

HOW PARENTS PARTICIPATE IN THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND SPIRITUAL  
FORMATION OF THEIR CHILDREN: A CASE STUDY OF HYBRID SCHOOLING

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how parents participate in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who are enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region. The theory that guided this case study was Christopher Watkin's biblical critical theory, as it provides the proper framework for interpreting how parents enculturate their children in the Christian belief system of the family. The central research question was, "How do parents participate in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who are enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region?" The study site was a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region, and the participants were 13 moms with one or more children enrolled in the school for one or more years. The participants completed individual interviews, engaged in focus group discussions, and submitted written responses to a prompt. All transcripts and written responses were uploaded to ATLAS.ti. Data analysis included three coding rounds and identification of themes that answered the research questions. Three themes that tied closely to Watkin's cultural figures were identified; those three themes were relationships nurtured in Christian identity, content shapes Christian education and spiritual formation, and parenting practices establish family culture. The study concluded with three interpretations of findings: policy, practice, empirical, and theoretical implications; study limitations and delimitations; and recommendations for future research.

*Keywords:* homeschooling, Christian education, spiritual formation, biblical critical theory, classical education, parenting practices, hybrid schools, collaborative schools

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## Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Gary, and to my daughters, Clare and Callan.

I dedicate this research to the study participants and head of school who long for their children to know their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Thank you for sharing your time, insights, loves, hopes, and fears with me. The Lord promises to hear your prayers. Trust in Him.

I also dedicate this and future research to those who obey God's command to train children in the way they should go (*English Standard Version Bible*, Proverbs 22:6). May the Lord equip all those in Christian fellowship to make Him known, for He commands,

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise (*English Standard Version Bible*, Deuteronomy 6:4-7).

May the Lord equip us all to serve Him well until He returns in splendor and glory, and on that day, may we hear Him declare, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (*English Standard Version Bible*, Matthew 25:21).

## **Acknowledgments**

I thank you, Father God, for guiding every aspect of this work. I am comforted, Holy Spirit, by your presence in this research. I pray, Lord Jesus, that you will advance Your kingdom through this study. Triune God, bring every child to Yourself.

Thank you, Gary, my beloved husband and friend, for your unwavering confidence in me and support for this research. God is kind to have made you my love, and I am grateful more than I can express for your protection and encouragement - how I adore and respect you. Thank you also to our daughters, Clare and Callan, the most important people in our lives, for celebrating the many milestones of this four-year project. Daddy and I treasure every moment of being your parents, and we thank God that you are His, always.

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To God be the glory.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	3
Copyright Page.....	4
Dedication .....	5
Acknowledgments.....	6
List of Tables .....	7
List of Figures .....	11
List of Abbreviations .....	15
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	13
Overview .....	13
Background .....	13
Historical Context .....	14
Social Context.....	17
Theoretical Context.....	19
Problem Statement .....	21
Purpose Statement.....	22
Significance of the Study .....	23
Theoretical .....	23
Empirical.....	24
Practical.....	24
Research Questions .....	25
Central Research Question.....	25
Sub-Question One.....	25

Sub-Question Two .....	26
Sub-Question Three .....	26
Definitions.....	26
Summary .....	27
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	29
Overview.....	29
Theoretical Framework.....	29
Related Literature.....	30
Origins of Biblical Critical Theory .....	30
Key Components of biblical Critical Theory and Religious Transmission .....	42
Related Literature.....	33
Values Transmission and Relationship.....	34
Values Transmission and Content .....	42
Values Transmission and Practices.....	51
Twenty-First Century Parenting .....	57
Christian Religious Transmission .....	60
Summary .....	62
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS .....	64
Overview.....	64
Research Design.....	64
Research Questions .....	66
Central Research Question.....	66
Sub-Question One.....	66

Sub-Question Two .....	66
Sub-Question Three .....	67
Setting and Participants.....	67
Setting .....	67
Participants.....	69
Recruitment Plan.....	69
Researcher’s Positionality.....	70
Interpretive Framework .....	70
Philosophical Assumptions.....	71
Ontological Assumption .....	71
Epistemological Assumption .....	71
Axiological Assumption .....	72
Researcher’s Role .....	73
Procedures.....	73
Data Collection Plan .....	74
Individual Interviews .....	75
Focus Groups .....	78
Letter-Writing .....	80
Data Analysis .....	81
Trustworthiness.....	83
Credibility .....	84
Transferability.....	86
Dependability .....	86

	10
Confirmability .....	87
Ethical Considerations .....	87
Permissions .....	88
Other Participant Protections .....	88
Summary .....	89
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS .....	90
Overview .....	90
Participants .....	90
Anna Neville .....	91
Christina Lambert .....	92
Elizabeth King .....	92
Holly Johnson .....	93
Jessica Irving .....	94
Katherine Holt .....	95
Lauren Givens .....	95
Megan Ford .....	96
Natalie Evert .....	96
Olivia Dobbs .....	97
Paula Curtis .....	98
Samantha Burg .....	99
Traci Adams .....	100
Results .....	100
Relationships Nurtured in Christian Identity .....	101

Content Shapes Christian Education and Spritual Formation .....	108
Parenting Pratices Establish Family Culture.....	111
Outlier Data and Findings.....	117
“It’s Not All About You”.....	117
The Financial Sacrifice of Hybrid-Model Schooling.....	118
Research Question Responses.....	118
Central Research Question.....	119
Sub-Question One.....	119
Sub-Question Two .....	120
Sub-Question Three .....	120
Summary .....	121
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	123
Overview.....	123
Discussion.....	123
Summary of Thematic Findings.....	124
Interpretation of Findings .....	125
Devotion to God and Family.....	125
Appreciation for Classical Content and Methodology.....	126
Accountability Through Hybrid-Model Schooling.....	127
Implications for Policy or Practice .....	128
Implications for Policy.....	128
Implications for Practice .....	130
Empirical and Theoretical Implications .....	131

Empirical Implications .....	132
Theoretical Implications .....	135
Limitations and Delimitations.....	136
Limitations .....	136
Delimitations.....	137
Recommendations for Future Research .....	137
Conclusion .....	138
References.....	140
Appendix A.....	171
Appendix B.....	172
Appendix C.....	173
Appendix D.....	174
Appendix E.....	175
Appendix F.....	176
Appendix G.....	179
Appendix H.....	180
Appendix I .....	181
Appendix J .....	182

### **List of Tables**

Table 1. Individual Interview Questions.....	76
Table 2. Focus Group Questions.....	79
Table 3. Participant Descriptions .....	91
Table 4. Themes & Subthemes .....	101
Table 5. Relationships Nurtured in Christian Identity .....	102
Table 6. Content Shapes Christian Education and Spiritual Formation .....	109
Table 7. Parenting Practices Establish Family Culture.....	112

### **List of Figures**

Figure 1. The Formation of a Christian Child: Biblical Critical Theory & Religious Transmission.....	32
Figure 2. Biblical Critical Theory Framework.....	33

### **List of Abbreviations**

Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)

Christian Education (CE)

Christian Education and Spiritual Formation (CESF)

Classical Christian Collaborative School (CCCS)

Hybrid for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

Social and Emotional (SE)

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

Spiritual Formation (SF)

Transformative Social-Emotional Learning (tSEL)

United States Department of Education (ED)

University Model Schools International (UMSI)

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

A cultural trend in America has captured the attention of researchers (Davis & Graham, 2023; Trueman, 2022; Watkin, 2022). Children who were raised in Christian homes are leaving the church as young adults despite the religious transmission efforts of their parents (Barrow et al., 2021; Dollahite et al., 2019; Kelley et al., 2021; Vonk et al., 2019). Some parents may blame themselves for the apostasy and question any number of their parenting practices (Barrow et al., 2021; Kelley et al., 2021). While research indicates parents have a tremendous influence on the spiritual formation of their children, there is a need for research on how parents are efficacious in religious transmission (Barrow et al., 2021; Dollahite et al., 2019; Kelley et al., 2021). This introductory chapter examines the background of religious transmission within American culture, then offers a purpose for and significance of the study of religious transmission for 21<sup>st</sup>-century parents, along with questions to guide the research. Finally, this chapter ends with a list of definitions that frame the content and a summary.

### **Background**

Since the beginning of American history, parents have labored to enculturate children in family faith practices, and the extended community participated in training the next generation in accepted cultural norms (Machen, 1923; Smith, 2020; Smith & Adamczyk, 2021). In the modern era, however, with its increasing secularization, the concept of family has shifted from a large, interdependent, proximate support system to a small, independent, isolated unit (Cooper & Dyer, 2022; Kelley et al., 2021). The power of secular influences on families is evident in the lives of contemporary adult children who were raised in a faith community, as research indicates young adults are increasingly abandoning the faith traditions of their families and are leaving the church

(Barrow et al., 2021; Davis & Graham, 2023; Dollahite et al., 2019; Kelley et al., 2021; Shenvi & Sawyer, 2023; Vonk et al., 2019).

This study presents the problem of declining church attendance in young adults from three perspectives. First, this section provides the historical context of education in the United States. Second, this section provides the social context of religious transmission in contemporary American culture. Third, this section provides the theoretical context of religious transmission and includes research on generative devotion, ecosystems theory, and attachment theory.

### **Historical Context**

Since the establishment of Plymouth Colony in 1620, the families of this country have lived in community with like-minded neighbors (Machen, 1923; Smith, 2020; Smith & Adamczyk, 2021). As the colonies grew toward independence in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the leading American founders created a government built on classical and Christian natural laws supportive of families, church, enterprise, and faith-based education (Cooper & Dyer, 2022). Early American culture reflected biblical principles of two-parent households headed by a father, family worship, acts of devotion, and knowledge acquisition rooted in the word of God (Davis & Graham, 2023; Henderson, 2024; Kelley et al., 2021; Smith, 2020). From its establishment as a religious colony in 1620 until the rise of progressive philosophy of the late 1800s, American culture was a cord of three strands, wherein family, school, and church interdependently reinforced communal norms; what was trained in the home was amplified in the church and reinforced in the school (Machen, 1923; Smith, 2020).

The secularized modern era, however, is transforming the Christocentric communal foundation of the 17<sup>th</sup> through middle 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Cooper & Dyer, 2022; Kelley et al., 2021; Shalin, 2022). Progressivism, a philosophical movement born in the 19<sup>th</sup> century from a concern

for human welfare and equal opportunity, became influential during the period of the American Industrial Revolution and the European Immigration (Gould, 2013). From 1890 to 1914, Progressive Era philosophies called for federal attention to newly industrialized and overcrowded urban centers (Gould, 2013; Shalin, 2022). The political, economic, and social ideals born in the Progressive Era shaped American culture for the remainder of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; indeed, its mission of establishing governmental protections for the weak, the few, and the oppressed is evident in 21<sup>st</sup>-century American culture (Gould, 2013; Shalin, 2022).

Within the realm of education, John Dewey fathered the progressive school movement by creating the University of Chicago Elementary School, also known as the Dewey lab school, which he oversaw from 1896 to 1904 (Stack, 2020; Vine, 2020). Noting many urban children suffered alienation and isolation, Dewey proposed that, by reforming public education, the schools would supply the sense of community city children needed, would encourage active learning, and would nurture students' interests (Dewey, 1916; Stack, 2020; Vine, 2020). At the lab school, Dewey developed innovative teacher training methods and provided free education from nursery through secondary school until he departed for Columbia Teacher's College in 1904 (Stack, 2020). Proponents of the Progressive Era education movement of 1890 to 1914 advocated for curriculum that nurtured children, prepared them for responsible citizenship, and made them productive members of the workforce, and similar emphases are evident in the educational philosophies and programs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Dewey, 1916; Stack, 2020; Vine, 2020).

The advance of progressivism in economics, politics, and society influenced the family, as well (Vine, 2020). From the establishment of the first American colony in 1620 to the beginning of the Progressive Era in 1890, parents controlled children's education as evidenced

through the creation of dame schools, freedmen schools, church schools, correspondence schools, cottage schools, and home schools (McShane, 2021; Wearne, 2021). However, as progressive education reforms advanced the professionalization of teaching, state oversight of public education, and the growth of compulsory education laws, parental authority in schooling weakened (Dwyer & Peters, 2019; McShane, 2021; Provasnik, 2006; Smith, 2020). Over time, parents increasingly relied on public schools to train their children (Provasnik, 2006).

While compulsory education laws were being established throughout the nation, beginning with Massachusetts in 1853, religious studies had long been a component of public schooling (Smith, 2020). Bible reading and prayer were a regular part of public schooling until a series of Supreme Court decisions in the 1940s ruled such practices violated the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses (Lupu et al., 2019; Smith, 2020). Supreme Court decisions in the ensuing decades, up to the present day, have suppressed religious-based practices in public education.

Dissatisfied parents sought alternatives to the public school. The history of the homeschooling movement in the United States is tied to the grassroots efforts of parents seeking to educate their children according to family values (Dwyer & Peters, 2019; McShane, 2021). While there are incidences of 20<sup>th</sup>-century parents homeschooling their children as early as the 1960s (Dwyer & Peters, 2019), the modern homeschool movement was established in the 1980s with John Holt's call for parents to unschool their children, and with Raymond Moore's call for Christian parents to recapture parental authority in education (Dwyer & Peters, 2019; McShane, 2021). School districts across the country typically granted religious exemptions to the homeschooling pioneers of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, but as the movement grew, district school boards and state departments of education developed home education policies and legal

requirements (Dwyer & Peters, 2019; McShane, 2021; Wearne, 2021). On the national level, the Home School Legal Defense Association was organized in 1983 to offer legal protection for homeschooling families (Dwyer & Peters, 2019; McShane, 2021).

Home-based education in the United States has increased over the last forty years, from an estimated 93,000 students in 1983 to 2.3 million students in 2016 (Ray, 2020). The increase in homeschooling numbers correlates with an increase in educational options. For example, parents may choose to be the sole educator, to participate in a homeschool co-operative, or co-teach in a hybrid homeschool, the first of which was formally established in 1993 (McShane, 2021; Wearne, 2021). Homeschoolers may also choose to develop their own curriculum, purchase commercially prepared materials, or participate in online coursework. The 1940s call by Dorothy Sayers, C.S. Lewis, and Mortimer Adler for a return to classical education as a redress for the person-centered, subjectivist progressive philosophy of education proposed by Dewey, has been heard; a classical education is readily available to homeschoolers via curriculum, online classes, and hybrid homeschools (Forster, 2024; Wilson, 2022).

### **Social Context**

Research indicates that approximately 87% of school-age children attend public schools today (Allen, 2024). Parents who enroll their children in a public school must comply with its annual calendar, daily schedule, course offerings, curriculum, activities, and values. With the increased secularization of public education, children may be reading books, befriending peers, and adopting language, ideas, and perspectives of which parents disapprove (Kelley et al., 2021). Whatever the faith tradition, the four most common being Christian (70%), Jewish (2%), Islam (1%), and Hindu (1%), parents holding to religious orthodoxy may find themselves at odds with the progressive public school environment (Gallup, 2024).

Parents choosing to raise children in a family faith tradition make sacrifices to do so, which may include choosing private or home schooling (Dollahite et al., 2019; Kelley et al., 2021). Religious transmission and faith enculturation are of top concern for parents who purposely curate their children's social environment, friendships, activities, and educational content (Barrow et al., 2021; Dollahite et al., 2019; Kelley et al., 2021; McQuiggan & Megra, 2017). Indeed, parents of diverse religious traditions find themselves at odds with mainstream culture when they resist secular influences and persist in family faith practices (Barrow et al., 2021; Kelley et al., 2021; Vine, 2020).

Parents of diverse faith traditions in the United States are free to eschew state-sponsored schools to educate children according to family values. This educational freedom, however, is not free of cost; private school tuition in the U.S. averaged \$12,594 per year in 2023, and parents today can expect to pay \$312,026 to privately educate a child from kindergarten through college (Hanson, 2023). Despite 46% of American private schools reporting post-pandemic enrollment increases (McClusky & Ekins, 2024), a private school education may be out of range for typical American families. Statistics show homeschooling is on the rise in America; approximately 2.5 million students were homeschooled in 2019, pre-pandemic, and nearly 4 million students are being home-educated nationally, post-pandemic (Hernholm, 2024). In addition, research shows a breadth of demographic markers for families who homeschool; for example, statistics indicate near equal numbers of *poor* as *non-poor* parents homeschooled their children in 2016 (McQuiggan & Megra, 2017), and from 1999 to 2019, between 3 and 4% of families within every designated income bracket from \$20,000 to over \$100,000 chose to homeschool (NCES, 2021). The appeal of homeschooling across broad income categories may suggest that parents seek to provide an education that is unavailable elsewhere.

By homeschooling, some parents hope to enculturate their children in their family faith traditions. Such parents may recognize that, in increasing numbers, young adults are abandoning their childhood faith practices, even those who were raised in Christian homes, who attended Christian schools, and who went to church with their families (Barrow et al., 2021; Davis & Graham, 2023; Dollahite et al., 2019; Vonk et al., 2019). Yet research shows young adults who remain steadfast in their faith credit the influences of religious exemplars in their formative years (Boyatzis, 2019; Deprez, 2017; Smith & Adamczyk, 2021; Powell & Clark, 2011; Vasquez, 2019).

As children spend most hours of their weekdays in school, research on the relationship between schooling and religious transmission is warranted. By design, homeschooling requires parents and children to be in close contact for lengths of time, thus home education models provide opportunities for collecting rich data on religious transmission (Barrow et al., 2021; Dollahite et al., 2019; Kelley et al., 2021; Vonk et al., 2019). The current study identified the presence of those elements of religious transmission that research indicates are effectual in religious persistence by examining the interactions of parents and their children who are enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school (Barrow et al., 2021; Dollahite et al., 2019; Vonk et al., 2019).

### **Theoretical Context**

Research on religious transmission indicates that those who persist in family faith traditions credit the influence of religious exemplars in the formative years (Greenway, 2022; Vonk et al., 2019). The importance of relationship lies at the heart of three theories under examination in this section; studies on generative devotion, ecosystems theory, and attachment theory provide relevant background to the study of religious transmission (Bellous, 2021; Ginty,

2022; Vonk et al., 2019).

First, the theory of generative devotion, developed by Dollahite, Marks, and Wurm (2019) from the 20 years-long National Family of Faith Project, describes the intentional efforts of parents, family, and community members to nurture children in a faith tradition (Barrow et al., 2021; Bellous, 2021; Dollahite et al., 2019). Generative devotion is outward-focused and seeks the good of the child (Barrow et al., 2021). Noted aspects of generative devotion are authoritative parents who include children in religious observances, model family faith and values, and honor children's agency by allowing them to question, explore, and take ultimate responsibility for faith choices while maintaining loving relationships (Barrow et al., 2021; Davis & Graham, 2023; Dollahite et al., 2019; Vonk et al., 2019).

Second, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory describes the consecutive layers of influence, like the rings of a tree, that impact a child's world (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Of most immediate and enduring influence is a child's relationship with parents and siblings (Goodman & Dyer, 2020; Van Niekerk & Breed, 2018; Seland et al., 2022). The next layer of influence is the extended family of grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles who interact with the family unit (Davis, 2021; Deprez, 2017). Following extended family are community influences, such as religious centers, schools, activities, peers, and neighborhoods with which the immediate family unit is involved (Greenway et al., 2022; Kambouri et al., 2021; Lin, 2021; Rios, 2020). The outermost area of influence is the age in which a child lives, as considerable cultural pressure emanates from the policies, opportunities, and freedoms generated by governmental agencies; the impact of the economic environment on jobs, wages, and cost of living; the cultural effect of print, broadcast, social, and web media; and available education options. Contemporary governmental, economic, and socio-cultural influences impact parental opportunities and quality

of life, and trickle down to the family unit and to the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Seland et al., 2022).

Third, Bowlby's attachment theory (1977) describes how parents, particularly mothers as the primary caregiver in early childhood, respond to the needs of their children in ways that foster the formation of secure attachments and warm bonds (Bellous, 2021; Christian, 2020; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990; Simpson et al., 2021). Attachment theory describes the ability of children to form functional, trusting relationships first with family members and caregivers, and then with others as they mature (Bellous, 2021; Holmes, 2023; Mcleod, 2024; Simpson et al., 2021). It is suggested that secure attachments enable children to develop resilience that equips them to endure hardships in healthy ways (Ciuhan, 2021; Davis, 2021; Simpson et al., 2021).

Research on generative devotion, ecological systems theory, and attachment theory undergirds the study of religious transmission. Aspects of each of the three theories are found in the bidirectional nature of relational exchanges between parents and their children (Barrow et al., 2021; Simpson et al., 2021). Each theory provides insight into the parent-child relational dynamic and supports the identification of the elements of effective faith transmission.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem is young adults are leaving the church (Davis, 2021; Davis & Graham, 2023; Greenway et al., 2022; Powell & Clark, 2011). Research indicates religious affiliation creates societal good, while increasing secularization creates division in societal value systems (Davis & Graham, 2023; Larson, 2005; Vine, 2020). Societal fractionation creates cultural discord, pressures institutions and individuals to conform to emerging social norms, and threatens family bonds (Minor et al., 2023; Vine, 2020). In fact, Davis and Graham (2023) report that more people have left the church in the last quarter century than were converted to

Christianity in the First Great Awakening, the Second Great Awakening, and the Billy Graham Crusades combined.

This abandonment of familial faith practices by young adults brings into question parental efforts to raise authentically Christian children in an apostate culture (Barrow et al., 2021; Smith & Adamczyk, 2021). The trend of young adults leaving the church has been widely studied; Powell & Clark (2011) list, for example, studies by the Barna Group, the Fuller Youth Institute, Lifeway Research, and the National Study of Youth and Religion that document the decline. Research on what produces a sticky faith reveals young adults who remain religiously faithful credit certain childhood experiences and relationships for their steadfastness (Davis, 2021; Powell & Clark, 2011; Smith & Adamczyk, 2021).

As revealed in self-report surveys and backed by literature on generative devotion, ecological systems theory, and attachment theory, young adults who persist in family faith traditions credit close relationships with their parents (Minor et al., 2023). While ample research indicates parents significantly influence children's faith, there is a lack of research on how parents create a family culture that supports religious transmission in an age of increasing secular pressure (Vine, 2020). Therefore, this case study interviewed parents who co-taught in a hybrid homeschool, an under-researched segment of the faith community, to examine how they participated in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who were enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this case study was to examine how parents participated in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who were enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region. Parent participation was identified as those

intentional, multidisciplinary, bidirectional interactions engaged by parents to disciple children. The theory that guided this study was Christopher Watkin's (2022) biblical critical theory as it provides a comprehensive framework for interpreting the modern, Western, fractionated culture that is drawing young people away from family faith traditions.

### **Significance of the Study**

Contemporary cultural values are changing (Davis & Graham, 2023). Research shows that societal values impact families (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), one aspect of which is how religious families negotiate contemporary societal influences (Smith & Adamczyk, 2021). Faith and religion are rooted in value laden ideas and often based in familial traditions, yet parenting practices are increasingly being shaped by secular culture (Minor et al., 2023; Shenvi & Sawyer, 2023). Parents raising children within a religious tradition strive to enculturate them in family faith practices without instigating their rebellion (Barrow et al., 2021; Dwyer & Peters, 2019; Smith & Adamczyk, 2021). This study examined how a particular segment of the Christian community enculturated its children in their family faith traditions.

### **Theoretical**

Research indicates children raised in a faith tradition are increasingly abandoning their childhood religion in young adulthood (Davis & Graham, 2023). Studies reveal some young adults see religion as restrictive, inconsistent, and exclusive on issues of social justice, sexual freedom, and gender identities (Davis & Graham, 2023; Pew Research Center, 2024). Labeled *nones* for believing in *nothing in particular*, these young adults are abandoning family faith practices, seldom attend worship services, and yet are less socially and civically participatory than atheists, agnostics, and the religiously affiliated. Nones, by nature of what it means to be religiously unaffiliated, view the world from a secular perspective. Christopher Watkin (2022),

on the other hand, suggests that biblical critical theory is the single honest tool for analyzing contemporary Western culture. This study on religious transmission used Watkin's bibliocentric theory as a framework for researching the religious transmission efforts of homeschooling parents whose children were enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region.

### **Empirical**

Research on religious transmission has examined church Sunday schools, efficacious pedagogical practices, self-reports of religiously steadfast young adults, and the expressed concerns of parents for the religious persistence of their children (Davis & Graham, 2023; Huth, 2021; Smith & Adamczyk, 2021; Van Niekerk & Breed, 2018; Wilkerson, 2022; Yoder et al., 2021). To date, there is scant research on the impact of schooling on efficacious religious transmission (Csinos, 2018; McShane, 2021; Wearne, 2021). Thus, the current study examined how a classical Christian, hybrid-model school supported the efforts of parents to enculturate their children in their family faith traditions.

### **Practical**

The practical significance of the study rests in discovering how a classical Christian, hybrid-model school supported the efforts of parents to enculturate their children in their family faith traditions. Hybrid homeschooling is costly as it requires tuition payments; is time-consuming as it requires commitment to a traditional school schedule; and is sacrificial as it requires the oversight of one stay-at-home parent (McShane, 2021; Wearne, 2021). In examining how parents participated in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who were enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region, the efforts, values, commitment, and benefits evident in the model may encourage discouraged parents to

persevere, to pursue local and state policy changes that support their education choices, and to broadcast this form of schooling as a viable, valuable, and preferred education model for other Christian parents to consider (Dwyer & Peters, 2019).

### **Research Questions**

Although the problem of declining church attendance in young adults who were raised in Christian families may seem inconsequential to some (Csinos, 2018), the trend is under investigation by the Christian community (Davis & Graham, 2023; Powell & Clark, 2011; Shenvi & Sawyer, 2023; Smith & Adamczyk, 2021). While some young adults attach blame for their apostasy on parents, research is needed to examine the religious transmission practices identified as efficacious by young adults who remained faithful (Csinos, 2018; Davis, 2021; Davis and Graham; 2023; Deprez, 2017; Smith & Adamczyk, 2021; Vasquez, 2019). Therefore, this case study examined how parents participated in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who were enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region.

#### **Central Research Question**

How do parents participate in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who are enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region?

#### **Sub-Question One**

How does relationship affect parents' participation in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who are enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region?

### **Sub-Question Two**

How does content affect parents' participation in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who are enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region?

