided familiarity with a sense of comfort (Patton, 2002; van Manen, 2016). Microsoft Teams was used for the virtual meeting room, and the space was intentionally arranged for equality of members. While Microsoft Teams continuously shifted webcam views of fellow participants in a vertical structure setup on the right side of the screen, I designed a PowerPoint slide arranging participant space in a horizontal structure at the top of the slide which also presented the focus group

question and a five minute timer to allow for each participant's response and contribution to discussion (Patton, 2002). The focus group was recorded, and Microsoft Teams transcription service was used throughout the discussion and collected immediately following the meeting.

Focus Group Questions

Billups (2021) recommends that qualitative researchers begin a focus group with an icebreaker question. This question will relax participants and include introductions. Because the participants worked in an online setting, they knew one another's names, subjects taught, possible interests, but they did not have intimate knowledge of personal details like religious affiliation and additional educational endeavors. I began my focus group with an icebreaker of an introductory nature and allowed a brief sixty second response focused on these personal details. According to Patton (2002), research in the 21st century has demonstrated online focus groups to be a place of comfort and less intimidating than in person focus groups, so I was comfortable to begin the online focus group with personal questions. Throughout the focus group, I followed Billups' (2021) suggestion of using probing questions as I moderated discussion. I also recognized fatigue during the focus group and allowed time for participants to leave after one hour. All participants chose to stay to complete the questions. Time constraints only allowed for two complete cycles of answers and discussion. A concluding thoughts question was posed before thanking participants and ending the focus group.

1. What is Christian *paideia* and how does it influence your curriculum decision making? CRQ, SQ1, SQ2

This question asked for participants to voice their understanding of the phenomenon as well as to connect their understanding with curricular decisions made within their classrooms. Since the participants had time to reflect on their previous experiences

- from their individual interviews, they had a more concise interpretation of the phenomenon to offer within this new setting. They also heard from other participants which expanded their own individual understanding.
2. How does reflection help when thinking about Christian *paideia* and the transformation of Christian culture when making curricular decisions? CRQ, SQ4
Question two involved reflection, a significant part of phenomenology and professional growth (van Manen, 2016). It ascribed agency of the educators' positions to transform Christian culture through curricular decision making for future career development and reflection opportunities.
 3. How does the global online classroom impact your pedagogical aim of Christian *paideia* in your day-to-day activities? CRQ, SQ3
This question considered the lived experience of the phenomenon in relation to the environment.

Focus Groups Data Analysis Plan

Once again, I immediately engaged in reflective writing post-interview to follow van Manen's (2016) recommendation of writing, reflecting, and rewriting during phenomenological analysis. Because the point of structure and emergent themes had already been discovered, I did not choose a priori prompts for reflection but engaged in van Manen's (2016) cycle of reflective writing to capture the vocative. My reflection was handwritten for sixty minutes post-focus group, so I could see the data (Saldaña, 2021) and consider the language and linguistic choices of the focus group participants. van Manen (2016) describes this reflective writing practice as the reduction, but Saldaña (2021) explains that it does not reduce as much as condenses. The

purpose of reflective attentiveness to the vocative through reduction was to further mine meaning of participant's meaning making of the phenomenon (van Manen, 2016).

After I transcribed the focus group transcript, I enacted member checks to ensure accuracy of the transcript before entering the entire transcript into Delve for data analysis. I also read my reflective writing of the focus group discussion and wrote another reflection for thirty minutes, still concentrating on mining meanings. I entered my condensed thirty-minute reflection into Delve before preliminarily in vivo coding the focus group data as a lumpner (Saldaña, 2021).

The first cycle for coding was value coding using Saldaña's (2021) visual of a Values Coding Venn Diagram (Appendix L). Saldaña (2021) supports the use of value codes in a venn diagram for analyzing data intended to explore culture, experience, and intrapersonal actions. The top circle represents values that the participant perceives as important within the lived experience of the phenomenon; the bottom left circle represents attitudes about how the participant feels about the phenomena; the bottom right circle represents what the participant perceives as truth in relation to the phenomena (Saldaña, 2021). The resulting analysis provided insight into the participants' perspectives (Saldaña, 2021), further explicating the essence of Christian *paideia*. A second pass of concept coding was chosen according to Saldaña's (2021) recommendations and used preliminary pass in vivo codes along with van Manen's (2016) point of structure to better understand the relationship between codes, categories, and themes (Saldaña, 2021). The values and concept codes were transferred into the Microsoft Excel Data Synthesis Code Book, and the hard copies of Appendix L for all participants were added to their individual participant folders.

Data Synthesis

After all three data collection analyses were complete, preliminary codes stored in Delve qualitative software were added to the Microsoft Excel Data Synthesis Code Book for a final cycle of thinking, writing, and reflecting (Saldaña, 2021). Codes were condensed to form categories, and categories were considered across all three data sets and further compared between research questions to verify cogency of motif (van Manen, 2016). Revealed themes, subthemes, and categories from the Microsoft Excel Data Synthesis Code were leveraged to create a concept map representing the final synthesis of data. This process of concept mapping added an additional analysis opportunity while synthesizing the categories and themes into a single visual representation (Saldaña, 2021). After synthesizing and concept mapping was completed, I employed the craft of memoing to reflect on the synthesis and detailed themes (van Manen, 2016; see also Creswell & Poth, 2018). A final member check of the concept map closed out the methodology of the research design.

Trustworthiness

Reliability and validity are measured differently for qualitative studies than for quantitative studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018), and Lincoln and Guba (1985) constructed a conceptual framework of standards for natural and human science qualitative researchers to establish a position of trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework of trustworthiness includes four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. This section addresses the followed procedures in meeting all four criteria and for establishing the research study as reliable and valid. This section ends with an explanation of ethical considerations.

Credibility

Because qualitative research is contextually based (Flynn & Korcuska, 2018), credibility

in phenomenological research can be defined as the authentic establishment of procedures that systematically follow the research design (Bordogna, 2021). Hermeneutical phenomenology with its interpretive nature can be challenging to validate (van Manen, 2016; see also Creswell & Poth, 2018), unless it follows previously established accepted forms of evaluation (Bordogna, 2021), which is why I employed several procedures to collectively establish research credibility. Establishing credibility can include prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) along with implementing the hermeneutic circle (Bordogna, 2021) and is documented in the Research Methodology Audit Trail (Appendix O).

As my professional and personal identity is the same as my research participants, I have maintained an extensive amount of time in the field of CCE, helping me to understand the culture of the lived experience with the phenomenon (van Manen, 2016). Having access to peers and leaders within the culture proved to be valuable resources for keeping my interpretations accurate and removing misinformation from my understanding of the culture of the CCE classroom (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Three separate data collection methods ensured prolonged engagement with the study participants, and continuous observation of participant responses and emerging themes enhanced my ability to discover the essence of Christian *paideia* for the career CC online educator (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The different data collection methods were used to triangulate emergent themes and establish credibility for the research findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018), as I engaged in hermeneutic phenomenology to reveal the essence of Christian *paideia* through thick, rich descriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). The data collection methods included individual interviews, classroom observations, and a split focus group

(Saldaña, 2021). My use of reflection through the hermeneutic circle continuously advanced emergent themes and allowed for triangulation, further strengthening the credibility of the data analysis (Patton, 2002).

As previously discussed, peers identified as experts in their field but not involved in the study were available for feedback and discussion about research observations, findings, and writings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These peers were invaluable for establishing credibility and asking difficult questions to challenge my interpretation of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I also took part in several debriefing meetings with my Dissertation Chair.

Participants were asked to review and check the accuracy of the transcribed interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As data analysis convened and emergent themes were identified, participants had the opportunity to provide feedback on the quality of themes. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that participant feedback and collaboration are valid forms of member checking. In addition, participants were provided with phenomenological writings and could respond to the accuracy of interpretations and descriptions of the phenomenon (van Manen, 2016).

Transferability

Transferability demonstrates that the study's conclusions may be applicable or useful within other settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), although the final judgment of transferability rests within the mind of the reader. Providing detailed, thick descriptions of interpretive findings, as recommended by van Manen (2016), helps to support understanding of the findings and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability does not include generalization, as phenomenology, at its heart, is not to generalize to other settings but to discover what is unique

within one setting (van Manen, 2014).

Dependability

Dependability shows that the findings are consistent and could be repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by keeping an audit trail consisting of accurate records that can be reviewed by external auditors (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I kept an electronic copy of a my research methods as an audit trail (Appendix O), noting research methods throughout the study. I also consistently maintained a handwritten research log of researcher thought processes and analytic memos as reflective writing throughout the study that were available for auditing and peer debriefing with committee members.

Confirmability

Confirmability is a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the respondents shape the findings of a study and note researcher bias, motivation, or interest (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The research log and reflective writing mentioned above support the findings' basis of neutrality. In addition to the audit trail and memoing procedures, triangulation demonstrates researcher neutrality and is part of the data collection, analysis, and presentation of findings for this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002).

Ethical Considerations

As this study involved a purposeful sample of human participants, ethical considerations during all stages of research were of vital importance (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002; van Manen, 2016). Ethical considerations included a respect for persons' autonomy, concern for participants' welfare, and recognition of justice through equity. Prior to conducting the study, permission was obtained from the CCE online school because it contracts the participants of this research study as well as myself (Appendix C). Informed consent from thirteen participants was

obtained, explaining the voluntary nature of the study and informing them of their individual rights (Appendix G). Participants had the right to confidentiality using pseudonyms and the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disclosing the reasons. Individual interviews (Appendix I) took place via Microsoft Teams and were recorded for reliable transcription. All electronic work used during the study for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data was maintained on a secure personal computer and stored on an external hard drive. Data will remain on the external hard drive for three years at which time it will be destroyed. The participants' welfare was safeguarded through a reciprocity agreement, one-hour initial interviews that occurred at a time convenient for the participants, and a one-half hour follow up committed time for member checking. Use of participants' archived classes for researcher observation was strictly voluntary and fell under the same pseudonym protection as the interview process. Because I work alongside the participants, any perceived power imbalance as the researcher who controlled the interview was addressed prior to the interview (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Care and compassion were taken during all interactions to nullify power asymmetry.

Summary

Max van Manen (2016) describes phenomenological research design as the appropriate design to choose when researching the meaning or being of a thing. In my attempt to discover the essence of Christian *paideia* for CC educators, I chose a research design that allowed me to search for meaning through the art of questioning. Because I am a CC educator at the same setting where I conducted my research, the hermeneutic phenomenology design enabled me to connect to the culture of the participants and interpret their lived experiences with the phenomena of Christian *paideia* (Patton, 2002; van Manen, 2016).

The trustworthiness of the data collection, interpretation, and analysis was documented

through the triangulation of three data collections that included a semi-structured interview (Bordogna, 2021; van Manen, 2016), the observation of an archived lesson (Saldaña, 2021; van Manen, 2016), and a focus group (van Manen, 2016). The interpretive processes of thematizing codes (Saldaña, 2021; van Manen, 2014) and memoing further validated the research, all of which when combined completed a hermeneutic circle (Bordogna, 2021).

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology is to discover the essence of Christian *paideia* for career classical Christian (CC) educators who make daily curricular decisions at a CC online academy that serves a 2nd-12th grade international student body. This chapter presents the results of data analysis after carefully employing the research methodology described in the previous chapter and systematically captured in the audit trail (Appendix O) (van Manen, 2016). Research participant demographics are detailed in a table and thick participant descriptions are provided, some of which is written in the participants' own dialogue. Data analysis gives way to data synthesis, and the results are revealed in the following themes: *understanding the nature and character of God, building holistic connections, forming Christian character, and leading Christian culture*. A point of structure (van Manen, 2016) is also revealed: *everything God intended anchored in history*. Three outliers are introduced, yet *jealously guard, learning from zero*, and *universality* are still supported by the point of structure of the essence of phenomena. The research question and sub questions are answered followed by a brief summary of the findings.

Participants

Thirteen participants engaged in this hermeneutic phenomenology and represented a purposeful sampling of the possible 65 teachers contracted by the CCE research site (Patton, 2002). These participants were a demonstrative group, ranging in residency, years of service within CCE, years teaching at the online research site, educational background, and discipline areas. The participants passed initial screening (Appendix F) before taking part in a demographics questionnaire (Appendix G), revealing their cumulative expertise in teaching CCE

from an online global platform as demonstrated by Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Current Residence	CCE Years	Years at Site	Highest Degree	Major(s)	Expertise Teaching Online
Becky Snyder	New Jersey	8-11	6	Masters	Humanities/Arts	Proficient
Catherine Davidson	Utah	20+	13	Bachelors	Math	Proficient
Catherine Madison	Iowa	20+	8	Masters	Humanities/Arts	Proficient
Cathy Roberson	Mississippi	8-11	9	Bachelors	Math	Proficient
Donald Masterson	United Kingdom	3-7	4	Doctorate	Humanities/Arts	Expert
Elizabeth Hunter	North Carolina	8-11	9	Masters	Education	Proficient
Elizabeth Stuart	Idaho	12-15	4	Bachelors	Humanities/Ed	Adv Beg
Helen Miller	New Mexico	16 -19	12	Bachelors	Humanities/Arts	Proficient
Kelly Livingston	Kansas	16 -19	8	Bachelors	Education	Proficient
Margaret Miler	Montana	20+	10	Bachelors	Math	Expert
Mariana Salas-Romero	Canada	8-11	8	Bachelors	Education	Proficient
Nathaniel Holmes	Tennessee	20+	10	Masters	Humanities/Arts	Proficient
Sally Bahler	Wisconsin	12-15	6	Masters	Humanities/Arts	Proficient

The research participants are career CC educators as identified by their service in CCE for more than three years and earning their primary income through the occupation of CCE. For research anonymity, the career CC educators chose personal pseudonyms reflecting their backgrounds, and these pseudonyms are used throughout the manuscript to protect their identity. Years of service in CCE beyond teaching 6th – 12th grade at the current online global academy,

better referred to as the logic and rhetoric/dialectic years in CCE, included teaching at other online academies, brick-and-mortar schools, homeschools and co-ops either full-time or part-time.

Becky Snyder

Becky has been teaching teenagers ever since she graduated from a Christian university in 2013 with dual degrees in Biblical Studies and Secondary Education History. She earned her Master of Arts degree in Curriculum Design and Assessment from an online Christian university in 2020. Currently, she teaches blended humanities courses covering biblical studies, history, and English at the research site and as an adjunct at a Christian university. She also teaches literature and American Government courses at the online CCE research site and an art history component is woven into her humanities course at the university. Her educational endeavors include developing and implementing course curriculum at the research site, a Christian university, and “an organization that caters specifically to unaccompanied immigrant minors who come across the border. They’re put into different facilities and the government requires a certain standard of education, but most of those places don’t have anything to meet those needs.” She is married with two children and has been teaching them at home, which she identifies as “*obviously* [emphasis added], my top priority.”

Becky described her own educational upbringing as disjointed. “I went to Christian school my whole life, but the inclusion of Christian worldview was like tack a verse on the end. ... It was like we’re Christians, we’re teachers, and we tell you these verses once in a while.” Now as an adult, she realizes the impact of secularization on her Christian schooling and appreciates a post-secular, holistic approach to an integrated Christian education like the one she received at the university level. When speaking about her earliest notion of Christian *paideia*, she

said about Christian education, “Oh, *this* [emphasis added] is what it should look like. This is what it looks like to infuse biblical worldview of what it means to be a Christian in all aspects.”

Catherine Davidson

Catherine has been teaching online at the CCE research site for 14 years. Currently, she teaches Pre-Calculus, Calculus, and Physics II. Teaching in her current position has brought Catherine’s career full circle because the magazines published by her current employer appeared in her earliest recollection of being captivated by the CCE movement in America. “I loved [the founders]. I loved [their] catalog. I would just read that cover to cover, all their articles they put in there. *Everything* [emphasis added]!” Other foundational CCE teacher training materials influenced her, such as Sayers’s essay “The Lost Tools of Learning” (1948) and *The Seven Laws of Teaching* by Gregory (1884/2004).

Catherine began her teaching career in 1986 just after receiving her Bachelor of Science in Mathematics. She described her first years teaching in a failing public school district in California as challenging:

The school district was desperate for teachers; they just let me jump right in and teach. So, I took teacher training at the same time that I started teaching. ... I had a lot of students there that were from Cambodia, straight out of the killing fields, and so I would read to them, for example, *Little House on the Prairie* [during homeroom]. ... They loved the *Little House* series. “That’s our life,” [they would say]. “That’s what we did,” and then they told me horrific, *horrific* [emphasis added] things. I don’t even want to explain how horrible the things they saw and experienced while traveling in covered wagons, to experience what they did in the jungles.

Catherine continued to choose curriculum that connected to student experiences while.

teaching in the Californian school system until she and her husband began to raise their own children. She had always been interested in homeschooling and committed to teaching her own children with an interdisciplinary and Christian worldview approach. Training in classical Christian education came through magazines, books, articles, and other homeschooling families. When speaking about Christian *paideia*, she explained that she had been moving closer to an honest and active understanding of it throughout her teaching journey and likened it to being part of an authentic Christian culture.

Catherine Madison

As an artist, Catherine bemoaned her own educational background garnered during post-modernism in the late 1970s and early 1980s. She explained her collegiate experience: “I had a very post-modern art education to the point where I didn’t even have a color theory class, as a painting major, until my senior year, and it was an elective. That’s how *bad* [emphasis added] it was, and it’s still like that today.” To supplement her education, Catherine traveled from her home in the US to Europe and with a Euro rail pass, spent six months visiting art history sites and learning about the famous artists and their techniques, styles, and achievements that she could only glimpse during her time at college. She is mostly self-taught, self-published, and has been in demand to teach and write art curriculum for classical startups in the United States since the mid 1990s. Currently, Catherine teaches Art Studio, Art History, and Art Grammar courses at the CCE research site, all of which she took part in designing. She continues to learn and develop a true classical artistic style and point of view by attending the Florence Academy in Italy “every chance” she gets.

Catherine lived in Maine with her husband and their first two children when she recognized the necessity for homeschooling. Catherine recalls:

That was back in the late 80s when hardly, I mean there were less than 300 people, not individuals, but 300 total being homeschooled in Maine. And it wasn't illegal, it wasn't legal, it wasn't anything. Nobody was doing it, and none of my friends were doing it. I had kids that were older than anybody else of my friends, and so I started just digging, you know, digging into things and finding some resources, and within a couple years, there were more people doing it. Now, this was *before* [emphasis added] computers and research are anything.

Since then, Catherine has been advancing her own understanding of what it means to be a classical art teacher and advocates for classically training art students, no matter their age, through an historical approach to teaching art chronologically based on excellent models. She traveled the US, attended workshops and conferences, and befriended Susan Wise Bauer, an early pioneer of CCE. Catherine educated interested families with her self-published homeschooling planner, comprised of teaching, parent, and student outlines. She designed a four year spiral curriculum for a classical academy in Maine. She taught classically for several homeschooling co-ops, accepted interim headmaster positions at a classical Christian brick and mortar school, and earned her MFA all before being employed in 2016 at the current CCE research site. When speaking about Christian *paideia*, Catherine recalled not the term so much as learning what it embodied through decades of experience in classical Christian education and from the “saints who have gone before” her.