### **Sub-Question Three**

How does practice affect parents' participation in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who are enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region?

### **Definitions**

1. *Authoritarian Parenting Style* - parental caregiving that combines low levels of warmth with high levels of coercive control that undermines development of autonomy in children (Bornstein et al., 2022; Pinquart & Fischer, 2022).
2. *Authoritative Parenting Style* - parental caregiving that combines high levels of warmth with high levels of reason-based control that promotes development of autonomy in children (Bornstein et al., 2022; Pinquart & Fischer, 2022).
3. *Christian Education* - educational content and methodology rooted in Christian belief and faith practices for the purpose of formation and transformation in its learners and teachers (Davis, 2021).
4. *Christian Spiritual Formation* - one's lifelong, embodied growth in Christlikeness within the context of Christian community (Rios, 2020; Tolbert, 2014).
5. *Classical Education* - a pedagogical model of teaching the trivium and quadrivium, also known as the classical liberal arts, with a language and history-based curriculum that accesses the developmental strengths of children (Bauer & Wise, 2016).

6. *Classical Liberal Arts* - includes the subjects and stages of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy (Bauer & Wise, 2016).
7. *Content* - the material matter and pedagogical practices used by homeschooling parents (Csinos, 2018).
8. *Hybrid Model School* - a co-teaching arrangement between professional educators and homeschooling parents in which children attend designated, graded classes on a school campus two or three days per week and homeschool the remaining days of the week (McShane, 2021).
9. *Nones* - people claiming no religious affiliation (Davis & Graham, 2023).
10. *Parental Participation* - intentional, multidisciplinary, bidirectional interactions engaged by parents to disciple children (Boyatzis, 2019).
11. *Practice* - homeschooling parents' enculturation behaviors and use of time (Aniol, 2021).
12. *Relationship* - the authority, security, and warm bonds in which parents lovingly envelope children (Simpson et al., 2021).
13. *Religious Transmission* – the enculturation of children in family beliefs, values, practices, and faith traditions (Conway et al., 2023)

### **Summary**

Parents who raised children to follow Christ are increasingly finding them abandon their family faith traditions. The problem of dechurched draws attention to those who stay; research indicates young adults who remain steadfast church-goers credit particular childhood experiences and warm parental bonds for their perseverance. One education model providing frequent opportunities for efficacious religious transmission is the classical Christian, hybrid-model homeschool. Therefore, the purpose of this case study was to examine how parents participated

in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who were enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview**

Research reveals young adults raised in Christian communities are increasingly abandoning their family faith traditions (Davis, 2021; Davis & Graham, 2023; McShane, 2021). As Christian parents disciple their children, the church-leaving trend invites exploration (Davis, 2021; Ginty, 2022; Holmes, 2023). The current case study examined Christian parents' religious transmission practices using Christopher Watkin's (2022) biblical critical theory as a framework. The framework section overviews biblical critical theory and its utility for examining six categories of Western culture, categories Watkin labels cultural figures (Watkin, 2023). Following the framework section, the related literature section examines how modern, Western culture transmits values to children by looking at parenting and education research through the lens of Watkin's six cultural figures. In this climate of growing secularization, Watkin's biblical critical theory and the concept of religious transmission gives rise to a central research question of how parents participate in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children (Butterfield, 2023; Davis & Graham, 2023; Greenway, 2022; McShane, 2021; Shenvi & Sawyer, 2023). The chapter summary recaps research findings on values transmission and reveals a topic for further study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Christopher Watkin's (2022) biblical critical theory frames this case study of values transmission, or more specifically, how parents participate in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who are enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region. Three sub-concepts of values transmission are parent-child relationship, pedagogical and materials content, and faith practices. What follows is a description

of how biblical critical theory, values transmission, and the three sub-concepts are linked in familial relationships.

## **Related Literature**

### **Origins of Biblical Critical Theory**

Biblical critical theory is a Christian social theory derived from the biblical world wherein Watkin (2022) identifies six universal, cultural figures and presents them as tools for interpreting modern Western culture (Harvey, 2022; Michener, 2023). Watkin suggests all Western cultures are defined by the figures he describes as the rhythms and patterns giving meaning to life; the six figures are as follows: how a culture expresses time and space; how a culture uses language, ideas, and stories; how a culture uses material objects or artifacts; how a culture instills behavioral norms; how a culture establishes relational standards; and how a culture presents reality (Harvey, 2022; Keller, 2022; Michener, 2023; Watkin, 2023).

In comparing the modern Western world with the biblical world, Watkin developed a tool for bridging perceived cultural opposites. By engaging a device he calls diagonalization, Watkin (2022) shows that, when viewed through the biblical apologetic that all things are made through Christ, culturally defined ideas are linked (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2011, Col. 1:16; Harvey, 2022; Trueman, 2023; Watkin, 2022). For example, some may consider criminal justice as a compassionate system treating the causes of crime, or as a punitive system designed to protect society (Watkin, 2022). Watkin suggests the notions of compassion and justice are not opposed but originate from and cohere in the scriptures; by understanding compassion and justice as they are revealed in the biblical world, diagonalization produces a biblical understanding of modern criminal justice that is both merciful and requiring punishment.

Watkin's biblical critical theory evolved from a two-fold curiosity (Watkin, 2022). As a student of philosophy and medieval languages at Jesus College in Cambridge, England, Watkin was captivated by the worlds he studied; he wondered at the ideas that inspired the characters inhabiting those worlds and at the norms influencing their behaviors. As a Christian, Watkin was also captivated by the biblical storyline; he recognized the scriptures also contain ideas and norms shaping that ancient culture. What piqued Watkin's imagination was his perception that the enculturated worlds of French and German literature and the enculturated world of ancient Hebrew scriptures run in parallel tracks. Watkin mused at the lack of scholarship bridging the contemporary and biblical worlds (Matei et al., 2023; Michener, 2023).

Watkin (2022) searched for biblical resources and theologians capable of bridging the world presented in the biblical storyline to the world of modern Western culture to reveal a Christian social theory (Harvey, 2022; Trueman, 2023; Watkin, 2022). In reading *The City of God* (Augustine, ca. 426/2003), Watkin recognized Augustine accomplished for ancient Rome what he desired to accomplish for modern Western culture (Michener, 2023; Watkin, 2022). As Watkin explains, Augustine critiques Roman culture by exposing its inconsistencies and internal contradictions despite its tremendous achievements, then compares Rome with the entire biblical story (Harvey, 2022; Michener, 2023; Watkin, 2022). It was the coherence of Roman culture with the arc of the biblical storyline that inspired the structure for Watkin's biblical critical theory (Harvey, 2022; Watkin, 2022).

### **Key Components of Biblical Critical Theory and Religious Transmission**

This case study investigated how parents mitigate modern Western culture in their religious transmission efforts. The six cultural figures of biblical critical theory were condensed into three categories for this study (Figure 1). The reality structures figure and the relational

standards figure form the relationship category; the objects and artifacts figure and the language, story and ideas figure form the content category; and the behavioral norms figure and the time and space figure form the practices category.

**Figure 1**

*The Formation of a Christian Child: Biblical Critical Theory & Religious Transmission*

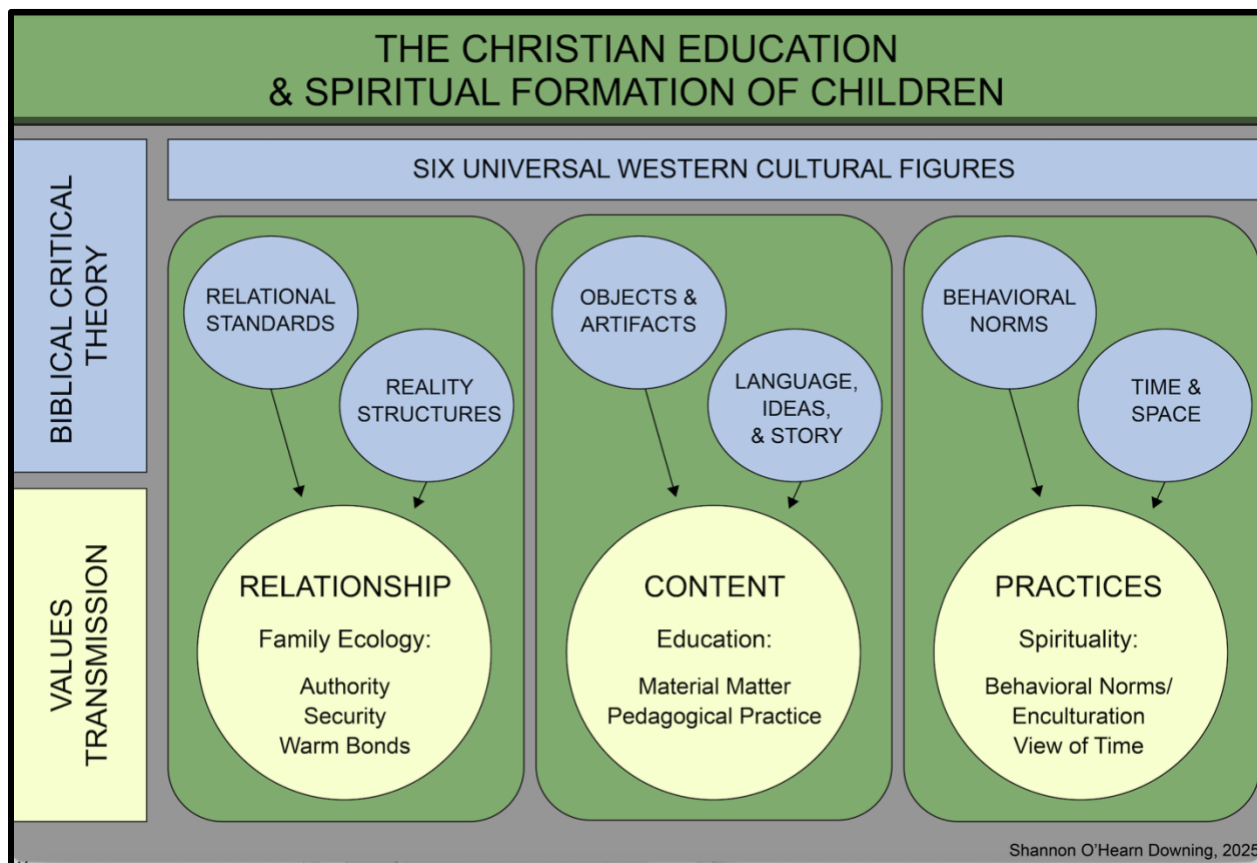
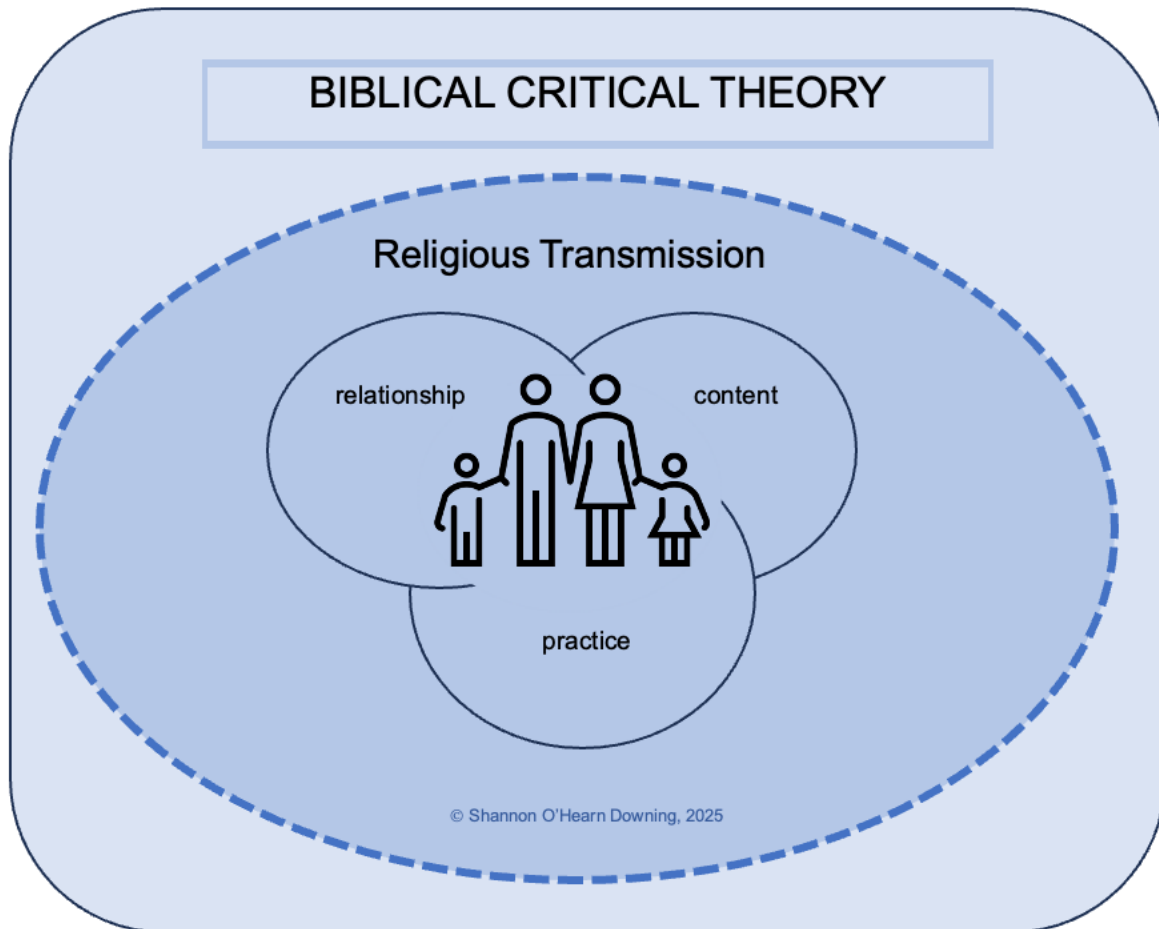


Figure 2 was created to graphically illustrate the interrelationship between biblical critical theory and religious transmission in the Christian education and spiritual formation of children. To facilitate comparison between sectarian and nonsectarian aspects of modern Western culture, however, research on both religious transmission and values transmission will be investigated. The following research review examines issues surrounding both sectarian religious transmission and nonsectarian values transmission.

**Figure 2***Biblical Critical Theory Framework***Related Literature**

The related literature section presents research on values transmission. This section is organized by the three categories of values transmission derived from Watkin's six cultural figures. The three sections are values transmission and relationship, values transmission and content, and values transmission and practices. First, within the section on values transmission and relationship, research on parental authority type, secure parent-child attachments, and warm parent-child bonds is reviewed. Next, within the section on values transmission and content, research on the influence of philosophies of education on pedagogical practice and educational

materials is reviewed. Third, within the section on values transmission and practices, research on behavioral norms and parents' use of time is presented. Next, this chapter presents research on 21<sup>st</sup>-century parenting and Christian religious transmission. This chapter concludes with a summary of the findings and a suggestion for further research.

### **Values Transmission and Relationship**

Two of Watkin's (2023) cultural figures, relational standards and reality structures, provide categories for researching how relationship transmits religion, or morals, or values (Ginty, 2022). The two cultural figures, as aspects of relationship, were examined through research on how family ecosystems shape child formation (Goodman & Dyer, 2020; Holmes, 2021). Research on parenting practices illuminates the bidirectional interplay of parents and children within the family ecosystem.

Children are born into families that influences their physical, mental, and emotional development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Seland et al., 2022). Studies on parent-child interactions show the reciprocal nature of the relationship; children are formed by parental care, and children influence parental responses (Aniol, 2019; Aniol, 2021; Davis, 2021; Korja & McMahon, 2021). Studies on parent-child interactions show parental influence on the moral formation of children begins in infancy and endures through the length of the relationship (DePasquale & Gunnar, 2020; Geraci & Surian, 2023; Gill & Sommerville, 2023). What follows is current research describing how family ecosystems nurture relationship (Minor et al., 2023; Seland et al., 2022). More specifically, findings on parental authority, secure attachments, and warm bonds reveal ways the bidirectional nature of the parent-child relationship influences the formation of the child (Alexander & Putnam, 2021; Almeida et al., 2022; Bellous, 2021; Holmes, 2023; Ingersoll, 2020; Simpson et al., 2021).

### ***Authority***

Findings on parental authority indicate the relationship shared by parent and child, not genetics, peer influences, or nationality, primarily influences the socio-moral development of the child (Alexander & Putnam, 2021; Bornstein et al., 2022; DePasquale & Gunnar, 2020; Fatima et al., 2022; Pinquart & Fischer, 2022). Research on parental authority supports the assertion that children are innately moral, and moral sense is shaped by parenting style (Fatima et al., 2022). In addition, the parental effect on the socio-moral development of the child begins in infancy (DePasquale & Gunnar, 2020; Kearney, 2023).

In a study of moral sense in children, findings suggest that 4-month-old infants demonstrate inherent understanding of fairness (Hamlin et al., 2007; Geraci & Surian, 2023). In situations designed for infants to observe the even and uneven distribution of material objects, researchers concluded the prolonged gazing of infants at the unfair distributor revealed an ability to discern unfairness (Geraci & Surian, 2023). Research further suggested infants associated the unfairness with the distributor and avoided additional contact with him (Geraci & Surian, 2023). Similar research found 6- to 10-month-old infants preferred agents who helped rather than agents who harmed (Gill & Sommerville, 2023; Hamlin et al., 2007). A study of 27 infants, aged 5- to 9-months revealed 22 preferred victims of observed physical harm, but showed no such preference when the source of the harm was not apparent (Uzefovsky et al., 2020). However, a replicated study of 32 children aged 14- to 16-months was inconclusive on whether the children preferred helpers, calling into question the reliability of research on morality in preverbal children (Schlingloff et al., 2020).

In addition, findings from a study of 65 children enrolled in 15 New England preschools revealed children between the ages of four and five years old adhered to an inner moral sense

and conventional norms in situations of unfairness (Alexander & Putnam, 2021). Furthermore, when the moral sense of the child conflicted with a command from an adult to contradict moral convention, the child determined the immoral command should be ignored, suggesting children possess an inherent moral sense that is shaped by parental authority, affirming the interactionist-constructivist position that morality is both inherent and learned (Alexander & Putnam, 2021; Dahl, 2019). In a study of 281 Australian children aged 4- to 10-years-old, researchers observed children distinguished between moral concern for others and personal preference for them; in other words, research on moral circles or boundaries revealed that Western children display concern for others whether they are a preferred group or not (Nelder et al., 2023).

As children mature, research indicates adolescent morality-based decision-making is affected by parental authority type (Bornstein et al., 2022). For example, in a sample of 256 ethnically homogenous adolescents and their parents living in the DC Metro Region, research showed adolescents with authoritarian mothers were characterized by increased incidents of poor mental health and social nonconformity, whereas adolescents with authoritative mothers were characterized by social competence and improved adaptability (Bornstein et al., 2022). Similarly, a study of 236 Pakistani adolescents, 90% of whom were Muslim and 10% Christian, revealed authoritative parenting linked positively with moral identity and prosocial behaviors, whereas permissive parenting and authoritarian mothering linked negatively with moral identity and prosocial behaviors (Fatima et al., 2022). A meta-analysis of 23 studies with 5,042 participants whose mean age was 14 years indicated authoritative parenting was associated with moral reasoning and autonomy in adolescents, irrespective of parental gender or country location, whether Western or non-Western (Pinquart & Fischer, 2022).

Research reveals an authoritative parenting style links with efficacious parent-child religious transmission within the family ecosystem (Dudley & Wisbey, 2020; Smith, 2021). Findings indicate the strength of the religious transmission correlates with the intensity and consistency of intra-family religious socialization (Conway et al., 2023; Dudley & Wisbey, 2020; Smith, 2021). More specifically, the components of strong intra-family religious transmission are found in a conservative, normative, God-centered ideology that provides a moral and prescriptive framework for interpreting the world, combined with an authoritative parenting style characterized by frequent and clear communication, low-hostility, and warm bonds (Dudley & Wisbey, 2020; Smith, 2021; Smith & Adamczyk, 2021). In addition, parents modeling behaviors they encourage in their children more successfully foster religious transmission than parents who do not model the behaviors they encourage in their children, such as regular prayer and worship service attendance (McPhail, 2019). In a 10-year longitudinal study that began when they were teenagers, 653 young adults credited both the loving and protective care they received from their parents for their religious persistence; of the 653 participants, 73% indicated an emotional commitment to church, and 61% attended worship weekly or monthly (Dudley & Wisbey, 2020).

Conversely, research suggests that children raised by parents holding a liberal religious ideology that emphasizes personal autonomy and religious subjectivity undermine religious transmission (Conway et al., 2023; Smith, 2021). Based on 10-year longitudinal data obtained from the National Study of Youth and Religion in the United States, a study of 1,879 participants revealed differences in religious transmission between conservative and liberal parents (Smith, 2021). More specifically, the strength of religious transmission was highest for children of religiously conservative parents and lowest for children of religiously liberal parents; parents

holding liberal theological views attended worship services least frequently, and exhibited the lowest levels of involved parenting, religious socialization, and congregational embeddedness (Smith, 2021). Or framed differently, as compared with the Christian religious transmission success rate of 45%, non-religious parents successfully transmit their non-religion 95% of the time, according to the British Attitudes Social Survey (Strhan & Shillitoe, 2019).

### ***Security***

Child security is characterized by healthy attachments in parent-child interactions (DePasquale & Gunnar, 2020; Irvine et al., 2023). Secure attachments are formed bidirectionally, through the emotional availability of parents to children and children to parents (Barrow et al., 2021; Boele et al., 2024; Simpson et al., 2021). The Emotional Availability Scale measures six relational components, four for parents and two for infants, indicative of healthy attachment (Almeida et al., 2022; Biringen et al., 2023; Hakanen et al., 2019; Korja & McMahon, 2021). Sensitivity measures the accuracy of the assessment made by the mother regarding the emotional state of her child; structuring measures the ability of the mother to play with and impose limits on her child; non-intrusiveness measures the ability of the mother to remain appropriately involved with her child; non-hostility measures the ability of the mother to avoid expressing a negative affect; involvement measures the ability of the child to initiate interaction with his mother; and responsiveness measures the ability of the child to respond appropriately to the cues of his mother (Almeida et al., 2022; Korja & McMahon, 2021).

Research indicates secure attachment begins early and grows from the bidirectional interactions of mother and child (Biringen et al., 2023). In fact, secure attachments may begin before the child is born; there is evidence supporting a correlation between prenatal depression and the child's negative involvement with and responsiveness to the mother at six months of age

(Hakanen et al., 2019; Kearney, 2023; Korja & McMahon, 2021). In addition, mothers who were prenatally and postnatally anxious or depressed exhibited intrusive responses, inability to read the emotional cues of the infant, and poor scaffolding and structuring abilities (Hakanen et al., 2019). Conversely, a study of 139 mothers and their six-month-old infants revealed mothers high on the attachment scale exhibited increased physiological responses to their distressed children; mothers scoring low on the attachment scale exhibited no significant physiological responses to their distressed infants (Xu & Groh, 2023).

In a study of 64 toddler-mother dyads, research revealed secure attachments positively correlated with play level (Stuart et al., 2024). As play influences the cognitive, emotional, and physical development of children, play is important for healthy growth (Camas-Garrido, 2024). A study by Stuart et al. (2024) showed that securely attached children, measured at 18- and 30-months in a prolonged laboratory play setting, exhibited higher play engagement and higher quality of play than children with insecure attachments. In fact, children with insecure attachments engaged in superficial play and failed to engage in a make-believe, story-stem play scenario arranged by the researchers. Conversely, researchers found a positive correlation between secure attachments and elevated developmental play in young children.

Childhood attachment experiences are found to have prolonged influence. In a U.S. study of 407 preadolescent children, findings reveal fourth- and fifth-grade children with secure parental attachments were more likely to report high self-esteem and less likely to appear depressed or to be argumentative, findings that remained stable over time (Irvine et al., 2023). The long-term impact of childhood attachment experiences is evident in a study of 616 adults that reveals adults with anxious attachments and with adverse childhood experiences displayed higher problematic media use (Wilke et al., 2020). Similarly, in a study of 188 adults, findings

reveal adults with anxious attachments and fear of missing out displayed higher problematic social media use (Boustead & Flack, 2021).

Security may relate to stability within the family ecosystem, as well. Research on the two-parent advantage describes environmental benefits that accrue to the child (Kearney, 2023). Two-parent homes provide improved access to parental attention and material resources in the form of sports, extracurricular activities, and improved educational opportunities than do single-parent homes. Raising children is expensive; the most recent USDA statistics reveal middle-income families spend more than \$230,000, or approximately \$13,000 per year to raise a child to age 17. As single-parent families tend to be lower-income families, there is reduced access to spending on children in such households; the most recent USDA statistics reveal lower-income families spend \$9,700 per year per child. Put differently, in 2019, children living in married households had income levels 72 times as high as single parent homes; two-parent household median wealth was \$70,839, which is significantly higher than single-parent median wealth of \$975 (Gibson-Davis & Hill, 2021). A single parent in stressed circumstances has fewer economic resources, a diminished support system, and more demands on emotional resources; fewer resources, both material and emotional, has a detrimental effect on child security (Kearney, 2023; Roskam et al., 2021; Wilcox, 2024). Research reveals traditional two-parent households in which the primary caregiver, usually the mother, demonstrates attentiveness to the child's physical and emotional needs is often related to developmental advantages and opportunities, and children from two-parent families are twice as likely to graduate college than children from single-parent families (Kearney, 2023; Wilcox, 2024). In essence, children raised in environments characterized by two parents with sufficient material means who spend time

with their children develop secure attachments that promote social-emotional and cognitive well-being (Irvine et al., 2023; Kearney, 2023).

### ***Warm Bonds***

Literature on parent-child bonding reveals the growing pressures felt by parents is resulting in stressed households, increased socio-emotional problems in children, and lower test scores (Gibson-Davis & Hill, 2021; Kearney, 2023; Roskam et al., 2021; Wilcox, 2024).

Children raised in homes with economic, mental, or relational instability are characterized by a lack of warm bonding and the presence of other stressors (Gibson-Davis & Hill, 2021; Korja & McMahon, 2021; Hakanen et al., 2019; Roskam et al., 2021). Conversely, warm bonding established in infancy and built throughout childhood produces advantages for the child (Bellous, 2021; Gibson-Davis & Hill, 2021; Simpson et al., 2021).

The increasing individualistic nature of Western culture is found to affect family ecology (Barrow et al., 2021; Holmes, 2021; Roskam, 2021). Rios (2020) and Roskam (2021) call for an anthropology of collective personhood, one in which families participate in a nurturing community. Whereas warm parent-child bonds formed in early childhood create secure attachments in children, research reveals children also benefit from forging warm bonds with trusted community members welcomed into the family ecosystem (Bellous, 2021; Brailey & Parker, 2020; Castillo & Sarmiento, 2022; Davis, 2021; Smith, 2021).

Research on intergenerational relationships reveals a mutuality of benefit (Allen & Santos, 2020; Duflos et al., 2022; Larson, 2020). Trusted community members, religious exemplars, and grandparents forging warm bonds with children relieves time-crunched parents and provides enduring benefit to children (Davis, 2021; Greenway et al., 2022; Holmes, 2021). Research on immigrant families reveals the participation of grandparents in nurturing children in

family faith traditions helped maintain family culture and faith tradition and helped children resist secular influences (Bossi & Marracoli, 2022; Gemar, 2023). In a systematic review of studies on grandparent-grandchild bonds, researchers found such intergenerational relationships fostered emotional well-being, closeness, and positive reciprocal influences (Duflos et al., 2022). One study included in the review highlighted the familial closeness typical of collectivist societies; in a study of 643 Malay, Chinese, and Indian adolescents living in Malaysia, those reporting close bonds with a grandparent exhibited lower levels of life stress and psychological difficulties (Tan, 2018).

### **Values Transmission and Content**

Two of Watkin's (2023) cultural figures, language use and artifacts, provide categories for researching how content transmits religion, morals, or values (Ginty, 2022). The two cultural figures, as aspects of content, were examined through research on how the four philosophies of education shape child formation (Borekci & Uyangor, 2021; Gordon et al., 2019; Oksuz & Senturk, 2021). Understanding the philosophical underpinnings of an education model illuminates the ideologies inherent in its pedagogies and materials (Aslan, 2022; Erdem, 2021; Stevens, 2022).

### ***Pedagogical Practice***

Pedagogy refers to the art of instruction or the instructional techniques and strategies that guide learning (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002). First, this section presents research on how philosophies of education influence pedagogical practice. Next, this section presents research on how philosophies of education influence values transmission.

**Pedagogy and Philosophy of Education.** With the advent of critical theories, the purpose of which are to transform an aspect of culture by highlighting it against other aspects of

culture, the term *pedagogy* in 21<sup>st</sup>-century literature may follow critical-descriptive adjectives (Watkin, 2022). For example, an internet search of the term *pedagogy* produced articles on digital pedagogy, pandemic pedagogy, social justice pedagogy, trauma-informed pedagogy, and critical anti-racist pedagogy, to name a few, and all of which reflect the influence of identifiable philosophies of education (Harrison et al., 2023; Kubota, 2021; Vaataja & Ruokamo, 2021; Vander Schee & DeLong, 2022; Veri et al., 2022). This section will discuss pedagogy in its broadest sense, specifically, the art of teaching.

Research reveals pedagogical practices positively correlate with philosophies of education, whether the philosophy is inherent in the curriculum or in the worldview of the teacher (Borekci & Uyangor, 2021; Erdem, 2021). For example, in a study of 295 Turkish teachers, research shows a disconnect between teachers' personal philosophies of education and the nationally mandated, problem-centered, reconstructionist curriculum; the findings indicate teachers instructed in ways that aligned with their personal philosophical positions and were uncomfortable designing problem-centered lessons; therefore, the national curriculum goals were unmet (Erdem, 2021). Similarly, a study of 515 primary school teachers working in the Mediterranean region reveals that teachers holding reconstructionist and progressivist perspectives designed lessons in which students would engage problems, and teachers holding essentialist and perennialist perspectives designed subject-centered lessons (Aslan, 2022). In addition, a study of 789 Turkish physical education teachers reveals a philosophical divide by gender; female teachers favorable to modern pedagogies were shown to adopt a progressivist philosophy of education, while male teachers favorable to traditional pedagogies were shown to adopt perennialist and essentialist philosophies of education (Isikgoz, 2020). Furthermore, the study on Turkish physical education teachers reveals that, as the teachers matured professionally,

their philosophies became more conservative; teachers who matured in the profession trended away from progressivism and reconstructionism and trended toward essentialism.

***Content-Centered Pedagogy.*** The pedagogical orientations of the philosophies range from conservative to liberal, and those orientations affect instructional delivery (Borekci & Uyangor, 2021). As the conservative philosophies espouse the historical rootedness of truth, the pedagogical practices of perennialism and essentialism center on content; these two models orient around information that is important for the formation of the child into a knowledgeable person or equipped citizen. Both perennialist and essentialist models of education set forth the proposition that content or subjects should be learned, and thus, instruction is teacher-driven. Teachers are seen as deliverers of a prescribed body of knowledge, and academic success is measured by student mastery of the material.

Interest in some content-centered pedagogies is waning as evidenced by the diminished availability of classical subjects in both private and public schools in the United Kingdom (UK)(Hunt, 2024). A survey of British teachers of classical studies suggests student interest in Latin, Greek, classical civilizations, and ancient history has dropped off due to pandemic lockdown effects, STEM requirements, and outdated curriculum, and the long-term viability of such courses depends on curricular, policy, and budget reforms. The reverse is evident in the United States with renewed interest in modern classical education (Goodwin, 2020). It is estimated that over 1,000 classical schools exist across all 50 states, with Hillsdale College and others underwriting charter schools in Arizona, Texas, Colorado, and Florida (Hess, 2024).

***Learner-Centered Pedagogy.*** Also known as child-centered designs, learner-centered pedagogies focus on the interests, needs, and developmental stage of the individual child (Borekci & Uyangor, 2021; Erdem, 2021). Some child-centered curriculum models use terms

like active learning, differentiated instruction, constructivism, and experiential learning (Borekci & Uyangor, 2021; Gordon et al., 2019). Learner-centered pedagogies, based on the progressive ideology of forging the school into the social community of the child, equip the child for social and civic participation (Camas-Garrido, 2024; Erdem, 2021).

***Problem-Centered Pedagogy.*** Based on the educational philosophy of social reconstructionism, problem-centered pedagogies focus on identifying societal problems and developing solutions (Borekci & Uyangor, 2021; Erdem, 2021; Gordon et al., 2019). Evolving from the progressivist philosophy of education, the problem-centered pedagogy of reconstructionism trains students in activism by examining societal injustices, such as unmet needs, oppression, or inequity in marginalized people groups (Borekci & Uyangor, 2021; Erdem, 2021). The curriculum design models for problem-centered pedagogies include hybrid learning, cooperative learning, and group projects (Gordon et al., 2019).

***Philosophies of Education and Values Transmission.*** Curriculum is designed to be transformative (Camas-Garrido, 2024). Research reveals philosophies of education transmit morals, values, or beliefs through curriculum design (Aslan, 2022; Eulalio-Jabagat et al., 2021). What follows are studies on the four major philosophies of education with pedagogical evidence of the inherent morals, values, or beliefs of each philosophy.

***Reconstructionist Pedagogy.*** The reconstructionist philosophy of education is seen as a flowering of the progressive movement as the aim of reconstructionism is to remake society through education (Brameld, 1952; Hussein, 2022; Sayers, 1951). Social reconstruction pedagogies emphasize equality of opportunity, elimination of oppression, and support for under-resourced communities (Hussein, 2022). The following studies reveal the values inherent in social reconstruction-based educational programs.

First, the Philippine government, concerned for the equal educational opportunity of indigenous people with diminished access to technology during the pandemic lockdown, developed Philippine Basic Education Learning Continuity in which a print module option was made available for students with reduced access to online learning; while the study provided no academic measure of the effectiveness of the print module project, the report illustrates the transformative intent of the reconstructionist philosophy (Eulalio-Jabagat et al., 2021). Second, researchers found in a study of second grade, scripted, early literacy curriculum, unequal representation of minorities in a booklet on fossils; the researchers called for curriculum providers, school districts, and teachers to adapt curriculum to accommodate the lived experiences of the marginalized within the school community, yet the study provided no academic measure of the effectiveness of educating students with minority-sensitive materials (Wittingham & Hoffman, 2024). Finally, a mixed-methods study of a 12-week course designed to address social alienation through values transmission found a group of 65 fourth graders and 30 elderly volunteers benefited from participation in an intergenerational relationship-building program; findings from semi-structured interviews reported these participants experienced positive feelings about cross-generational friendships and cultural transmission, findings that are affirmed in other studies of intergenerational values transmission (Allen & Santos, 2020; Aydinbas, 2021; Bossi & Marracoli, 2022; Davis, 2021; Duflos et al., 2022; Ingemann et al., 2023; Tan, 2018). These studies reveal curricular aims based in social reconstructionism are designed to transmit values to the learners (Aydinbas, 2021; Eulalio-Jabagat et al., 2021; Wittingham & Hoffman, 2024).

***Progressivist Pedagogy.*** While social reconstructionism flows from progressive philosophy, the two movements differ on the focus of reform (Brameld, 1952). The aim of social

reconstructionism is to reform societies and the world, whereas the aim of progressivism is continuous, democratic reform of school culture based on the interests of the child (Brameld, 1952; Dewey, 1916; Hussein, 2022). The following studies reveal the values inherent in progressivist educational programs.

In a 10-year literature review of child-centered curriculum designs, findings indicate students benefited from the interactive nature of progressive curriculum structured to elicit student feedback on their interests (Khadim et al., 2023). Cited in that literature review was a study on deeper learning approaches, an educational model drawing from such inquiry-based learning approaches as project-based learning and work-based learning; research reveals students enrolled in deeper learning programs had an 8% higher graduation rate when compared with peers, increased test scores in typically underserved students, and strengthened social-emotional learning skills like empathy, patience, and conflict-resolution (Hernandez et al., 2019). Next, in a study of 81 data sets of Indonesian families participating in a blended learning environment during the pandemic lockdown, findings indicate the student-parent dyad benefitted from relaxing traditional learning standards by including lessons and activities based on the interests of the child, such as extracurricular activities, visits to museums, and outside lessons, actions reflecting a child-centered, progressive educational philosophy (Ratih et al., 2022). In addition, parents reported benefits to the child by creating a comfortable learning environment; parental efforts included removing electronic distractions, arranging a dedicated workspace, and remaining nearby to provide guidance and support. These studies reveal progressivist pedagogies are designed to appeal to the interests of the students in providing child-centered, developmentally appropriate activities and materials (Borekci & Uyangor, 2021).

***Essentialist Pedagogy.*** Whereas reconstructionism and progressivism are child-centered pedagogies designed to reform, essentialism is a content-centered pedagogy designed for cultural stasis (Borekci & Uyangor, 2021; Smith, 2020). Rooted in the position that educated citizens possess a core basic knowledge, essentialist curriculum reflects standards-based education, the idea that a particular content is essential for producing an educated child, and evaluation of the child's mastery of the content is measured against standards (Bagley, 1939). The following studies reveal the values inherent in essentialist educational programs.

In a study of state physical education standards, for example, research reveals assessing student mastery of the standards was challenging and required clear communication of learning and performance objectives (Townsend & McNamara, 2021). Similarly, in a study of K-12 science standards, research on core curricular requirements for 604 classrooms in 152 schools in three states showed curriculum design affected student performance, irrespective of student demographics; while the curriculum was considered essential based on national core curriculum and subject-based standards, the report indicates that various learning methodologies improved student performance on the assessments (Cunningham et al., 2020). In a broad United States (US) survey on the state of education, a 2023 survey of 5,029 American adults indicated 69% believe schools spend insufficient time on the core subjects of math, social studies, science, and reading, affirming the essentialist position that educated citizens are formed by mastering core curriculum (Minkin, 2024). The inherent value in essentialist philosophy of education is that certain content must be mastered to produce an educated citizen (Borekci & Uyangor, 2021; Smith, 2020).

***Perennialist Pedagogy.*** Like essentialism, perennialism is a content-centered pedagogy (Borekci & Uyangor, 2021; Smith, 2020). Rooted in the belief of an absolute truth, the

perennialist perspective on education advocates the study of the enduring classical liberal arts and sciences, with the presupposition that character formation in virtue flows from studying that which is good, true, and beautiful (Borekci & Uyangor, 2021; Hutchins, 1938; Nikolic, 2020). For example, in a study of the educational philosophies of 30 Turkish administrators, findings reveal administrators were predisposed to the reconstructionist and progressivist models espoused by the Turkish education department, yet on a measure requiring adherence to truth and moral values, administrators reflected perennialist views (Yayla, 2023). Similarly, in a study of 211 English teachers in Turkish schools, findings reveal teachers held to perennialist perspectives on truth and goodness, but found perennialist teaching methods challenging, thus experience-based methods were used (Yazgi & Irgatoglu, 2021). Finally, in a study of 690 preservice teachers, findings indicate that, while there was variability in the moral maturity of pre-service teachers based on gender, years of college, and achievement level, there was a positive and strong correlation between perennialist educational philosophy and teachers' moral maturity, as measured by Likert scale rankings of a hierarchy of values, such as spiritual, social, and humanistic (Aydemir & Kaya, 2021; Solmaz, 2018). The inherent value in a perennialist philosophy of education is that certain content must be learned to produce a virtuous human (Borekci & Uyangor, 2021; Goodwin, 2020).

### ***Material Matter and Overlapping Philosophies***

Objects and artifacts, or material matter, are one of the six figures that define a culture (Watkin, 2023). While there are commonalities among the four philosophies of education regarding materials use, there are also material preferences reflective of the inherent values of the philosophies. However, what follows is a study revealing the overlap of educational

philosophies, pedagogical practices, and curriculum materials in two high-achieving, public elementary charter schools in New York City (Harrison, 2023).

The researcher investigating the success of the school programs was intrigued that, despite the No Excuses model of education adopted by the two elementary schools, the school population of minority students reported favorable feelings about mathematics (Harrison, 2023). The No Excuses behavioral policy required students to sit quietly, show respect, and follow through on facts-based, teacher-directed instruction, a model Paulo Freire labeled a *culture of silence*, and a model the researcher perceived to be harmful to minority learners (Harrison, 2023; Smith, 2020). Further investigation revealed teachers developed authoritative relationships with the students in which the students felt valued but were also held to high behavioral and academic standards (Ciuhan, 2021; Harrison, 2023). By instilling loving and high expectations for the students, and by being *warm demanders*, this study reveals students were able to build solid foundational mathematical knowledge (Boele et al., 2024; Harrison, 2023). In addition, teachers helped students develop a growth mindset regarding mathematics in which errors were seen as opportunities to learn and to encourage others; the accepting atmosphere resulting from a growth mindset equipped children to move beyond an incorrect answer to explore the principle behind the answer, and to better understand both what went wrong and to find novel ways of tackling the problem (Harrison, 2023). Research indicates the growth mindset, in which the child perceived he could learn mathematics and that his mathematical ability was not fixed, resulted in improved test scores, mathematical understanding, and overall academic achievement (Harrison, 2023; Kaya & Karakoc, 2022). Once students exhibited mathematical foundational knowledge, teachers developed lessons based on student interest, problem solving, and real-life experiences, ones in which critical thinking and progressive mathematics were engaged (Harrison, 2023).

As shown by the No Excuses curriculum model, materials perceived to represent one philosophy may be used by an advocate of a different philosophy (Yazgi & Irgatoglu, 2021). The researcher found the cultures of the two schools, which were based in authoritative relationships and growth mindset, enabled students to experience academic success, thus students gained self-confidence and developed persistence (Harrison, 2023). Once students mastered foundational academic knowledge and behavioral self-regulation, teachers presented lessons based on the schools' educational philosophies of social justice and equity (Harrison, 2023).

### **Values Transmission and Practices**

Two of Watkin's (2023) cultural figures, behavioral norms and time, provide categories for researching how practices transmit religion, morals, or values (Ginty, 2022). The two cultural figures, as aspects of practices, were examined through research on how behavioral enculturation and use of time shape child formation. The following studies reveal how positive parenting transmits values through behavioral enculturation and parents' use of time.

#### ***Enculturation and Behavioral Norms***

Cultural influences shape parenting practices, including how parents relate to their children and how parents spend time with their children (Cumming et al., 2022; Kearney, 2023; Roskam et al., 2021). While individual family dynamics are unique, research identifies practices that promote healthy cognitive, behavioral, and emotional development in children over time (Boele et al., 2024). What follows is a review of research on positive parenting practices and how school-home collaboration benefits the social-emotional learning of children.

**Positive Parenting Practices.** Research indicates positive parenting practices correlate with healthy child development (Boele et al., 2024; Morris et al., 2021). Positive parenting practices, like authoritative parenting, are parenting habits that foster warm bonds, secure

attachments, and bi-directional communication (Cumming et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2024). Positive parenting is defined by the presence of both an instructive component that includes scaffolding and autonomy support, and a socio-emotional component that includes responsiveness and control (Cumming et al., 2022; Kearney, 2023). What follows is research on components of positive parenting practices.

Research extrapolated from a longitudinal study of 15,827 children suggests positive parenting correlated with the executive function abilities of kindergarteners; the measure of high executive function in kindergarten children included inhibitory control, strong working memory, and cognitive flexibility (Cumming et al., 2022; Helm et al., 2020). Results indicate positive parenting activities like reading books, scaffolding learning opportunities, and emotional receptivity resulted in high executive functioning in kindergarteners which translated to improved behavioral outcomes (Cumming et al., 2022). In addition, a study of 151 parent-child dyads reveals high executive function remains stable in children transitioning to school; 4-year-olds measuring high on an executive function scale also scored high at 6-years-old (Helm et al., 2020). Conversely, 4-year-olds measuring low on an executive function scale scored lower on the scale at 6-years-old, reflecting the challenge of behavioral self-control necessary for school success (Helm et al., 2020). Similarly, executive function measures of 640 socioeconomically disadvantaged 4-year-olds enrolled in Head Start Programs correlate with one measure of positive parenting; researchers found cognitive stimulation mediated the effects of poverty on the executive function of the children when measured one year later (Baker & Brooks-Gunn, 2020).

An aspect of positive parenting is maternal mindfulness, the ability of a mother to be aware in the moment, to be less reactive, to self-regulate, and to exhibit high levels of mental, physical, and socio-emotional functioning (Ostlund et al., 2021; Siu et al., 2016). Research

shows maternal mindfulness positively correlated with the emotional regulation abilities of the child (Ren et al., 2021). In a study of 1,723 biological mothers of elementary-age children, results reveal children of mindful mothers displayed emotional self-regulation abilities. Conversely, maternal perceived stress weakened the links between maternal mindfulness and children's emotional self-regulation. In addition, a study of maternal mindfulness during pregnancy reveals an effect on neonates; children born to highly mindful mothers exhibited alertness and receptivity at 24 hours, and children born to emotionally dysregulated, less mindful mothers exhibited blunted attention at 24 hours (Ostlund et al., 2021).

A review of decades of research on adolescent development indicates the cultivation of relationship over time using authoritative, positive parenting practices produced favorable results (Biringen et al., 2023; DePasquale & Gunnar, 2020; Morris et al., 2021). More specifically, findings indicate the long-term cultivation of warm parental discipline that fostered autonomy in the child helped develop positive and enduring bidirectional relationships; the benefit of these parenting practices held across culture, ethnicity, family composition, and socio-economic status (Kearney, 2023; Morris et al., 2021). As authoritative parenting has long been an accepted philosophy, current research examining its components reveals it is the evolving bidirectional relationship over the length of the life of the child that produced benefits, including healthy emotional socialization, confidence, and reduced internalized and externalized problem behaviors (Morris et al., 2021).

Similarly, a study of emergent leadership skills in adolescents indicates the favorable influence of positive parenting (Ghazal & Riaz, 2020; Liu et al., 2024). A mixed methods investigation of Chinese middle school students reveals components of positive parenting influenced the development of leadership skills in children (Liu et al., 2024). More specifically,

the quantitative study of 1,255 adolescents and their parents shows a positive correlation between parental warmth and emergent leadership with beneficial effects observed on intrapersonal, or self-esteem and self-efficacy, and interpersonal, or empathetic and pro-social, behaviors. In addition, quantitative results reveal the levels of parental warmth and self-esteem of the child were higher when parental support of adolescent autonomy was higher. Finally, the qualitative study confirms the quantitative findings; interviews of 32 students revealed positive effects of parental encouragement of adolescent autonomy on leadership emergence as reflective of positive parenting practices. Conversely, studies of both authoritarian parenting and overparenting showed negative relationships with adolescent leadership emergence (Ghazal & Riaz, 2020; Liu et al., 2019).

**Social Emotional Learning & Hybrid Relationships.** Reported benefits of social and emotional (SE) skills include academic success, college and career readiness, and social-emotional well-being (Anguiano-Carrasco et al., 2022; Daley et al., 2023; McVey et al., 2023). Research indicates SE skills can be improved through training the child to sustain effort, cooperate with others, exercise self-control and open-mindedness, and make social connections. Studies reveal that including the family in social-emotional learning (SEL) training improves outcomes (Bryan et al., 2020; Kambouri et al., 2021; Skoog-Hoffman et al., 2023; Van de Sande et al., 2024). For example, research indicates the importance of parent-school collaboration in the development of SE skills in low-income or migrant children (Van de Sande et al., 2024). To gauge parental perception of SEL, researchers conducted semi-structured interviews of 32 low-income, migrant parents of children enrolled in Dutch vocational schools; findings reveal parents' perceptions of SEL components differed from the SEL skills trained in the school

materials, thus researchers suggested SEL training should be modified to include parents' perspectives and cooperation.

CASEL, or Hybrid for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, is an organization advancing research and support for the hybrid classroom-school-families-community ecosystem (Skoog-Hoffman et al., 2023). Building on established SEL research, CASEL recognizes the influence of parents on healthy child development and supports school-home hybrid efforts. An offshoot of SEL is tSEL, or transformative social-emotional learning, whose aim is to address social inequalities and power imbalances in schools by forging respectful, cooperative school-family-community learning environments (Jagers et al., 2021). Studies reveal the outcomes of parent-school-community hybrid partnerships included improved attendance, higher test scores and graduation rates, better social-emotional health, and increased participation (Bryan et al., 2020; Kambouri et al., 2021).

### ***View of Time***

Time is a culturally situated phenomenon (Watkin, 2023). People groups across the world view time as circular, limited, eternal, or linear, while philosophers compartmentalize time by its nature (Bardon, 2024). Realism, idealism, and relationism describe time as existing separately from events, as a human construction, or as a way of describing actual change, respectively (Bardon, 2024). What follows are two aspects of time; the meaning of time and time as a resource are discussed below.

**Meaning of Time.** In *Confessions*, Saint Augustine of Hippo suggests time is solely the current moment (Augustine, ca. 400/1876; Berger, 2024). Memory recalls or suppresses time that has passed, but outside of memory, those moments are spent and nonexistent. Similarly, an anticipated future depends upon memory restoring the past by bringing it into the present.

Ultimately, man strives for happiness; Augustine suggests happiness resides in God alone, accessible through the memory of a sinless, pre-fall life of eternity past or a post-resurrection life with God in eternity future (Augustine, ca. 400/1876). While few may consider time as deeply as Augustine has done, time is equally available to all Westerners and is spent according to personal discretion. What follows are findings on how parents spend time with their children.

**Time as a Parental Resource.** Time is also a commodity, and as one of the three key parenting resources, the other two being money and energy, research reveals how and how much time parents spend with their children is impactful (Kearney, 2023). Findings indicate children in two-parent, higher-income homes spent more time with their parents and demonstrated better socio-emotional and cognitive results. In addition, well-educated mothers were more likely to spend time with children in developmentally appropriate ways and provided care that adapted to the changing needs of the maturing child. Findings also show that, across ethnicities and education levels, married parents spent more time with their children than non-married parents. Conversely, findings show under-resourced, stressed parents spent less time with their children, and income challenges affected their cognitive abilities and parenting practices (Kearney, 2023; Roskam, 2021). Similarly, research indicates academic and social-emotional benefits accrued to children whose parents invested in home-school partnerships (Kambouri et al., 2021). Furthermore, well-resourced parents spent more time with their children daily; studies indicate that children of well-resourced parents benefited from parental support into early adulthood, thus weakening the economic, social, and employment challenges faced by their under-resourced peers (Kearney, 2023).

## **Twenty-First Century Parenting**

U.S. Surgeon General, Vivek H. Murthy, issued an advisory on the mental health and well-being of 21<sup>st</sup> Century parents who are increasingly stressed, lonely, and ill-equipped (Murthy, 2024). Research indicates parenting practices have changed in the last half-decade (Ishizuka, 2019; Kearney, 2023; Lin et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2023; Roskam et al., 2021). A variety of cultural factors influence modern parenting, and evidence can be found in the family ecosystem (Gibson-Davis & Hill, 2021; Ginty, 2022; Kaneko et al., 2024; Rios, 2020). This section presents research related to modern cultural influences on parenting.

### ***Community***

Western culture is characterized by independence, autonomy, and individualism (Barrow et al., 2021; Rios, 2020; Roskam et al., 2021). American families are less inclined to live near family and in intergenerational living arrangements than are families living in communal societies (Allen & Santos, 2020; Kaneko et al., 2024; Larson, 2020; Tan, 2018). Research indicates 21<sup>st</sup>-century parents are feeling the pressures of raising families with limited support systems (Ingemann et al., 2023; Kearney, 2023; Roskam, 2021).

Relationships formed in community are seen to support well-being (Greenway et al., 2022). For example, institutional warmth is defined as the efforts made by churches to form a sense of family-like belonging in young people by facilitating open conversations; relationships in which young people feel safe to express doubts and fears are seen to support feelings of belonging and faith transmission (Bellous, 2021; Davis, 2021; Greenway et al., 2018). In-person interviews of 61 parents and their children, aged 3 to 13, indicate parents longed for community for their families; despite the scheduling difficulties, parents were desirous of developing

intergenerational ties with their church communities, to move beyond individualism, and move toward fostering secure, dependable, and reliable church relationships (Holmes, 2021).