Cathy Robertson

Cathy teaches Physics at the research site and has been teaching online at the CCE research site for nine years, the same amount of time she has been a graduate from her hometown university in Las Vegas, Nevada. She first began teacher training at the undergraduate level in an

Honors Seminar. Cathy recalled, “We went through books together and had to organize a lesson plan, and part of the Honors Seminar was us learning how to educate, how to teach.” Her pursuit in studying math and music also led her to study abroad at Saint Andrews University in Scotland, UK, where she met her husband. Once they were married, Cathy and her husband lived in the UK for seven years, so she opted for a flexible career. Remembering her fondness for teaching and the flexibility of the online coursework offered through the CCE academy that she had attended as a homeschooled high schooler, Cathy decided to apply for an online teaching position.

As a recipient of the CCE homeschool movement in America, Cathy recounted that she had an excellent role model for teaching throughout her life. With admiration, she stated:

My mom was a *huge* [emphasis added] influence. ... I loved the education she was able to give us. We went through the Great Books courses. ... Loved reading the firsthand sources and studying from home. It allowed more freedom, I think, the flexibility to pursue things, yeah, to pursue what we were good at and to continue on to have this well-rounded education. I love that. So that led me to study mathematics. ... I did a mathematics degree as well as her and *loved* [emphasis added] the idea of teaching. So, she really inspired me to start teaching right after university.

An apparent affinity for the family’s part in educating the children that grew out of Cathy’s own experiences also impacted her interpretation of Christian *paideia*, which she described as not knowing much about. “I would say [Christian *paideia* is] the heart of shepherding and instructing your students, whether that’s the students involved in the classroom or your children as a parent. How to instruct them in a way that is honoring to the Lord.”

Donald Masterson

Donald is finishing his fourth year teaching online at the CCE research site. He teaches multiple courses in the humanities including Associate Logic, Logic I and II, Senior Thesis, and a blended course of theology, history, and literature. He has written curriculum for Logic courses and other important pieces such as a doctoral thesis on the Stoic School of Antiquity after completing his master's research on the Epicurean School. Donald earned his Master of Divinity and Doctor of Philosophy from Aberdeen University in Scotland, UK.

Donald's teacher training took place while attending Aberdeen University. He recalled teaching Divinity undergraduates and first years in the role of an academic tutor. "These tutorials were around the context of the New Testament, which is basically what my thesis was on.... Then I had a visiting professorship... in Manila, teaching New Testament studies for a semester." With his citizenship in Scotland and his postgraduate education in Christianity and philosophy of antiquity, Donald provided a unique perspective on Christian *paideia* as enacted through the American CCE movement. He stated:

I think the classical Christian model takes the truth of the ancient *paideia* concept, and it democratizes it, because you didn't have that concept of everyone needs to follow this, certainly, up into the logic stage which is part of philosophy. That's for very, very few people, actually. So although we do often say we're going back to classical models, we're actually doing something quite profound with it. We're looking to spread it, but that I mean, has great Christian heritage as well.

By great Christian heritage, Donald referred to one of the Reformation leaders, John Knox, and his creation of the first public schooling system with the intent to educate lay people to read the

Bible. In the same way, Donald viewed the current application of Christian *paideia* in 21st century CCE.

Elizabeth Hunter

Elizabeth is in her ninth year teaching online at the CCE research site. She teaches integrated humanities survey courses that include Bible, history, and literature ranging from the ancient world to the modern epoch. A philosopher at heart, Elizabeth has always been interested in asking challenging questions, especially about education. She spent her postgraduate years questioning the state of education in democracies like Canada, her home country. Elizabeth recalled:

My master's thesis was on how homeschooling ought to be viewed as a viable and even encouraged alternative to a public school system by liberal democratic societies. Because a liberal democratic society *ought* [emphasis added] to have as its end goal in education, it ought to be to educate for autonomy. And so, I specifically looked at how home education, whether secular or parochial or whatever it is, umm, is particularly well suited to educating for autonomy and what that means for a liberal democratic society. And it means that if when you look at a society that claims liberal and democratic principles and then throws a hissy fit when people homeschool, it means that there's cognitive dissonance going on, and that if they truly either understood homeschooling or were aiming for what they said they were aiming for, those things would be treated differently.

Elizabeth's interest in homeschooling developed early on in her life when her family moved from Canada to North Carolina. She was in the eighth grade when her mother enrolled her in an "early startup classical school." She recalled being "fascinated with the process of education. ... Like we were involved in a big experiment, and people were always talking about

what they were doing. ... [I] felt very involved in that and wanted to comment on a lot of it.” Elizabeth moved back to Canada, and during her university years, further honed her skill of questioning the status of education.

When she began schooling her own children, Elizabeth had already decided to choose a classical approach based on her personal educational experiences combined with the reading of *The Well Trained Mind* by Susan Wise Bauer (1999) that she completed early in her undergraduate years. Reading *The Well Trained Mind* also contributed to Elizabeth’s earliest notion of *paideia* even though her understanding of it was still in a fledgling state. It took a visit to the home of some church friends in Quebec, Canada, to bring Christian *paideia* into tangible thought. Elizabeth remembered seeing a copy of *Beowulf* on their coffee table. During their conversation surrounding *Beowulf*, Elizabeth found the curriculum for classically educating her children as well as her current position at the CCE research site. Elizabeth, her husband, and their five children now live in the USA so she can classically homeschool her children without fear of the potential legal ramifications that they faced in Canada as recently as 2020.

Elizabeth Stuart

Elizabeth loves teaching Rhetoric and US History online courses at the CCE research site and makes an extraordinary participant, as the beneficiary of an entirely immersive educational experience in CCE. She was raised by CC educators, attended Logos School from kindergarten to 12th grade, and graduated from New St. Andrews College in Idaho after four years. Logos School is “one of the early classical Christian schools in America,” started by CCE pioneer Doug Wilson (1991) who wrote *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning* based on Sayers’s (1948) essay. Elizabeth knew she “wanted to be a teacher” going into college and received a semester of teacher training at New St. Andrews College before graduating with her Bachelor of Arts Degree

in Liberal Studies with an emphasis on education and history. She attributed most of her teacher training to her parents and through observation of her own outstanding teachers throughout her life. “You know that we all remember that one teacher or more who was *really good* [emphasis added] at what they did, and both my parents actually, genuinely were teachers or administrators. And so, I lived and breathed this stuff.”

Elizabeth’s teaching career has also consisted of working entirely in CCE environments. She taught at two CCE brick and mortar schools in Washington during the first decade of the new millennia. “I was in what we call the first generation of teachers who’d actually received a classical education, then going out to teach in classical schools.” Elizabeth married and moved to the UK in 2010, the birthplace of her husband, and they started a family. Upon returning to the US, Elizabeth began looking for a flexible teaching opportunity and was intrigued by her father’s current position at the online CCE research site. She remembered:

He would start talking about, “Oh, this is *really* [emphasis added] cool. I can do *this* [emphasis added] in my classroom and so on.” I’m like, “What do you mean, your *classroom* [emphasis added]?” You know what? I was such a novice in that sense of Adobe classroom things and stuff. ... So, I looked at it and went, OK. I guess, I guess we’ll try the technology teaching thing. You know, he’s really doing it. ... I know [the founders]. I know that they really *get* [emphasis added] classical and Christian, and so these are all good things, and I’m really glad that I did.

Elizabeth’s upbringing and culminating career in CCE made it impossible for her to recall a time when she did not understand Christian *paideia*. “I was drenched in this from the get-go because I saw it lived for me. Always the importance of this was core.”

Helen Miller

Helen holds both administrative and teaching positions in her current role at the online CCE research site. She teaches various literature, writing, theology, and history courses and has an affinity for teaching Shakespeare that she hopes to master by auditing courses in Harvard's EDEX program. Her love of literature is equally matched by her love of science, and she earned her Bachelor of Science degree in English from a Christian University in 1994. After graduation, Helen traveled a diverse career path before making her way to teaching at a CCE school. "I didn't understand why I had all these odd puzzle pieces that didn't seem to form a picture, *at all* [emphasis added]. They seemed all very, *very* [emphasis added] separate until... ." Helen recognized God's providence in leading her to a startup CC school:

It was a classical school, and I didn't understand what that meant, at all. All I knew is that I had respect for the people that I saw, you know, their names up on those slides, that they were the ones founding the school. I'm like, OK, and then they started talking about what classical education was, and I was like you, [the researcher]. I was like, *that's it* [emphasis added]. This is what I'm supposed to do, and I just knew.

Helen's earliest teaching experience copied her own educational background, some public, some Christian, but all secular. When asked specifically about Christian *paideia*, Helen could not help but see God's hand at work, again. She found it surprising to be raised by a pastor and reading God's word throughout her life and yet she was unable to de-secularize her thinking until teaching at the CCE startup. She recalled:

So, there's two-fold things. There's the hearing, the terminology: *paideia*, trivium, everything else, and we were just deer in the headlights. We were like, "What do you

mean [emphasis added] by *paideia*?" We didn't know. The vocabulary was something that was very foreign to all of us that started teaching, but I'll never forget when I was in the classroom. . . . I was using the Veritas Press second grade history, so creation through the fall of ancient Egypt, and I was preparing the lesson, and I got up to teach the kids, and it clicked. . . . that *world history and biblical history* [emphasis added] overlapped.

Helen continued learning as she taught, attended workshops and an ACCS conference that eventually led to her position teaching at the online CCE research site.

Kelly Livingston

Kelly's relationship with the CCE research site developed before he began online teaching. He first came to know the CCE parent organization when he was asked to write parts of the curriculum for the courses he now teaches online, an integrated humanities course covering theology, history, and literature. His contributions to the curriculum included Doyle's *The Lost World* and Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. During this same time, Kelly taught at a brick-and-mortar CCE school in Colorado. He taught there for 11 years, until 2015 when the leadership opted to change the school's pedagogical model. Kelly shared:

They were trying to convert Charlotte Mason into, "Hey, she fits wonderfully into a classical model. In fact, *she's better* [emphasis added], and because of this reason. . . .", and the new headmaster at our school totally loved her and just threw out everything we'd ever been doing. I didn't really integrate well with that and wasn't going to move forward with that plan.

Kelly also did not plan on moving since he and his wife were expecting their second child, and the online CCE academy provided the opportunity he needed to continue his teaching career without changing his physical location.

Teaching was not the first career Kelly considered. While in his twenties, he began training as a youth pastor but struggled to find a nearby college where he could earn a pastoral degree. He believed that attending a university as an education major might help him secure a future position as a youth pastor or Bible teacher. “Even though I was intending to get a teaching degree to help me with my youth pastoring, it turned out to be the opposite.” Kelly knew that God had prepared his way and is happy to use his pastoral training in the classroom, teaching middle schoolers through the logic phase of CCE and hoping to enlighten their minds to the true, the good, and beautiful. He recognized Christian *paideia* as integral to achieving that aim.

Margaret Miler

Margaret enjoys teaching geometry and “only geometry” at the CCE research site. She has always enjoyed teaching geometry, beginning with teaching her own children in the home, at co-ops, or on base as a homeschooling military family.

We moved around a lot. And so usually the church we were in would have a co-op and, you know, some of the kids were doing classical, some of them were just doing regular, just whatever the parents decided. I was just always usually the math teacher in the co-op because nobody *else* [emphasis added] wants to teach geometry *except* [emphasis added] me.

Margaret was drawn to CCE after reading Sayers’s (1948) essay and chose CCE curriculum to homeschool her children. She became “very interested in trying to teach to the strengths of the way that children’s minds develop.”

Margaret’s formal education culminated in a Bachelor of Science and Education in Math and History, or BS EdD, from Montana State University in the 1980s. She had a semester of teacher training and graduated with her teaching certificate. Math, history, and teaching methods

functioned as catalysts for her current teaching position at the CCE research site, but Margaret's faith was her primary reason. When speaking about Christian *paideia*, her face lit up as she conveyed:

So, my idea of Christian *paideia* is to really teach people to look at the world and think about, think about God in all these subjects. How do they all *fit* [emphasis added] together, and how did God put them all [together]? Because they really do. They're all so intertwined. And how do you see this kind of like, I don't know, spiderweb or something that *just fits* [emphasis added], and fits together perfectly?

Mariana Salas-Romero

Mariana is in her eighth year teaching Spanish at the CCE research site. She loves teaching teenagers Spanish online and calls it her “dream job.” Mariana was raised in Mexico and earned a degree in speech pathology in Mexico City where she enjoyed working as a speech therapist. She worked with children who had “cerebral palsy or Down Syndrome from birth” before moving to Canada with her husband. In Canada, “you need a master’s degree to work as a speech pathologist,” and Mariana desired to start a family rather than go back to school. Having children became the first step of a journey that Mariana recalled as intricately woven into her faith and part of what moved her toward her current dream job. Mariana had been unaware that homeschooling was an option for educating children and was initially introduced to the idea through her local church. She shared:

So, we've never, *in our lives* [emphasis added], have heard about homeschooling coming from Mexico. That's not. That's unheard of, so I was just assuming that my kids were going to go to school, but then you have them and just start hearing at church, some friends were homeschooling. So, they introduced me to the idea of homeschooling, like,

“What? Do... you just don't teach? Like you'd *never* [emphasis added] send them?” It was such a foreign concept for me to like... *how* [emphasis added]? Like, I couldn't even grasp my brain around the thought of not sending them to school.

Mariana relied on her church family for support and advice when it came time to homeschool her two sons, and the more she grew in her faith, the more she began to understand the how and why of offering a God honoring education.

Mariana's introduction to CCE came a few years later when her boys were in the third and fourth grades. She received a CCE catalog from her sister who had recently enrolled her children in an online CCE academy. Mariana and her homeschooling church community began reading and learning about the classical model. She read *The Well Trained Mind* and other staples of the field and committed her efforts to teaching classically. When her children grew beyond her expertise, Mariana enrolled them in the online CCE school where she is currently employed. She thanked CCE for growing not only her faith but also her understanding of Christian *paideia*. She realized:

When you start learning the theology of life, in general of how am I to live? ... All of a sudden, you start noticing this... progress of deeper understanding that the teaching, the education, my *every* [emphasis added] single second of *every* [emphasis added] day has to be filled with Christianity, with Christ.

Nathaniel Holmes

Nathaniel is a humanities instructor at the CCE research site. He teaches integrated theology, history, and literature courses, German I and II, and German literature. He has been a proponent of CCE since the earliest stages of the movement in America, well before the start of

the new millennia. Along with his wife, Nathaniel taught his children and in homeschooling co-ops throughout the 1980s and 1990s. He shared:

[My wife] loves literature, poetry, writing, and she excels at teaching those subjects. And our kids got just a fabulous introduction, but more and more, I would sort of nudge and say, “Well, you need to give them the context to some of these things. You need to give them the context to Shakespeare. You need to give them the context to... .” So she and I would do a little bit of team teaching where she would teach the literature and I would teach the history.

Realizing that homeschooling curriculum was missing this connection of historical context, Nathaniel and his wife began their own publishing company and wrote integrative history materials. They spent over a decade traveling around America, educating interested homeschooling families on how to teach history. Nathaniel recalled:

[We] transformed history for home schoolers. We went around the country to book fairs and did seminars on: You should teach history chronologically. You should begin at the beginning. You should teach the ancient world first, and you should teach history chronologically, because that's the easiest way to understand it, and that's the way the Bible presents history. Before we started publishing our material, nobody did it that way.

Nathaniel’s own educational background provided the foundation for his expertise in history and pedagogy. In high school, Nathaniel was a “math/science geek.” He took dual enrollment courses at Georgia Tech and attended Davidson College as an undergraduate where after two years, he was “seduced by the humanities.” Davidson’s general education requirements included a “two-year integrated humanities program, and you started with the Epic of Gilgamesh, and you finished two years later with Jean Paul Sartre and the existentialists.”

Nathaniel switched from math to “history with a minor in German” and spent a year studying abroad in Germany. He attended Stanford for graduate school in “a joint doctorate program where you could take a two-year integrated humanities program and get a joint degree in your discipline and humanities.” He had traveled this road before, stating:

But it was graduate student level seminar stuff, and we started with the Epic of Gilgamesh and finished two years later with Jean Paul Sarte, and I was like, “Oh, this is great. I’ll have *fun* [emphasis added] doing this.” So, I worked on a joint PhD in History and Humanities.

He also married, earned a “Fulbright Fellowship to go study abroad in Germany, *again* [emphasis added],” where he and his wife had their first child, and passed his oral exams for his doctorate.

Nathaniel and his wife have been teaching CCE since they began their pedagogical careers. “I just didn’t know. I didn’t know to call it classical Christian. For me, it was Great Books from a biblical perspective.” They have written CCE curriculum, designed a CCE university model program that they have co-directed for 20 years, and brainstormed and developed products with other CCE publishers. In his spare time, Nathaniel sits as president on a board of church schools and works closely with his state’s Department of Education, advocating for the rights of families to home educate their children. When offered his current position teaching online at the CCE research site, Nathaniel was amused:

I looked at it, and you know it took me all of about 10 minutes to go, “*Oh* [emphasis added], this is a Great Books program. This is *just* [emphasis added] like the program I did at Davidson. This is *just* [emphasis added] like the program I did at Stanford. It’s from a biblical worldview... .” Sign me up!

He still has the original curriculum from Davidson College on his desk and connects Christian *paideia* to those earlier days, stating, “The concept was embodied way, way back in everything I had done from my freshman year in college on. I didn’t *realize* [emphasis added] what it was.”

Sally Bahler

Sally is in her sixth year teaching online at the CCE research site. She teaches integrated theology, history, and literature courses and previously worked in CCE before arriving at her current position. Married with two young daughters, Sally found the flexibility and convenience of teaching online beneficial to her role as a mother. In addition, she appreciated the pedagogy and curriculum of the online CCE research site. She recalled, “I wanted to move back to the area that I’m from, and there aren’t very many classical schools here, or if there are, they’re kind of pigeonholed for a very conservative Catholic subgroup that we have here.” Sally had already been teaching “in North Carolina in a classical Christian School,” and consulting on pedagogy and curriculum for a number of schools. She explained:

So, one was a choice school that was trying to implement classical pedagogy and curriculum, and then another was a private Charlotte Mason School that was on the university model. And then the third that I worked with was a charter school for Mung refugees.

Sally’s background provided the education she needed to advance in multiple areas. She described her earliest education as “a semi classical schooling environment. It wasn’t pure classical, and it wasn’t Christian, but it was more in the style of the old British private schooling system,” after which she attended a liberal arts Christian college in Pennsylvania. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in English literature and went to the UK for graduate school. As far back as she recalls, Sally had been interested in people groups and the way they lived their daily lives, so she

studied anthropology at the University of Saint Andrews in Scotland where she earned a Master of Research and Social Anthropology. She shared her interest:

Now, anthropology has broken beyond the typical tribe mindset, so we, you know, studied various subcultures in big cities as well. It's a good way of seeing how one can really understand the daily relationships that people have. It's not these large-scale economic systems, but more just, you know what's important to cultures and subcultures in their regular life.

Sally's study and attention to cultures and subcultures helped her to connect Christian *paideia* to her current role as an online CCE educator. She first became aware of Christian *paideia* at her liberal arts college by meeting and developing relationships with classmates who had come from a CCE background. She was an "old school student," and related *paideia* to virtue cultivation.

Sally read books and learned from seminal pieces, including Adler's (1984) *The Paideia Program*, commonly called the Great Books program. Her thinking about *paideia* has grown into a more Christian *paideia*. Sally related, "[It] has kind of extended into not just the individual's cultivation of virtue, which is what I was thinking it was when I was young, into more of an actual culture of classical Christian education and biblical worldview."

Results

Four themes and twelve subthemes emerged as a result of data analysis, plus a point of structure discovered through hermeneutic phenomenological reflection (van Manen, 2016). The data gathered from individual interviews, observations of archived lessons, and focus groups yielded nearly 1,000 pages of original information and resulted in close to 200 preliminaries in vivo codes. Themes of *understanding the nature and character of God*, *building holistic connections*, *forming Christian character*, and *leading Christian culture* were revealed after first

and second cycle coding, analytic memoing, theming the data, and researcher reflection, culminating in the completion of hermeneutic circles and theme saturation. A point of structure developed that outlined the shape of the essence (van Manen, 2016) of Christian *paideia*, namely *everything God intended anchored in history*.

Table 2

Point of Structure: Everything God Intended Anchored in History with Themes & Subthemes

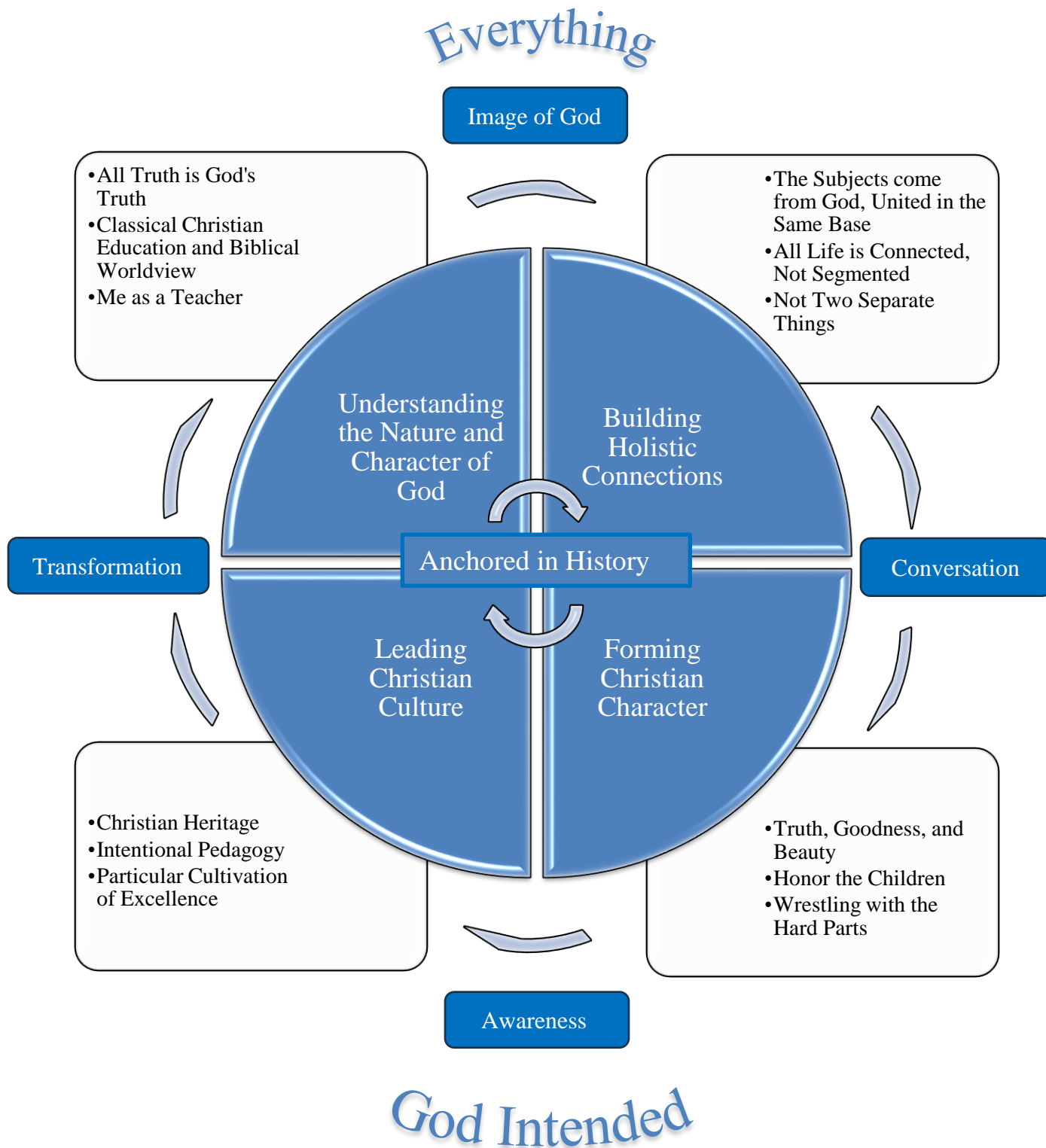
Theme	Subthemes			
Understanding the Nature and Character of God	<i>All Truth is God's Truth</i>	<i>Classical Christian Education and Biblical Worldview</i>	<i>Me as a Teacher</i>	<i>Image of God</i>
Building Holistic Connections	<i>The Subjects come from God, United in the Same Base</i>	<i>All Life is Connected and Not Segmented</i>	<i>Not Two Separate Things</i>	<i>Conversation</i>
Forming Christian Character	<i>Truth, Goodness, and Beauty</i>	<i>Honor the Children</i>	<i>Wrestling with the Hard Parts</i>	<i>Awareness</i>
Leading Christian Culture	<i>Christian Heritage</i>	<i>Intentional Pedagogy</i>	<i>Particular Cultivation of Excellence</i>	<i>Transformation</i>

Table 2 demonstrates the themes and subthemes of the essence of Christian *paideia* for thirteen career CC educators within their lived experiences of online global curricular decision-making. However, lived experiences are not flat or static (van Manen, 2016), and Table 2 is a simplification of the dynamic essence but a necessary image for marking the beginning point of an abstract ideal. Figure 1 represents a more active and multi-dimensional perspective of the CCE paradigm as revealed through this hermeneutic phenomenology and includes the point of

structure in support of the framing of the essence of Christian *paideia*. It is an original creation that stemmed from the final data synthesis concept map recommended by Saldaña (2021) when a researcher is attempting to provide a bigger picture that also reveals processes.

Figure 1

The Essence of Christian Paideia Concept Map



Understanding the Nature and Character of God

Understanding the nature and character of God was a common theme that developed across all three data collections and coded in vivo 32 times. This theme gave rise to the shape of the essence of Christian *paideia* for the career CC educators and represented the participants' foundational beliefs in the triune Christian God as the author, designer, and exhibitor of all knowledge. During his interview, Kelly Livingston explained:

Some of the most intelligent people in the world have been the most wicked, so we don't want wicked smart people, we want good people. And the primary way, of course, is God's word. We need to always have that as our foundation, not Plato or Socrates or anything but God's word, which is a record of God's revelation of Himself, and we need to be faithful to that and help kids to understand how trustworthy that is. They don't just need to know it, but they need to feel it. They need to feel it in their heart and their lives. And their examples.

Elements of *understanding the nature and character of God* appeared for twelve participants across all three data collections and the thirteenth participant in the interview and observation collections. The subthemes included: *all truth is God's truth*, *classical Christian education and biblical worldview*, *me as a teacher*, and *image of God*. The codes *God's word*, *the author of our story*, and *understanding who God is* were clustered to form the subtheme *all truth is God's truth*, coded 71 times. The codes *training in the how-to's*, *the ladder*, and *infuse biblical worldview* were clustered to form the subtheme *classical Christian education and biblical worldview*, coded 182 times. The codes *greater work*, *essentials of the faith*, *eye on the deeper things* were clustered to form the subtheme *me as a teacher*, coded 83 times. The codes *to live in Christ and for Christ*, *value of humanity*, *heart and mind of God* were clustered to form

image of God, coded 77 times. In total, the theme of *understanding the nature and character of God* was coded 445 times across interviews, observations, and focus group data collections.

The subtheme *all truth is God's truth* was found in vivo 23 times before themeing the data resulted in grouping codes (Saldaña, 2021) and hermeneutics produced interpretations (van Manen, 2016). *All truth is God's truth* appeared in 11 out of 13 participant interviews and during five participant observations of an archived lesson. Prior to themeing (Saldaña, 2021) and hermeneutics (van Manen, 2016), the subtheme *classical Christian education and biblical worldview* was found in vivo 41 times in all thirteen participants' interviews, one participant's observation, and one participant's contribution during the focus group. The subtheme *me as a teacher* was found in vivo 21 times, with eight occurrences during individual interviews, 10 during the humanities focus group, and three during the multiple disciplines focus group. *Image of God* occurred in vivo 16 times, appearing in seven out of 13 participant interviews, four observations, two humanities focus group members, and three multiple disciplines focus group members.

All Truth is God's Truth

Themes are thought to bring meaning into form (van Manen, 2016). *All truth is God's Truth* was the way career CC educators brought form to their curricular decisions through God. God's character has been revealed throughout history, and this rendition of Saint Augustine's famous line (S. J. Smith, 2020) formed the participants' curricular decisions. Elizabeth Stuart demonstrated the essence of *all truth is God's truth* during her individual interview:

Even now, in snippets from Cicero or Aristotle or Quintillion, who are flaming pagans, but God gives common grace, and here they are, thousands of years ago, observing that man *does* worship a God. Obviously, they don't believe in Jehovah, but they were talking

like, “Well, obviously, because man worships God and God does this or that, then this is how we need to behave.” Or here is the nature of mankind. And it's like, yes, spot on. Like, I'm sorry that you weren't a Christian because this is pretty good stuff, you know? And then, so when they're creating their thoughts based on that, that's going to have an impact on, therefore, what we're teaching. When we're going, “Hey, rhetoric is a good idea. Hey, logic's a good idea. Hey, reading excellent things is a good idea, whether they be explicitly Christian or not.”... We're not here for the surface stuff. We're here for a God who plunders the Egyptians, who made it all, including Homer and Quintilian. He made those people, he gave them those brains, let's utilize that.

Classical Christian Education and Biblical Worldview

Themes develop from experience, a point of focus (van Manen, 2016), and this subtheme revealed the point of focus for career CC educators and the difficulty of explicating Christian *paideia* apart from CCE or biblical worldview. When speaking to her peers in the humanities focus group, Becky Snyder divulged the nuance of Christian *paideia* as it connects to worldview, classical, and the curricular decisions of a CC educator:

I know as doing teacher evaluations, one of the things that [the admin] and I went back and forth about a little bit was the category on a biblical worldview element or what the, you know, I can't remember the wording on it. ... Because so often the only way to do that in 15 minutes is to see if there *was* [emphasis added] a verse tacked on, if there *was* [emphasis added] a connection, and that's not really what we want in a classical education. We want to see that it is in everything that people are speaking and doing, it's who they are as a person, and how they reflect it. So, I think as far as making curriculum

decisions, there are practical things we can do. But it's more so as an educator, are we deeply rooted in seeking God in all the things that *we* [emphasis added] study?

Me as a Teacher

This subtheme exhibited the connection between personhood and presentation of curriculum for career CC educators and advanced the previous subtheme into deeper explication. The essence of *me as a teacher* revealed the inward beliefs and outward behaviors of the educator in relation to teaching a classical curriculum from a biblical worldview. In the multiple disciplines focus group, Mariana explained:

You're either a Christian in every single thing you do, or you're not. Everything is. You can't pick and choose where you're a Christian, and how you behave as a Christian, and how your life is impacted as a Christian, so your Christianity actually impacts every single molecule of your life, every single part, every single activity, everything, every single thought, every single word that you say. So, if it doesn't affect every single thing, that's when we pray, 'God search my heart that I may repent because I am cherishing sin,' so I bring that to class. I bring that to the Spanish kids. Umm. Yes, it's Spanish. We need to learn the language. Some of them are gonna be missionaries. Some of them are going to go and live in South America when they get married, or some of them are never going to see it again after a few years. And when they get married, and never touch Spanish again. But that's OK, because the point is yes, to learn Spanish, it's a great thing. It's a great skill to have. It's wonderful to have a second language. There's no question about it, but the idea is that it is for Him, through Him, and to Him that we do all things. And so, we are being sanctified in our teaching and learning Spanish.

Image of God

This subtheme was another point of focus for CC educators when engaging with curriculum in their online global classrooms. The essence of the theme revealed the significance in considering God, His nature and character, and how He fashioned man in His image (*ESV*, Genesis 1:27, 2001/2016) when making curricular decisions that placed Christian *paideia* as a pedagogical aim. Because hermeneutic phenomenology data collection and analysis work together to reveal how meaning exposes itself pre-reflection (van Manen, 2016), the *image of God* could have existed in the CC educator's pre-reflection. During his individual interview, Kelly demonstrated:

It's God; He built his character into us, so education, enlightenment should activate, so to speak, to speak in a philosophical way, that innate image of God in us, and allow us to be accessing that. And so, it becomes a means of spiritual awareness of God as revealed to us naturally. So, we can naturally access those things and not even be aware of God's philosophy.

An essence can also be enacted (van Manen, 2016), and the essence of the *image of God* can become part of operationalizing curriculum in the online global classroom as described by Helen Miller in her interview:

We talk about and integrate science and we integrate history all with the foundation of God and who He is. We may not be able to figure out why He does what He does, but we can trust it. So, Providence comes in, sovereignty comes in. His creative element, you know, how are we made in his image? So, if we list characteristics of God, how do we see those in ourselves as well? I tell the students, I say, "We're obviously not God, we understand that. But we are made in his image, so what does that look like?"

Building Holistic Connections

Building holistic connections was the second common theme that emerged across all three data collections and coded in vivo 85 times. This theme further developed the essence of Christian *paideia* for the career CC educators and represented the participants' recognition that all aspects of life connect. In support of 21st-century educational theory that stated education does not exist in a vacuum (Benson, 2021; Biesta, 2020; Biesta & Hannam, 2020), career CC educators recognized this central fact when revealing the essence of Christian *paideia* during curricular decisions. Catherine Davidson's observation produced the following dialogue:

What we're doing today is learning the history of how Isaac Newton solved these problems of finding the zeros. We already find zeroes; we've done it a lot in Algebra II and Pre-Calc. Now we're going to look at Newton's method for finding the zeroes. ... It is just a historical look back. ... throwing scientists off... huge debate... I read a book that argued Sir Isaac Newton and Renee Descartes were the two most intelligent people who ever lived. I mean, we got to set aside the God Man Jesus Christ. ... I wanted to show you a page from his [Sir Isaac Newton] hand-written journal. ... He read the Bible like 12 hours a day. This is what he did in his spare time.

Catherine connected prior knowledge to new content knowledge, historical events to present course content, and course content to Jesus Christ. The impact of her chosen words would fall short without a family's commitment to providing their children with a classical Christian education and Catherine's own understanding of Christian *paideia* as a CCE educator who expressed the theme of *building holistic connections*.

Elements of *building holistic connections* appeared within all participants' individual interviews, witnessed in all participant observations of online global teaching in their core

content area, and discussed by seven out of 12 participants during focus groups. The subthemes included: *the subjects come from God, united in the same base*; *all life is connected and not segmented*; *not two separate things*; and *conversation*. The codes *integrated and not isolated*, *building a cathedral*, and *the ultimate hero* were clustered to form the subtheme *the subjects come from God, united in the same base*, and was coded 48 times. The codes *heart and mind*, *teaching is relational*, and *context* were clustered to form the subtheme *all life is connected and not segmented*, coded 106 times. The codes *in a box*, *Christian education*, and *21st century kaleidoscope of clashing cultures* were clustered to form the subtheme *not two separate things*, coded 39 times. The codes *engage in conversation*, *God is part of the conversation*, and *Great Conversation* were clustered to form *conversation*, coded 87 times. In total, the theme of *building holistic connections* was coded 365 times across interviews, observations, and focus group data collections.

The subtheme *the subjects come from God, united in the same base* was coded 11 times before theming the data resulted in grouping codes (Saldaña, 2021) and hermeneutics produced interpretations (van Manen, 2016). *The subjects come from God, united in the same base* appeared in eight out of 13 participant interviews and during six participant observations of an archived lesson. Prior to theming (Saldaña, 2021) and hermeneutics (van Manen, 2016), the subtheme *all life is connected and not segmented* was coded 27 times in 10 participant interviews, interpreted in nine participant observations, and in vivo coded for one participant in the humanities focus group and four participants in the multiple disciplines focus group. The subtheme *not two separate things* was found in vivo one time in a participant interview. *Conversation* occurred in vivo 17 times, appearing in six out of 13 participant interviews, one observation, and mentioned by five participants during focus groups.

The Subjects Come from God, United in the Same Base

The essence of *the subjects come from God, united in the same base* was formed by the participants' understanding that a holistic education initiates curriculum design from the base of the ultimate designer. During her individual interview, Helen Miller expressed:

We're not adding God to the subjects; we're seeing how the subjects come from God. So, God is the source of the subjects, not trying to make something Christian by adding a Bible verse or adding, in a brick-and-mortar school, adding Chapel or a Bible class. That's not what makes Christian education. So, everything about what we do centers around Christ as the core and filters from there and not the opposite direction.

All Life is Connected and Not Segmented

In general, scientific organizational patterns have minimalized God in education (Balukh et al., 2022), but this subtheme provided the perspective of career CC educators that education should not be reduced to bits of knowledge but should be explored in the context of history, in the relation of culture, and in the hearts and minds of the students they teach. The essence of *all life is connected and not segmented* was shared by Cathy Robertson during her individual interview:

I don't think you can have a complete education, I'm a little biased, but without an understanding of the math and physics of how the world works, and I love to bring in the connections with other subjects as well. I think giving them more of that well-rounded perspective. And just the ability, if they're growing in that wisdom of the Lord and their faith too, and building a strong foundation, I think in order to counteract a lot of the lies in the culture right now, you need to have a solid science background and foundation. Know the answers to some of these questions. Be able to speak knowledgeably about it,

and not be frayed by what you're going to encounter then at university and beyond. Yeah, be able to have those conversations with people. So, I don't think you can separate that, you know, physics and math is a very integral part of it.