### ***Support***

A growing body of research shows the positive influences of close family ties, intergenerational living, and community support (Ingemann et al., 2023; Kaneko et al., 2024). In a study of Greenlandic and Dutch parents, a series of semi-structured interviews revealed parents intentionally cultivated a family ecosystem that included grandparents, aunts and uncles, and neighbors, a practice participants considered protective and done for the well-being of the child (Ingemann et al., 2023). Similarly, a study of 570 young Japanese mothers indicated community support was protective; findings reveal that mothers with low neighborhood trust, defined as a lack of cohesive social bonds with neighbors, experienced higher levels of stress, anxiety, and lower levels of mental health and feelings of fulfillment; conversely, mothers with high levels of social capital, defined as harmonic relationships within the social environment, experienced increased well-being and satisfaction (Kaneko et al., 2024).

### ***Intensive Parenting***

Research identifies a type of parenting style called *intensive parenting* (Forbes et al., 2020; Kim & Kerr, 2024). The term intensive parenting originated with research by Hays (1996) who outlined three dimensions of this primarily U.S. socio-cultural phenomenon evident in White, middle-class mothers (Forbes et al., 2020; Kim & Kerr, 2024). The three dimensions of intensive parenting are the belief that mothers are the preferred parent because of the inherent nurture in mothering; parenting requires an exhaustive, self-sacrificing commitment of time and material resources as suggested by experts; and an intensive mothering ideology that frames motherhood as joyful and fulfilling (Kim & Kerr, 2024).

Research following Hays (1996) indicates types of intensive parenting can affect the well-being of the mother, and may include anxiety, fear, depression, stress, guilt, and burnout (Forbes et al. 2020; Kim & Kerr, 2024). A study seeking to describe the components of intensive parenting indicates most mothers manifest intensities in some components and few mothers manifest intensity in all components. Research classifies the components of intensive parenting as essentialism, meaning the mother should be the better-equipped parent; child-centered, meaning the mother should focus her attention solely on the child; stimulating, meaning the mother should provide consistent and constant intellectual stimulation; challenging, meaning the mother should believe parenting is hard and exhausting; and fulfillment meaning the mother should believe that motherhood is completely fulfilling. Contrary to Hays' (1996) findings that categorize intensive parenting as a White, middle-class, mothering phenomenon, a growing body of research indicates intensive parenting has become normative across the world and is identifiable in the parenting practices of a range of people groups (Forbes et al., 2020; Ishizuka, 2019).

**Parental Guilt.** One detrimental effect of intensive parent ideology is feelings of guilt (Lin et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2023; Roskam et al., 2021). Studies show intensive parenting ideology may cause mothers to feel guilty about being away from their children for work or other obligations, or because they do not conform to cultural gender norms (Forbes et al., 2020; Kim & Kerr, 2024). Guilt feelings may affect the mental health of the mother. In semi-structured interviews of 19 Australian mothers, participant responses reveal good mother ideology, as reinforced by perceived super-mom societal standards, created a good-mom, bad-mom dichotomy and internalized feelings of guilt when mothers perceived they fell short of their own or societal standards (Williamson et al., 2022).

**Parental Burnout.** Parental burnout resulting from intensive parenting can be characterized by detachment, exhaustion, emotional distancing, anxiety, sleeplessness, resentment, strained relationships, substance abuse, suicidal ideation, and violence (Kim & Kerr, 2024; Roskam et al., 2021). It is estimated that 5-8% of parents suffer from parental burnout (Roskam et al., 2021). One study of mothers' self-reports indicates single and low-income mothers experienced more burnout than married mothers, suggesting married mothers experienced less burnout because of help from their spouses (Kim & Kerr, 2024). Parental burnout has a cultural component; in a study of 17,409 parents in 42 countries, research indicates parents report different levels of burnout between Western and non-Western countries (Roskam et al., 2021). Findings on parental burnout show a linear relationship between parental burnout and individualism; parental burnout in individualistic, Western cultures exceeded that of collectivistic, non-Western cultures even when controlled for sociodemographic and socioeconomic variables, like age, sex, education, vocation, neighborhood, number of children, family type, and economic inequalities. Similarly, findings from a study of 347 Belgian and 377 Polish parents who responded to an online questionnaire indicate perfectionist parents were more likely to experience parental burnout; a protective factor against parental burnout, however, was found in perfectionistic parents with high levels of interpersonal and intrapersonal emotional competence (Lin et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2023).

### **Christian Religious Transmission**

Religious transmission takes place within the ecosystem of the child. While parents are found to be primary influencers of spiritual formation in their children, some parents send their children to Christian schools to reinforce values taught at home and at church (Davis, 2021; Stevens, 2022). Aspects of what is taught by families and schools are the faith-based behaviors,

content, and perspectives of Christianity (Nason, 2019; Wilkerson, 2022; Yoder et al., 2021). What follows is research on Christian schools and faith formation and spirituality.

### ***Christian Schools***

A 2021-2022 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) survey indicates there were 29,727 private schools operating in the U.S., of which 10,393 or roughly 35% were Christian (NCES, 2022). Within that umbrella are hybrid schools. While the exact number of hybrid schools in existence is difficult to determine, the 2023 survey report of 100 hybrid schools indicates 70% are religious; of the religious hybrid schools, 73% serve all grades; 26% are classical; 88% hold classes two days per week; 54% are suburban; and average enrollment per school is 143 students (Wearne & Thompson, 2022). A report on alumni of Association of Classical Christian Schools (ACCS) classical Christian schools indicates 90% attend church more than three times per month; 90% donate money to charity; nearly 90% earned a Bachelor of Arts or higher degree; 84% believe the Bible is historically and scientifically reliable; and 83% regularly meet and talk with their friends about religion (Goodwin, 2020). Findings from these reports indicate there is significant participation in Christian education and positive life survey results within a segment of the classical education population.

### ***Faith Formation and Spirituality***

Christian spirituality is the child's appropriation of the family's belief system, and an outworking of his understanding of his spirit's unity with the Holy Spirit of the Christian godhead (Aniol, 2019; Aniol, 2021; Estep & Brekenridge, 2019; Matei et al., 2023; May, 2020; Rios, 2020). Young children observe the traditions and behaviors of their parents within their environments and adopt those practices (Bornstein et al., 2022; Castillo & Sarmiento, 2022; Goodman & Dyer, 2020). What is less clear is the way the family belief-set impacts the

spirituality of the child and how to nurture the child's spirituality toward Christ (Barfield, 2020; Johnson-Miller & King, 2018; Matei et al., 2023).

Research reveals personality and experiences influence the successful religious socialization of children. Agents, or influences within the ecosystem of the child, significantly shape adolescent faith formation (Brailey & Parker, 2020; Greenway et al., 2022; Matei et al., 2023; Zajac & Boyatzis, 2021). Two studies on youth and religious retreats demonstrate the positive influence of religious agents. First, in a study of 299 12- to 18-year-old Baptists attending a religious summer camp, findings reveal youth participation in events was influenced by personality type; for example, extroverts reported favoring group and individual activities, church worship, and public engagement events, like mission trips; in contrast, introverts reported favoring individual activities, like meeting with a spiritual mentor and reading Christian books (Francis et al., 2021). A study of 1,522 adolescents who attended a religious conference suggests a correlation between the strength of their faith and pro-social behaviors; more specifically, 58% participated in community service projects a minimum of five times in the previous year, 62% had never viewed pornography, 83% believed in premarital celibacy, 79% were morally confident, and 61% did not struggle with depressive thoughts (Belsterling & Shepson, 2023). Findings on adolescent personality provide insight on ways parents and churches may tailor religious transmission efforts.

### **Summary**

The problem of declining church attendance is a symptom of cultural shifts and the problem is multifaceted (Minor et al., 2023). Empirical evidence of the benefits of religion includes strengthened family ties, spiritual well-being, and civic participation (Goodwin, 2020; Holmes, 2021). Research on the dechurched phenomenon reveals, while people leave the church

for different reasons over the course of their lives, those who stay credited the influence of parents for their persistence in family faith tradition (Bornstein et al., 2022; Castillo & Sarmiento, 2022; Holmes, 2023; Ingersoll, 2020; Matei et al., 2023; McPhail, 2019). Research on authoritative parenting highlights components of the parent-child relationship that produce parent-child connection; faithful young adults were children who were securely emotionally attached, intellectually stimulated, not treated harshly, allowed to question and doubt, understood family rules, received appropriate discipline, made moral decisions, and developed autonomy (Ciuhan, 2021; Fatima et al., 2022; Goodman & Dyer, 2020; Morris et al., 2021; Pinquart & Fischer, 2022). In sum, empirical research on parenting practices indicates parents are the primary influencers of the emotional, social, cognitive, and moral development of their children, and a growing number of religiously conservative parents are enrolling their children in Christian hybrid-model schools (McShane, 2021; Wearne, 2021). However, hybrid-model schools are under-researched, and their efficacy in religious transmission has not been studied (McShane, 2021; Wearne, 2021). Research is needed to understand the link between religious transmission and hybrid schooling. Therefore, this study examined, using the biblical critical theory framework, how parents participated in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who were enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this case study was to examine how parents participate in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who are enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region. Chapter Three begins with an overview of the case study method of research. The research design section defends the use of a case study design for this study. Following the research design section, the central research and sub-questions are restated. Next, setting and participant selection criteria are explained, along with the participant recruitment plan. The section on researcher positionality presents the interpretive framework, the philosophical assumptions, and the role of the researcher in the study. The procedures section describes the steps used to conduct the research. The data collection section highlights the three data collection methods for the study and includes tables presenting the interview questions. The data analysis section provides an overview of the methods for coding and interpreting the findings. The final section explicates the considerations for ensuring the trustworthiness of the research.

### **Research Design**

Qualitative research designs are used to investigate and derive meaning from human experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Stake (2003), an instrumental case study investigates an issue; the setting and participants are selected because they manifest the issue. This study qualifies as an instrumental case study because it examined an issue contained within a bounded system composed of integrated parts; the issue was religious transmission, the bounded system was a classical Christian, hybrid-model school, and the integrated parts were the people and their interactions within the schooling context (Stake, 2003). The setting was selected

because, as participants in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school founded on co-teaching arrangements, parents spend extended periods of time with their children, supporting the formation of warm bonds; the co-teaching arrangement requires parents and children to engage the religious curriculum, facilitating bidirectional, frequent, open-ended discussions (Barrow et al., 2021; Biringen et al., 2023; Morris et al., 2021). Research shows, of those young adults who remain in the church, some credit their persistence to the warm bonds and bidirectional conversations shared with parents during childhood (Powell & Clark, 2011; Smith & Adamczyk, 2021). Thus, the issue of religious transmission may be investigated in the hybrid-model school setting.

Case study research is considered to have begun with the Chicago School of Sociology in the 1920s and 1930s (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Stake, 2003; Yin, 2018). An early example of a case study is *Boys in White* (1961); the study was conducted by Becker, Geer, Hughes, and Strauss and published by the University of Chicago Press (Stake, 2003). While qualitative case study research is less rigorously structured than quantitative research, Stake underscores the critical role of the researcher as the interpreter of the issue within its naturally occurring and embedded context (Harrison et al., 2017). According to Stake (2003), case studies examine entities with the expectation that the issue under investigation may be extrapolated to similar entities. The philosophical orientation Stake adopts for case studies fits well with the study of religious transmission as findings may transfer to other classical Christian, hybrid-model schools of similar demographic composition.

To generate interest in the research, the head of school purposively selected 17 qualified participants, emailed them a letter of introduction, and attached the IRB-approved participant recruitment letter (Appendix E). Individuals qualified to participate in the study if they were the

parent of one or more children who were enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region for one or more years. After establishing their qualifications, 13 moms were invited to participate in the study. Three data collection methods were used to examine how parents participate in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children. Data collection took place over a five week period; all interviews were conducted via Zoom and were scheduled at the convenience of participants.

### **Research Questions**

The problem of declining church attendance affects American culture, family structure, and the Christian education and spiritual formation of children (Ansberry, 2023; Butterfield, 2023; Davis & Graham, 2023; Koenig et al., 2020; Meador, 2023). Therefore, the purpose of this case study was to examine how parents participated in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who were enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region. This study addressed the following questions:

#### **Central Research Question**

How do parents participate in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who are enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region?

#### **Sub-Question One**

How does relationship affect parents' participation in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who are enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region?

#### **Sub-Question Two**

How does content affect parents' participation in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who are enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the

DC Metro Region?

### **Sub-Question Three**

How does practice affect parents' participation in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who are enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region?

### **Setting and Participants**

This section describes the setting and the selection criterion. Next, this section describes the study participants, the parents of the children enrolled in the hybrid-model schools. Finally, this section concludes with a description of the participant recruitment plan.

#### **Setting**

The setting for this study was a classical Christian, hybrid-model school located in the DC Metro Region. Classical Christian Collaborative School (CCCS) was a classical Christian, independent, private school providing an education centered on orthodox Christianity and the study of the classics (Goodwin, 2020). In addition, professional educators taught students in a traditional classroom setting 3 days per week and parents taught at home the remaining days of the week (Wearne, 2021; Wearne & Thompson, 2022). As fits the model, this classical Christian, hybrid-model school partners with parents in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children (McShane, 2021; Wearne, 2021). Following is current information on classical Christian schools, hybrid homeschools, and classical Christian, hybrid-model schools.

A classical education paradigm follows developmentally appropriate practice in its structure (Bauer & Wise, 2016; Goodwin, 2020; Sayers, 1948). As a developmental pedagogy, the classical model presents three learning stages; the grammar stage develops facts memorization through singing, chanting, and moving; the logic stage develops argumentation;

the rhetoric stage develops reason and eloquence. As rooted in the Western timeline, a classical education covers political, religious, and cultural history from creation to the present day.

Classical Christian, hybrid-model schools originated in 1993 with Grace Preparatory Academy in Arlington, Texas with parents seeking to add structure, support, and community to their home education efforts (McShane, 2021; Wearne, 2021). Over the following decades, Grace Preparatory Academy provided support to others seeking to replicate their model and developed what is now known as the university-model school. Today there are more than 100 university-model schools in the US and abroad that are overseen by University Model Schools International (UMSI). While UMSI schools resemble hybrid homeschools, UMSI rejects the hybrid label because of their specific nomenclature, curriculum, and college-preparatory emphasis (Wearne, 2021). UMSI schools are distinct because they meet UMSI accreditation requirements and bear its trademark (McShane, 2021; NAUMS, Inc., 2024; Wearne, 2021). Because of the variety of definitions of hybrid homeschooling, precise statistics on the number of such schools currently in existence is lacking (Wearne, 2021; Wearne & Thompson, 2022).

The classical Christian, hybrid-model school participating in this research was in the DC Metro Region. The school met three days per week in a leased church building, served grades K-10, and operated as a traditional, private school. The head of school provided organizational oversight, structured the day, selected the calendar, hired faculty and staff, fundraised, served on the board of directors, and participated in vision-casting. Staff members supported school financial, secretarial, and maintenance operations. Teachers oversaw classes of 10-15 students and taught the classical curriculum for their grade levels; from August to May, teachers met with students three days a week and were available to answer parent questions during homeschool

days. The board of directors was composed of military professionals, pastors, businessmen, attorneys, and parents.

The school was chosen for the current case study because, as a classical Christian, hybrid-model school, parents were required to affirm the school's statements of faith and fully participate in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children. Students enrolled in the school memorized scripture, learned hymns, and were taught the classical curriculum from a biblical worldview. This case study provides rich descriptions of how these parents endeavored to participate in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children.

### **Participants**

Qualitative research recommends recruiting 10-15 participants for a study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this study, there were 13 participants whose children were enrolled in the classical Christian, hybrid-model school. Participants had one or more children enrolled in the school. Participants had a minimum of one full year of experience in classical Christian, hybrid model schooling. Participants provided demographic information at the beginning of the individual interviews, such as age, level of education, marital status, number of years married, number and ages of children, number of years hybrid-homeschooling, number of years a Christian, and denomination (Appendix D).

### **Recruitment Plan**

The head of school sent an email to qualified parents introducing the researcher, the research, and inviting parents to contact me to participate in the study. Purposive sampling methods were used to recruit qualified participants (Patton, 2015). Purposive, or purposeful, sampling ensures a variety of participants perceived to have experiences and perspectives that will contribute to the study will be recruited to participate. Participants were contacted by the

head of school, informed of the study protocols via the IRB-approved Participant Recruitment Letter (Appendix E), and invited to contact me for more information about the study (Appendix J). After I received an email from an interested parent, I responded with an invitation to participate, offered meeting dates, and attached the IRB-approved Participant Information Sheet (Appendix F).

### **Researcher Positionality**

The following sections contain my interpretive framework and philosophical assumptions. First, in the interpretive framework section I explain how critical theory forms the basis for my research paradigm. Next, in the philosophical assumptions section I explain my ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions. Finally, in the researcher's role section I explain my position and responsibility as a researcher within this study.

### **Interpretive Framework**

Qualitative studies derive from the interests of the researcher who articulates within the study any inherent biases (Stake, 2003; Yin, 2018). As biblical critical theory underpins this study, my interpretive framework is a transformative critical theory, or one that seeks to reframe cultural understanding and to work in collaboration with others to encourage cultural reformation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Watkin, 2022). My perspective is rooted in a Christian worldview, a perspective requiring transformation of self and service to others. I believe Christians have a duty to bring biblical ethics to their spheres of influence. As one who has been transformed, I am required to share a perspective of biblical transformation with others, yet I understand transformation of others happens by the power of God alone. I believe biblical critical theory offers a vision for human renewal, challenges contemporary systems of thought, and is necessary for human flourishing (Harvey, 2022; Watkin, 2022).

## **Philosophical Assumptions**

In qualitative studies, a researcher brings personal philosophical assumptions to the work (Stake, 2003; Yin, 2018). Those philosophical assumptions derive from the values and worldview of the researcher (Stake, 2003; Tackett, 2006; Yin, 2018). There are three philosophical assumptions for this case study that further explicate my Christian worldview, and those are my ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### ***Ontological Assumption***

In the words of Rosaria Butterfield (2023), “Ontology is a philosophical term for who you are eternally, essentially, and originally” (p. 226). One may believe in a single reality or truth, or in multiple realities or truths, or in the changing nature of reality or truth (Pretorius, 2018). An ontological assumption, therefore, undergirds an understanding of the nature of reality and truth, and how that understanding is used to interpret *self* (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Pretorius, 2018).

As a Christian, my ontological assumption is of a single, universal, knowable reality that is situated in the deity of Christ (*English Standard Version*, 2001, John 1:3). My Christian ontological assumption further asserts events occur in a singular reality that is foreordained by the sovereign God of the Bible (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Eph. 1:11). Therefore, this study reflects an ontological position that its participants did encounter the foreordained reality and truth of God in their lives and in our work together (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Isaiah 55:11).

### ***Epistemological Assumption***

Epistemological assumptions reflect the ways in which people know and experience reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). In other words, one may say

something is real or true because it can be proven, and another may say something is real or true because it is perceived to be so (Steup & Neta, 2024). An epistemological assumption, therefore, undergirds the way a person knows reality, whether through perception, introspection, reason, testimony, or memory (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Steup & Neta, 2024).

As a Christian, my epistemological position is that knowledge is revealed in Christ through the Bible and through the work of the Holy Spirit (*English Standard Version*, 2001, Deut. 29:29). My Christian epistemological position shapes the understanding that, while there is one unified truth that rests in the deity of Christ, there are two kinds of revelation: general and special (*English Standard Version*, 2001, John 17:3; Romans 1:20; Wahlberg, 2020; Westminster Assembly, 1646/2007). Therefore, this study reflects my belief that all humans encounter the reality and truth of God through general revelation, and that some may come to know Him salvifically, through special revelation.

### ***Axiological Assumption***

Axiological assumptions reflect the intrinsic values held by a person, as well as his ways of viewing the world (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). In other words, the inner value system held by a person colors his interpretation of experiences, phenomena, and the values and behaviors held by others (Creswell & Poth, 2018). An axiological assumption, therefore, undergirds the way a person perceives and interprets the world (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

My axiological position is built upon a Christian worldview, one that advocates moral behavior, submission to orthodox biblical principles, and Christian advocacy (Tackett, 2006). My Christian axiological position shapes the understanding that, while there is a tension believers hold between godliness and sinfulness, human behaviors and values generally reflect

either a biblical orientation or a worldly orientation (*English Standard Version*, 2001, John 17:15-16). Therefore, this study reflects my belief that Christian advocacy requires one to share the truth of Christ with others.

### **Researcher's Role**

Stake (2003) indicates researchers, as humans conducting qualitative studies, must examine and transparently reveal their research biases. In meeting with the head of school and the participants, I stated my position was as a researcher, and that I held no position of influence or authority in the setting. Rather, I revealed my position was one of positive bias as I seek to support parents in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children (Yin, 2018).

To that end, I shared in advance my experience as an educator of children and my desire to obey the Lord's calling on all believers to train children in the truths of scripture (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, Deut. 6:7-9). After teaching in low SES elementary schools and in a community college, I left public education to homeschool our two daughters using classical and Christian materials and methods. I taught homeschool classes in co-op settings, then opened a classical Christian elementary school where I served as a teacher, head of school, and board member. The impetus for this study is my concern for the number of children who were raised in Christian homes, who were homeschooled or attended Christian schools, who have since become *nones* (Davis & Graham, 2023; Pew Research Center, 2024). As a Christian educator, I hope to discern from research the discipleship practices found to be efficacious for religious transmission into early adulthood.

### **Procedures**

Before beginning data collection, Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) permission was obtained (Appendix A). The IRB application contained information on the site

permission, participant recruitment plan and protections, data collection methods, and data storage procedures. Following IRB approval, site permission was sought (Appendix B) and attained (Appendix C).

Prior to initiation of data collection procedures, all forms, interview questions, and the letter-writing prompt were submitted for the approval of my committee chair and research methodologist. Using purposive sampling methods, the head of school sent the Participant Recruitment Letter (Appendix E) in an email to parents who had been enrolled in the hybrid-homeschool for more than one year, introduced the research and the researcher, and invited them to contact me for further information. An audit trail of events was initiated (Appendix J); when moms notified me of their interest in the study, they were emailed the IRB-approved Participant Information Sheet (Appendix F), individual interviews were scheduled (Appendix G), video recorded via Zoom, and audio recorded on the Voice-Memos app. Following completion of the individual interviews, participants were emailed the transcription and invited to add/correct/approve it. Following completion of the 13 individual interviews, focus groups interviews (Appendix H) of 3-5 participants were arranged, video recorded via Zoom, and audio recorded on the Voice-Memos app. Following completion of the focus group interviews, a letter-writing prompt with instructions for its completion and return were emailed to participants (Appendix I). All data was transcribed, uploaded to ATLAS.ti, coded, and analyzed. As three data sources were analyzed, data triangulation standards were met (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). As all data collection methods were reviewed by research experts and member-checked by participants, credibility standards were met.

### **Data Collection Plan**

The current investigation describes how parents participated in the Christian education

and spiritual formation of their children who were enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region. Yin (2018) indicates several methods of data collection are appropriate for qualitative case study designs. The current study used individual interviews, focus group discussions, and letter-writing for the data collection methods.

Individual interviews provided insight into the Christian worldview of the parents and gauged how they participated in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children. The focus group meetings were used to elucidate and elaborate the responses of the participants; openly shared thoughts prompted deeper reflection and additional sharing. At the conclusion of the individual and the focus group interviews, participants wrote letters to their children explaining their desires, fears, and joys in homeschooling.

The individual interviews and focus group interviews were scheduled for times convenient to the participants (Appendix J). The meetings were video-recorded on Zoom, audio-recorded on the Voice-Memos app and transcribed. The interviews and written responses were coded for recurring themes using ATLAS.ti. The three methods of data collection enabled data triangulation for how these parents participated in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children (Stake, 2003).

### **Individual Interviews**

Interviews are the primary means of data collection in case study research and, for this study, served as an instrument through which to gather thick, rich data on the Central research question (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). After purposive sampling and participant recruitment, individual interviews were conducted (Yin, 2018). The interviews were scheduled in advance (Appendix J); took place via Zoom; were audio-recorded on the Voice-Memos app; and lasted approximately 45 minutes. Interviews began with collection of demographic information

(Appendix D) and an icebreaker question (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The individual interview questions (Appendix G) were displayed on the shared computer screen, flowed from the central research and sub-questions, and probed how these parents participated in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children. Clarification was provided when a participant asked for additional information, otherwise the researcher rarely spoke during the interview (Yin, 2018). Before closing the interview, participants were asked if they would like to share additional thoughts; all 13 participants took advantage of that open-ended question and shared additional information and insights.

## **Table 1**

### *Individual Interview Questions*

1. How did you decide on homeschooling? Icebreaker.
2. How would you describe your relationship with your child? SQ1.
3. How would your child describe his or her relationship with you? SQ1.
4. How does your family manage conflict and discipline? SQ1.
5. Please describe a time you felt successful in speaking with your child about matters of faith. SQ1.
6. How do materials help you shepherd your child in matters of faith? SQ2.
7. How do people help you shepherd your child in matters of faith? SQ2.
8. How do you use the Bible materials provided by the school in your child's Christian education and spiritual formation? SQ2.
9. How have the Bible materials provided by the school affected the Christian education and spiritual formation of your child? SQ2.
10. How have the Bible materials provided by the school affected your Christian

- education and spiritual formation? SQ2.
11. How have the Bible materials provided by the school affected the Christian education and spiritual formation of your family? SQ2.
  12. How do you make opportunities to speak with your child about matters of faith? SQ3.
  13. How do you equip yourself to speak with your child about matters of faith? SQ3.
  14. Please describe your ideal parent-child faith-based discussion. SQ3.

The interview questions listed above were designed to probe how these parents perceived the hybrid model of education supported their religious transmission efforts. The first question was an icebreaker that set a warm tone and led parents to recall their hopes for home educating their children (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The purpose of questions 2, 4, and 5 was to understand the parenting style of the participants. Research on attachment indicates children raised by authoritative parents are more likely to maintain family traditions, and an aim of this study was to identify the ways homeschooling parents exercise authority in their families (Bellous, 2021; Holmes, 2023). The purpose of question 3 was to determine whether these parents adapted their parenting style to fit the needs of the child. Research on effective parenting reveals children whose parents were highly engaged exhibited fewer emotional and social difficulties (Biringen et al., 2023; Korja & McMahon, 2021). The purpose of questions 6, 7, and 8 was to understand how these parents used materials and pedagogy in their religious transmission efforts. Research indicates educational materials and teaching philosophies derive from philosophies of education and transmit values (Erdem, 2021; Smith & Adamczyk, 2021). The purpose of questions 9, 10, and 11 was to understand how the bidirectional nature of teaching impacted the family dynamic, especially in the realm of spiritual growth (Alexander & Putnam, 2021; Almeida et al., 2022; Bellous, 2021; Holmes, 2023; Ingersoll, 2020; Simpson et al., 2021). The purpose of questions

12, 13, and 14 was to understand how these parents perceived and structured time with their child. Research indicates children of parents who dedicate intentional time to develop warm bonds and a close relationship exhibit favorable outcomes (Smith, 2021).

### **Focus Groups**

The focus group is a form of data collection originating in World War II as a method for studying military morale that was later adapted as a market research method (Yin, 2018). Focus groups are comprised of participants to whom a particular question, centered around a particular aspect of the research, is presented (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). Focus groups can be avenues through which participants forge connections, share information, and develop novel ways of thinking about an issue.

Following the individual interviews, moms met for approximately 45 minutes in focus groups of three or five participants and me. The interviews were scheduled in advance (Appendix J), were video recorded via Zoom, and audio-recorded on the Voice-Memo app. The focus group questions were designed for parents to share how they oversaw the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children (Appendix H). The focus group questions were displayed on the shared computer screen; I read the questions aloud and encouraged open discussion; clarification was provided when a participant asked for additional information, otherwise the researcher rarely spoke during the interview (Yin, 2018). The focus group discussions drew out additional data by encouraging hesitant participants to share or recall information not shared in the individual interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Before closing the focus group interviews, participants were asked if they would like to share additional thoughts; all participants took advantage of that open-ended question and shared additional information and insights.

**Table 2*****Focus Group Questions***

1. How do you start your homeschool mornings? Icebreaker.
2. How did you come to decide on classical Christian, hybrid-model education for your children? CRQ.
3. How do you accommodate your children's differences? SQ1
4. How do you encourage a discouraged child? SQ1
5. How do you manage sibling conflict? SQ1
6. How do you implement the school curriculum at home? SQ2
7. How do you supplement the school curriculum at home? SQ2
8. How do you connect the school curriculum with your religious beliefs when teaching your child at home? SQ2
9. How much of your day is spent homeschooling? SQ3
10. How do classroom teachers support your homeschooling? SQ3
11. How does your teaching style work with the school curriculum? SQ3
12. How do you establish your family ethos in your homeschooling? SQ3

The focus group interview questions listed above were designed to further probe how these parents perceived the hybrid model of education supported their religious transmission efforts. The first question was an icebreaker that set a warm tone by providing a glimpse into how other parents begin their homeschooling days (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The purpose of Question 2 was for these parents to share how they decided to homeschool their children. As homeschooling families are in close contact for extended periods, research on attachment styles may reveal similarities across the parent-child relationships (Bellous, 2021; Holmes, 2023;

Mcleod, 2024; Simpson et al., 2021; Watkin, 2023). The purpose of Questions 3-5 was for these parents to share how they nurtured the individual personalities of their children. Research on parental authority types reveals connections to social-emotional well-being in children (Dudley & Wisbey, 2020; Smith, 2021; Smith & Adamczyk, 2021; Watkin, 2023). The purpose of Questions 6-8 was for these parents to share how they used the curriculum and connected it with their religious transmission efforts. Research reveals parents' enculturation efforts affect the faith formation of their children (Barrow et al., 2021; Dollahite et al., 2019; Kelley et al., 2021; Vonk et al., 2019; Watkin, 2023). Finally, the purpose of Questions 9-12 was for these parents to share how they used their time and how they established behavioral norms in their homeschooling. Research reveals children whose parents spend more time and resources on them exhibit cognitive, social, and emotional advantages (Kearney, 2023; Roskam et al., 2021; Watkin, 2023; Wilcox, 2024).

### **Letter-Writing**

The letter-writing assignment for this study required participants to reflect on and respond to a prompt designed to generate additional data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To better understand how these parents participated in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who were enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region, a look into the perspective of a homeschooling parent will reveal motive. One way to capture the perspective parents hold on their homeschooling experiences would be for them to reflect on their efforts to raise children with a Christian worldview. At the conclusion of the focus group meetings, participants were emailed a writing prompt that included instructions for how to complete the assignment (Appendix I). The prompt was based on the Central research question "How do parents participate in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their

children who are enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region?” Instructions included writing a one or two paragraph reflective response and returning the response via email within 14 days. The prompt asked participants to reflect on their homeschooling, then write a letter to their child(ren) sharing their desires, fears, and joys in homeschooling. The instructions included assurance that the emailed letters would remain confidential and in the possession of the researcher.

### **Data Analysis**

Case study research is a form of qualitative analysis, one that calls upon the researcher to determine the question, design the study, collect the data, and make sense of the findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Priya, 2021; Stahl & King, 2020; Stake, 2003; Yin, 2018). Unlike quantitative research, in which analysis begins once data collection is complete (Gall et al., 2007), case study analysis begins at the inception of the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Stake, 1995). For the current study, researcher analysis began with collection of demographic information and progressed continuously throughout the three forms of data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Priya, 2021; Saldana, 2021 Yin, 2018). The collected data was triangulated, i.e. examined for emergent themes that can be clustered for broader understanding (Priya, 2021; Saldana, 2021; Stake, 2003; Yin, 2018). Analysis occurred at every stage and shaped the course of the research.

The data collection process included three coding cycles; all data was compared within the case study and with extant literature (Saldana, 2021). At the completion of data collection, recurring concepts were assigned a label, such as love spending time together, and clustered by theme, such as enculturation and behavioral norms. After data saturation was attained, the triangulated results were examined for the emergence of commonalities and possible ubiquitous

practices among these families who were dedicated to the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children (Stake, 2003; Yin, 2018).

The individual interviews were the first data collection method used with the participants. A spiral notebook was used to record notes from participant comments that affirmed extant literature. The individual interviews were scheduled in advance (Appendix J), took place over Zoom, and audio-recorded on the Voice-Memo app. Participants were asked to provide demographic information (Appendix D), respond to the 14 interview questions (Appendix G), then invited to share any final thoughts. Following the interviews, the Zoom-generated transcripts were manually transcribed against the Voice-Memo audio recordings; the final transcriptions were emailed to the participants for their approval. Few participants responded to the invitation to approve their individual interview transcripts; one participant provided a forgotten detail on CCCS classroom rules, and one participant provided a spelling correction (Saldana, 2021).

The focus group interviews were the second data collection method used with the participants. As with the individual interviews, a spiral notebook was used to record notes from participant comments that affirmed extant literature. Following completion of the individual interviews, the focus groups were scheduled in advance (Appendix J), took place over Zoom, and audio-recorded on the Voice-Memo app. The first focus group had three participants, and the second and third focus groups had five participants each. Participants were asked to respond to any/some of the 12 focus group questions (Appendix H), then invited to share any final thoughts. Following the interviews, the Zoom-generated transcripts were manually transcribed against the Voice-Memo audio recording. Unlike the individual interview, participants were not emailed copies of the focus group discussions, nor invited to approve the transcriptions.

Letter-writing was the third data collection method used with the participants. Following completion of the focus group meetings, the letter-writing prompt was sent via email (Appendix I). The email contained instructions as to the length of the written response and its due date. The letter-writing prompt asked participants to reflect on all that was discussed in the individual and focus group interviews, then write a letter to their child(ren) sharing their desires, fears, and joys in homeschooling them.

Data attained from the interviews and letters was uploaded to ATLAS.ti for preliminary analysis. Common and recurring themes across all data was assigned a label or code. Coding continued until saturation was met; 96 codes were drawn from the data and assigned to one of six themes; revision culled the codes to 65 and the themes to three; the final three themes aligned with the three cultural figures (see Figures 1 and 2) derived from Watkin's (2022) biblical critical theory (Saldana, 2021; Stake, 2003). The data analysis process for this study involved data triangulation, or the comparison of data collected from the three sources; data triangulation protects against researcher bias and enhances research credibility (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Patton, 2015). Finally, a research expert and methodologist reviewed the findings for bias and accuracy.

### **Trustworthiness**

Research standards are established for qualitative and quantitative studies to assure the reader of their trustworthiness (Schwandt et al., 2007; Stahl & King, 2020). The trustworthiness categories for qualitative studies derive from quantitative, positivist paradigms, and are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Stahl & King, 2020). Explanations of the four qualitative trustworthiness categories and ethical considerations follow.

## **Credibility**

Qualitative studies are considered credible when the findings reflect what the researcher reports (Stahl & King, 2020). This qualitative research study followed five steps to increase its credibility. Those five steps were prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation of data, peer debriefing or expert review, and member-checks. When followed carefully, the five steps produce accurate findings and ensure the reader of the credibility of the study (Janesick, 2003; Schwandt et al., 2007; Stake, 2003). What follows is an explanation for how my study met credibility standards for qualitative research.

### ***Prolonged Engagement***

According to Stake (2003), prolonged engagement indicates the researcher has spent sufficient time with the participants to understand the phenomenon under consideration. Through the individual and focus group interviews, a minimum of 12 hours of conversation was recorded and analyzed, allowing sufficient time to study and understand the details and nuances of the religious transmission efforts of parents. Through continuous examination of the spoken and written data, it was clear when saturation had been met; the data collection process concluded with receipt of the final written response (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 2003).

### ***Persistent Observation***

According to Yin (2018), field research requires observation. This study met the standard of persistent observation through my access to and accurate reporting of the experiences, viewpoints, and perspectives of the participants who home educated their children (Yin, 2018). The individual and focus group interviews provided direct observation opportunities, and the letters provided a window into participants' reflections (Patton, 2015). The three data collection

methods allowed me to observe how these parents participated in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children.

### ***Triangulation***

According to Stake (1995), data triangulation aids the researcher in accurately reporting findings. Data triangulation has a two-fold purpose. First, triangulation is the process through which the researcher gathers multiple sources of data (Stake, 2003; Yin, 2018). Second, by collecting and comparing multiple sources of data, the researcher may locate and eliminate undetected bias (Yin, 2018). The cross-comparison of data from the individual interviews, focus group interviews, and letters facilitated accurate description of the issue under study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). This study attained data triangulation on the religious transmission efforts of these homeschooling parents by collecting, coding, and analyzing three data sources for recurring themes (Janesick, 2003; Stake, 1995).

### ***Peer Debriefing***

According to Spall (1997), attaining validity in qualitative research depends on the cooperation of the researcher and an expert peer. My committee chair provided continuous, expert guidance throughout the study design, data collection, and data review processes. The guidance offered by my committee chair steered me away from error, honed my study focus, and supported me in times of difficulty (Stahl & King, 2020). Minimally, my committee chair provided an external check on my study; ultimately, my committee chair provided expert oversight of the study through peer debriefing and insightful guidance (Spall, 1997; Stahl & King, 2020).

### ***Member Checking***

Member-checks are a means to validate the collected data by inviting participant input (McKim, 2023; Schwandt et al., 2007; Stahl & King, 2020). Data validation by member-checking was offered to all 13 participants following the individual interviews. After the Zoom-generated transcript was audited against the audio-recording and manually corrected, I emailed the final transcript to each participant and welcomed feedback on its accuracy (McKim, 2023; Stake, 1995). In addition, participants were invited to add, clarify, and/or amend any of their statements. By inviting participants to member-check the transcripts of their individual interviews, I sought to ensure accuracy of the findings, thereby enhancing the credibility of this study by correctly representing participant views (McKim, 2023; Stahl & King, 2020).

### **Transferability**

Known as external validity or generalizability in quantitative studies, a qualitative study meets the condition of transferability by the extent to which it resonates with and/or informs similar situations (Janesick, 2003; Stahl & King, 2020; Stake, 2003). A study may be determined to be transferable if it provides sufficient information to allow that determination. To meet the standard of transferability, I provided general information on the setting; any demographic limitations, whether in the participants or locations; the number of participants and my length of engagement with them; the types of data collection methods I used and how I implemented them; and the duration of the data collection process (Patton, 2015).

### **Dependability**

Known as reliability in quantitative studies, a qualitative study meets the condition of dependability by the extent to which it sufficiently details the research processes (Stahl & King, 2020). In other words, the researcher's goal of meeting the dependability standard is to rid the

study of hidden bias through expert review and peer debriefing. This study met the standard of dependability by carefully auditing, recording, and reporting the data collection process, and by corrective revision following the expert reviews of my committee chair and methodologist (Patton, 2015). A study is considered dependable if research methods and their effectiveness are reported in the research design and implementation details, data gathering processes, and the revealed reflexivity of the researcher; these elements were met and described in this chapter.

### **Confirmability**

Known as neutrality or objectivity in quantitative studies, this qualitative study met the standard of confirmability by accurately representing the experiences of parents who participated in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children at CCCS (Patton, 2015; Stahl & King, 2020). The researcher's positionality section of this chapter presents my Christian worldview so readers may understand the position from which I interpreted the findings. I safeguarded against researcher bias by triangulating data, implementing three coding cycles, undergoing expert review, and inviting member-checking (Janesick, 2003; Shenton, 2004).

### **Ethical Considerations**

In studies involving human participants, the researcher must ensure the research adheres to commonly accepted ethical standards (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018). First, site permissions were obtained following IRB approval of this research study. Next, participants were informed of the purpose of the study through a Participant Recruitment Letter (Appendix E) and Participant Information Sheet (Appendix F) that includes a written summary of my aims as a researcher, an overview of the study design, and the voluntary nature of their participation. In addition, the positionality of the researcher was made clear in the appropriate section, and the insights of peers and experts were sought to reveal any blind spots. Participants were made aware that the school

site and their identities would remain confidential, and that all data would be stored electronically in password-protected files.

### ***Permissions***

Following successful proposal defense and the approvals of my doctoral committee members, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was sought (Appendix A). Following conversations in which I shared my research goals, study design, data collection methods, and reporting procedures, site permission was requested of its head of school (Appendix B). Shortly thereafter, site permission was granted by the head of the school where my research took place (Appendix C).

### ***Other Participant Protections***

Participants were emailed a Participant Recruitment Letter (Appendix E) by the head of school, and a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix F) by me. These forms detailed the three data collection methods, the time commitment, and the voluntary nature of the study. The expected risks from participating in this study were minimal, which means they were equal to the risks encountered in everyday life. Participants were made aware that, if during the study I received information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I was required to report it to the appropriate authorities. Additional risks to the participants included emotional vulnerability as they discussed parenting issues, and discouragement resulting from comparison of their parenting experiences to others in the focus group discussions. While participants did not expect a direct benefit from participating in this study, benefits to others included providing parents with a better understanding of the religious transmission practices used by faithful Christians in their homes and schools. Additional potential benefits included relief in learning of others' parenting challenges and encouragement

in sharing their joys and fears with sympathetic listeners. Other protections included making participants aware that the site and their identities were protected by pseudonyms, their responses were being stored in pass-protected electronic files, and all collected data was to remain confidential. Finally, participants were asked to member-check the transcripts and final report for accuracy (McKim, 2023; Stahl & King, 2020).

### **Summary**

Chapter Three presents the design elements, researcher positionality, and the purpose of this case study, which was to examine how these parents participated in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who were enrolled in classical Christian, hybrid-model school located in the DC Metro Region. The instrumental case study model was chosen for this research as it investigated a particular issue captured within a group of people bounded by place and time (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). The setting selection was based on the schools' provision of a classical Christian, hybrid-model education. Participant selection involved inviting 13 qualified moms to join the study. The data collection methods of individual interviews, focus group interviews, and letter-writing facilitated data triangulation. In addition, data coding and analysis included three coding cycles until saturation was met, the identification of recurring themes, expert review, and member-checks. This instrumental case study met the trustworthiness standards of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability; and met the ethical standards of IRB approval, setting and participant permissions, and other participant protections, as required for legitimate social science inquiry.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this case study was to examine how parents participated in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who were enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region. For this study, data was collected from mothers who homeschooled their children two days per week in collaboration with professional, grade-level educators who taught their children in a school setting three days per week. This chapter contains participant profiles, a summary of the findings and outlier data, a description of how the findings answer the research questions, and how the findings are corroborated by the theoretical framework.

### **Participants**

Participants for this study were required to meet qualifications for inclusion in the research. First, CCCS requires all parents of children enrolled in the school to have a credible profession of Christian faith and be active members of a Bible-believing church. Second, mothers who qualified to participate in this study were married and had one or more children enrolled in the school for more than one year. The Head of School, Claire Matthews, purposively selected sets of parents, emailed them the Participant Recruitment Letter (Appendix E), and encouraged them to reach out to me for further information about the study. Seventeen qualified families expressed interest in participating in the research; thirteen mothers completed the individual interviews, the focus group interviews, and the written prompt response.

**Table 3***Participant Descriptions*

Parent Participant	Participant Age	Participant Denomination	Ages of Children	Years at CCCS
Anna Neville	39	Baptist	10, 8, 6, 4	6
Christina Lambert	36	Baptist	6, 4, 1	2
Elizabeth King	38	Non-Denominational	9, 6, 5, 1	4
Holly Johnson	48	Baptist	30, 24, 15, 13, 10	5
Jessica Irving	42	Baptist	7, 4, 3	3
Katherine Holt	41	Baptist	9, 6, 1	5
Lauren Givens	48	Baptist	14, 12, 9, 5	4
Megan Ford	38	Baptist	14, 12, 10, 6	2
Natalie Evert	44	Baptist	13, 10, 5	4
Olivia Dobbs	38	Baptist	7, 3, 2	3
Paula Curtis	40	Baptist	11, 10, 7, 5	3
Samantha Burg	37	Baptist	11, 8, 6, 2	6
Traci Adams	34	Presbyterian	7, 3, 1	2

**Anna Neville**

Anna is a 39-year-old mother of four children, ages 10, 8, 6, and 4. She has been a believer for over 25 years. Anna and her husband, Brad, have college degrees and have been married for 11 years. The Neville family are members of a Baptist church. Three of the four Neville children attend CCCS. Anna has partnered with CCCS as a homeschooling parent and as a teaching assistant for six years.

The Nevilles wanted to homeschool their children but were unsure of Anna's ability to commit to a five-days-per-week homeschooling schedule. They learned about CCCS from an Instagram post, investigated the school and the hybrid model, and felt that CCCS was a providence of the Lord. Anna explained, "We just knew right then and there that this is the best thing for us as well as our kids." Anna and her four children love spending time together, and

though there are challenges, the Neville family appreciates how classical methodology highlights the centrality of Christ in all their learning.

### **Christina Lambert**

Christina is a 36-year-old mother of three children, ages 6, 4, and 1. She has been a believer for 13 years. Christina and her husband, Stephen, have master's degrees and have been married for 12 years. The Lambert family are members of a Baptist church. The oldest Lambert child attends CCCS. Christina has partnered with CCCS as a homeschooling parent and part-time teacher for two years.

When the Lamberts were residents of a foreign country and unable to find any truly Christian preschools for their first child, they explored classical homeschooling. A career opportunity brought the Lamberts to the DC Metro Region where they discovered CCCS. "This is what we need," Christina explained. She added that, as a non-native English speaker, "I was extremely concerned for how I was going to teach English to my daughter . . . and when we found out [CCCS] was a hybrid [school], it was like, 'Great! I don't have to do this alone.'" The Lamberts' mothers and an aunt watch the younger Lambert children for an hour in the mornings of days that Christina teaches a class at CCCS. When she returns home, Christina delights in what she perceives to be her responsibility, and that is to teach her young children about Christ through homeschooling.

### **Elizabeth King**

Elizabeth is a 38-year-old mother of four children, ages 9, 6, 5, and 1. She has been a believer for approximately 25 years. Elizabeth and her husband, Tony, have master's degrees and have been married for 13 years. The King family are members of a non-denominational church.

Three of the four King children attend CCCS, and Elizabeth has partnered with CCCS as a homeschooling parent for four years.

Before joining CCCS, Elizabeth had homeschooled her oldest child for kindergarten. She appreciated the flexibility and extra time homeschooling provided their family. Following the pandemic, however, the Kings sought more socialization opportunities for their children and academic support for Elizabeth in the subject areas she felt less prepared to teach. “I have always stayed home with them,” Elizabeth stated. “Our lives are mostly a shared experience,” and hybrid schooling “seemed like the best of both worlds.” In reflecting on the CCCS community, Elizabeth especially appreciates its like-mindedness. “It is a rare and wonderful thing to send your kids somewhere where you know they are hearing only things that you also believe.”

### **Holly Johnson**

Holly is a 48-year-old mother of five children, ages 30, 24, 15, 13, and 10. She has been a believer for 20 years. Holly and her husband, George, attended college and have been married for 25 years. The Johnson family are members of a Baptist church. The three Johnson children still living at home attend CCCS. Holly has partnered with CCCS as a homeschooling parent for five years.

The Johnson children came to CCCS from public school. Mr. and Mrs. Johnson were concerned for what their children were learning in the neighborhood public school, and following a disappointing conversation with the school principal, Holly investigated homeschooling. Then, after speaking with a friend at church about hybrid homeschooling, the Johnsons contacted Claire Matthews, Founder and Head of School for CCCS. The collaborative hybrid school “was just what we wanted,” said Holly. “We wanted to homeschool, but we needed the help because I couldn’t do it myself.” Through their years at CCCS, Holly has shown

her children how God has answered their prayers for friends, has learned the hymns her children sing as they go about their days, and has been challenged by what her children are learning. She mused, “If Claire hadn’t had it in her heart from God to start CCCS, we wouldn’t have much choice right now. This is very rare. We are very blessed and thankful for CCCS.”

### **Jessica Irving**

Jessica is a 42-year-old mother of three children, ages 7, 4, and 3. She has been a believer for nine years. Jessica has a bachelor’s degree, and her husband, Mark, has a graduate degree. The Irvings have been married for eight years, and their family are members of a Baptist church. The oldest Irving child attends CCCS. Jessica has partnered with CCCS as a homeschooling parent for three years.

Jessica never planned to homeschool. During the pandemic, however, when the Irvings sought a preschool that did not require masking, they realized the public school options were not going to work for their family. After the Irvings moved back to the DC Metro Region, they discovered that a classical Christian, hybrid-model school had opened in their church building. When Jessica and Mark met with Claire Matthews, Founder and Head of School for CCCS, they expressed their appreciation for the school’s technology-free, classical curriculum and its goal of “teaching the kids to learn, and how to think, and just to be good people.” While Jessica is grateful for the bonds her family is forging by memorizing scripture and catechism, growing in their faith, and spending time together, she acknowledged that, though the school carries most of the load, she still feels ill-equipped at times. She wondered that the school “might not know how much certain people struggle.”

**Katherine Holt**

Katherine is a 41-year-old mother of three children, ages 9, 6, and 1. She has been a believer for 37 years. Katherine and her husband, John, have master's degrees and have been married for 12 years. The Holt family are members of a Baptist church. The two older Holt children attend CCCS. Katherine has partnered with CCCS as a homeschooling parent and/or teaching assistant for five years.

Katherine attended public schools as a child and anticipated choosing that route for her children. However, when the kindergarten year rolled around, the Holts found the public school options within the DC Metro Region undesirable. Katherine considered "hybrid homeschooling a little less intimidating than [fulltime homeschooling], since I had not previously thought I could even do that," and after interviewing with Claire Matthews, Founder and Head of School for CCCS, enrolled her oldest child in kindergarten there. Katherine loves being home with her children and feels CCCS provides a balanced parent-teacher partnership. In fact, she expressed appreciation for how the collaborative school model holds parents accountable for their children's learning. "Because," she admitted, "we can't *not* be involved and succeed there."

**Lauren Givens**

Lauren is a 48-year-old mother of four children, ages 14, 12, 9, and 5. She has been a believer for 28 years. Lauren has a bachelor's degree and her husband, Paul, has a master's degree. The Givens have been married for 17 years, and their family are members of a Baptist church. All four Givens children attend CCCS. Lauren has partnered with CCCS as a homeschooling parent for four years.

As members of a military family, the Givens children have attended schools in foreign countries. They have been both the Christian minority in a secular school and the Christian

majority in a school founded by missionaries. Upon returning to the United States, Mr. and Mrs. Givens researched Christian schools in the DC Metro Region hoping to find something like their international missionary school, “something specifically Christian.” Lauren explained that CCCS “was definitely that, definitely Christ-centered,” and found their family was “aligned theologically with not only what they were teaching, but the fact that they were teaching that in the school.”

### **Megan Ford**

Megan is a 38-year-old mother of four children, ages 14, 12, 10, and 6. She has been a believer for 33 years. Megan has a master’s degree, and her husband, Thomas, has a doctoral degree. The Fords have been married for 18 years, and their family are members of a Baptist church. All four Ford children attend CCCS. Megan has partnered with CCCS as a homeschooling parent and as a full-time teacher for two years.

The Fords are a military family, and they have experienced fulltime Christian schooling, fulltime homeschooling, and now hybrid homeschooling. Megan was naturally drawn to the classical curriculum when she was homeschooling fulltime, and now that her children are enrolled in CCCS, she especially appreciates how the weekly catechism and scripture verse memorization equip her children for sharing their faith. “God’s word never returns void,” Megan explained. “So, if they’re hiding the Scriptures in their hearts, these catechism questions . . . answer why.” She added, “Maybe when talking to someone who doesn’t know Jesus . . . these catechism questions will be brought to their minds in a time when they may need that.”

### **Natalie Evert**

Natalie is a 44-year-old mother of three children, ages 13, 10, and 5. She has been a believer for 35 years. Natalie attended college, and her husband, Greg, has a bachelor’s degree.

The Everts have been married for 19 years, and their family are members of a Baptist church. All three Evert children attend CCCS. Natalie has partnered with CCCS as a homeschooling parent for four years.

When the pandemic hit, the two older Evert children were enrolled in a public school. Online learning revealed to Natalie how her sons' public school teachers seemed unconcerned for their educational strengths and weaknesses, and she decided to homeschool them for a year. After that year concluded, Natalie saw tremendous academic growth in both of her children but realized she was unable to fulltime homeschool and continue working parttime. She spoke with a friend whose children attend CCCS, then interviewed with Claire Matthews, Founder and Head of School at CCCS, and enrolled her children that fall. Four years later, the Evert family cannot imagine any other way of schooling. Natalie reflected that hybrid homeschooling "is more than I could have ever imagined." She added that, "When I reached out to my friend at church and said, 'Tell me more about the school your daughter attends,' I would never have guessed it would have been this much of a blessing."