Not Two Separate Things

The essence of this subtheme enhanced the career CC educators' approach to curricular decision-making through the interwoven but limited aspects of a Christian worldview. It was a consistent emphasis on de-secularization in modern Christian education by embracing the holistic nature of God and was explicated by Becky during her personal interview:

I don't think [Christian worldview] encompasses all that [Christian *paideia*] is, because what [Christian worldview] did, it just helped me know rules, right? So *as* [emphasis added] a Christian, I don't believe in this; *as* [emphasis added] a Christian, I do believe in this. As a Christian – which isn't bad. Rules are a good, like, you know, baby stage. *But* [emphasis added] that didn't help me to understand, um, what about the situation that there's nothing in Scripture about? How do I address these? I mean, AI's obviously not addressed in Scripture, what do I do with this? How do I understand it? How do I stop just thinking, OK, what does the Bible say, but also what is the *heart of God* [emphasis added] in the Bible, and how does it apply to everything? And so I think that *that's* [emphasis] the difference, and I personally, in my own faith, struggled for a long time because I just kept trying to find the answers completely outlined in Scripture, as opposed to the heart of who God is, what He cares about, what breaks His heart, what warms His heart. What do we see? We see *that* [emphasis added], and the Bible isn't designed as a system of rules. It's designed as a display of who our Savior is, and so when we come to

classical education, I think they're deeply linked because that's also how we approach [classical Christian education].

Conversation

The essence of *conversation* built the holistic connection of education to all of history and attached CCE to Christian *paideia*. This subtheme included the actions of engaging students in conversations, recognizing God's part in the conversation, and continuing the conversation as it relates to the great conversation throughout the course of time. Elizabeth Hunter explained the essence of *conversation* in her humanities focus group meeting:

But when I think of Christian *paideia*, I think as the idea of being like involved with a humility and piety towards the history of Christian culture and the whole great conversation, but not just from a classical perspective, but from a Christian perspective. The great conversation of church history and of being members of that and seeing that as our family history. ... I think that really the key aspect that comes out of the curriculum that I'm teaching, that I really want the kids to grasp, that I think is essential to this concept of them being initiated into a Christian *paideia* is a great sense of humility before the mighty works of God that we see in the 1000 years of history that we study in Omnibus II. Like, it's just astoundingly beautiful to see all these sinful, terrible people and all these sinful, terrible cultures and the power of the Gospel as it sweeps through them and how God uses even sinful people to accomplish his plan throughout history. And then so as we *{sic}* encounter God, we are in awe and humbled before Him in the curriculum, but also as we encounter these really great thinkers and writers of the past, I want the students to be humble as they approach this great conversation and learn from the voices of the people who have gone before them.

Forming Christian Character

Forming Christian character was the third common theme that emerged across all three data collections and coded in vivo 49 times. This theme continued to fill the form of the essence of Christian *paideia* for the career CC educators. At least half of the participants who were unaware of language to articulate Christian *paideia* still applied this theme in vivo when discussing Christian *paideia*'s relationship with their curricular decision-making. During his interview, Nathaniel Holmes explains:

The idea that education is about forming character and forming Christian character, again, that side of it [is] more than beyond just presenting the information from a worldview. Focusing not so much on just transferring knowledge but focusing on forming character - that really came out of the homeschooling years when we homeschooled our own children in the 80s and 90s. Obviously for us, education was a critical part of forming our children's character, helping them to acquire the godly virtues, and education as a tool to assist in that. So again, we knew that's what we were doing. I could have articulated it from very early on: our reasons for home schooling, and our reason for the selection, the material we used, and the way in which we taught it, and what the goal of our teaching was. But I didn't actually hear the term Christian *paideia* until [the CCE research site]. As soon as I heard it, I'm going, "Yes, I certainly understand what that is because I've been doing that for 20 years."

Elements of *forming Christian character* appeared across nine participants' individual interviews, witnessed in all observations of archived lessons, and discussed by one participant in each focus group meeting. The subthemes included *truth, goodness, and beauty; honor the children; wrestling with the hard parts, and awareness*. The codes *classical realm, Christian*

linking of paideia, and *beauty of the online global classroom* were clustered to form the subtheme *truth, goodness, and beauty*, and was coded 163 times. The codes *have a burden for the students*, *authentically human*, and *teach to their strengths* were clustered to form the subtheme *honor the children*, coded 65 times. The codes *trapped in a subculture*, *hear their experiences*, and *challenges* were clustered to form the subtheme *wrestling with the hard parts*, coded 81 times. The codes *culturally sensitive*, *cultural differences*, and *embodied before realized* were clustered to form *awareness*, and coded 66 times. In total, the theme of *forming Christian character* was coded 424 times across interviews, observations, and focus group data collections.

The subtheme *truth, goodness, and beauty* was coded 40 times before theming the data resulted in grouping codes (Saldaña, 2021) and hermeneutics produced interpretations (van Manen, 2016). *Truth, goodness, and beauty* appeared in five out of 13 participant interviews, witnessed during two participant observations of an archived lesson, and referenced by one participant at the focus group meeting. Prior to theming data (Saldaña, 2021) and hermeneutics (van Manen, 2016), the subtheme *honor the children* was coded 16 times in 5 participant interviews, interpreted in one participant observation, and in vivo coded for one participant in the humanities focus group and one participant in the multiple disciplines focus group. The subtheme *wrestling with the hard parts* was coded 24 times across nine transcripts, one observation, and two participant discussions in the multiple disciplines focus group. *Awareness* was also coded 24 times, appearing in seven out of 13 participant interviews, two participant discussions in the humanities focus group, and three participant discussions in the multiple disciplines focus group.

Truth, Goodness, and Beauty

The essence of *truth, goodness, and beauty* envelopes the preconceived notion of first principles as applied in antiquity (Turley, 2014) and explored through the trivium curriculum (M. Joseph, 2002) when creating culture (Jaeger, 1943) with curriculum (P. B. Joseph, 2021). The subtheme was not a subjective, emotive expression but an objective approach to curricular decisions that produced Christian *paideia*. During her focus group, Catherine Madison explained:

We have a part of our studio class that has to do with aesthetics. The philosophy of beauty and how being an artist is different as a Christian than as in the world and how we are to think. How do we think? How do we think about creating things? How do we think about standards of truth, goodness, and beauty in our artwork? ... The older kids start to get really excited about that kind of stuff, and once again bringing into play... I mean, just last, before vacation, we were talking what are the things an artist can do, or what can somebody do to think Christianly about their role? And they were really stumbling around in the dark. And I brought in, "Does anybody know the first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism?" And the moment I brought that up, it was like there were two or three of them who understood what that was. And that really is the pivotal point where they started to really understand. "Oh, now I understand," how that goes into their creating works of art. That it's to enjoy God forever, and it's that pleasure that we have in that.

Honor the Children

The subtheme *honor the children* helped to develop the theme of *forming Christian character* by revealing the conscious burden felt by the research participants. The necessity of

teaching to student strengths and not causing them to stumble marked the essence of *honor the children*. When observing Margaret Miler’s archived geometry lesson, she demonstrated this subtheme as she encouraged:

Now I know this is one of those pithy sayings that people like to tell you, “The struggle you're in today is developing the strength you need for tomorrow.” Unfortunately, it's kind of true, though. We talked about perseverance, that's a good Christian character, right? Things get hard, you don't quit. You persevere, you work at it a little bit harder, you keep going. You're climbing the mountain, and it levels off, and you gotta keep going to climb it again. You know, it's kind of one of those things. It's hard at times for everybody. It does, it helps us to learn to persevere, to not quit, to think that the next time, tomorrow when we come across this situation that's hard, we won't give up.

Wrestling with the Hard Parts

The essence of wrestling with the hard parts recognizes the difficulties experienced by CC educators and their students in the online global classroom because of systemic academic antagonism against Christianity and the weight of oppression living within a secularized or persecuted culture (Balukh et al., 2022). The many nuances of this subtheme made its essence elusive, and Elizabeth Stuart demonstrated the complex nature of *wrestling with the hard parts* in an online global classroom during the multiple disciplines focus group:

Currently plunging toward the Civil War, so slavery and racism and Jim Crow and all that sort of thing formulate a great deal of American history, not that we are alone, of course. And reminding my students of that, that American slavery is not special, and you need to get it out of your head that it is because the media is *relentless* [emphasis added] about that in this day and age. ... So, I've had some very interesting conversations with

my students and bearing in mind that I have Black kids in my classes. Some of them, of course, though are not American, and so American slavery didn't affect them. They stayed in their African country and grew up that way. So, the young man that I had, also though, spent a great deal of time in France, so he was fluent in French as well as his own native language and in English. ... I loved his perspective on these things because he understood, again, that sin is sin, no matter what country you're in, and that slavery has been with us from the beginning of time practically, that the Black nations in Africa are just as guilty of it as... remember the Ottoman Empire, everyone? Yeah, let's talk about *that* [emphasis added], as well as China, as well as... I mean name a country, they've had slavery. OK. And it's a very dominant topic in my history class, but even in my rhetoric class, my rhetoric book likes to go here with a few things. We talk about the Civil Rights Movement and eloquent people there like Dr. Martin Luther King as opposed to someone like Malcolm X, and violent rhetoric versus peaceful rhetoric in trying to resolve age-old sin problems, but I guess that's the point. I have all these kids from everywhere, and I don't want to spend a lot of time going, "Hey, what makes you different from all of us?" Like that can be cool, and fun, and when we have time to talk about some of those things, that's great. But it's mostly, I want to find out what we have in common. Do you see Christ in each other? Do you see the church moving? Do you see how God has worked both in you and then with you, and your country in relation to all these other countries all around? And how He's used different countries for different parts of His story. You're all part of that, and I'm part of that here in this moment. Here we are in this one little classroom that is allowed because we're online. I love that. The kids like to reflect on that, too. They all think, yeah, we're all right here in this chapter of God's story.

Awareness

The essence of the subtheme *awareness* was how career CC educators approach their curricular decisions in an online global classroom when considering the formation of Christian character within the ideal of Christian *paideia*. During her multiple disciplines focus group, Catherine Davidson shared the essence of *awareness*:

I think for me, just globally, being more aware of ... where they are. So I'll go, and when I learn where my students are, I'll actually look at their profiles. Go look at where they live, and I have several students in China, which I love. They're in an underground church and they actually met in apartments where they were found out, so they had to move those apartments. The kids meet in one set of apartments, and the church actually meets in another. And their pastor was just arrested. They just talk about it like, "Oh yeah, this is life here." Now he's going to go for three years to a Chinese prison. I am just like what? I read this, but I am actually teaching kids who are living this, and so what does that mean? How does that affect how I teach or my day-to-day activities? I don't know, except that, um, it just, it *matters* [emphasis added] to me that I'm aware ... I think it was Mariana [who contributed], you know, right now, set in front of you is this work. ... You know what your job is, you know what your walk of faith looks like right now - it's *do* [emphasis] this. It's do this hard math and to do it for His glory, not to get a fathead yourself, but for Him. And so constantly emphasizing that. Emphasizing that in a lot of places, it's hard to be a Christian. Praying for each other, letting the other students ... I can't say everything, but letting other students know what some students are going through. I think it does help a lot that the students understand we live in very different parts of the world.

Leading Christian Culture

Leading Christian culture was the final common theme that emerged across all three data collections and coded in vivo 15 times. This theme completed the two-dimensional form of the essence of Christian *paideia* for the career CC educators demonstrated in Figure 1. The essence of this theme expanded on the intention of shaping Christian culture through acts of consciousness during curricular decisions. Donald Masterson explained this essence to his focus group:

I am wanting to give them the skills, the ways of thought, that they can *{sic}* take forward. Umm. And how in this fitting, you know, our whole selves, what we're learning -worldview matters: So, what we think about finances, what we think about ethics, what we think about marriage, what we think of the purpose of life. ... We have a choice. We can kind of pick it up passively from the culture, which is increasingly divested of any idea of God or objective reality. And if you don't want to fall into that, you actually have to kind of do some work, right? You know, we live in the culture. We can't just sit back and just kind of coast along. You will have to have kind of an intellectual background that counters a lot of the messages you're receiving.

Elements of *leading Christian culture* appeared across all participants' individual interviews, observations of archived lessons, and discussed by four participants in the humanities focus group meeting and four participants in the multiple disciplines focus group. The subthemes included: *Christian heritage*, *intentional pedagogy*, *particular cultivation of excellence*, and *transformation*. The codes *all history is church history*, *building literacy in the church*, *instruction in the books of the Bible* were clustered to form the subtheme *Christian heritage*, and was coded 46 times. The codes *build community*, *the heart of teaching*, and *humility and piety*

were clustered to form the subtheme *intentional pedagogy*, coded 119 times. The codes *virtue*, *certain mindset*, and *create culture* were clustered to form the subtheme *particular cultivation of excellence*, coded 66 times. The codes *biblical analysis as guide stone*, *move forward in faith*, and *transcend culture* were clustered to form *transformation*, coded 75 times. In total, the theme of *leading Christian culture* was coded 321 times across interviews, observations, and focus group data collections.

The subtheme *Christian heritage* was coded 23 times before theming the data resulted in grouping codes (Saldaña, 2021) and hermeneutics produced interpretations (van Manen, 2016). *Christian heritage* appeared in six out of 13 participant interviews, witnessed during five participant observations of an archived lesson, and referenced by seven participants at the focus group meeting. Prior to theming data (Saldaña, 2021) and hermeneutics (van Manen, 2016), the subtheme *intentional pedagogy* was coded 50 times in nine participant interviews, interpreted in four participant observations, and coded for three participants in the humanities focus group and all participants in the multiple disciplines focus group. The subtheme *particular cultivation of excellence* was coded 13 times across six transcripts from individual interviews and for one participant from each focus group. *Transformation* was also coded 16 times in seven out of 13 participant interviews.

Christian Heritage

The essence of *Christian heritage* exposed the embedded belief of career CC educators that history is ultimately His story, and the story of Christians is inseparable from Christian heritage. CC educators enacted the essence of this subtheme when making curricular decisions in their online global classroom. Catherine Madison was observed enacting the essence of *Christian Heritage* throughout her archived lesson, including this dialogue from her opening class prayer:

Heavenly father, thank you Lord, the amazing history that we're going to be covering this week, especially today. I pray that you would help my students understand the tremendous importance of what happened during this time period that we call the Dark Ages; they were indeed not dark at all Lord. In many respects they were really tremendous times with great works of art, theologians that really dug deep in the *{sic}* scriptures and really analyzed things well, scholars that were brought back in the fray to be able to look back at the ancient works that were so important to keep alive and well, and that we have this day because of the work in the past. So thank you for the saints who have gone before us, Lord, and I pray that you would help us to recognize their value in our lives.

Intentional Pedagogy

The essence of *intentional pedagogy* was how career CC educators respond to the ontology of God's providence through His divine grace (Balukh et al., 2022; Nelson, 2020; *ESV*, 2 Cor 9:8, 2001/2016) when making curricular decisions to build Christian community and connect with the arching theme of *leading Christian culture*. In the humanities focus group, Nathaniel Holmes explained:

You won't understand your own culture until you get really, really deeply familiar with another one, and then you begin to realize the things that are peculiar to your culture and that are not, as [Elizabeth Hunter] observed, some of the things that we do in our churches are because we're Americans or North Americans or Westerners, and we don't understand that the Gospel transcends some of those local peculiarities and practices. So, it's the same principle applied in a different area. Being global, let's us do that. ... [The research site] has attracted a variety of religious orientations and persuasions. There are

Christians from all sorts of different denominations. I get Greek Orthodox students all the time. Occasionally, I have some Roman Catholics. I've had one or two astonishing miscues on my part with the Mormon students or the non-Trinitarian folks, and I go, "Oh, OK, well, we're gonna have to disagree on this one." But again, when we have those various perspectives in a classroom, when we're dealing with issues of church history, having people from those different branches of Christianity enriches our perspective. And you realize, "Oh, we do that because we're Baptist, not because it's fundamental to Christianity, but because it's our flavor of Christianity." And there are other flavors that do things differently. So global and online are, you know, synchronistic, and I think they help us.

Particular Cultivation of Excellence

This subtheme connected the ancient idea of *paideia* to enculturate higher ideals through a program of education (Jaeger, 1943) to 21st century Christian *paideia* to enculturate higher ideals through a CCE curriculum. In her interview, Sally Bahler reasoned:

Like Christian *paideia* is such a big umbrella, but at the same time it can feel very simplistic. Whereas classical Christian education, as it embodies the Christian *paideia* is a very holistic thing. So, you know, we have the Christian *paideia*, which is very much dealing with the ideals that we want in our children and in our culture as far as beauty, truth, and goodness, and how it looks to live in Christ and for Christ. But you know, classical Christian education, I think, takes all of these ideals and then it puts it into something that is a concretish course that we can follow in order to meet those ideals. So, if, like the Christian *paideia*, is this abstract sort of goal, classical Christian education is the ladder that is a real physical thing that's gonna get us up to that *paideia*, hopefully.

Transformation

The subtheme of *transformation* propelled the other subthemes of *leading Christian culture* into action. The subtheme of *Christian heritage* demonstrated through history engaged the subtheme of *intentional pedagogy* with an aim to make curricular decisions that provided the subtheme of *particular cultivation of excellence* in the hope of transformation. van Manen (2016) describes themes as intransitive, but the essence of the theme *leading Christian culture* appeared to be action oriented and has produced transitive subthemes. Donald Masterson demonstrated the essence of *transformation* during an archived Omnibus IV lesson and offered this dialogue when using biblical analysis as a guide stone to teach his students about the role of the church in the 21st century:

I don't know if this has been your experience of churches, at least it has been mine. Most churches I've been at are at least 90% middle class and then a few upper class, millionaires as well. You get like 1 or 2, occasionally. Not much what you would say lower or working class. *But* [emphasis added], there are quite a few needy people. People who have alcohol problems and that, and so they come to the church for help. Our churches, to my experience, tend to be preservers of the middle class, very controlled, very refined in that kind of thing. Even some of the churches that I've been, located in not great areas, the church building is there and the middle class people drive in, go to church, and leave, and hardly anyone from the local area come in. I don't know if that tallies with what you've seen, but I know the churches I've been at have expressed alarm at that. Why is that? Church is for everyone. So what is it that we're doing? Why aren't we approaching that? ... Yeah, it could be [responds to student], because that goes back to the heart of Christianity itself. If you read Corinthians, the early, early, early church in

Corinthians is pretty much unstructured, and Paul writes in part of his letter, “You have to have some order in church. If people are talking in tongues,” we won't get into that debate, but this is where he starts off, “you need to have someone there to interpret it. You can't all just be everyone talking in tongues and interpreting it, you can't be everyone singing different songs and just kind of, you, like, let's get some order here.” [Student poses question] I don't know what it is. I haven't been, but I have heard of some charismatic churches that are really more in the Dionysian category, not in the revelry, but certainly in the, kind of, open to the spirit, and everyone dancing, and clapping, and singing, and whatnot, so maybe that would kind of bubble up there, I suppose. The Bible offers the Apollonian & Dionysian side captures different elements, almost, but neither of them are the solution for biblical anthropology or our salvation. For that we need God, and we need His grace.

Everything God Intended Anchored in History

While themes may describe revealed aspects innate to the structure of a phenomena's essence, hermeneutic phenomenological reflection may also reveal a point of structure that acts as the fastener, representing a cogency of motif (van Manen, 2016). *Everything God intended anchored in history* was the point of structure for the essence of Christian *paideia* for career CC educators within their lived experiences of online global curricular decision making. All 13 participants conveyed this point of structure during their individual interviews, their archived observations, and in both focus groups. *Everything God intended* was in vivo coded 18 times in eight participant interviews. *Anchored in history* was produced in vivo only once in one focus group. *History* was in vivo coded 130 times in 12 participant interviews. Through analytic memoing and hermeneutic reflection, I noticed the undercurrent of this point of structure in the

verbal and nonverbal communication of each participant's discussion of Christian *paideia*. As the point of structure emerged, I ceased coding and merely marked the data collection pieces that exhibited the point of structure. In total, 100% of data were marked, which resulted in the point of structure *everything God intended anchored in history*.

Catherine Madison discussed the point of structure for the essence of Christian *paideia* with her peers during the focus group:

Every time I'm in class with them, we have a short slideshow of a particular time in history. We run through, umm, chronologically, the art cards, like you would if you were teaching them history or Old Testament or something like that. And so they get to know that, but then they get hands on touching the information, and I'm teaching them drawing skills or painting skills throughout so that they're anchoring not only the history and the part of the world, the geography. I teach geometry in it, Margaret, a lot of it. And you know, they often say, this isn't a math class. I say you're gonna need the math if you're going to draw, you're gonna need math. So, I cover a lot of different things, and it's just delightful because I see kids from all over the world that are responding to the same language. It's the same language.

Animating

According to Patton (2002), researchers should pay attention to both verbal and nonverbal communication. When marking the point of structure, six participants were observed using their hands to demonstrate a coming together, an entwining action with their hands and fingers. This animation always occurred when participants were expressing their understanding of Christian *paideia* as it connects to their career in CCE. Many of the participants have lived in multiple countries, but only three of the 13 participants were born outside of the United States.

All three participants used their hands to animate the essence of Christian *paideia* as *everything God intended anchored in history*. Donald Masterson described his understanding of Christian *paideia* as follows:

Christian *paideia*. Well, probably, in like the classical Christian model ... the basic concepts of it were familiar to me because I was looking at philosophical schools, and how they... I, you know, literally writing a chapter on how the ancient philosophers trained people, their concept of *paideia*. And, of course, the Christian classical version of that is taken from the church fathers who took it from that. So, I was 21 and reading history books about *paideia*, and then the Christian linking of it [entwines fingers] later on. Hmm. OK. Well, the trivium and paying attention to, or prioritizing humanities and logic and grammar, rhetoric. These were things that demarcated you as being educated. Umm, it's inverted in our society. In our society, philosophy, logic and whatnot is seen as a luxury, kind of hobby horse. In antiquity, it wasn't.

Patton (2002) also recommends scrutiny when observing nonverbal communication cross-culturally and calls for the researcher to follow-up with the participant to ensure the intention of the gesture was correctly interpreted. All nonverbal communication was recorded in the transcripts, and all transcripts were member checked and verified by participants.

Outlier Data and Findings

Patton's (2002) caution of cross-cultural interpretations is an appropriate segue to outlier data and findings. The outlier data came from the participants' consideration of the global nature of the research setting. The outliers did not contradict the research findings of themes, subthemes, or points of structure, but added an additional dimension of meaning for career CC educators who make curricular decisions in an online global classroom.

Jealously Guard

As the only self-labeled classicist in the participant group, Donald Masterson offered his unique perspective on ancient *paideia* and its linking to Christian *paideia* that is non-existent in the other participants' data. Donald's doctoral research in ancient philosophy provided a depth of knowledge reflected in his observation: "How accessible did the ancient philosophers make their philosophy, their *paideia*? Basically, the answer is 'not very.' They actually tried to restrict it." Donald explains how the ancient *paideia* was "jealously guarded" and available only for the elite, but this approach to *paideia* was challenged by the early church fathers. Donald divulges:

You would even get critics of Christianity, such as Celsus, who Origen, the church father, responded to him. Celsus made an attack against Christianity and said, "It's so pathetic. Look at your churches. It's filled with slaves and women and regular folk." And Origen says, "Well, yes, it is, but that's because for you, Plato should be in the hands of the few, for us, we believe Christianity, this thing we have," which he was classifying as a philosophy, "our philosophy is for everyone, and this is a great innovation." So he responded to it by actually accepting the charge but negating the principle of that this is a bad thing. So, it gets the hopes of the Christian Gospel, but also Christian *paideia*, is for everyone.

Donald applied his understanding of ancient *paideia* as "jealously guarded" when approaching his classroom instruction but accepted Origen's argument that Christian *paideia* is for everyone. He used the words "jealously guard" when discussing the value of CCE with online students to encourage their thankfulness for the opportunity of their classical educational experience, which appeared in both his individual interview and focus group transcripts.

It's not just, 'Hey! We're bringing this back.' We are, but we're not. This [CCE] actually

hasn't been done before this. ... I think we should be quite proud of what we're doing cause we aren't just, 'Oh, it was obscured by the industrial revolution,' and things like that. Not, not really. Actually, this is quite a novel endeavor. ... I remind myself, and I remind my *{sic}* students of the importance of the *paideia* they're receiving and to jealously guard it and to see the value of it.

Learning from Zero

All participants discussed challenges that they encountered while teaching international students through an online platform except one, Mariana Salas-Romero. Mariana resides in Canada and teaches Spanish at the research site. During her interview, she expressed the commonality of learning a new language as alleviating the typical challenges associated with language barriers in an international educational setting.

I think it's different with Spanish. Maybe other subjects will experience that [challenges in an online global classroom] a little bit more than Spanish, because for me in Spanish I, for example, everybody is from zero on that we're all learning from zero to hello. Or, you know so. So I guess in that sense, I don't have that problem. I could have a kid from China and a kid from England and a kid from the United States with different accents each of them. And yet they'll all have to struggle.

Universality

Three career CC participants also connected the learning of language to assuaging some of the typical challenges associated with language barriers in a global classroom. During the multiple disciplines focus group, Catherine Madison, Catherine Davidson, and Margaret Miler related their ease of teaching in an online global CCE classroom to the universal language of their subject matter. Catherine Madison stated:

As far as drawing and painting, it is a universal language and that's one of the things that I love about what I teach is how universal it is. A circle is a circle no matter what part of the world you're in. A square is a square. A straight line between two points is the same thing, no matter where you are in the world, and so the language that I teach is something that any of my students anywhere can understand.

Catherine Davidson reflected: [Math] is so universal. That is fun about mathematics, you know, it's not hard to teach students from different cultures in math. Sometimes the commas mess us up. Yeah, I will say that. Yes, but it's really not hard." Margaret Miler agreed, "And it's a universal language, and the students can understand it and figure it out because math is a universal language."

The outlier data and findings provided unexpected but thoughtful pieces still represented within the conceptual model of the essence of Christian *paideia* (Figure 1). Because the point of structure *everything God intends anchored in history* touched upon the outliers, *jealously guard*, *learning from zero*, and *universality* were part of the phenomena's essence as experienced by the career CC educator when making curricular decisions in an online global classroom. One more piece of universality was explicated in the data, not in relation to language but to culture and solidified the pedagogy and curricular decisions of the online global CC educator to the essence of Christian *paideia* through the point of structure *everything God intended anchored in history*. Sally Bahler summarized:

What we [career CC educators] are getting at is that fundamental human experience, and that it's really cool to see these people from hundreds of years ago and their heart issues exactly the same as us. Like the joys that they experience are the same, you know, the sorrow they experience are the same. Some of these are real living human beings. Some

of them are fictional, but they're drawing from real human experiences, and so, you know, taking what can be often really challenging, as any of our content areas testify to, with like so much that you have to cover, just trying to distill it down to, you know, like what [Elizabeth Stuart] was saying - the big picture of what is it that we're trying to accomplish and then what is it that we need to reveal about our own hearts in order to have the stage set so that we are able to then take what it is that we are to learn from these texts to the glory and honor of God and move forward in that direction? That is a universal thing, like the way that it is executed in each of our lives, whether it's ours individually, in the classroom, or from these different figures of the past, fictional or real, that, you know, the execution is gonna be different, but there's so many similarities between us all.

Research Question Responses

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology was to discover the essence of Christian *paideia* for career classical Christian (CC) educators who make daily curricular decisions at a CC online academy that serves a 2nd-12th grade international student body. Individual interviews, observations of archived lessons, and focus group sessions were used to hermeneutically reflect on the lived experiences of online career CC educators. Data from all three sources has been included in the research question responses below.

Central Research Question

What is the essence of Christian *paideia* for career CC educators within their lived experiences of online global curricular decisions?

The essence of Christian *paideia* for career CC educators was everything God intended for the teaching of His children and the furthering of His kingdom as revealed in the nature and

character of God and His work throughout history. Elizabeth Stuart shared:

Paideia and pedagogy must go hand in hand, and that means how I teach. And I'm playing the long game as we all should be, which is how will I hand this off in 50 years to the next one. Having that thought process of this isn't just about me and my subject. It is about the whole person, the education of the soul, of the image of God that was made in front of me right here.

This essence of Christian *paideia* was at the heart of the participants' curricular decisions, and they intentionally applied a time-honored formal classical curriculum that naturally created holistic connections and formed Christian character to lead to a united global Christian culture.

Kelly Livingston shared:

We don't integrate ... the subjects in order to show the unity of God. God is the creator of all these things, and they all integrate into God. ... Our world and globally is putting the emphasis on *man's* [emphasis added] ideas and the way *man* [emphasis added] interprets things and *our* [emphasis added] reason and the way *we* [emphasis added] want to accomplish things. So, when we enter into a global online classroom, we're accessing all these different applications of the principle of human reason trying to solve the problems of humanity. And when we go into a global online classroom, we have to be aware of all those differences as has been noted, but it also has the beauty of breaking down all of those barriers. It really allows us to unite in a very important way that we can't do in any other format.

Sub-Question One

How do career CC educators make meaning and understand Christian *paideia*?

The participants made meaning of Christian *paideia* as part of God's calling on their lives as

Christian parents and educators to instill in His children what is true and good and beautiful by understanding God’s character. Becky explained, “At the core, our heart is who is God? What has He given us a responsibility with *and* [emphasis added] how does that come out in everything we do?” The everything that CC educators do, according to Nathaniel, “[is done] instinctively out of their own Christian walk and Christian worldview, even if they aren’t intentionally aiming at that as a significant part of their teaching. It is a significant part of their teaching because of who they are.” In other words, career CC educators understood Christian *paideia* as who God made them to be at the present moment in time and as part of a 2,000-year-old church family with the appointed tasks of teaching His children the literacy of the church and carrying forward the Christian mission. Catherine Madison agreed: “I look at my job as not so much just teaching the kids. My job, I really love the idea that I’m building literacy in the church. The school is one thing, but the church is what is most important in my life and too, you know, in equipping the saints with those kinds of things.”

Sub-Question Two

In what ways do career CC educators consider Christian *paideia* when making curricular decisions for an online global classroom?

The participants found it impossible to separate Christian *paideia* from the curriculum decisions they make on a daily basis in their online global classrooms. They considered Christian *paideia* as essential to delivering a classical curriculum in a God-honoring way and to approaching their individual subjects from a broader perspective of historical context to create a holistic and integrated Christian education that will fit the whole child as he goes forward on his Christian journey. Margaret shared:

Well, if your goal at Christian *paideia* is to create a student, a child, that is complete, a

complete character is formed as a Christian person, so that in every aspect of their life, what they look for is that foundation of Christ in their life. ... Whatever they're doing, that is the foundation of their life. A classical Christian school, I would hope, that is the goal in every single subject. In every single subject is, well, what we want to create here is a student who graduates, and whatever they're doing, that foundation is underlying what they're doing. You know, that they look at that foundation when they come across the hard things. So, I think they should complement each other. I think that's the goal of a classical Christian School is to create Christian *paideia*.

The participants discussed multiple ways they create Christian *paideia*, but God's character was the core of their considered curricular decisions. Helen illuminated:

We talk about and integrate science, and we integrate history, all with the foundation of God and who He is. We may not be able to figure out why He does what He does, but we can trust it. So, Providence comes in, sovereignty comes in. His creative element, you know, how are we made in his image? So, if we list characteristics of God, how do we see those in ourselves as well? I tell the students, I say we're obviously not God, we understand that. But we are made in his image, so what does that look like?

Sub-Question Three

How does the online global classroom platform impact CC educators' experiences of Christian *paideia*?

The online global classroom platform created a challenging environment for all the CC educators except for one outlier in how they experience Christian *paideia*. The participants met these challenges created by teaching students from diverse nations with intention, compassion, and joy by honoring and nurturing the children as image bearers of God who are members of one

Christian family, one Christian culture, and one Christian kingdom and enabling a Christian *paideia* that cultivated relationships. Nathaniel relayed his approach:

I need a relationship with these kids, or I can't teach them. Teaching is relational. I can't teach a child. I can't teach a student unless I have a relationship with them, and the students need relationships with each other. ... It's very deliberate on my part. We have to lay the groundwork for building this community. We have to take some time to introduce ourselves to each other, to connect voices and faces. ... What we're doing when we do that, we are building a community, we are laying the groundwork. I can't complete that task. The students have to pick up the threads, and they have to move from that introductory phase onto building friendships and community. But you got to start. ... In one sense, I'm modeling as best I can. Hey, this is about more than just the books we're gonna read. This is about getting to know each other, and learning, and figuring out ways to encourage each other.

Sub-Question Four

How do career CC educators reflect on the transcendence of Christian *paideia* for the global Christian community?

The participants reflected on the ways CC curriculum delivered from a biblical worldview promoted teaching to the hearts and minds of children all around the world by addressing both the spiritual and the physical and bringing God's character into the classroom conversation.

Kelly explained, "If we try to just teach the mind and forget about the heart or if we just teach the heart and forget about the mind, then we're not fully coming to that state of being in the image of God." The holistic approach of Christian *paideia* challenges students to think about knowledge combined with faith so "when they go into secular environments, they are fitted with the tools to

analyze what comes at them and be critical thinkers, not just to accept what people say or any kind of lazy stereotypes,” added Donald. He continued:

The classical *paideia*, by its nature, sees goodness, truth, and beauty in all different kinds of contexts. So, it is something that allows them to, basically, whatever it is they’re doing, they can see resonances and employ the same hermeneutics.”

The transcendence of Christian *paideia* allowed for true freedom. Catherine Madison shared her reflection:

Philippians 4:8 with whatever is beautiful, praiseworthy, think on these things. And I said, “That's true freedom, when you understand that.” So, I got into that with the kids, and one of them said, “I have learned more in this class about all kinds of things of life than I ever imagined possible.” It's like really? Tell me about that! So, I mean, those are the kinds of things that I'm stepping into more and more, and that's another reason that I love teaching [at the CCE research site]. Just the freedom that I have to be able to pray with these kids, preach the gospel, talk to them about biblical things, life issues, things that are, you know, that they're facing. I told them that I didn't grow up as a Christian and that I was in my early 20s when I came to understand, and the Lord drew me to him. I started my life; my life was different. I see things of beauty now that I never even knew existed, and I see them in such a different way, and it's not because I'm 63 years old. It's because I know Christ, and they were like, “Wow.”

Summary

To discover the essence of Christian *paideia* required the process of hermeneutics through data collection, analysis, and reporting of findings. The essence of Christian *paideia* for 13 career CC educators was revealed throughout Chapter Four through hermeneutic

phenomenological reflection (van Manen, 2016) and reported in vivo. Four remarkable themes emerged, including *understanding the nature and character of God, building holistic connections, forming Christian character, and leading Christian culture*. Each theme began with a gerund produced through process coding during data analysis (Saldaña, 2021) and represented the action orientation of the essence of Christian *paideia* for career CC educators who make curricular decisions in an online global CCE classroom. The results demonstrated not only an action but also an embodiment of the essence of Christian *paideia* as the CC educators live within and go about their daily curricular decisions. The concept map (Figure 1) illuminated this embodiment of Christian *paideia* with the determinate point of structure (van Manen, 2016), *everything God intended anchored in history*. The concept map (Figure 1) also showed the fluidity between the four themes and twelve subthemes in relation to the whole. The three outliers were significant findings as they did not negate the point of structure but reinforced it through the participants' multicultural perspectives, keeping in mind the unity of one global Christian culture embodied in the essence of Christian *paideia*.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology is to discover the essence of Christian *paideia* for career classical Christian (CC) educators who make daily curricular decisions at a CC online academy that serves a 2nd-12th grade international student body. Chapter Five presents a thorough discussion of the essence of Christian *paideia* within several subsections, including an interpretation of findings, implications for policy and practice, empirical and theoretical implications, and limitations and delimitations of the study. The interpretation of findings includes three subsections: *in Christ, to Christ, and through Christ; the paideia of the Lord; and the complete picture – God’s earthly kingdom*. The implications for policy discuss the appropriateness of Christian *paideia* for Christian institutions and possible teacher training developmental content for the research site. The implications for practice are centered on the classroom educator’s personhood in relation to children as the heart and art of pedagogy. Empirical implications posit God’s purpose for His people while the theoretical implications discuss possible advantages for Christian educational and curriculum theory to include TLT in tandem with CR. The final subsection shares recommendations for future research followed by the conclusion.

Discussion

van Manen (2016) writes that the nihilism of the 20th century following Nietzsche’s unanswerable question of “what’s the use” (p. 123) has caused the deterioration of pedagogy. Teachers whose only response to Nietzsche’s question lies within administrative aims, standardized testing, and classroom objectives have forgotten the lifeworld of pedagogy, of what it means to be teachers of children. We are confined to teach in classrooms without hope (van

Manen, 2016). van Manen (2016) describes the beginning of phenomenological research in the human sciences as growing out of the necessity of hope. To understand the lifeworld of the human is to understand where hope lives.

The deterioration of pedagogy creates a tension for current classroom teachers (van Manen, 2016). Teacher burnout is prevalent throughout American education (García-Carmona et al., 2019), and teens are experiencing a surge in mental illnesses (Green et al., 2017). The loss of hope is palpable in America's classrooms as children have found the answer to Nietzsche's question in their schools, their curriculum, and in their educators' approach to teaching them. The ideology of hopelessness has infiltrated the lifeworld of the classroom, and children have responded with rising suicide rates, aggression, bullying (Rees et al., 2022), and a 30% increase in anxiety for teenagers before they even graduate high school (Green et al., 2017). A generalization to be sure, but we cannot forget that children are part of pedagogy and what it means to teach children is the art of pedagogy.