### **Olivia Dobbs**

Olivia is a 38-year-old mother of three children, ages 7, 3 and 2. She has been a believer for 35 years. Olivia and her husband, Aaron, have master's degrees, and have been married for 15 years. The Dobbs family are members of a Baptist church. The oldest Dobbs child attends CCCS. Olivia has partnered with CCCS as a homeschooling parent for three years.

Olivia and Aaron Dobbs attended the same church community group as Claire and Rick Matthews and prayed with them about whether the Lord was calling the Matthews to start CCCS. After the Dobbs became parents, they investigated the various educational options in the DC Metro Region, public and private. Olivia explained, "We were open to what the Lord had." After

investigating the local school options, Olivia said she and Aaron “became convinced we wanted a Christian education for our daughter. I really liked the classical model and the idea of being involved in our daughter’s education.” One aspect of hybrid homeschooling for which Olivia expressed gratitude is “the unity of messaging” their child receives between church, home, and school.

### **Paula Curtis**

Paula is a 40-year-old mother of four children, ages 11, 10, 7, and 5. She has been a believer for 37 years. Paula has a bachelor’s degree, and her husband, Daniel, has a master’s degree. The Curtises have been married for 14 years and their family are members of a Baptist church. All four Curtis children attend CCCS. Paula has partnered with CCCS as a homeschooling parent for three years.

Before moving to the DC Metro Region, Paula and Daniel’s oldest child attended a fulltime Christian school. After their move, Paula decided to take advantage of the many regional cultural and natural resources and homeschool their first year. Because of the pandemic, Paula homeschooled for two years and found herself “really burned out” by “the mental load that homeschool moms carry.” She looked for an educational option that could provide rigor and balance for their family. The Curtises found the hybrid model met their family’s need for academic excellence, like-minded peer relationships, and days at home that allowed their “son who needs to move as much as he needs to learn” to thrive. While hybrid homeschooling has been a great experience for the Curtis family, Paula acknowledged the model provides challenges for large families. “It is, financially, a huge sacrifice . . . because by nature hybrid homeschooling means that one parent cannot work fulltime.” In the DC Metro Region schooling

is expensive, and living on one fulltime income may impact families' ability to hybrid homeschool.

### **Samantha Burg**

Samantha is a 37-year-old mother of four children, ages 11, 8, 6, and 2. She has been a believer for 32 years. Samantha and her husband, Eli, have master's degrees and have been married for 15 years. The Burg family are members of a Baptist church. The older three Burg children attend CCCS. Samantha has partnered with CCCS as a homeschooling parent and staff member for six years.

The Burg family moved to the DC Metro Region when their oldest was kindergarten age and enrolled her in the local public school. The Burgs had thought they would send their children to public schools because that was what they experienced back home, but soon realized the secular education offered by the public school conflicted with their faith. Fulltime Christian schools in the area were cost-prohibitive, and the thought of fulltime homeschooling overwhelmed Samantha. The Burgs discovered CCCS at their church, where the school meets, and soon felt hybrid homeschooling was "the best of both worlds" for their family. In reflecting over their six years at CCCS, Samantha stated the Burg children's "formative years are being shaped by what they're hearing right now, and they are not the same as they would be in public school." Samantha added that "I truly, with 100% confidence, believe that CCCS has changed the spiritual course of my children's lives." Samantha and Eli are grateful for the way Claire Matthews, Founder and Head of School at CCCS, safeguards the community by carefully screening new families. She observed that "Claire has protected this little group of parents that are like-minded and who want to link arms to partner for the good of our kids, for their education, and for their heart formation."

**Traci Adams**

Traci is a 34-year-old mother of three children, ages 7, 3, and 1. She has been a believer all her life. Traci has a bachelor's degree, and her husband, David, has a master's degree. The Adams have been married for 11 years, and their family are members of a Presbyterian church. Traci has partnered with CCCS as a homeschooling parent for two years.

Traci and David were both homeschooled and wanted a Christian education for their children. Their oldest child started half-day preschool at a fulltime classical Christian school, but Traci became concerned for the times they would miss being together once her daughter started first grade. After in-depth investigation into the three classical Christian schools in the area, ultimately Mr. and Mrs. Adams decided to enroll their daughter at CCCS. Traci said, "It was the covenantal piece that I really figured out was the game-changing piece of why one school felt so much more spiritually aligned with our family." In addition, Traci wanted to have a role in her children's education. "I don't think you can hold a candle to parents being involved in their kids' faith." Traci believes parents are called to model their faith to their children. She explained, "We're finding that we really have to show them the benefit and how [faith] is a part of our lives or else they really don't believe it." She reflected that enrolling her children in a full-time school was a challenge to growing her children's faith, "even if it is Christian. You are telling them that [faith] is important, but they're not always having as many opportunities to see why it's important."

**Results**

The data collection results are contained in this section and derive from participants' individual interviews, focus group interviews, and written responses to the prompt. The participants were 13 married moms who had been hybrid-homeschooling one or more children

for one or more years. All interviews were held over Zoom, and the Zoom-generated transcripts were compared to the audio recordings and manually edited. The transcribed interviews and prompt responses were analyzed for evidence of categories emanating from the themes of relationship, content, and practice. The themes and subthemes that answer the central research question and sub-questions are presented in this section. Table 4 presents the themes and subthemes, and Tables 5, 6, and 7 present the subthemes and corresponding codes.

**Table 4**

*Themes & Subthemes*

Themes	Subthemes
Relationships Nurtured in Christian Identity	Authority, Security, Warm Bonds
Content Shapes Christian Education and Spiritual Formation	Material Matter, Pedagogical Practice
Parenting Practices Establish Family Culture	Enculturation & Behavioral Norms, Use of Time

**Relationships Nurtured in Christian Identity**

Each of the 13 participants reported making intentional efforts to nurture their children in the family’s shared Christian identity through their parent-child relationships. When asked to describe their relationships with their children, in the individual interviews the moms used words like loving, trusting, open, and close; in the focus groups the moms used words like Christ, Lord, God, and Holy Spirit; and in the letters to their children, all 13 moms expressed hope that their children would know and/or grow in Christ. For example, when asked in the individual interview to describe her ideal parent-child faith-based conversation, Christina Lambert expressed what all 13 moms desire for their children: “When I can present the gospel once again . . . and they say, ‘Yes! I want to surrender my life’. . . that would be – woof – the best!” The theme of relationship

nurtured in Christian identity produced subthemes of authority, security, and warm bonds that reveal how the participants nurtured their children's Christian identity within the parent-child relationship.

**Table 5**

*Relationships Nurtured in Christian Identity*

Subthemes	Codes
Authority	parental duty and desire, honoring parents and God, understanding the child's heart, growth toward independence, bidirectional spiritual growth
Security	trustworthiness, stewarding in Christ, open communication
Warm Bonds	affection and joy, modeling Christlikeness, evidence of spiritual fruit

***Authority***

The data collected in the individual interviews, focus groups, and written responses reveal five aspects of parental authority. Those five aspects may be seen as both parental goals and parental insights and are coded as parental duty and desire; honoring parents and God; understanding the child's heart; growth toward independence; and bidirectional spiritual growth. Findings reveal participants used these authoritative parenting practices in their relationships with their children.

First, some moms expressed both a duty and desire to teach their children. Christina Lambert said in the individual interview, "I think parents should be [homeschooling] if they can," and added in the letter to her daughter that, "as your mother, I feel a special responsibility for your growth." Traci Adams expressed a desire to teach her daughter "about being a part of our family and being in our home." Similarly, in a letter to her children, Megan Ford said,

“Though I believe you attended a wonderful 5-day traditional Christian school . . . I wanted more time and say in your education.” These moms expressed a sense of duty and desire to educate their children.

Second, some moms mentioned a responsibility to teach their children to honor God by honoring their role as parents. In her individual interview, Anna Neville said her children are taught that they “don’t cross the line, they don’t disrespect” because she and her husband Brad “tell them what it says in the Bible . . . for children to obey their parents.” Similarly, Natalie Evert explained in her individual interview that she and her husband Greg “don’t pull punches because sometimes they need to know, ‘You are sinning against God.’” In the individual and focus group interviews, Katherine Holt said she draws her children’s attention to their behaviors by asking them, “Is this honoring your father and your mother?” and by establishing consistent and “clear consequences for sinful behaviors or disobedience.” She went on to relate a time she overheard her son telling “a friend to do something disobedient,” and she “got to talk with him about how the Bible tells us not to help a brother stumble.” These moms endeavored to teach their children to honor God by honoring their parents.

Third, moms expressed a desire to understand the motives of their children’s hearts in both academics and behaviors. In her individual interview, Christina Lambert said, “Discipline is communication first.” Her approach was to “try always to understand the heart, because if not, it is pointless.” In the focus group, Holly Johnson agreed with Christina and added that, during moments of sibling conflict, “I will come and ask what happened. What is going on in their heart? Why are they acting that way? What is it making them feel?” In a letter to her daughter, Lauren Givens expressed concern for her academic self-perceptions; Lauren wrote, “I am in battle for you . . . I pray [God] softens your heart . . . and opens your eyes to the gifts and talents

He has given you.” These moms expressed a commitment to understanding the motives of their children’s hearts.

Fourth, some moms acknowledged their duty to grow their children toward independence. With three young children at home, Christina Lambert stated in the individual interview that, “There’s a lot of dependence, but at the same time . . . they know I am there [and] being with me all this time has given them independence.” Lauren Givens expressed gratitude in the individual interview for the “touchpoints” homeschooling provides throughout the day; she said her older children love “being home, but they’re trying to figure out what it looks like to be our children, and to be under our care, and then also exert some independence.” These moms nurtured their children toward independence.

Fifth, some moms mentioned the bidirectional nature of interacting with their children drew them closer to the Lord. Such experiences were noted in the individual interview with Samantha Burg, for example, as she said, “I do see so much of my sin reflected back to me in my children.” She added that, “The Lord has taught me, mercifully, that the challenges of discipling them and walking alongside them are His mercy to me.” Similarly, in the letter to her son, Jessica Irving wrote that she begins “every year with the same hope: that we would grow and learn together, you as a student and me as your teacher.” These moms recognized their own spiritual growth happened in concert with the growth they saw in their children.

### ***Security***

The data collected in the individual interviews, focus groups, and written responses reveal three aspects of secure parent-child relationships. Those three aspects may be seen as both a characteristic of secure parent-child relationships and as actions parents take to develop secure relationships with their children. The three aspects of secure parent-child relationships emerging

from the data are coded as trustworthiness; stewarding in Christ; and open communication. Findings reveal evidence of those three aspects in participants' efforts to build secure relationships with their children.

First, some moms spoke of their efforts to build a relationship of trust with their children by being available for them. Traci Adams noted in the individual interview that, by quitting her job and dedicating one-on-one time with her daughter, she "built a lot of trust with her because I was giving up my time which I otherwise wouldn't have had." Megan Ford shared in the individual interview that she has a child who is struggling; she described him as "very dependent on me. I am his safe person, so any time anything is wrong, I am the one he goes to." As an aspect of building trust, some moms mentioned asking forgiveness of their children when they are in the wrong. For example, in the letter to her children, Holly Johnson asked them to "forgive me when I said one thing and did another." Similarly, in the individual interview, Samantha Burg said that an "important thing my husband and I try to do is ask forgiveness from our kids . . . when we have responded in anger or spoken wrongly to them . . . or whatever way we have sinned against them." These illustrations demonstrate participants' efforts to build trusting relationships by spending time with their children and by seeking forgiveness when they have sinned against them.

Second, some moms spoke of their efforts to steward their children in Christ. In the individual interview, Olivia Dobbs expressed appreciation for the privilege of helping her daughter through times of frustration; she mused, "What are the tools that I can give her now to think through these challenges that she's going to face her whole life?" Similarly, in the individual interview, Anna Neville shared the importance of "guiding them to the answers, not just saying, 'Hey, this is the answer,' but like, 'let's start from the beginning.'" Some moms

noted stewardship requires patience. For example, in the focus group discussion, Paula Curtis shared that, “as a mom, it is hard because you have to stay even when the freak-outs are happening,” and Samantha Burg said, “I am tempted, in times of conflict, to just fix the circumstances rather than disciple the heart.” In the individual interview, Jessica Irving described shepherding her children as “a long game. It truly is.” Jessica added that, ideally, she would be prepared with “Scripture at my fingertips” with the result of “lead[ing] them joyfully and in a way that glorifies God.” In developing secure relationships with their children, these parents viewed stewarding their children in Christ as a privilege that requires thoughtfulness and patience.

Third, some moms described establishing open communication in their families. For example, in the individual interview, Natalie Evert said she and her husband Greg are “working to build a strong relationship with our children where they feel confident and comfortable coming to us with any of their cares or needs.” Megan Ford shared in the individual interview that she’s “been thankfully surprised that [the teen-aged children] will still come to me and ask me about things.” Similarly, Lauren Givens mentioned in the individual interview that sometimes her children will ask spiritual questions or ask for advice on how to handle school relationships. These parents mentioned making intentional efforts to maintain open communication with their children.

### ***Warm Bonds***

The data collected in the individual interviews, focus groups, and written responses reveal three aspects of warm parent-child bonds. Those three aspects may be seen as both a characteristic of warm parent-child bonds and as actions parents take to develop warm bonds with their children. The three aspects of warm parent-child bonds evident in the data are coded as

affection and joy; modeling Christlikeness; and evidence of spiritual fruit. Findings confirm those three aspects in participants' efforts to foster warm bonds with their children.

First, some moms described the bonds they have formed with their children as affectionate and joyful. In the letter to her daughter, Traci Adams wrote that being "able to sit on the couch and snuggle while we read history, science, theology, or picture books like *Frog and Toad* has been so sweet." Similarly, in the individual interview, Jessica Irving described "the perfect picture of my relationship with my children is when everyone wakes up in the morning . . . and one-by-one they'll climb onto my lap." Likewise, in the individual interview, Natalie Evert said, "I enjoy having my kids home more . . . spending additional time with them, playing games, going and exploring, building what I believe will be a lasting relationship." In the individual interview, Katherine Holt shared that, "I think we have a really fun, joyful family life," and shared in the letter to her children that, "to be honest, you are also plain fun to be with, so I enjoy the extra time" homeschooling allows. These moms expressed affection and joy for their children.

Second, some moms sought to be models of Christlikeness that would facilitate the formation of warm bonds with their children. In the individual interview, Traci Adams expressed the importance of "parents being involved in their kids' faith because . . . they become what we are, and they love what we love." Samantha Burg shared a like observation in her individual interview when she stated that, "showing the gospel to our kids in our own lives . . . is one of the most important things we can do." In the letter to her daughter, Olivia Dobbs expressed the hope that by homeschooling she "would model faithfulness in teaching and supporting you in both the sweet and hard times we will experience for the glory of God." These moms expressed the importance of modeling Christlikeness in forming warm bonds with their children.

Third, some moms noted evidence of spiritual fruit in the warm bonds they share with their children. For example, in the individual interview, Paula Curtis noted that, in discipling her children, “if their hearts are soft . . . and they can understand what they’ve done is wrong, and they are able to humbly come to the Lord and ask forgiveness . . . that’s really ideal.” In the individual interview, Christina Lambert shared delight that her daughter “is reading in the morning the Bible by herself . . . I didn’t tell her to do that . . . she loves to know about the word of God, so I love that.” Katherine Holt expressed in the individual interview similar delight to evidence of her daughter’s faith as she “professes to be a Christian . . . she thinks about these things, and she journals about it . . . and she seems to love the Lord, and I’m so excited about it.” These moms have been encouraged by evidence of their children’s spiritual fruit resulting from their shared warm bonds.

### **Content Shapes Christian Education and Spiritual Formation**

Each of the 13 participants reported using a variety of materials and practices in their children’s Christian education and spiritual formation. The theme of content shapes Christian education and spiritual formation produced subthemes of material matter and pedagogical practices. First, the material supports participants used fell into two categories: classical Christian education materials used to homeschool children, and biblical materials used in the family’s spiritual formation. In addition to materials, the pedagogical practices moms engaged were reflective of classical methodology. For example, in the focus groups, some moms shared how they combined the lessons, so the entire family was able to participate; Paula Curtis said they “do the catechism and memory work at dinner, and that gets dad involved.” The materials and practices participants used in their homeschooling reveal how, together, they shape their children’s Christian education and spiritual formation.

**Table 6***Content Shapes Christian Education and Spiritual Formation*

Subthemes	Codes
Material Matter: Spiritual Formation	Bible, books, podcasts
Material Matter: Classical Curriculum	Bible-subject connections, memory work, classical content
Pedagogical Practice: Classical Education	bidirectionality, mind-heart connection

***Material Matter: Spiritual Formation***

All 13 participants mentioned using extra-biblical materials to shape their family's Christian education and spiritual formation. In their individual interviews, both Megan Ford and Lauren Givens, parents with older children, said they primarily use the Bible; Megan referenced the use of her children's Sunday school materials, and stated, "I can't think of any other materials besides the Bible"; Lauren mentioned once using Christian materials to speak with their children about sexuality, and admitted, "Usually we just read the Bible." Newer parents of younger children, on the other hand, mentioned listening to Christian podcasts and books on parenting, using personal and family devotionals, and playing Christian music produced for children. In the individual interview, Jessica Irving referred to the extra-biblical materials she used as "mom research: podcasts, books [in print] . . . audio books . . . and just talking to other sisters." Similarly, in the individual interview, Katherine Holt said, "First and foremost we use the Bible," but also mentioned using "the *Slugs and Bugs* CD . . . it's mostly just straight scripture in song . . . and *Praying through the Bible for Your Kids*." In addition, Christina Lambert mentioned in the individual interview that she and her husband Stephen, in addition to

reading parenting books, “have done conferences, workshops and stuff, as well.” All 13 participants said they have consulted a variety of Christian materials in their efforts to strengthen their family’s Christian education and spiritual formation. All 13 participants stated the extra-Biblical materials assigned to their children for use in their schooling have shaped their family’s Christian education and spiritual formation.

***Material Matter: Classical Curriculum***

All 13 participants, as part of their CCCS homeschooling responsibilities, used the classical curriculum materials assigned by the school. In the individual interview, Jessica Irving articulated how classical materials were used throughout the school day; “The school does an amazing job bringing faith into everything,” she said. “We start with Matins and we end with Evensong . . . they sing the doxology at lunch . . . and there’s catechism questions and a Bible memory verse every week.” In her individual interview, Megan Ford added that, “Every week they are memorizing catechism questions about what they believe and why they believe it.” Some moms expressed appreciation for how the curriculum connects with the Bible. For example, Paula Curtis noted in the individual interview that classical Christian materials highlight how “our understanding of God affects our understanding of science, or of history, or of literature, and other peoples’ perspectives of how they’re writing literature.” In the letter to her daughter, Olivia Dobbs expressed her hope for the impact of classical curriculum on the child’s Christian education and spiritual formation; she said,

I pray that in math and science, you will see God’s infinite nature and power over His creation; in literature and history, you will see His faithfulness and the beauty of the Gospel as the hope our world needs for sin; and in art and music, the many colors and elements of beauty He has given us to enjoy are but a taste of what Heaven will be like

with Jesus.

All 13 participants stated that the classical materials reveal the connection of the subjects to the Bible through both the memory work and the classical content.

### ***Pedagogical Practice: Classical Education***

The classical content, both the extra-biblical materials and the classical curriculum, was taught classically, meaning instruction followed the three stages of the trivium. In their homeschool teaching, some moms noted the bidirectional nature of classical pedagogy. For example, in speaking of the catechism in the individual interview, Anna Neville said, “I use it in my daily devotions at times.” Similarly, in the focus group interview, Jessica Irving said they intentionally practice the memory work “when the little kids are around, so they’re hearing [the material] and they’re able to repeat it back, as well.” Lauren Givens added that her husband, “loves history, he loves politics, he loves to continue those types of themes and conversations at the dinner table and relate that to the . . . current political climate in the U.S.” Similarly, Holly Johnson shared in the individual interview that their son initiated a dinnertime conversation about Reformation history; she said, “My son was convincing my husband [to become Baptist] and we went to visit [a Baptist church] and we’ve been loving it.” In their homeschooling, participants shared how the bidirectional nature of teaching the classical content connected their own hearts and minds to the Bible and to the academic subjects.

### **Parenting Practices Establish Family Culture**

Each of the 13 participants reported making intentional efforts to nurture their children in the family’s shared Christian identity through their parenting practices. Hybrid homeschooling provided two days per week for the moms to shape their children’s Christian education and spiritual formation within their family culture. For example, when asked in the individual

interview how she made opportunities to speak with her children about matters of faith, Paula Curtis expressed what all 13 moms hoped to establish. “Everything is an opportunity,” she said. “It’s just . . . talking about it as you eat, as you sit down, as you go out . . . it’s all the time.” The theme of parenting practices establish family culture produced two subthemes; the first subtheme is enculturation and behavioral norms, and the second subtheme is use of time. Findings reveal how the parenting practices of the participants established their family culture.

**Table 7**

*Parenting Practices Establish Family Culture*

Subthemes	Codes
Enculturation & Behavioral Norms	conflict, ethos, prayer
Use of Time	parental desire, inclusive, schedule

***Enculturation & Behavioral Norms***

Each of the 13 participants described ways in which they enculturate their children in their family faith traditions and establish distinctly Christian behavioral norms. Findings from the interviews and written responses point to ways the participants addressed sibling conflict, cultivated a family ethos, and engaged prayer. Parents’ efforts to establish a family culture were evident in their parenting practices.

First, all 13 moms shared examples of how they address sibling conflict. Some moms said their initial response to conflict is to let the children resolve the issue on their own. For example, in the focus group interview Christina Lambert stated, “First of all we try, ‘Can you solve it by yourself? Can you communicate to each other and solve the problem?’” Moms agreed that, if the children were unable to resolve the problem on their own, they would get involved.

For example, in the individual interview Anna Neville said once she was involved, she would ask, “What is causing the bickering? Is it worth fighting over? Is it something you guys can sit down and talk over?” All 13 participants mentioned making efforts to discern the type of conflict and, as Katherine Holt said in the individual interview, to “have clear consequences for sinful behaviors and disobedience.” For example, if the children were fighting over a toy, Jessica Irving said in the focus group interview, “We just try to break it up. We remove whatever they’re fighting over, because they’re usually just fighting over an object.” In conflict situations, moms said they will “admonish” their children (Lauren Givens in the focus group interview); “withhold little privileges, like a dessert” (Lauren Givens in the individual interview); rescind the child’s “chance at watching a show that day” (Elizabeth King in the individual interview); and give “time-outs” (Natalie Evert in the individual interview, and Jessica Irving in the focus group interview). For serious conflict, some moms mentioned consulting the Bible, overseeing apologies, forgiveness, and reconciliation between their children, and issuing meaningful consequences. For example, in the individual interview, Jessica Irving said of determining consequences for sibling conflict that, “If it’s a ‘God event,’ if you’re lying or hitting, those are going to be a spanking.” Similarly, Samantha Burg mentioned in the individual interview that she and her husband, Eli, “desire to have their consequences or discipline directly relate to what they’ve done.” She mentioned, for example, if a child is “dishonoring somebody else in our home, then I would desire to have them serve that person in some way, whether it’s picking up their room, or folding their laundry, or doing their part of the dinner dishes.” When managing conflict resolution, all moms mentioned engaging intentional practices to foster a Christian family culture.

Second, all 13 moms spoke of enculturating their children in a shared value system, or

family ethos. For example, in the focus group interview, Christina Lambert tells her children, “Let’s work hard, really hard, and then we can rest and have fun.” Traci Adams added that she and her husband, David, deprioritize grades and prioritize learning. She said, “In the Picture of a Graduate, this idea of grades is more . . . an accolade to ourselves, and we’re looking for learning . . . for a more holistic picture of what God would want us to do with our lives.” Some moms emphasized teaching their children to honor God in their work. For example, Jessica Irving said in the focus group interview, that in times of struggle she “reminds [her son] to work for the glory of God.” Samantha Burg said in the individual interview that God’s sovereignty is “an ongoing conversation we’re trying to have in our home.” She added that they strive to live like they “trust that God is good, that His character is true regardless of our circumstances, and that our suffering does not change who He is, but we can trust that He has given us His very best.” All 13 participants described efforts to enculturate their children in a distinctly Christian family ethos.

Third, all 13 participants referenced prayer as a normative aspect of their family culture. Participants mentioned prayer as both a personal act of seeking guidance from the Lord and an interpersonal family practice. In the letter to her children, for example, Holly Johnson wrote that she has “prayed for God to guide us to do His will with you, your life, and your education.” Similarly, when asked in the individual interview how she equips herself to speak with her children about matters of faith, Natalie Evert responded, “Lots and lots of prayer.” Prayer was also mentioned as an interpersonal family practice. When asked how they start their homeschool mornings, Katherine Holt said in the focus group interview, “I try and pray for us . . . and I always pray for patience for me, too.” Anna Neville related a story in the individual interview of “a time we were in prayer and reading our Bible, and my son recited a Bible proof verse that they

had [learned] a couple of years back.” Similarly, Elizabeth King expressed gratitude for how the teachers guide prayer in the classrooms; she said her daughter “had gone to school all of four days and she prayed at dinner the other night in a way that I know either Miss Smith or Mrs. Jones had to have prayed at school.” Finally, as part of their homeschool practice, Olivia Dobbs spoke in the individual interview that, “On Thursdays, we try to do [a lesson] about a particular country in the world that we can pray for, and that they can learn about.” All 13 moms spoke of prayer as both a personal act of seeking guidance from the Lord and an interpersonal family practice in their efforts to establish a family faith culture.

### *Use of Time*

Each of the 13 participants shared why and how they use their time hybrid homeschooling their children. Findings from the interviews and written responses reveal participants’ reasons for hybrid homeschooling include their desire to spend more time with their children and their appreciation for the inclusive nature of hybrid homeschooling. In addition, participants shared how they spend their time on homeschool days. Parents’ efforts to establish a family culture are evident in why and how they use their time hybrid homeschooling.