To help recover the art of pedagogy, Klauke (2019) calls for the classical model as proposed by Sayers (1948) to aid in rebuilding a frustrated (Lockerbie, 2005) and fragmented Christian community (O'Callaghan, 2019). The essence of Christian *paideia* discovered during my research supports Klauke's (2019) calling for Christian schools to leverage Sayers's (1948) classical model if their aim is not only to recover the lost tools of learning (Wilson, 1991) but also to amplify a global Christian culture. "*Paideia* is pedagogy," according to CC research participant, Elizabeth Stuart. Since pedagogy does not remain in the abstract, pedagogy as *paideia* becomes action oriented through curricular decisions during the lived experiences of the classroom teacher; therefore, Christian *paideia* has significant implications for all Christian educators.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The essence of Christian *paideia* for career CC educators includes the themes of *understanding the nature and character of God, building holistic connections, forming Christian character, and leading Christian culture*. The themes are neither listed in chronological order, nor order of importance, but they work together in creating the essence of Christian *paideia* and are held together by the point of structure *everything God intended anchored in history* (see Figure 1, Appendix N). The concept map of Christian *paideia* demonstrates how the themes and subthemes are fluid and multi-dimensional as they continuously draw us nearer to fully knowing God. According to CC research participant Mariana, “We are being sanctified in our teaching and learning.”

The point of structure is key for 21st century Christian educators who have received a modern education in a post-modern age. On the surface, the point of structure appears merely a conjecture. How do we know everything God intended, intends, or will intend? And if He is God, wouldn't His intention play out no matter what we did? The point of structure is *everything God intended anchored in history*, and the point of structure must stay intact for the integrity of the building. *Everything God intended anchored in history* is the epistemology of Christian education and the inherent essence of Christian *paideia* empirically supported by the findings of this research. Apart from the teaching of history and understanding the nature and character of God throughout history, Christian *paideia* loses its integrity while Christian education has no idea what it has lost.

Interpretation of Findings

van Manen (2016) defines essence as the thing that makes the thing the thing; that without the thing, the thing could not be the thing. His definition feels humorous but is none the

less accurate. I intentionally kept van Manen's (2016) definition in my conscious as I reflected after each data collection and again on cycles of coding. After all, essence is the subject of my central research question. Researching for the essence of Christian *paideia* within the boundaries of this question and with van Manen's (2016) definition in mind enables an accurate interpretation of research findings during and through hermeneutic phenomenology reflection.

Additionally, I applied the interpretive framework of critical realism (CR) in tandem with Mezirow et al.'s (1978) transformational learning theory (TLT) to discover the essence of Christian *paideia* for career CC educators during their lived experiences of curricular decision making in the online global classroom. In *Transcendence: Critical Realism and God*, Archer et al. (2004) discuss the appropriateness of applying the interpretive framework of CR when researching objects or concepts that do not exist in physical space. Because essence does not inhabit physical space but still exists within the space of the participants' lifeworld, I interpreted my findings within the framing of CR, which also placed God within reality as the objective entity whether He is experienced or not. However, an important piece of CCE pedagogy is for students to experience God (Wilson, 2019), so a transformation becomes necessary for Christian educators who have themselves learned to teach according to postmodern epistemology, an epistemology that rejects hope as part of pedagogy (van Manen, 2016).

Mezirow et al.'s (1978) TLT states that education can provide adult learners with a new point of reference by pushing the boundaries of understanding through critical thinking and reflection. I gathered, coded, reflected, interpreted, and wrote my findings through CR and according to TLT to discover the essence of Christian *paideia*. The thing that makes Christian *paideia* the thing for CC educators has provided a new frame of reference for novice CC educators that will transform their current disciplinary and interdisciplinary paradigms (Patton,

2002).

In Christ, To Christ, and Through Christ

In *Researching Lived Experience*, van Manen (2016) discusses the appropriateness of interpreting the lifeworld through exegesis. In Christ, to Christ, and through Christ is an exegesis of the research findings that reveals how career CC educators at the research site make daily curricular decisions. In the absence of a curriculum science field (Deng, 2018), the answers to the “what and how” of classroom teaching (Ruzgar, 2018) come from educators’ presuppositional perspectives (Deng, 2018), akin to worldview. In Christ, to Christ, and through Christ answers the what and how for CC educators in the 21st century online global classroom by interweaving the why of curricular decisions throughout their personhood. In the same manner that worldview is more than perspective, *paideia* is more than worldview. The research participants found it impossible to separate their curricular decisions from their daily walk with Christ because they live and teach in Christ, to Christ, and through Christ. CCE merges the classical form of *paideia* with the hope of Christ through an integrated core curriculum, allowing for a holistic teaching of God’s children. Classroom tension and frustration can disappear when teachers are able to engage the personhood of their whole self (Scimecca, 2019) while engaging curriculum.

To engage curriculum in Christ, to Christ, and through Christ, the career CCE research participants did not separate their subjects from the history of the world. The point of structure *everything God intended anchored in history* developed and sustained our conversations during data collections. Sally Bahler’s explanation of Christian *paideia* provides a sound summary of the point of structure:

And so if we think of, you know, what our curriculums are for and our individual subjects

with regard to fulfilling this greater idea of God's purpose for us individually, but us also corporately as the church and his people, then that helps me to focus in my lessons on the questions that are going to get students thinking.

So, understanding God's purpose for the church as one body throughout history is an integral part of how the participants experience Christian *paideia* and ties Christian *paideia* directly to their daily Christian walk and their classroom teaching.

The Paideia of the Lord

Based on the exposed essence of Christian *paideia* comprised of this study's themes, subthemes, and point of structure, the participants have shared their understanding of Ephesians 6:4. While the pedagogical aims of CCE are many, they are all aiming for the "paideia of the Lord" (Wilson, 2019). The research participants integrative knowledge of history combined with their daily Christian walk provides a tangible context for when Paul wrote his epistle to the church at Ephesus. The Greek mind of Paul's time would have understood Paul's reference to *paideia* as an intentional education of building a culture by educating man to his highest form (Jaeger, 1945; van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021). The participants' unique position as career CC educators in a global setting enable them to deliver curriculum fully emersed in Paul's intention. The *paideia* of the Lord as exhorted by Paul places everything God intended for his church as the highest ideal for educating Christian children while anchored in His story of history. "Fathers, raise your children in the *paideia* of the Lord" (ESV, 2001/2016, Ephesians 6:4) directly relates the forming of Christian character to creating a Christian culture. The themes of *understanding God's nature and character, building holistic connections, forming Christian character, and leading Christian culture* are then able to grow directly from this fertile soil as already evidenced by the early Christian church (Jaeger, 1961) and supported in the 21st century by the growth of

American CCE as documented in Goodwin and Sikkink's (2020) the "Good Soil" report.

The Complete Picture – God's Earthly Kingdom.

What is the point of a Christian education? "Thy kingdom come, they will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (ESV, 2001/2016, Matthew 6:10). This daily prayer offered by Jesus reminds us that our focus is on the day-to-day preparations of building His earthly kingdom while keeping in mind the bigger picture of the beginning and the end. By understanding everything God intends for us as evidenced by His history, His word, and His revelation, Christian *paideia* enables Christian educators to present curriculum in a manner that restores Christian culture. For Christian educators, *paideia* cannot be separated from history, the Bible, or the urging of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Helen Miler shared how she encourages beginning CC educators to listen to the prompts of the Spirit when they feel led.

Dissecting a Christian educator from these elements to teach in a classroom of God's children jeopardizes the personhood of the educator (Scimecca, 2019), frustrates the classroom, and dismantles hope. Christian educators understand their practice as God's calling on their lives and implement curriculum based on a complete picture of God's work through humanity to redeem a broken world. They are part of this picture, and they make intentional daily curricular decisions towards the building of a contemporary Christian culture. This is Christian *paideia* in the 21st century global classroom.

Implications for Policy or Practice

The research setting was specifically chosen for its form and function of providing Christian education to a global community. The phenomenological design was chosen to understand the lifeworld of the practitioners. Implications for policy are specific to those educational institutions who desire to promote the transformation of Christian culture through

education while providing a rigorous academic curriculum that is spiral in nature and includes all of history, from antiquity to modern times. Implications for practice are significant for all Christian educators who are concerned with their spiritual integrity during classroom teaching.

Implications for Policy

The ACCS has identified Christian *paideia* as its primary educational aim, and the publication of the “Good Soil” report concludes that more Christian adults enjoy living life as a Christian after graduating from ACCS schools than any other type of schooling attended by Christian children throughout the USA (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020). van der Walt and Oosthuizen (2021) cite the Bible’s limited references to *paideia* as problematic for Christian institutions that promote Christian *paideia* as a possible pedagogical aim. They also discuss concerns of *paideia*’s propagation during antiquity and high-paganism. Both points appear troubling on the surface and very well could be in a non-classical environment. On the other hand, the shared experiences of CC educators who make curricular decisions in an online global classroom demonstrate that it is the quality of the *paideia* Paul exhorted in his letter anchored to the history of the human race in relation to His story that makes Christian *paideia* an appropriate pedagogical aim for His children in the 21st century. As a policy implication for international Christian education, it is important that a humanities curriculum be part of any curriculum that identifies Christian *paideia* as its pedagogical aim, but Christian *paideia* has proven to be a successful way to raise happy Christian adults, making it a defense for the hopelessness, frustration, and fragmentation that continues in education focused on secular aims.

The movement of God throughout history is epistemology, and epistemology is Christian *paideia*. The structure of this sentence is intentional to show the relationship between the ideas. The movement of God throughout history is the subject directly linked to the predicate noun of

epistemology. How Christian educators know what they are to teach is the epistemology of their practice and is directly linked back to the subject of how God has moved through the ages. The conjunction joins the two sentences in parallel structure because Christian educators know what they are teaching by their understanding of the essence of Christian *paideia*, which is entirely entangled with their understanding of history. The implication for the research site is to provide survey historical content during new teacher training or continuing education coursework. The implication for personal development is to always be seeking God's revelation of himself and could be encouraged through administrative procedures in the design of personal development coursework for novice CC educators. Many of the research participants talked about their personal learning in relation to understanding the history of nations and is a noteworthy implication of the research findings connecting personal faith to God's work throughout history. This implication could also extend to other Christian education settings with an interest in teaching about our Christian heritage and God's hand upon the ages.

Implications for Practice

The career CC educators revealed the significance of Christ as part of their personhood. Scimecca (2019) discusses personhood as being related to the whole self. Literature on 21st century education often cites the difficulties of teacher training and developing curriculum while ignoring the spiritual element of humanity (Biesta, 2020; Biesta & Hannam, 2020; Cooling, 2020). The findings of this study support the suggestion that the spiritual self is an essential self, and the revealed subtheme of *me as a teacher* shows how they interpret the necessity of maintaining spiritual integrity through their practice. One implication for novice practitioners in a CCE classroom is to trust in the providence and sovereignty of God in the lifeworld of any classroom, whether online, brick and mortar, local, national, or global. By recognizing God as a

living God, His character is revealed during instruction and works against the fragmentation of the dominant worldly culture. In this way, a CC educator can model what it looks like to be in the world, but not of the world (*ESV*, 2001/2016, John 17:16). Also, maintaining spiritual integrity during practice may help keep hope alive in the atmosphere of the classroom because the Christian educator's personhood is not frustrated.

Another implication for classroom practice relates to the novice CC educator's personhood, as well. The career CC participants reported recognition that they are made in the image of God to be a significant part of their teaching practice. Of course, this implies that their students are image bearers, so they can act with justice and mercy, fairness, and grace, when making curricular decisions that reflect God's image. This is wisdom as taught by Proverbs. Most of the daily curricular decisions made in the classroom are subjective and situational and require wisdom that comes from understanding the image of God in ourselves. A way to know God and understand the image of God is to read the Bible. Career CC research participant Becky recalled how coming to a recognition of Christian *paideia* as lived experience meant that she feels the need to learn more, study more, and always engage with aspects of her faith. Becky's recollection is pertinent advice for novice CC educators.

A third implication for practice rests on the image bearers who make up the class. The research participants felt a burden for the image bearers set before them. Novice CC educators can approach their classes in the same manner, remembering they were called to be teachers of children. The art of pedagogy, according to van Manen (2016), brings hope to the classroom. Recognizing children as image bearers of a living God restores the art of pedagogy and hope for the children. Teacher training programs at Christian universities could consider personhood as part of such coursework. If teachers are frustrated when asked to teach secular curriculum, even

in Christian schools, then learning how to teach any curriculum with their personhood intact could benefit the teachers, the students, and possibly the surrounding culture.

Empirical and Theoretical Implications

The empirical and theoretical implications are important to understanding the future of Christian education in a global environment. Online teaching is on the rise (Beech, 2021), and worldview and religious education necessitates serious conversations and research to ensure a peaceful future of merging religious and non-religious cultures. Educational theorists have been studying varying frameworks for epistemological changes during globalization, and this study's findings make possible contributions to a 21st century paradigm of reformed critical realism.

Empirical Implications

Twenty-first century Christian educators are living in unprecedented times as the availability of global connections of cultures increases at an ever-quickenning pace. *Paideia*'s connection to global pedagogy and curriculum methods challenges contemporary educators (Horn, 2018), especially Christian educators who learned their practice from secular universities (Bekh et al., 2021). Empirical implications from this study suggest that Christian *paideia* is embodied by Christian educators and integrated into their pedagogy and epistemology so they can nurture and instruct the full body of believers. They have reinstated hope in the classroom of the 21st century. Since Christian *paideia* is an abstract (van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021) and dynamic term (Jaeger, 1943, 1945, 1961), revealing its point of structure for CC educators in an online global classroom is significantly important. Everything God intended anchored in history provides a steppingstone for Christian institutions to understand what is missing from the teaching of future Christian teachers and a guide stone for post-secular teacher training programs to consider broader curriculum questions within those programs.

Even though Christian *paideia* represents a broader and more dynamic concept than a Christian worldview, worldview and religious education courses must remain part of the global conversation for developing international curriculum, and this study supports Gardner et al.'s (2017) call for worldview and religious coursework in higher education courses to be on the rise. Without an understanding of cultural and subcultural worldviews, we can imagine the difficulty in understanding *paideia* since worldview and religious history are nuances of the essence of *paideia*. However, a Christian *paideia* approach to worldview and religious education for Christian educator training at the university level aligns more with Balukh et al.'s (2022) call for a Christocentric education worked out as Bible eschatology. This study did not address Null's (2020) call for secular universities to provide teacher training programs in worldview and religious coursework that serve the public good, but understanding how *paideia* aids in the realization of cultured worldviews could help teacher training programs establish integrated worldview curriculum. Worldview literature supports an integrative approach for teacher training programs in a pluralistic and peaceful society (Gowan & Miner, 2021), and the essence of *paideia* demonstrates an integrative approach in connection with history.

Including Christian *paideia* into curricular conversations should always be in tandem with the teaching of history based on the findings of this study. The content of knowledge of world history including all major religious patterns was deeply embedded in the participants' responses. As the point of structure of Christian *paideia*, everything God intended anchored in history became the bounded framework of the concept. Everything the participants thought, spoke, and acted upon when making curricular decisions was bound within the framing of God in history. The decline of the liberal arts curriculum (Gray, 2021) only diminishes Christian educators' ability to provide an integrative and holistic approach towards a Christian *paideia*.

How can we understand everything God intends for his people when we do not know the history of our own people? Secularization in the West has disconnected the Christian church from her heritage, and by replacing the liberal arts with an industrialized education (Noll, 1994; Sayers, 1948), Christians are now doers and not thinkers. Worse yet, we are immersed in a postmodern culture where everything is relative (Veith, 1994). Hope cannot be sustained in Christian education without Christian *paideia* as a pedagogical aim, and Christian *paideia* works in tandem with the history of the world.

Theoretical Implications

Critical theory focuses on the power relations within and between organizational systems and cultures. Critical realism (CR) focuses on God in the place of the objective and the daily lifeworld as subjectively experienced whether God's role is recognized or not. CR has been leveraged by Christian scholars such as NT Wright, Margaret Archer, and Trevor Cooling for advancing notions of Christian education in a post-modern age (Edlin, 2020). Even secular scholars involved in developing epistemological frameworks have revealed the need for truth that can be equitably approached through CR. CR theoretical proponents suggest that framing through CR helps social constructs like education create a common space and refrain from extreme forms of dogma. Current international education trends focus on the need for common ground and hermeneutics encourages active discovery. This study reinforces the purposefulness of hermeneutics delivered in a CR framework and implies the usefulness of CR for religious education researchers, specifically Christian pedagogues whose pedagogical aim is Christian *paideia*. Using a hermeneutic phenomenology with CR paved the common ground to discovery that revealed the essence of Christian *paideia* for 13 career CC educators implying that other religious and worldview educational research may benefit from a similar methodology.

Another theoretical implication is the use of transformational learning theory (TLT) in tandem with CR. CR creates the common ground that allows participants and researchers to engage one another with equality by observing God as the objective and humanity as experiencing the subjectiveness of living in a fallen world (Edlin, 2020). With TLT connected to CR, I could view how Christian *paideia* transforms the lifeworld of the online classroom and shifts paradigmatic perspectives from a fragmented secularized notion of learning to a connected spiritual epistemology for the online global CC classroom. The implication of joining TLT to CR could enhance the development of the critical theoretical approaches to globalized Christian pedagogy that is currently a topic of serious debate in academic literature (Edlin, 2020). During my research, reflection, and writing this phenomenology, I grew to understand reformed critical realism (RCR) from a new perspective. RCR aligns with my personal theological and philosophical positions on education, but this new understanding required a change to my point of reference enacted through TLT. TLT joined with CR could help theologian scholars share academic space with secular theories.

The findings of this study also have theoretical implications for RCR. RCR recognizes God's absolute truth as inherent to His nature, the Bible as written by divine revelation through man's hands, and man existing in a specific time and place. The contextualized nature of RCR theory (Edlin, 2020) could develop further by considering Christian *paideia*. Context comes from knowing history and understanding culture which Jaeger (1943) states is one of the most challenging aspects of academia. What better way to understand context than with the pedagogical aim of Christian *paideia*, which houses everything God intends anchored in history as its very point of structure?

The essence of Christian *paideia* reveals additional implications for TLT in an online

environment. Little research has been conducted on Christian online learning that brings about redemptive change (Beech, 2021). The findings of this study demonstrate how transformational learning in an online environment includes Christian *paideia* as a pedagogical aim and how pedagogy impacts curricular decisions that lead to the formation of character. Christian *paideia* may benefit online learning transformative research.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations were potential weaknesses of the study that could not be controlled. Limitations of the study included the gender of the participants and the content taught by the participants. Delimitations were purposeful decisions made to define the boundaries of the study which included withholding a definition of curriculum from conversations with participants and choosing the particular research site.

Limitations

While the participant pool was purposefully and reliably gathered, the final 13 participants were predominantly female, making gender a limitation of this study. Ten of the participants were women and three were men. With a majority of participants from the female gender, there is a possibility that the findings lack a full representation of the essence of Christian *paideia* for all CC educators at the research site. Phenomenological findings are not transferable outside of the paradigm (van Manen, 2016), and based on the limitation of gender, care should be taken when applying the findings equally to both genders.

The integrative curriculum used to teach a blended course of theology, history, and literature was the core curriculum for six out of the 13 participants. This core curriculum is published by the research site's parent company, which presents a possible limitation. Almost half of the teachers in this study teach from the same history curriculum, which could weaken the

point of structure of Christian *paideia*. If the findings are overly focused on history, they would not be representative of the whole lived experiences of CC educators who teach online at the research site.