First, all 13 participants stated one of their primary motivations for hybrid homeschooling was they wanted to spend more time with their children. For example, in the individual interview, Paula Curtis said of her children, “I want to know them.” Similarly, Megan Ford said in the letter to her children, “When I began this journey of homeschooling, it came from a space of wanting to spend more time with you . . . I wanted to redeem the time I have with you – it’s not very long.” In the individual interview, Elizabeth King expressed appreciation for the extra time hybrid homeschooling has provided for her and her children; she said, “I feel like I know them really well.” All 13 moms expressed their desire to spend more time with their children as

an influence on their parenting practices.

Second, some moms expressed appreciation for the inclusive nature of hybrid homeschooling. For example, Elizabeth King stated in the individual interview, “I get to be involved in their education.” Similarly, Katherine Holt said in the individual interview, “I love learning both alongside them and guiding them and being so interwoven and knowing what they’re learning at school.” Some moms noted benefits to their preschool-aged children in hybrid homeschooling. For example, Traci Adams said in the individual interview that “our three-year-old also learned all the books of the Bible,” and in her individual interview, Olivia Dobbs noted that because she brings her younger children to “Matins and Evensong . . . my 3-year-old . . . knows the songs, and he knows the catechisms and the verses, and he will say it with the kids that are up there [on stage] saying it, and he is just loving it.” Moms appreciated the benefits to their entire family from the inclusive nature of hybrid homeschooling.

Third, each of the 13 participants shared how they use their time on homeschooling days. Some moms shared their efforts to gather as a family, often at mealtimes. For example, in the focus group interview, Samantha Burg said their homeschool mornings begin a little slower; she said, “We do pancake Thursday,” and added that, “breakfast, a lot of times, is when we do our catechism together . . . and then we get to work with school.” Lauren Givens shared that their military experience has shaped their homeschool days; she stated that, “Our kids have to wear their school uniforms on their home days, too.” The Givens kids begin their mornings with exercise; Lauren said, “They scooter up and down the street . . . then everybody picks an exercise . . . jumping jacks, push-ups . . . then at breakfast we start with the catechism” and with prayer. In the focus group discussion, Jessica Irving responded to Lauren Givens that, “We’re just pure chaos here . . . we start just wherever we can, and we do whatever we can until there’s a fire or

something.” In addition to how moms use their time, they shared why they use their time homeschooling. In the individual interview, Natalie Evert said hybrid homeschooling her children “is impressing upon them God’s truth on a daily basis because we don’t skip a day.” Traci Adams offered in the individual interview that, “This hybrid model . . . is supposed to be a whole-family education . . . and so everyone is benefitting.” Katherine Holt summarized in the letter to her children that, “Our whole family participates in your schooling. It is sometimes difficult, sometimes fun, and overall, it is extremely rewarding.”

### **Outlier Data and Findings**

Outlier findings are aspects of the research that are outside the study parameters established by the central research question and the sub-questions. There were two outlier findings for this study. The first outlier finding was the participants’ expressed concern for their ability to keep their children engaged on the homeschooling days. The second outlier finding was the participants’ expressed concern for the affordability of hybrid homeschooling.

#### ***“It’s Not All About You”***

An aspect of homeschooling that caused some participants to deliberate before committing to the hybrid model was their concern for their ability to keep their children engaged on homeschooling days. In the focus group interview, Traci Adams shared that, “It just sounded super daunting to have them home all day.” She elaborated that she thought her daughter was “going to be pretty demanding, and I don’t know if I can fill her days with enough good things for the entire day.” Olivia Dobbs agreed and added that, “I work parttime, and so sometimes I’ll have a call that comes up and . . . sometimes [my daughter] just has to be patient . . . having to wait is really good for her.” Traci Adams asserted that there is benefit in teaching her children patience; she said she explains to them that, “There’s a lot of other things going on in the life of

the family,” and “it’s not all about you.” To summarize, in considering whether they were equipped for homeschooling their children, some participants expressed concern for their ability to provide sufficient stimulation for their children, day in and day out; these moms realized instead the benefit of teaching their children patience and an understanding of their place in the family.

### ***The Financial Sacrifice of Hybrid-Model Schooling***

An aspect of homeschooling that caused some participants concern for hybrid homeschooling was its expense. In the individual interview, Paula Curtis explained that hybrid homeschooling “is, financially, a huge sacrifice, and as it gets more expensive, I worry that we will type out of our demographic.” She added that its expense is, “probably one of the biggest hurdles to hybrid versus traditional, because in a traditional full-time school, if parents are struggling to afford it, they can both work, and that's harder [to do] with hybrid.” Similarly, after deciding to remove her children from the public school system, Natalie Evert related in the individual interview a conversation she had with her husband; she told Greg that hybrid homeschooling “is what we need, and both of the kids are going to go [to CCCS]. We’re going to have to figure out how to pay for it.” To summarize, because hybrid homeschooling requires one parent to teach at home two days per week, some moms expressed concern for how the tuition expenses may be a hardship for single income families located in the DC Metro Region.

### **Research Question Responses**

This case study presented one central research question and three sub-questions in examining how parents participated in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who were enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region. The body of literature on parenting and education practices was examined in light of

Christopher Watkin's biblical critical theory that structured the study design. Data from each of the 13 qualified participants was collected and triangulated from individual interviews, focus group interviews, and written responses to a prompt.

### **Central Research Question**

The central research question asked: How do parents participate in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who are enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region? The three themes that emerged from the findings answered the central research question; each of the participants expressed a desire to forge close family relationships, to use biblical and classical materials and methods in their homeschooling, and to cultivate a distinctly Christian family ethos in their parenting practices. Traci Adams, in the letter to her children, summarized participants' responses to the central research question in this way: "I hope every minute that we are working you are learning about who we are as a family, our values, and what it means to be in the larger family of God."

### **Sub-Question One**

The first sub-question asked: How does relationship affect parents' participation in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who are enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region? The theme that addressed the first sub-question was relationships nurtured in Christian identity, and the three sub-themes were authority, security, and warm bonds. All participants indicated forging a distinctly Christian family ethos was a reason for hybrid homeschooling, and their responses in the individual interviews, focus group interviews, and written responses reveal their efforts to build strong family ties through authoritative parenting, secure attachments, and warm bonds. In the letter to her children, Natalie Evert captured the theme of relationships nurtured in Christian identity and

the sub-themes of authority, security, and warm bonds when she wrote, “My desires in homeschooling are many, but the one that stands out the most is my desire to have a close relationship with you.” Later in the letter she added, “I want to build a strong foundation at home and in your faith now so that in all the years to come our family remains close.”

### **Sub-Question Two**

The second sub-question asked: How does content affect parents’ participation in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who are enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region? The theme that addressed the second sub-question was content shapes Christian education and spiritual formation, and the two sub-themes were material matter and pedagogical practices. All participants indicated they used biblical and classical education materials and practices in shaping their family’s Christian education and spiritual formation. Participant responses in the individual interviews, focus group interviews, and written responses reveal parents used biblical and extra-biblical materials, the classical curriculum, and classical pedagogy in their hybrid homeschooling. In teaching the Bible-centered classical curriculum to their children, several moms noted the bi-directional nature of hybrid homeschooling. In the individual interview, Anna Neville expressed the bidirectional nature of content shapes Christian education and spiritual formation when she said of the classical materials, “Those topics and those conversations they allow us to have at home give us a chance to bond as a family and not just to have random conversations but help us open our Bible together and spiritually grow together.”

### **Sub-Question Three**

The third sub-question asked: How does practice affect parents’ participation in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who are enrolled in a classical

Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region? The theme that addressed the third sub-question was parenting practices establish family culture, and the two sub-themes were enculturation and behavioral norms and use of time. All participants expressed a desire to nurture their children in a shared faith tradition, and their responses in the individual interviews, focus group interviews, and prompt responses reveal their efforts to enculturate their children in the family's established behavioral norms through their use of time. In the individual interview Samantha Burg said, "Matters of faith are spoken about every day in our home because of how we're interacting with it." She added that, "Allowing it to overflow into hearts of gratitude and joy . . . does take intentionality and discipline, but there are opportunities [to do so] everywhere."

### **Summary**

This chapter presents findings from the study of how parents participated in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who were enrolled in a hybrid homeschool in the DC Metro Region. The chapter begins by presenting the participant profiles that captured demographic information and parents' motivations for hybrid homeschooling. Next, this chapter presents the results of data analysis. The results section presents the themes and sub-themes that emerged from analysis of the data collected from the individual interviews, the focus group interviews, and the written responses to the assigned prompt. Three themes emerged from the data. The first theme, relationships nurtured in Christian identity, presents findings on parents' authoritative parenting practices, their efforts to develop secure attachments with their children, and evidence of warm family bonds; participants spoke of their desire to spend more time with their children, to teach them about God, and what it means to be a member of their family. The second theme, content shapes Christian education and spiritual formation, presents findings on what materials the moms used in their homeschooling and how those materials affected their

growth in Christ; the participants spoke of the bidirectional nature of the classical methodology and how the family shared in one another's learning. The third theme, parenting practices establish family culture, presents findings on how participants used their time to enculturate their children in distinctly Christian behavioral norms; the participants spoke of working to establish a family ethos reflective of their devotion to Christ. The results section also presents two outlier findings; some moms spoke of their efforts to enculturate their children into the family by teaching them to wait patiently and by helping them grow in autonomy, and some moms spoke of the financial challenges of relying on a single income as the hybrid homeschool model requires. Finally, this chapter ends with summary answers to the central research question and sub-questions.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this case study was to discover how parents participated in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who were enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region. As mothers typically oversee their children's homeschooling, qualified participants were married moms who had been homeschooling one or more children for one or more years. Thirteen moms qualified to participate in the study, and all 13 completed an individual interview, participated in a focus group interview, and produced a written response to a prompt. The data was collected, transcribed, and coded; three themes emerged from the data. This chapter provides a summary and interpretation of the findings, considerations for policy and practice, empirical and theoretical implications, limitations and delimitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and a conclusion.

### **Discussion**

This case study examined how parents participated in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who were enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region. Thirteen moms completed individual interviews, focus group interviews, and a written response to a prompt which generated data that answered the central research question and three sub-questions. The three themes that emerged from data triangulation and analysis are relationships nurtured in Christian identity, content shapes Christian education and spiritual formation, and parenting practices establish family culture. This section presents a summary and interpretation of the research findings, suggestions for how the findings impact policy and practice, and analysis of the alignment of the findings with extant empirical and theoretical research.

## Summary of Thematic Findings

Data analysis generated three themes for this case study. Those three themes are relationships nurtured in Christian identity, content shapes Christian education and spiritual formation, and parenting practices establish family culture. Watkin's (2022) biblical critical theory provides the framework for data analysis (see Figures 1 and 2); more specifically, the derived and condensed cultural figures of relationship, content, and practices guided data analysis and interpretation. The three themes that emerged from the data captured aspects of the participants' efforts to homeschool their children in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school.

First, the theme of relationships nurtured in Christian identity reveals the intentional efforts made by the participants to cultivate Christ-centered, interpersonal family connections. The participants spoke of designing their lives around Christian community, wherein what was trained in the home was amplified in the church and reinforced in the school. Within the home, moms engaged authoritative parenting practices as they strove to understand the hearts of their children, to nudge them toward independence, and to establish trustworthiness through open communication and stewardship. Participants consistently described parenting with affection and joy, modeling Christlikeness, and feeling gratitude for evidence of spiritual fruit in themselves and their children.

Second, the theme of content shapes Christian education and spiritual formation reveals the materials and teaching practices participants used in their homeschooling. The participants spoke of using biblical and extra-biblical materials as resources for teaching their children about their Christian faith and for guidance in Christian parenting. Furthermore, the participants mentioned the bidirectional nature of hybrid homeschooling; in teaching their children the classical curriculum assigned by the school, other members of the family often learned the

material, as well. In addition, some moms noted how the classical curriculum delighted the hearts and minds of their children; they explained that, as all things are created by God, finding biblical connections to the academic subjects was thrilling, right, and good.

Finally, the theme of parenting practices establish family culture reveals how participants used their time to establish distinctly Christian behavioral norms in their families. Conflict was mentioned as an aspect of family life, and the participants spoke of seeking community support, of consulting resources, and of regular prayer in their efforts to create peaceful, Christ-centered homes. In addition, the participants mentioned their desire to spend more time with their children than the various fulltime schooling options allow and noted the benefits of the inclusive nature of hybrid homeschooling in the ways they scheduled their days.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

There are three interpretations of the findings from the study of how parents participated in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who were enrolled in a hybrid-model school. The findings correlate with the three categories for values transmission derived from Watkin's (2022) biblical critical theory: relationship, content, and practice (see Figures 1 & 2). The three interpretations are based on findings from the participant interviews and written responses, and are devotion to God and family, appreciation for classical content and methodology, and accountability through hybrid-model schooling.

#### ***Devotion to God and Family***

The participants in this study expressed the primary importance of developing their family's Christian faith and how they strove to create homes centered on Christ and biblical principles. Interestingly, hybrid homeschooling was not the first educational option for any of the participants. Rather, these parents began looking for other options after finding their children's

school experiences challenged their family values (public and private Christian schools); became a financial hardship (private Christian schools); proved to be an inferior education (public schools); required excessive time away from family (all fulltime schools); and/or proved too demanding (fulltime homeschooling). Challenges with public schooling, private schooling, and fulltime homeschooling drew the moms to consider hybrid homeschooling because it was available to them in their area and because of the reputation of CCCS in the community. The moms were drawn to the academic rigor of classical schooling and to the co-teaching design of hybrid-model homeschooling, but a primary factor for choosing CCCS was the participants' longing for what Olivia Dobbs referred to as the "unity of messaging" between their homes, their churches, and the school. Because the Founder and Head of School for CCCS, Claire Matthews, was, as stated by Traci Adams in the individual interview, "ruthless" in the admissions process by "not letting people in who are not a good fit for the program," the participants expressed appreciation for the like-minded support of other parents and their children. Although the participants found hybrid-homeschooling challenging, they all expressed gratitude for the benefits it provided to their families. By spending more time together, the participants were able to build a Christian family ethos, to form strong bonds, to better know their children by understanding their strengths and struggles, and to grow together in Christ.

### ***Appreciation for Classical Content and Methodology***

The participants spoke of their own childhood school experiences and while those included public school, private school, and homeschooling, none of the participants had personal experience with either the hybrid model or classical curriculum. Some expressed the challenge of teaching subjects with which they were unfamiliar or with which they felt ill-equipped, but many participants expressed delight with how the classical curriculum and methodology put Christ in

the center of all learning. They appreciated how the science curriculum linked to the creation narrative, how the orderliness of math reflected God's character, and how, by memorizing Bible materials, by "hiding it in their hearts," the truths of scripture would surface in practical, life-application ways, sometimes years after learning the material. Some parents discussed how the classical curriculum, in being centered on the deity of Christ, called their children to humility.

The Founder and Head of School for CCCS, Claire Matthews, spoke with them of The Portrait of a CCCS Graduate; she described classically trained students whose lives exhibit godliness, who devote their learning to better understanding and modeling Christlikeness in thought, word, and deed. CCCS students, in other words, find joy and meaning in learning for its own sake and work hard in their studies that they might glorify God and not self by earning high marks and by attending an acclaimed college.

### ***Accountability Through Hybrid-Model Schooling***

Perhaps the definitive perceived advantage of hybrid-homeschooling for the Christian education and spiritual formation of children over other school options is the accountability hybrid schooling requires of parents. As stated by Katherine Holt, "We can't not be involved and succeed." While fulltime homeschooling enables parents to enculturate their children in their family faith traditions, fulltime homeschooling lacks both an external accountability for day-to-day academic progress and an external perspective on student wholeness. For example, one parent shared concerns for her daughter's reading proficiency with her teacher and was later comforted by the teacher that the child was performing above grade-level. The accountability aspect of the hybrid-model school provides both time and opportunity for parents to shepherd their children; the one-on-one nature of homeschooling combined with the extra time allowed for parents and children to form secure bonds is reflective of the literature on what keeps children in

the family faith (Dudley & Wisbey, 2020; Kearney, 2023; Smith, 2021). Because parents are held accountable for their children's learning, and because parents share that learning, the warm bonds and secure attachments born from this model may better support children's perseverance in the faith.

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

Findings from data analysis suggest implications for policies and practices within the private Christian school network. Based on observations shared by participants, governmental policy considerations and institutional practice considerations are offered. The following suggestions are intended to support parents and school leaders who choose to educate children in private, hybrid-model homeschools.

#### ***Implications for Policy***

Laws regarding the power and duty to educate children originate with English common law. The commentaries of William Blackstone articulate these laws in "Rights of Parent and Child" that state parents' greatest duty is to educate their children (Buss, 2024; Sedler, 2006). While the U. S. Constitution falls short of guaranteeing a right to education, it does grant parents the right to control the education of their children (Sedler, 2006). All 50 states and the District of Columbia adopted compulsory education laws, beginning with Massachusetts in 1856 and ending with Mississippi in 1917 (Yeban, 2024). Since the adoption of the states' compulsory education laws, the issue of education authority has vacillated between parents as the authority, state as the authority, and shared authority between parents and state (Buss, 2024). Landmark U.S. Supreme Court cases, like *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* in which the Court declared states cannot mandate public education, have protected parents' rights to educate their children in keeping with family values (Buss, 2024).

Yet, there is a financial cost to families who opt out of the public school system. Private school tuition in the U.S. averaged \$12,594 per year in 2023, and parents today can expect to pay \$312,026 to privately educate a child from kindergarten through college (Hanson, 2023). Despite 46% of American private schools reporting post-pandemic enrollment increases, a private school education may be out of range for typical American families (McClusky & Ekins, 2024). Two-parent, double income families and/or two-parent families with a stay-at-home parent are a common private school demographic, yet only 48% of U.S. families are headed by two parents, and 26% of mothers and 7% of fathers in the U.S. are stay-at-home parents (Fry, 2023; Kearney, 2023; U.S. Census Bureau, 2024). Private schools are options for those with access to scholarships and/or discretionary income; in essence, a private school education is a privilege of opportunity and/or wealth, and could be perceived to be elitist, discriminatory, and unfair. Furthermore, as private Christian schools are often small and tightly funded, there are limited opportunities for those with financial needs to receive tuition assistance at these schools.

While school choice is a federal constitutional right as declared by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Carson v. Makin*, and while states cannot compel children to attend public schools as declared by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, parents face barriers to private school access in many states (Buss, 2024; Cargill, 2024). Access to the best schools, whether public or private, should be available to every American family. Policy reform at the state and local levels should be pursued to allow parents equal access to their schools of choice.

Policy reforms should be pursued to mitigate the cost-prohibitive nature of private schooling. As stated by Paula Curtis in the individual interview, “It is, financially, a huge sacrifice . . . because by nature hybrid homeschooling means that one parent cannot work fulltime.” A first consideration for education finance reform would be for private school

advocates to press state legislators to approve tax credit scholarship programs for families with limited financial resources; to establish government-authorized education savings accounts that are funded from a portion of state tax dollars and used for family education expenses; and/or to approve school vouchers that allocate designated school district funds directly to participating families for the purpose of paying private school tuition (EdChoice, n.d.; Florida Department of Education, n.d.; Stanford & Lieberman, 2023). A second consideration for education finance reform would be to offset the pay differential between public and private school employees by offering tax-exempt housing allowances for employees of schools that meet in church buildings; advocates should press the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to approve tax-free housing allowances for employees of private religious schools, similar to the parsonage housing allowance the IRS approves for ministers (IRS, 2015). A third consideration for education finance reform would be to offer bond instruments that offset capital costs for private schools; private schools could participate in publicly traded, tax exempt bond funds to be used for capital expenditures, enabling private schools to improve, purchase, or build a facility (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). A final consideration for education reform would be to offset the high cost of private school enrichment programs; by unbundling public school services, extra-curricular activities could be made available to private school students (Olchefske & Adamowski, 2023).

### ***Implications for Practice***

Implications for practice suggest possible supports for the entity under consideration. As a privately funded, classical Christian, hybrid-model school located in the DC Metro Region, CCCS has limited financial and human resources, so any practice implications would be constrained by budget and by time. With resource limitations in mind, the first practice implication could be for CCCS to staff a family ministries liaison. As mentioned by Jessica

Irving in her individual interview, the school “might not know how much certain people struggle.” The role of the family ministries liaison could be staffed by a qualified volunteer who offers practical parenting and scheduling recommendations, refers outside resources for struggling students, and advocates for the school with local churches. Veritas Academy, an established classical Christian, collaborative-model school in Austin, Texas, has a large family ministries department which functions as a liaison between teachers and parents, parents and children, and the school and the community; the family ministries department at Veritas Academy could serve as a model for CCCS and other small classical Christian, hybrid-model schools that are considering developing similar programs (Veritas Academy, n.d.).

Other practice implications could derive from parent volunteer requirements. For example, CCCS could establish minimum parent volunteer hours that could be satisfied by semester or by responsibility. As CCCS is housed in an old church building, parents with requisite skills could apply their mandatory volunteer hours to facilities repairs and improvements. Parents could also meet the mandatory volunteer hours by hosting family get-togethers in their homes, serving as field-trip chaperones, playing piano for student pageants and performances, overseeing lunchroom duties, and assisting in morning drop-offs or afternoon pick-ups, for example.

### **Empirical and Theoretical Implications**

Findings from the study of how parents participated in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who were enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region align with the extant literature on parenting and pedagogy and with the assertions of biblical critical theory. While there is scant empirical research on hybrid-model schools and/or homeschooling, the findings from this study build on the existing religious

transmission literature. Similarly, at the time of this writing, only scholarly critiques of biblical critical theory exist as Watkin's work was published December 2022; this study may be among the first applications of biblical critical theory to field research.

### ***Empirical Implications***

Findings from analysis of the data on how parents participated in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who were enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region align with literature on parent-child bonds (relationship), educational materials and pedagogy (content), and normative enculturation (practice). Findings from this study confirm findings from extant literature, and from which insights into best practices for effective religious transmission within the family ecosystem may be drawn. The three significant findings from this study that align with extant literature on religious transmission are parent-child bond is determinative, materials and pedagogy are influential, and normative enculturation is essential.

**Parent-Child Bond is Determinative.** Literature reveals that the parent-child bond begins before birth and shapes the healthy development of the child well into adulthood (Irvine et al., 2023; Kearney, 2023; Wilke et al., 2020). The participants in this study read books, listened to podcasts, consulted friends, appealed to authorities, and made personal sacrifices to establish authoritative, secure, and warm relationships with their children. Research on positive parenting practices indicates authoritative parenting produces secure attachments and facilitates the healthy development of the child (Cumming et al., 2022; Helm et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2024). The participants in this study reported their children enjoyed spending time with them, and shared their fears, sadnesses, anxieties, and joys with their parents. Research reveals children whose parents allowed them to question their faith, who maintained open lines of

communication, and who offered non-judgmental support were more likely to work through their struggles and develop a mature faith (Ciuhan, 2021; Fatima et al., 2022; Goodman & Dyer, 2020; Morris et al., 2021; Pinguart & Fischer, 2022). The participants in this study related stories of bidirectional conversations in which their children asked hard questions about their shared family faith and practices, pushed back against parental authority, and sought insights on examples of worldliness they observed in their neighborhoods. Similarly, adult children who felt their parents were trustworthy and supportive were more likely to maintain close relationships with them, and this closeness is credited as an aspect of their remaining in the faith into adulthood (Barrow et al., 2021; Davis & Graham, 2023; Dollahite et al., 2019; Vonk et al., 2019). Participants in this study shared stories about how their older children sought their counsel on how to manage social and relational challenges, and expressed appreciation for their parents' insights and care.

**Materials and Pedagogy are Influential.** Research on philosophy of education reveals teachers' personal philosophy of education informs their pedagogical practice, and that instructional orientation is value laden (Allen & Santos, 2020; Aslan, 2022; Borekci & Uyangor, 2021; Davis, 2021; Erdem, 2021; Eulalio-Jabagat et al., 2021; Isikgoz, 2020; Wittingham & Hoffman, 2024). A study by Harrison (2023) showed that, while teachers personally espoused progressive, if not reconstructionist, views on education, it was the essentialist/perennialist pedagogical practices that produced foundational learning. Findings from this study support the literature on how teachers' philosophy of education influences their pedagogical practices. CCCS parents taught from the perennialist view, a philosophy that asserts a corpus of eternal truths exists and that those truths should form the material content of the curriculum. In addition to forming the material content, the classical methodology focuses on memorization,

argumentation, and rhetorical analysis. All 13 families mentioned how the classical methodology saturated their family time as they all became involved in the catechism, memory work, hymn-singing, and table talk discussions. By engaging classical methods with perennialist/classical content, parents effectually nurtured their children in eternal truths which connected historical, scientific, and mathematical content with their biblical faith. Participants mentioned how science lessons linked to the creation account and the weekly catechism questions, and how the study of mathematical principles revealed that God values order. These findings support the literature on the value laden nature of teaching practices and how they shape children's learning.

**Normative Enculturation is Essential.** Research reveals that children whose parents modeled their religious faith traditions were more likely to exhibit those practices in adulthood (Dudley & Wisbey, 2020; McPhail, 2019). As stated by Traci Adams in the individual interview, "I don't think that you can hold a candle to parents being involved in their kids' faith." She explained that, "We're finding that we really have to show them the benefit . . . or else they really don't believe it." Findings from this study reveal parents' intentional practices of teaching and modeling their faith have been evidenced in their children. For example, participants reported students' demonstration of inherent behavioral norms in the way they treated others at school. Traci Adams illustrated in the focus group that she asked an older student to tell her three-year-old son that he was too little to be in the gaga pit, and she remarked that the student gently told her son, "I am just worried that you'll get hurt, buddy. I am just worried you'll get hurt." Similarly, Elizabeth King shared that her daughter had "gone to school all of four days and she prayed at dinner the other night in a way that I know" she had picked up from her teachers. These evidences demonstrate the family-school-church faith norms have been enculturated into the lives of the children.

### *Theoretical Implications*

The theoretical framework for this study was Christopher Watkin's (2022) biblical critical theory. Biblical critical theory is a Christian social theory derived from the biblical world wherein Watkin identifies six universal, cultural figures, presenting them as tools for interpreting modern Western culture (Harvey, 2022; Michener, 2023). Watkin suggests all Western cultures are defined by the figures he describes as the rhythms and patterns giving meaning to life (Harvey, 2022; Keller, 2022; Michener, 2023). The six figures are as follows: how a culture expresses time and space; how a culture uses language, ideas, and stories; how a culture uses material objects or artifacts; how a culture instills behavioral norms; how a culture establishes relational standards; and how a culture presents reality (Watkin, 2023).