Delimitations

The definition of curriculum was a delimitation of this study. Lalor (2016) defines five different layers of curriculum as formal, operational, taught, learned, and assessed. I did not share this definition with my participants and chose to see if these layers would come out in the research. Ten out of the 13 participants defined curriculum as formal and made statements that they did not choose their curriculum. Three of the 13 understood the operational and taught curriculum as the way they delivered curriculum and reflected on their curriculum delivery. By withholding a concise definition of curriculum from my participants, the definition of curriculum delimits the findings because of possible misinterpretation of language and unclear semiotics.

Another delimitation was the research site. I chose the research site where I am contracted as an online educator. The research site is a reliable setting to study CCE based on its longevity, organization, and mission, but the research site is not a member of the ACCS and is not represented in the “Good Soil” report (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020). Since the “Good Soil” report is the only published longitudinal study that captures data of American CCE alumni over the past twenty years, I used the findings as a benchmark when interpreting my data. The president of the ACCS and the president of the research site’s parent organization have the same pedagogical aim of Christian *paideia*, but the two separate organizations used as comparison is a delimitation of this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study’s findings reveal the essence of Christian *paideia* as the heart of curricular

decision making for the 13 career CC educators. Understanding God and His nature and character are a dimension of Christian *paideia* that requires knowledge of God throughout history. Building holistic connections is another dimension of Christian *paideia*, and connecting content to context between disciplines requires extensive knowledge of history. The dimension of forming Christian character displays aspects of truth, goodness, and beauty in light of God's nature and character, and the dimension of leading Christian culture reveals aspects of knowing Christian heritage and cultivating a particular excellence, which also requires knowledge of history. Based on the limitation that the integrative curriculum used to teach history was the core content for six out of the 13 participants, a duplicate study performed at the same site but with a participant pool 100% representative of different core content is recommended. Following this recommendation could reveal if history is indeed the anchor of the essence of Christian *paideia* or not. Another option for future study would be to duplicate the same research at another classical Christian 6th-12th educational setting that uses different history curriculum. This second recommendation would look at the same historical connection of Christian *paideia* to validate the point of structure for Christian *paideia*.

An interesting delimitation of the research is the limited understanding of the definition of curriculum. For advancement in curriculum theory of CC education, I recommend a case study of one of the participants using the found essence from the study as a research instrument (Appendix N). Lalor's (2016) five layers of curriculum could be learned prior to the first data collection. The research question: How does Christian *paideia* impact the five layers of curriculum in an online global CC classroom? Using the instrument (Appendix N) in conjunction with Lalor's (2016) layers of curriculum would help the researcher create interview questions, attend an observation, and provide a journal prompt looking to reveal the dimensions of *paideia*

within the layers of curriculum as understood, observed, and analyzed by the researcher. A case study following this design could provide additional insight for developing teacher training materials for novice CC educators.

Conclusion

Transforming culture through education is at the center of the Greek word *paideia* (Jaeger, 1945; Lockerbie, 2005; Säfström, 2019) even though the word *paideia* is more commonly understood by contemporary culture as child-rearing or education in general (van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2021). With modernity's simple interpretation of *paideia*, described by Jaeger as dynamic and abstract (Jaeger, 1943), it is difficult for modern educators employed within a classical Christian school to reach particular pedagogical aims that include Christian *paideia*. This hermeneutic phenomenology was designed to discover the essence of Christian *paideia* for career classical Christian educators within their lived experiences of their online global curricular decision-making with the hope of bringing new insight to the CCE field.

The research site was a CC setting, and the participant pool was made up of 13 career CC educators. Three data collections were chosen to triangulate and validate the research findings including a hermeneutic interview, an observation of a lesson, and a final focus group to gather a complete picture of the essence of Christian *paideia*. Data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously as reflective writing was sustained throughout the study and fulfilled data collection, analysis, and synthesis steps of the design (van Manen, 2016). Saldaña's (2021) preliminary coding in vivo, themeing the data, process coding, and value coding were also used to analyze and synthesize data.

Findings of the study are significant for understanding the essence of Christian *paideia* as a pedagogical aim for global Christian education and transformation of the Christian culture. A

Christian *paideia* concept map is included in Appendix N and demonstrates dimensions of Christian *paideia* connected to actions of Christian educators which adds to the CCE field of knowledge for training novice CC educators.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 26, 2023

Belinda King
Constance Pearson

Re: IRB Exemption IRB-FY23-24-227 The Essence of Christian Paideia for Career Classical Christian Educators: A Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Dear Belinda King, Constance Pearson,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by 546.111 (a)(7).

For a PDF of your exemption letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. Your information sheet and final versions of your study documents can also be found on the same page under the Attachments tab.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for

verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP

Administrative Chair

Research Ethics Office

Appendix B
Site Permission Request

September 27, 2023

Dr. Bob [REDACTED], Headmaster
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research to better understand the essence of Christian *paideia*. The title of my research project is *The Essence of Christian Paideia for Career Classical Christian Educators: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study*, and the purpose of my research is to discover the essence of Christian *paideia* for career classical Christian educators who make daily curricular decisions at a CCE online academy that serves an international student body.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct research at [REDACTED] by utilizing your teacher list to recruit participants for my research. I am also requesting permission to use one class archive of each participant as qualitative data for my research study.

Possible participants include career educators as defined by those who earn their primary income from the site with at least three years of experience teaching online at a classical Christian school. I will recruit participants through organizational email and phone calls. Ideally, I will contract 12 to 15 participants who will receive an informed consent letter prior to participating. Taking part in the study is completely voluntary, and participants can leave the study at any time. Because the research will be published, participants' identifying information will be kept confidential using pseudonyms employed throughout the dissertation. Confidentiality is available for the site, although certain descriptions may make it possible for the site to be identified.

Participants will be asked to attend a live 60-minute interview over Microsoft Teams, member-check interview transcripts, and attend an online 60-minute focus-group discussion.

Thank you for considering my request. Please provide a signed statement on letterhead indicating approval and email it to [REDACTED]. You may use LU's permission response template, which is attached for your convenience and includes a checklist of permissions.

Sincerely,
[REDACTED]

Binnie J King
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Appendix C**Site Permission Response**

October 2, 2023

Dear Binnie King,

I'm delighted that you continue to pursue your doctoral studies, and please consider me to be supportive of your research and the voluntary participation of our faculty. I pray it would be a blessing both to you and to those who choose to participate.

Yours,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the sender.

Dr. Bob 

Headmaster

Appendix D

Participant Recruitment

Dear Educator,

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research to better understand Christian *paideia*. The purpose of my research is to discover the essence of Christian *paideia* for career classical Christian educators who make daily curricular decisions at an online classical Christian academy that serves an international student body, and I am inviting you to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, hold an advanced degree of bachelor's, master's, or Ph.D. Participants must be career classical Christian educators as defined by those who earn their primary income from a classical Christian school with at least three years of experience teaching online at a classical Christian K-12 school. Participants must also teach 6th-12th grade curriculum. Participants will be asked to complete initial screening and a demographic questionnaire, take part in a face-to-face online 60-minute interview and an online 60-minute focus group discussion with 5-7 additional research participants, and review the transcript from both meetings to ensure researcher accuracy. I will also collect a 90-minute archived lesson post-interview for observation and analysis. In total, the research procedures will require approximately three hours of your time over the course of three to six months. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, and I will audio and video record the online interviews for transcription purposes. All identifying information will remain confidential and pseudonyms will be used for published research.

To participate in this study, please reply by written acceptance to [REDACTED] within seven days at which time I will send an email for screening. If you meet the participant criteria, we will collaborate to schedule a convenient interview time. All participants will receive a \$50 gift card of your choice at the conclusion of the study as a personal thank you for your time and commitment.

If you choose to participate, a consent document and demographic questionnaire will be emailed to you after the initial screening. The consent document contains additional information about research procedures, expectations, data collection, and protection. You will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at [REDACTED] prior to the time of our scheduled interview along with the demographic questionnaire.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]
Binnie J. King
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University
[REDACTED]

Appendix E

Recruitment Flyer

Research Participants Needed

The Essence of Christian *Paideia* for Career Classical Educators: A Hermeneutic Phenomenology

- Have you been teaching at an online classical Christian school for more than three years?
- Would you describe your primary career is in the field of classical Christian education?
- Do you teach transition courses or diploma courses at the 6th-12th grade levels?

If you answered **yes** to each of the questions listed above,
you may be eligible to participate in a research study!

The purpose of this research study is to discover the essence of Christian *paideia* for career classical Christian educators who make curricular decisions in an online classroom that serves an international student body.

Participants will be asked to complete a demographics questionnaire, participate in a one-hour online face-to-face interview, attend a one-hour focus group meeting with 5-7 other study participants, and review transcripts of both meetings to verify researcher accuracy. The researcher will also observe and analyze one archived lesson as it relates to the research topic of Christian *paideia* during curriculum and instruction.

Benefits to the classical Christian community include developing new insights into the relationship between classical education and Christian education for transforming Christian culture and training future classical Christian educators, raising awareness of the meaning of *paideia* from Ephesians 6:4 and its influence on the curricular design and decision-making of classical Christian education for building God's earthly kingdom through an online platform, and impacting future classroom practices by study participants' personal and professional reflections.

Participants will receive a **\$50 gift card** of their choosing at the end of the study.

If you would like to participate, please contact Binnie King at [REDACTED] additional screening email, a consent document, and a demographics questionnaire will be sent to you prior to the interview.

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

Please contact Binnie King at [REDACTED]

Liberty University IRB – 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515

Appendix F

Screening Questions for Participants

Please answer the following questions:

Years teaching at site online:

Grade(s) taught:

Country/State of residence:

Do you consider yourself a career classical Christian educator? YES/NO

Does your primary source of income come from teaching at the site? YES/NO

Appendix G

Consent Form

Title of the Project: The Essence of Christian Paideia for Career Classical Christian Educators: A Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Principal Investigator: Binnie J. King, Doctoral Candidate, School of Education, Liberty University

Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study designed to discover the essence of Christian *paideia* for career classical Christian educators who make curricular decisions in an online global environment. To participate, you must be at least 18 years old, you must hold a bachelor's degree or higher, you must have taught at an online classical Christian academy for at least three years, and you must currently be considered a career classical Christian educator because you earn a living teaching 6th-12th grade classes at a classical Christian school. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

Study Purpose and Background

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study will be to discover the essence of Christian *paideia* for the career classical Christian educator who makes curricular decisions in an online global classroom. More specifically, the study is designed to understand career classical Christian educators' experiences of making curricular decisions in consideration of restoring the culture to Christ and to reveal nuances of Christian *paideia* during curriculum and instruction.

Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Participants will be asked to complete an initial screening and a demographic questionnaire.
2. Participate in a one-hour online interview, answering questions about your educational career and classroom experiences as they relate to Christian *paideia*, the topic of the study. The interview will be audio and video recorded using the software platform Microsoft Teams.
3. Review the transcription from our online interview, checking it for accuracy. Your review should take between 15-30 minutes.
4. Participate in a one-hour online focus group with 5-7 other study participants who may or may not be personally known to you from your current workplace. The focus group should take about an hour and will be audio and video recorded using the software platform Microsoft Teams.
5. I will also collect a 90-minute archived lesson post-interview for observation and analysis.
6. Review the transcription for our online focus group, checking it for accuracy. Your review should take between 15-30 minutes.

Benefits

Participants should not expect to receive a personal or direct benefit from participation in this study. However, benefits to the classical Christian education community include developing new insights into the relationship between classical education and Christian education for transforming the Christian culture and training future classical Christian educators. Benefits to the Christian community and society at large include raising awareness of the meaning of *paideia* from Ephesians 6:4 and its influence on the curricular design of classical Christian education for building God's earthly kingdom during globalization. In addition, participant reflection on the essence of Christian *paideia* when enacting curricular decisions may or may not impact further classroom practices and personal and professional awareness.

Risks

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. Please be aware that if you mention anything regarding child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I am a mandatory reporter and will have to report it to the appropriate authorities.

Protection of Personal Information

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be confidential. Any personal identifying information reported or shared in the research study will be replaced with a pseudonym in any reported data or publications.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation and in a neutral online platform.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.
- Data will be stored on the internal hard drive of my personal computer protected by facial recognition and required pin. Data will be backed up on an external hard drive kept in a locked home office. Any hard copies of the data will also be kept in the locked home office. After three years, all hard copy and electronic data will be shredded or deleted.
- Audio and visual recordings in Microsoft Teams are only accessible to the meeting organizer and will be stored in my encrypted One Drive account for no more than 12 hours. I will download the audio and visual recording from the interview and focus group meetings onto the internal hard drive of my personal computer protected by facial recognition and required pin at which time I will delete the recording from One Drive. The recordings will remain on my internal hard drive until participants have reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts and then will be deleted. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Compensation

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. At the conclusion of the interview and focus group meetings, participants will be emailed and receive a \$50 gift card to the business of your choosing. Any participant who withdraws from the study after beginning but before completing all study procedures will receive a \$25 gift card of choice.

Voluntary Nature of Research

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you participate, you are free not to answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw

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

Contact Information

The researcher conducting this study is Binnie J. King. You may ask any questions about the study before committing to the research study, during the research study, or afterward by emailing [REDACTED] or phoning [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Constance Pearson, at [REDACTED].

Questions and Concerns about this Study

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher or faculty sponsor, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB at Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; the phone number is 434-592-5530, and the email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you agree to participate in this study as outlined above. Make sure you understand the topic of the study and the procedures required of you before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy of this consent form with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after signing this document, you can contact the study team 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 audio and video record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Participant Name

Signature of Participant Date

Appendix H

Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic Information

- A. Circle the response that BEST describes the number of years' total teaching experience you will have at the end of this school year.

- 0 4 to 7 years' experience
- 1 8 to 11 years' experience
- 2 12 to 15 years' experience
- 3 16 to 19 years' experience
- 4 20 or more years' experience

- B. Circle the response that identifies how many of your teaching years have been spent teaching classical Christian education, including homeschool, brick and mortar, part-time, full-time, and online teaching experiences.

- 0 4 to 7 years
- 1 8 to 11 years
- 2 12 to 15 years
- 3 16 to 19 years
- 4 20 or more years

- C. Circle the response that identifies how many of your classical Christian teaching years have been spent teaching via an online platform.

- 0 4 to 7 years
- 1 8 to 11 years
- 2 12 to 15 years
- 3 16 to 19 years
- 4 20 or more years

- D. Circle the response that identifies the highest degree that you have earned.

- 0 Less than bachelor's degree
- 1 Bachelor's Degree
- 2 Master's Degree
- 3 Educational Specialist Degree
- 4 Doctor of Education
- 5 Doctor of Philosophy

E. Circle the response(s) that BEST identifies your major(s) in higher education.

- 0 Business
- 1 Math
- 2 Science
- 3 Education
- 4 Humanities and the Arts

F. Please list the subject(s) you are currently teaching. _____

G. Circle the response that BEST describes how often you work with your course curriculum outside of classroom teaching during the school year including reflecting, writing, researching, lesson planning but not including time spent in assessing unless through the previously mentioned curriculum layers.

- 0 0 to 2 hours a week
- 1 3 to 4 hours a week
- 2 5 to 6 hours a week
- 3 7 to 8 hours a week
- 4 9 to 10 hours a week

H. Circle the response that BEST describes your level of expertise using technology to aid curriculum and instruction.

- 0 Novice with knowledge of the basics
- 1 Advanced beginner
- 2 Competent
- 3 Proficient
- 4 Expert

I. Circle the response that BEST describes your level of expertise teaching international students who are proficient in speaking English.

- 0 Novice with knowledge of the basics
- 1 Advanced beginner
- 2 Competent
- 3 Proficient
- 4 Expert

Appendix I

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please describe your educational background and career through your pre-teacher training. CRQ
2. How did the idea of teaching at a classical Christian online school first arise? CRQ
3. Can you recount the moment when you first became aware of Christian *paideia* and what it meant? SQ1
4. How do you define Christian *paideia* today? SQ1
5. How would you describe the relationship between Christian *paideia* and classical Christian education? SQ1
6. What does Christian *paideia* have to do with the curriculum you teach in your classroom? SQ2
7. Please describe a particular lesson when you consciously considered Christian *paideia* as a long-term objective while planning, presenting, and assessing a lesson or unit plan. SQ2
8. How did preplanning with *paideia* in mind affect the overall facilitation of the lesson or unit plan? SQ2
9. In what ways does an online global classroom change your consideration of Christian *paideia* during curricular decisions? SQ3
10. Please recount a classroom teaching experience where the online global classroom platform affected the pedagogical aim of Christian *paideia*. SQ3
11. How do you envision the ideal of Christian *paideia* making a transformative difference to the global Christian community? SQ4

12. Reflecting on your previous answer, how would you describe the significance of Christian *paideia* to a first year CC educator employed at your school? SQ4
13. Please share any additional thoughts that you have on Christian *paideia*. CRQ

Appendix J**Observation Instrument**

Participant Expressions	Researcher Observations	Researcher Responses	Process Coding	Themes
Participant Techniques				
Participant Dialogue				

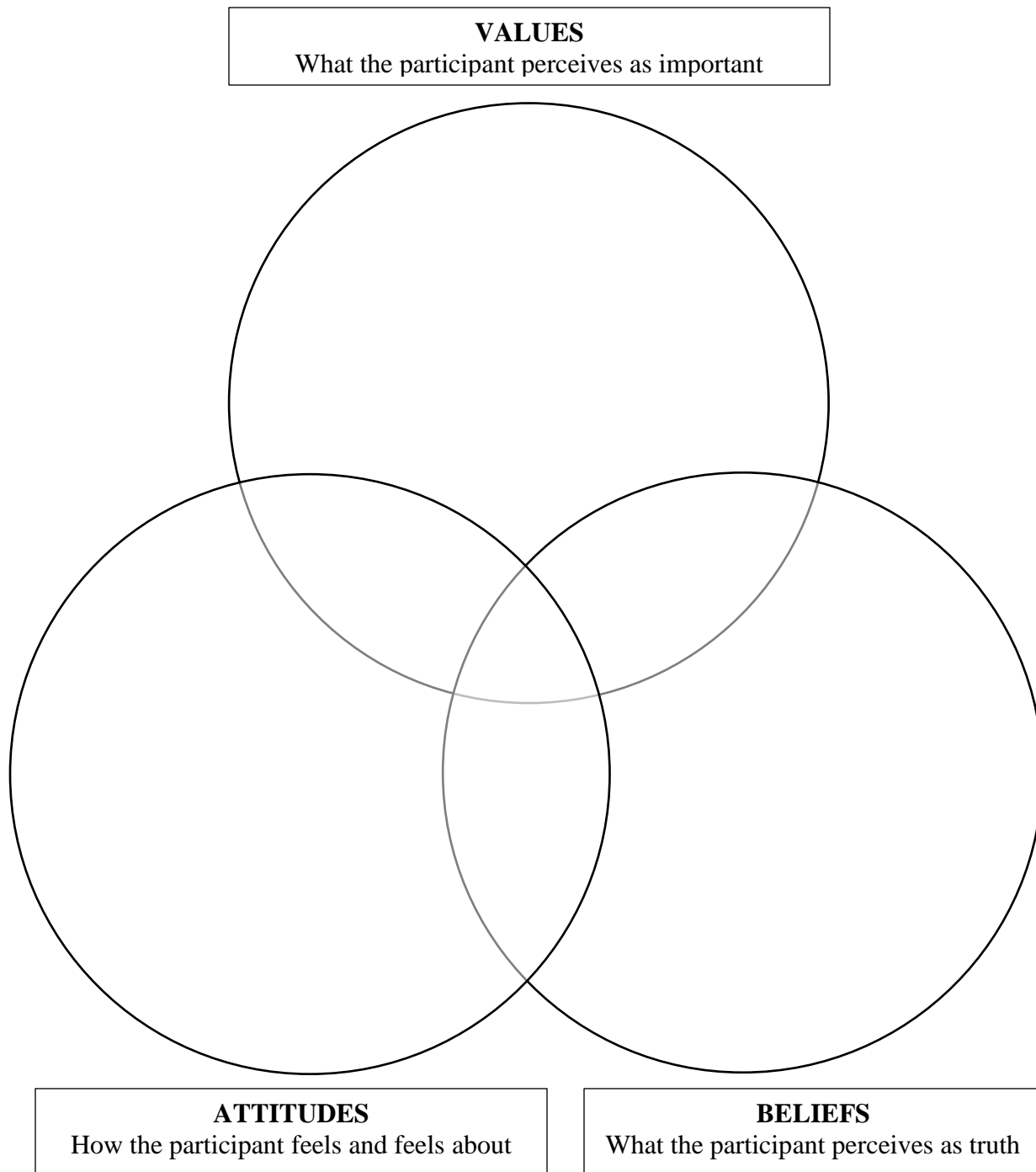
Appendix K

Focus Group Questions

1. What is Christian *paideia* and how does it influence your curriculum decision making? CRQ, SQ1, SQ2
2. How does reflection help when thinking about Christian *paideia* and the transformation of Christian culture when making curricular decisions? CRQ, SQ4
3. How does the global online classroom impact your pedagogical aim of Christian *paideia* in your day-to-day activities? CRQ, SQ3

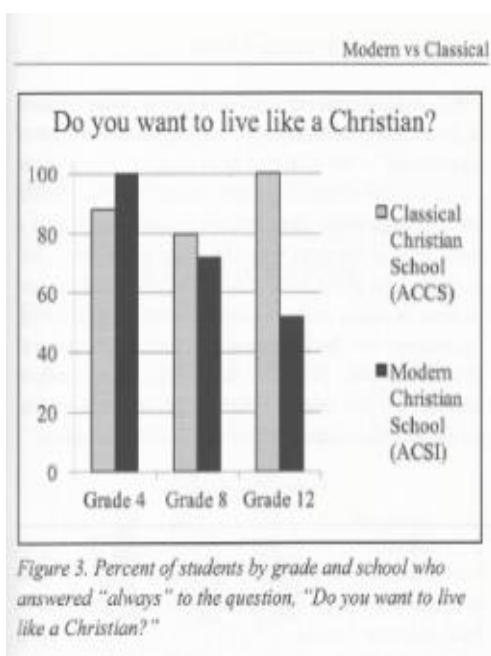
Appendix L

Values Coding Venn Diagram



Appendix M

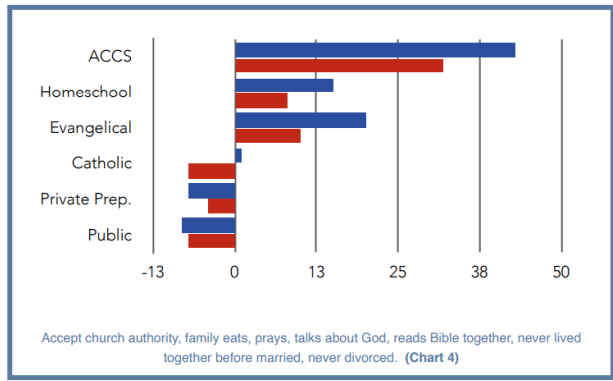
Previously Published Data Representing Christian *Paideia* in CCE Schools



Note. Students who graduate from a classical Christian school are nearly twice as likely to live a Christian lifestyle than those who graduate from a modern Christian school. Copyright 2018 by Dornlan.

PROFILE 4: CHRISTIAN LIFE

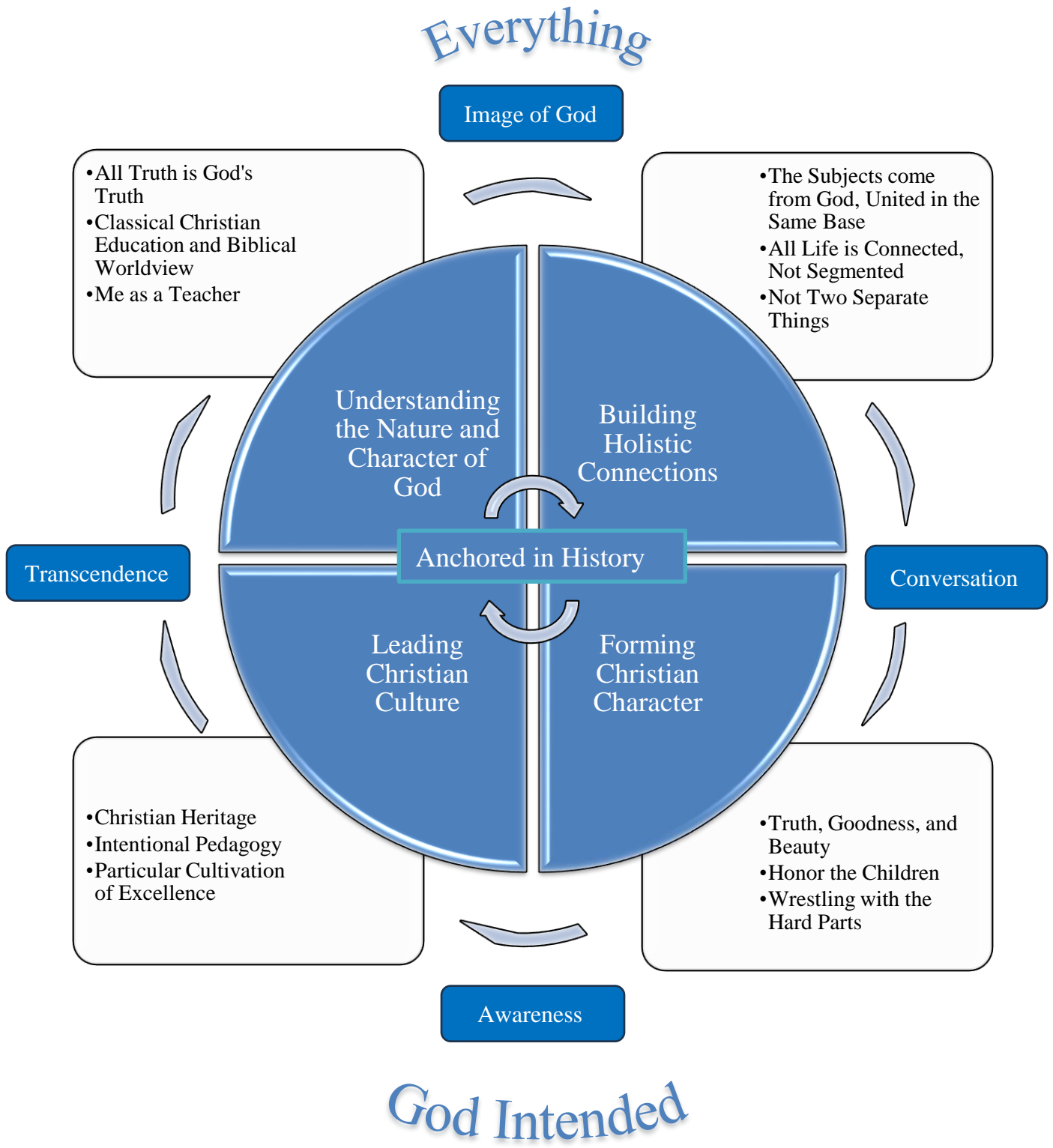
ACCS Alumni live their faith.



Note. Vertical zero is the median response of over 1,500 participants of the Cardus Education Study, with the blue bar representing unadjusted data and the red bar as statistically adjusted data “to isolate the school as the causal factor” (Goodwin & Sikkink, 2020, p. 9).

Appendix N

The Essence of Christian Paideia Concept Map



Appendix O

Research Methodology Audit Trail

Binnie J King	The Essence of Christian Paideia for Career Classical Educators:
Doctoral Candidate, LU	A Hermeneutic Phenomenology
9-26-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRB approval granted (Appendix A).
9-28-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sent email to Dr. Bob, headmaster of research site, detailing my research intentions along with attachments of IRB approval (Appendix A) and Site Consent Letter (Appendix B).
10-2-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Received Site Permission from headmaster (Appendix C)
10-8-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sent request to Admin for contact info of 3+ year career Classical Christian educators; Received an Excel Spreadsheet with 65 potential participant emails.
10-9-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sent Participant Recruitment Letter (Appendix D) via email to the 65 potential participants.
10-10-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created a new Excel Participant Spreadsheet to manage participant data.
10-13-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sent additional screening documents to the 10 volunteers and 7 out of 10 responded on the same day. • Posted Recruitment Flyer on faculty homepage.
10-16-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emailed 7 volunteers Consent Form and Demographics Questionnaire and requested times for interview.
10-17-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Participant Consent Form Returned. 1 Interview Meeting created for 10/27. Reminder email sent to the 3 potential participants to complete screening.
10-21-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final 3 volunteers returned their screenings and all 10 initially interested passed the additional screening. 1 more volunteer responded and was sent screening, and I used purposeful sampling to reach out to two more potential non-USA citizen participants. I sent consent form and demographics questionnaires to the 4 participants and sent all 11

	<p>participants. a request for pseudonym. So far, I have 3 scheduled interviews.</p>
10-22-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scheduled 2 more interviews, gathered 5 pseudonyms, and sent 2 screening emails to the purposeful sample.
10-24-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gathered some pseudonyms and sent 2 more consent forms and demographics for the final 2 purposefully sampled participants. At this point, I have 6 out of 13 interviews scheduled with less than that consent forms, but 8 pseudonyms.
10-25-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First interview with participant, followed by 1 hour of reflective writing following Saldana's memoing prompts 2 and five. I also sent a follow-up email to schedule the remaining interviews.
10-27-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second interview with participant, followed by 1 hour of reflective writing following Saldana's memoing prompts 2 and 5.
10-29-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Third interview with participant, followed by 1 hour of reflective writing following Saldana's memoing prompts 2 and 5.
10-30-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fourth interview with participant, followed by 1 hour of reflective writing following Saldana's memoing prompts 2 and 5. Fifth interview with participant, followed by 1 hour of reflective writing following Saldana's memoing prompts 2 and 5.
11-1-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sixth interview with participant, followed by "".
11-2-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seventh interview with participant, followed by "".
11-3-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eighth interview with participant, followed by "".
11-3-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ninth interview with participant, followed by "".
11-6-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenth interview with participant, followed by "".
11-7-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eleventh interview with participant, followed by "".
11-8-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Twelfth interview with participant, followed by "".

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thirteenth and final interview with participant, followed by “”.
11-11-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked in Excel Participant Sheet organizing and linking data across participant folders. I documented any data collections that needed to be addressed with participants and sent participant emails accordingly. I also created a schedule for our focus group meetings to garner feedback about possible time slots for scheduling. This email was sent, as well.
11-12-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downloaded individual interviews and transcripts and ensured all participant folders were complete and all data was stored on hard drive.
11-15-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Composed and sent initial focus group meeting email to 13 participants. • Began organizing two focus groups according to responses.
11-16-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued organizing two focus groups according to participant email responses.
11-17-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determined the day and times of two focus groups. Recognized, by God’s providence, the participants had naturally separated into a humanities group, specifically Omnibus, and a multiple discipline group, including art, foreign language, math, physics, which provides another dimension to my data collection. • Sent calendar invitations to 12 participants for focus group meetings. • The 13th participant could not fit into any schedule and will not be included in this data collection.
11-20-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed PowerPoint slides for focus group data collection. • Organized ideas and flow for group data collection.
11-26-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribed SB Interview & Chunked for analysis.
11-27-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held focus group for multiple disciplines. • Engaged in reflective writing immediately after the focus group
12-1-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held focus group for humanities. • Engaged in reflective writing immediately after the focus group.

12-7-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchased and sent choice of gift cards to all 13 participants.
12-12-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reached out to potential readers for Ch 1-3 via email.
12-27-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sent Ch 1-3 to Peer Reader for Review. • Sent participant transcript for member check • Transcribed RS Interview & Chunked for analysis. • Sent participant transcript for member check
12-28-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribed ES Interview & Chunked for analysis. • Sent participant transcript for member check • Received NT Member Check • Began transcribing MW transcript. • Peer Dr. M agreed to be a potential reader for Ch 1-3
12-29-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribed CD Interview & Chunked for analysis. • Sent participant transcript for member check • Received ES Member Check
12-30-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribed KL Interview & Chunked for analysis • Sent participant transcript for member check.
1-1-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribed CM Interview & Chunked for analysis
1-2-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sent participant transcript for member check.
1-3-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribed DM Interview & Chunked for analysis • Sent participant transcript for member check.
1-4-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribed HM Interview & Chunked for analysis • Sent participant transcript for member check. • Received DM Member Check
1-6-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribed MSR SQ1 & Chunked for analysis
1-9-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribed MSR SQ2-7 & Chunked for analysis • Received HM Member Check • Received CD Member Check/she is making some clarifications before signing off.
1-10-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribed MSR SQ8-12 & Chunked for analysis • Sent participant transcript for member check • Received SB Member Check
1-13-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribed EH SQ 1-3 & chunked

1-14-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribed EH SQ4-6 & chunked
1-15-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribed EH SQ7-13 & Chunked for analysis • Sent participant transcript for member check • Received MSR Member Check • Received CD completed Member Check
1-16-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribed MM Interview transcript & Chunked for analysis • Sent participant transcript for a member check
1-17-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribed CR Interview transcript & Chunked for analysis • Sent participant transcript for a member check
1-18-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribed <u>BS</u> SQ1-6 & Chunked for analysis
1-19-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribed BS Interview transcript SQ 7-13 & Chunked for analysis • Sent participant transcript for a member check
1-21-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribed Partial Focus Group Multi Discipline • Received CR, MM, EH Member Check Approvals • Received follow up from peer reader
1-24-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribed Partial Focus Group Multi Discipline
1-26-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removed faces and timings from Focus Group transcript
1-27-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed Focus Group Multi Discipline transcript • Sent Transcript to 6 participants for member checks. • Began Focus Group Humanities transcript.
1-28-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed Focus Group Humanities transcript. • Sent transcript to 6 participants for member checks.
1-30-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Received several member checks via email. • Sent 7 emails requesting archive course and section info from participants. • Received 3 responses for archive data collection so far
2-3-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Received 5 of 7 days back for archive observation, data collection #3. • Sent the remainder 5 emails requesting archive course and section for 3rd data collection
2-4-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathered SB Archive for Data Collection 3
2-6-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Received 2 more archive observation dates and sections back

	from participants, waiting on remaining 5
2-7-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Received 1 more observation date
2-10-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loaded 13 interview transcripts into Delve and began in vivo coding. Preliminary In vivo Codes complete on 10 interview transcripts.
2-11-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed 1st round of preliminary codes for SQ1 and began second cycle back through the same transcripts, adding new codes and organizing codes in relation to one another.
2-14-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed 2nd cycle for sub question 1 codes. Took screenshots of codes and printed them. Began Code Wall Began 1st cycle for sub question 2, made it to 5th participant transcript KL.
2-15-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed 1 round of preliminary codes for sub-question 2.
2-16-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed 2nd cycle of preliminary codes for sub-question 2. Took screenshots of codes with sub-question 2 and printed them. Added codes to Code Wall Completed 1st cycle of preliminary codes for sub-question 3. Began 2nd cycle of preliminary codes for sub-question 3. Stopped at KL.
2-17-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed 2nd cycle of preliminary codes for sub-question 3. Took a third pass for saturation. Took screenshots of codes with sub-question 3 and printed them. Added codes to Code Wall Completed 1st and 2nd cycle of preliminary codes for sub-question 4. Took screenshots of codes with sub-question 4 Added codes to Code Wall Completed 1st and 2nd cycle of preliminary codes for Interview Question 13 which was the final wrap-up. Added Demographics of participants into Delve Copied Interview Questions 1 & 2 into one document, uploaded as new project in Delve. Coded Interview Questions 1 & 2 In vivo in Delve reflecting participant education background

2-18/23-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection, Writing, Manuscript Development
2-24-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Began Observation Data Analysis, completed KL & NH by watching archives and filling out observation instrument
2-25-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed Observation Data Analysis for CD & SB.
2-26-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed Observation Data Analysis for ES
2-27-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed Observation Data Analysis for MSR
2-28-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Began Observation Data Analysis for BS
2-29-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked on Observation Data Analysis for BS
3-2-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed Observation Data Analysis for BS • Completed Observation Data Analysis for DM • Completed Observation Data Analysis for CM
3-3-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed Observation Data Analysis for MM
3-4-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Began Observation Data Analysis for EH
3-6-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed Observation Data Analysis for EH
3-7-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Began Observation Data Analysis for CR
3-8-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed Observation Data Analysis for CR • Completed Observation Data Analysis for HM • Analyzed Observation Data Analysis through van Manen's reflective writing
3-9/11-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzed Observation Data Analysis through van Manen's reflective writing
3-15-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Vivo Coding of Focus Group Transcripts • Completed Values Coding of Focus Group Transcripts for DM, BS, NH, EH, HM, and KL of the Humanities Group. • Completed Values Coding of Focus Group Transcripts for MM of Multiple Discipline Group
3-16-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed Values Coding of Focus Group Transcripts for MSR, CD, SB, ES, and CM of the Multiple Discipline Group
3-17-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joined codes, categories, and themes from all 3 data sets in an EXCEL Spreadsheet. Completed 5 out of 13: MM, EH, MSR, HM, DM

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaged in reflective writing as I began to merge codes, categories, and themes. Found point of structure according to van Manen: Everything God Intended.
3-18-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed joining codes for the final 7 out of 13 into data synthesis workbook: BS, KL, CD, ES, NH, SB, & CR
3-21-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worked in Microsoft Excel to “Clean out the Kitchen” and further synthesize and gird up themes. Added to point of structure = Anchored in History Double checked and verified Delve Snippets with final theme synthesis.
3-22-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed Data Synthesis and created a diagram that demonstrates the themes and their connection to one another in Appendix N.
4-12-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sent completed manuscript to participants for final member check.