For purposes of this study, Watkin's (2022) six cultural figures were distilled into three categories for analyzing religious transmission within the family ecosystem (see Figures 1 & 2). Watkin's figures of relational standards and reality structures were condensed into the category relationship with subcategories of authority, security, and warm bonds. Watkin's figures of language, ideas, and story, and objects and artifacts were condensed into the category content with subcategories material matter and pedagogical practice. Finally, Watkin's figures of time and space and behavioral norms were condensed into the category of practice with subcategories enculturation and behavioral norms and use of time. The three condensed cultural categories of relationship, content, and practice provided the framework for the interview questions and writing prompt. Therefore, this study linked closely with Watkin's cultural figures in its design, and data collection and analysis derived from Watkin's biblical critical theory framework.

Findings reveal participants shared a Christocentric ecology. In other words, participants shared the belief that Christ is the center of all things and strove to cultivate distinctly Christian

family cultures. To ensure internal consistency, these parents desired to spend their time and resources building relationships with their children by surrounding them with “unity of messaging,” as stated by Olivia Dobbs in the individual interview. They structured their days to build strong bonds with their children (relationship), sought reinforcement in classical Christian schooling (content), and endeavored to envelope their children in biblical behavioral norms (practice). Biblical critical theory provides the framework for this study and displays its results.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

Limitations and delimitations reveal the uncontrollable and the controllable aspects of the study, respectively. Limitations of this study include the voluntary nature of participation, the small sample size, and the participants’ religious affiliations. Delimitations of this study include inviting only moms to participate, establishing participant qualifications, and researching a single school population.

#### ***Limitations***

Limitations for this study are those aspects beyond the researcher’s control. One limitation was the voluntary nature of participation; only those moms who wanted to participate did participate. Claire Matthews, Founder and Head of School for CCCS, purposively selected participants who met the study requirements and emailed them the participant information sheet (Appendix F) with an encouragement to follow-up, if interested. The voluntary nature of the study may have narrowed the participant pool to those who were favorable toward hybrid-homeschooling and/or CCCS. Another limitation was the small sample size. Though 13 moms represent a significant fraction of the total number of CCCS families, random selection and/or mandatory participation could have produced different results. A final limitation was the representation of few religious affiliations; however, as CCCS admits families who hold to

reformed Christian orthodoxy, religious affiliation is likely to remain narrow.

### ***Delimitations***

The delimitations for this study are those aspects controlled by the researcher to establish its parameters. A case study was chosen to examine an issue that is bound by place and time. For this study, the issue was religious transmission, the place was a hybrid homeschool, and the time was the current moment in the lives of the participants. Another delimitation was the participants' gender; for this study, only married moms were invited to participate as they are usually the primary homeschooling parent. The last delimitation was choosing participants with a minimum of one child enrolled at the school for a minimum of one year. These delimitations of gender, length of experience with the hybrid model, and minimum numbers of children in the program were developed to establish some level of homogeneity in the participant pool to facilitate comparison of their insights, motives, and habits. The participant pool was diverse in race, nationality, education, age, and numbers of children.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Given the limitations and delimitations of this study, there are several recommendations for future research. First, the noted limitations include the voluntary nature of the study and its small sample size. To broaden the study beyond those two limitations, recommendations for future research include administering a mandatory re-enrollment survey for all parents; the survey would probe parents' religiosity and collect demographic information (see Appendix D), provide Likert-style questions on satisfaction levels, query parents' educational and spiritual goals for their children, and explore parent perceptions on the benefits and challenges of hybrid homeschooling. Second, the noted delimitations included use of a case study, single gender participants, number of children enrolled, and length of enrollment. To broaden the study beyond

those delimitations, recommendations for future research include administering a qualitative study comparing multiple sites across the country; comparing satisfaction results and commitment to hybrid homeschooling between participants who have graduated children from a hybrid homeschool and participants who have young children enrolled in hybrid homeschools; interviewing fathers for their perspectives on how hybrid homeschooling affects their families; comparing satisfaction results and commitment to hybrid homeschooling between participants with one or two children in the program to participants with four or more children in the program; interviewing and comparing the satisfaction/achievement/spirituality of adult children who had been enrolled in fulltime homeschools, fulltime Christian schools, fulltime public schools, and hybrid homeschools. In addition, recommendations for future research include broadening the participant pool to include regions with varied denominational representation; increasing the scope of the study by increasing the size of the participant pool; conducting a decades-long longitudinal survey that compares the religiosity of young adults who primarily hybrid-homeschooled to young adults who primarily attended other schools as children. Hybrid homeschooling is a relatively new educational option in the U.S., and as such, offers numerous opportunities for future, novel scholarship.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this case study was to discover how parents participated in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children who were enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school in the DC Metro Region. Biblical critical theory provided the theoretical framework for the research; Watkin's (2022) six cultural figures were condensed into three and used as categories for determining how normative culture is established in hybrid homeschooling families. The participants for the study were married mothers of one or more children who had

participated in hybrid homeschooling for one or more years, and who completed an individual interview, a focus group interview, and a written response to a prompt. The individual and focus group interviews were verified against the audio recordings during manual transcription, and all data was coded and analyzed for recurring themes and outliers. Three themes emerged from the data analysis; those themes are relationships nurtured in Christian identity, content shapes Christian education and spiritual formation, and parenting practices establish family culture. From these three themes, three implications emerged; those implications are the parent-child bond is determinative, materials and pedagogy are influential, and normative enculturation is essential. Analysis reveals there is alignment between the theoretical framework and the findings; in essence, biblical critical theory, like all critical theories, is a theory of transformation, and participants' efforts to enculturate their children in their family faith tradition were evident in their cultural habits, in how they formed relationships, engaged materials and pedagogical practices, and used their time establishing behavioral norms. Of significance was the inherent accountability the hybrid model imposes on religious transmission; as Katherine Holt said, "We can't *not* be involved and succeed there." In other words, what is unique to the hybrid homeschool model for religious transmission is parental accountability to the school, and this accountability requires parents to use their time speaking with their children about matters of faith and teaching them the behavioral norms of Christianity, both of which provide opportunity to form close, trustworthy, secure bonds. Recommendations for future research include quantitative studies that measure satisfaction and spirituality in parents and children, longitudinal studies that examine spiritual stickiness, and studies of hybrid homeschooling populations in different regions.

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## Appendix A

### IRB Approval Letter

# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 7, 2024

Shannon Downing  
Christine Saba

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY24-25-198 How Parents Participate in the Christian Education and Spiritual Formation of their Children: A Case Study on Hybrid Schooling

Dear Shannon Downing, Christine Saba,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application per 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 described in your IRB 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.(ii). 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:

Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or

**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 bar on 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, **which you must use to conduct your study**, can also be found on the same page under the Attachments tab.

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](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,  
**G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP**  
*Administrative Chair*  
**Research Ethics Office**

## Appendix B

### Site Permission Request Letter

Dear [REDACTED]

I am a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, and I am conducting research as part of a Doctor of Philosophy degree. My study is on the religious transmission efforts of parents, and I am particularly interested in how Christian parents teach their children about the Lord. The title of my study is How Parents Participate in the Christian Education and Spiritual Formation of Their Children: A Case Study on Hybrid Schooling.

I am writing to obtain permission to interview moms of one or more children who have been enrolled at [REDACTED] for one or more years. I hope to recruit a participant pool of 10-15 parents. The parents will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview, a focus group meeting of five to six people, and respond to a letter-writing prompt. Participants will also be invited to review their transcripts and the final report for accuracy. The total time commitment for participants is approximately two hours. The interviews will be recorded via Zoom and audio-recorded on the Voice Memos app. The research will take place over an 8-10 week period, will be scheduled at the convenience of the participants, and confidentiality protocols will be shared with them in advance. Participation is voluntary, and parents may discontinue participation at any time. Parents who complete the study will be given a \$75 Barnes & Noble gift card.

Thank you for your consideration. If you grant permission, please sign the attached form (Appendix C, Permission Approval Letter).

Sincerely,

Shannon O'Hearn Downing

Doctoral Candidate

sodowning@liberty.edu

[REDACTED]

**Appendix C**  
**Permission Approval Letter**

September 2, 2024

Dear Shannon O'Hearn Downing:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled How Parents Participate in the Christian Education and Spiritual Formation of their Children: A Case Study on Hybrid Schooling, I have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Check the following box as applicable:

I grant permission for Shannon O'Hearn Downing to contact parents of children enrolled in [REDACTED] to invite them to participate in her research study.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]  
Head of School  
[REDACTED]

## Appendix D

### Demographic & Religiosity Questionnaire

- What is your name:
- What is your age:
- What is your phone number:
- What is your email address:
- What is your street address:
- How long have you been married:
- What is your/your husband's highest level of education:
- How many children do you have:
- What are the ages of your children:
- How many children are enrolled in this school:
- How long have your child(ren) been enrolled in this school:
- How long have you been a practicing Christian:

## Appendix E

### Participant Recruitment Letter

Dear Parent,

I am a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, and I am conducting research on the religious transmission efforts of parents as part of a Doctor of Philosophy degree. The purpose of my research is to understand how parents participate in the Christian education and spiritual formation of their children, specifically within the hybrid homeschool context.

I am reaching out to you to invite you to participate in the research. Participants must be parents of children enrolled in [REDACTED]. Participants will be asked to:

- meet via Zoom for a one-on-one, video- and audio-recorded interview (45 minutes),
- participate via Zoom in a video- and audio-recorded focus group meeting of five to six people (45 minutes),
- respond to a prompt with 1 to 2 written paragraphs and return by email within 14 days (20 minutes),
- review transcripts of the interview transcripts (15 minutes).

It should take approximately 2 hours and 5 minutes total time to complete the study. Names will be requested for part of this study, but participant identities will remain undisclosed and confidential. If you would like to participate, please email me at the address below. Participants who complete the three parts of the study will receive a \$75 Barnes & Noble gift card.

Sincerely,

Shannon O'Hearn Downing  
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University  
sodowning@liberty.edu  
[REDACTED]

## Appendix F

### Participant Information Sheet

**Title of the Project:** How Parents Participate in the Christian Education and Spiritual Formation of Their Children: A Case Study on Hybrid Schooling

**Principal Investigator:** Shannon O’Hearn Downing, Doctoral Candidate, School of Education, Liberty University

#### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a parent whose child is enrolled in a classical Christian-hybrid model school. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research.

#### What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to understand the faith transmission practices used by parents whose children are enrolled in a classical Christian, hybrid-model school.

#### What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

1. Complete an online survey. This step should take approximately 5 minutes.
2. Meet in person or via Microsoft Teams/Zoom for a one-on-one, audio-recorded interview. This step should take approximately 45 minutes.
3. Participate in-person or via Microsoft Teams/Zoom for an audio-recorded focus group meeting of five to six people. This step should take approximately 45 minutes.
4. Respond to a prompt with 1 to 2 written paragraphs and return by email within 10 days. This step should take approximately 20 minutes.
5. Review emailed summaries of your interview transcripts. This step should take approximately 10 minutes.

#### How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect a direct benefit from participating in this study.

Benefits to society include providing parents with a better understanding of the faith transmission practices used by faithful Christians in their homes and schools and learning of those childhood practices reported to have strengthened their faith into young adulthood.

### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

I am a mandatory reporter. During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other focus group members may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.
- Data collected from you may be used in future research studies or shared with other researchers. If data collected from you is reused or shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed beforehand.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hardcopy records will be shredded.
- Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer and then erased after three years. Only the researcher will have access to the recordings.

### **How will you be compensated for being part of the study?**

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. If participants complete all three sections of the research (interviews, focus group, letter-writing, transcript review), they will receive a \$75 Barnes & Noble gift certificate.

### **Is the researcher in a position of authority over participants, or does the researcher have a financial conflict of interest?**

The researcher holds no position of authority in the school or over any of the participants. The researcher has no financial conflict of interest.

### **Is study participation voluntary?**

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

**What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address or 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.

**Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Shannon O’Hearn Downing. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] or [sodowning@liberty.edu](mailto:sodowning@liberty.edu). You may also contact the researcher’s faculty sponsor, Dr. Christine Saba, at [csaba@liberty.edu](mailto:csaba@liberty.edu).

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

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and want to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) ensures that human subjects research will be conducted ethically 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.*

## Appendix G

### Individual Interview Questions

1. How did you decide on homeschooling? Icebreaker.
2. How would you describe your relationship with your child? SQ1.
3. How would your child describe his or her relationship with you? SQ1.
4. How does your family manage conflict and discipline? SQ1.
5. Please describe a time you felt successful in speaking with your child about matters of faith. SQ1.
6. How do materials help you shepherd your child in matters of faith? SQ2.
7. How do people help you shepherd your child in matters of faith? SQ2.
8. How do you use the Bible materials provided by the school in your child's Christian education and spiritual formation? SQ2.
9. How have the Bible materials provided by the school affected the Christian education and spiritual formation of your child? SQ2.
10. How have the Bible materials provided by the school affected your Christian education and spiritual formation? SQ2.
11. How have the Bible materials provided by the school affected the Christian education and spiritual formation of your family? SQ2.
12. How do you make opportunities to speak with your child about matters of faith? SQ3.
13. How do you equip yourself to speak with your child about matters of faith? SQ3.
14. Please describe your ideal parent-child faith-based discussion. SQ3.

## Appendix H

### Focus Group Interview Questions

1. How do you start your homeschool mornings? Icebreaker.
2. How did you come to decide on classical Christian, hybrid-model education for your children? CRQ.
3. How do you accommodate your children's differences? SQ1
4. How do you encourage a discouraged child? SQ1
5. How do you manage sibling conflict? SQ1
6. How do you implement the school curriculum at home? SQ2
7. How do you supplement the school curriculum at home? SQ2
8. How do you connect the school curriculum with your religious beliefs when teaching your child at home? SQ2
9. How much of your day is spent homeschooling? SQ3
10. How do classroom teachers support your homeschooling? SQ3
11. How does your teaching style work with the school curriculum? SQ3
12. How do you establish your family ethos in your homeschooling? SQ3

**Appendix I**  
**Letter Writing Prompt**

**Directions:** Please reply to the prompt within 14 days. Replies may be sent to sodowning@liberty.edu.

**Instructions:** Please reflect on all that has been discussed in your one-on-one interview and in the focus group discussion. After reflection, please write a one or two paragraph letter to your child(ren) explaining your desires, fears, and joys in homeschooling. Your letter will remain confidential. Please return the letter to me within 14 days via email.

**Prompt:**

Dear Son/Daughter/Children,

I have reflected on my relationship with you and my desires, fears, and joys in our homeschooling relationship. I will try to express them as well as I can.

## Appendix J

### AUDIT TRAIL – FIELD WORK

MONTH	DATE	TYPE	ENTITY	EVENT
AUG	7	email-in	LU	Received IRB approval
	9	email-out	CCCS	Sent Participant Information Sheet, Participant Recruitment Letter, and Site Permission Request Letter to Claire Matthews
		email-out	CCCS	Asked Claire Matthews if I could make a five minute presentation to parent assembly at CCCS, and if so, whether we could get that on the calendar
		email-in	Lambert	Offered to participate in the research
		email-in	Clark	Offered to participate in the research
		email-out	Lambert	Thanked her for interest; asked whether she could meet by Zoom and asked her to reach out with a time that is good; sent second email with more specific information
	10	email-out	Clark	Thanked her for interest; asked her to tell me what works for her schedule; sent a second email with additional information
		text exchange	CCCS Matthews	Thanked Claire; she said more parents were interested; we shared personal and professional updates
		email-in	Holt	Offered to participate in the study
		email-out	Holt	Thanked her and offered a date for the interview
	11	email-in	Lambert	Agreed to meet at 2:00 on Tuesday, August 27; she said she would text at 1:30 to confirm
	14	email-in	Baker	Asked for information on the study; Mr. Baker's email included the recruitment email Claire sent to him
		email-out	Baker	Sent email to Mr. & Mrs. Baker asking if Mrs. Baker (only) could participate and if next Tuesday, August 27 morning/evening would work
		phone-in	Neville	Anna Neville left phone message expressing interest in participating in the study
	21	phone/text-out	Neville	Left voice and text messages with Anna Neville inviting her to learn more about the study
		text-in	Neville	She said she couldn't speak because she was in pickup line but that she would participate
		email-out	Neville	Sent email asking whether she was available next Tuesday morning or evening
		email-in	Neville	Offered to meet next Tuesday morning

	21	Individual Interview Prep		Made Individual Interview PowerPoint so participants could read the questions during the interview
	22	email-out	Neville	Replied to her email; suggested she reach out when she's ready
	22	email-out	Lambert & Neville	Emailed to confirm; attached Participant Information Sheet
		email-out	Holt, Clark, Baker	Emailed to suggest interviews for August 31, September 2, 10, 12, 13, 14
		Interview	Neville	Completed (1)
		text-in text-out	Lambert	Asked to meet at 2:30; I agreed
		Interview	Lambert	Completed (2)
	23	email-in	CCCS Matthews	Claire Matthews offered to contact more participants; clarified room and meeting time/date – Wednesday, September 18
	23	email-out	CCCS Matthews	Confirmed date/time/room; asked her to contact all on the list
	23	email-out	Neville	Sent transcript; asked for approval/corrections by Tuesday, September 3
	23	email-out	CCCS Matthews	Claire Matthews sent email inviting parents to the Participant Information Meeting
	23	email-in/ email-out	Irving	Interested in participating
	23	email-in/ email-out	Ford	Interested in participating
	23	email-in/ email-out	Irving	Confirmed interview for Thursday, September 12
		email-in/ email-out	Johnson	Holly Johnson expressed interest; I sent a follow-up with Participant Information Sheet
	25	email-out	Holt, Clark, Baker	Sent follow-up emails
	25	email-in/ email-out	King	Claire Matthews forwarded the Kings' email to me; I emailed them; included the Participant Information Sheet
	27	email-in/ email-out	Johnson	Confirmed meeting time for Tuesday, September 10 at 11:00 AM
27	email-in/ email-out	Ford	Megan Ford wanted to meet in person next Friday, September 6; I asked if we could meet virtually that day; Megan Ford responded with Thursday, September 12; I replied and suggested meeting any time between 9-11 AM or after 4 PM	
27	email-in	Neville	Anna Neville said she had received and was reading the transcript, and would approve the transcript by Tuesday, September 3	

27	email-out	Lambert	Sent transcript; asked for feedback by Monday, September 9
28	email-out	Neville	Reply to Anna Neville's email; I thanked her for reading the transcript; said the date was just a deadline for me to stay on track; suggested she take the time she needs
28	email-in/ email-out	King	Elizabeth King suggested a meeting for tomorrow (September 2). Agreed on 4:30-5:00. I said I would send the Zoom link and she could sign on when she was ready.
28	email-in/ email-out	Neville	She approved the transcript and recalled the third R (of classroom discipline); I said I would add it to the transcript; gave information about the Focus Group Interview; invited her to meet me at CCCS on 09/18
28	Interview	King	Completed (3)
28	email-in/ email-out	Baker	Mrs. Baker apologized for delay; I suggested we meet at CCCS on 09/18; Mrs. Baker said she was too busy to participate in the study at this time
29	email-in email-out	Givens	Lauren Givens reached out to participate; I responded with Participant Information Sheet and dates, as well info on the meeting at CCCS
28-29	email-in email-out	Holt	She reached out, apologized for the delayed response, and suggested we meet Thursday morning; I asked for 8:30-9:00 tomorrow morning; she emailed back and suggested next Friday, September 13; I agreed and asked that she suggest a meeting time
29	email-in email-out	Neville	She apologized for (mistakenly) missing the info meeting; I said it had not happened yet, and she could join us Wednesday, September 18
29	email-out	King	Emailed transcript; asked for approval by Wednesday, September 11
29	text-in text-out	Lambert	She was concerned that her interview answers made no sense (on the transcript) because English is her second language; I reassured her that her answers provided excellent data and offered for her to send corrections/additions if she chose to do so
30	email-in email-out	Ford	Offered to meet Monday, September 16 @ 11:00; I said I would send Zoom link at 10:45
30	email-in email-out	Evert	She emailed to say she would attend the information meeting; I emailed back thanking her

SEP	1	email-in	Givens	Lauren Givens emailed to ask to schedule Individual Interview for Saturday, September 14
		email-out	Givens	I emailed back to confirm Saturday, September 14; asked Lauren Givens to confirm the meeting time
		email-out email-in	Saba	I asked Dr. Saba whether I may set up Focus Groups while still recruiting new participants; She approved this request
	2	email-out	Johnson	Confirmed our interview for tomorrow
	2	email-out	Holt	Asked to set a time; corrected my email that indicated a wrong day
	3	Interview	Johnson	Completed (4)
	3	email-in email-out	Holt	Set Individual Interview time for Friday, September 13 at 8:00
4	email-out	Givens	Asked to set a time for Individual Interview	
	5	email-out	Irving	Sent email confirming interview tomorrow at 2:00 and notified her that I will send Zoom link shortly before 2:00
		Interview	Irving	Completed (5)
	6	Interview	Holt	Completed (6)
		email-in/ email-out	Givens	Set Saturday interview time for 9:00 AM
	6	email-out	Irving	Emailed transcript; asked for approval by Friday, September 20
		7	email-out	Johnson
	8	Interview	Givens	Completed (7)
	9	email-out	Ford	Sent reminder of Individual Interview tomorrow
		Interview	Ford	Completed (8)
		email-out	Givens	Emailed transcript for her approval
	10	email-out	Neville Lambert King Johnson Irving Holt Givens Ford	Send email thanking them for completing the Individual Interviews; asked to meet for Focus Group either Friday, September 20 @ 11:00 or Saturday, September 21 @ 3:00  Reminded them of the meeting at CCCS on Wednesday, September 18 @ 8:45 following Matins
	10	email-out	Evert Reagan Adams Burg Clark Dobbs	Asked to meet following Matins on Wednesday; purpose of the meeting is to provide an overview of research

	11	CCCS Presentation		Prepared sign-up sheets and hand-outs for presentation
		email-in	Holt Irving Johnson King	Emailed availability for Focus Group Interviews: Holt & Irving - F 09/20 @ 11:00 Johnson & King - Sat @ 2:30
	12	CCCS Presentation	Evert Holt Reagan Irving Neville Burg Johnson Dobbs Givens Curtis	Completed
	12	emails-out	Evert Holt Irving Lambert Ford Burg Johnson King Dobbs Curtis	Setting calendar dates for remaining Individual Interviews and upcoming Focus Group Interviews
	12	Focus Group Prep		Made Focus Group PowerPoint so participants can read the questions during the interviews
	13	Phone Call	Adams	Set up Individual Interview & Focus Group date
		Interview	Evert	Completed (9)
	14	Focus Group Interview	Evert Irving Givens	Focus Group Interview Completed (1)
	15	email-in/ email-out	Williams	Confirming Individual Interview for Thursday, September 26 @ 9:30
	16	email-out	Holt	Sent edited transcript; asked for approval by 09/27
	16	Text	Curtis	Reminder of Individual Interview at 10:00
	16	Interview	Curtis	Completed (10)
		Text	Holt Lambert Neville Johnson King	Reminder of Focus Group Interview @ 2:30

17	Focus Group Interview	Holt Neville Lambert Johnson King	Completed (2)
	email-out	Curtis	Transcript sent to Paula Curtis; asked to approve by Saturday, September 28
18	email-out	Ford	Sent transcript and asked for corrections/revisions by Saturday, September 28
	email-out/email-in	Burg	Sent follow-up email asking her to confirm our meeting tomorrow; she confirmed
19	Text	Adams	Confirmed 09/25 & 09/28
	Interview	Burg	Completed (11)
20	Text	Dobbs	Reminder of Individual Interview @ 1:00
	Interview	Dobbs	Completed (12)
	email-out	Reagan	Cancelled Individual Interview set for Wednesday because she was unable to attend the (last available) Saturday Focus Group
	Prompt Response	King	Received (1)
21	email-out/email-in	Adams	Confirming Individual Interview for Wednesday, September 25
	Text	Adams	Reminder of Individual Interview @ 1:00
	Interview	Adams	Completed (13)
	email-out	Williams	Cancelled interview due to exceeding the number of participants required for the study
	email-out	Burg	Transcript of Individual Interview was sent along with a reminder of the Focus Group Interview Saturday at 2:00
	email-out	Evert Irving Givens	Thanked them again for their participation; mentioned they can pick up their gift cards at the CCCS office
22	email-out	Ford Adams Burg Dobbs Curtis	Remind/confirm Focus Group Interview Saturday, September 28 @ 2:00
23	email-out	Evert Givens Irving	Reminder that Prompt Responses are due Friday, October 4
	email-out	Holt Neville Gomez Johnson	Reminder that Prompt Responses are due Saturday, October 5
24	email-out	Evert	Transcript sent to Natalie Evert; asked for corrections/approval by Friday, October 4

		email-out	Dobbs	Transcript sent to Olivia Dobbs; asked for corrections/approval by Friday, October 4
	24	Focus Group Interview	Ford Adams Burg Dobbs Curtis	Completed (3)
	24	notes	All participants & Claire Matthews	Hand-written thank-you notes to be included with gift cards and delivered Tuesday, October 1
	24	Prompt Response	Burg	Received (2)
	25	Prompt Response	Holt	Received (3)
	25	Prompt Response	Ford	Received (4)
	25	visit	CCCS	Delivered gift cards to CCCS office and gave a gift to Claire Matthews; visited with Claire
	25	Prompt Response	Givens	Received (5)
	26	Prompt Response	Lambert	Received (6)
	27	Prompt Response	Evert	Received (7)
	27	Prompt Response	Neville	Received (8)
	27	Prompt Response	Irving	Received (9)
	27	Prompt Response	Johnson	Received (10)
	27	Prompt Response	Adams	Received (11)
	28	Prompt Response	Dobbs	Received (12)
	29	Prompt Response	Curtis	Received (13)
	30	Data Collection		Data Collection Complete
	30	Data Analysis		Data Analysis begins; upload interviews and written responses to ATLAS.ti