

2017

Examining the Retention of African American Young Adults in Their Childhood Church

Stacia Lynn Alexander
Walden University

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Walden University

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Stacia Alexander

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Walden University
2017

Abstract

Examining the Retention of African American Young Adults in Their Childhood Church

by

Stacia' Alexander

MA, Amberton University, 1996

BA, University of Texas, Arlington 1991

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Clinical Psychology

Walden University

May 2017

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the reasons for the decline of young adult church attendance after an affiliation with church during childhood. Religion plays an important role in the lives of African Americans as a coping mechanism for loss, adversity, racism, and trauma. In addition, spiritual exploration is a component of psychological development during maturation. Using the social identity theory, the study explored the impact of childhood church affiliation and coping styles of young adults. African American Youth between 18 and 30 years old were randomly selected to complete a combination of questions from the Lasting Faith Scale, Private Religious Practices questions, Brief Religious/Spiritual Coping, and Organizational Religiousness scales ($n = 103$) via Survey Monkey to (a) assess variables which contributed to their decision on whether or not to continue participating in organized fellowship and (b) examine the relationship between the childhood affiliation and their adult coping styles. The design for the study was quantitative and comprised of correlational measurements using Spearman's Rho. Among young adults who attended church as children, there was a significant positive relationship between church attendance and positive spiritual coping. This study will increase church leaders' understanding of this congregation's needs. It will provide a framework for program development that addresses the needs of young adults as related to coping styles. The implication for social change is a greater understanding from church leaders and young adults of what is beneficial for the spiritual development of children and how it is related to identity and coping factors later in life.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband who has understood me from day one in my quest for furthering my education. My children, who are now young adults but were little ones when I began, have watched my struggles and joys in finishing this degree. It is my hope that the joys have outweighed the struggles and instilled in them that same intense desire to seek knowledge. I would be remiss if I did not thank the village who constantly supported my family during this process; my parents, my in-laws, and the relatives.

Acknowledgments

I graciously thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Martha Giles, for her patience as I stumbled through this process. Thanks also to others who helped to solidify my thoughts which often went far beyond the scope of this dissertation. The support received is sincerely appreciated. Ultimately, I thank God for the blessings in my life which helped shape who I am today.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Churches are often faced with the question of how to increase or sustain membership to ensure the future of the church. Churches have put considerable physical and financial resources and effort into developing programs which have been very successful in drawing new members into the congregation (Hirdes, 2009). The amount of financial investments into Christian materials reached the four billion dollar range, annually, in 1996 (Hirdes, 2009). Ideally, families joining a congregation are the most stable symbol of a church's growth (Hirdes, 2009). Adult family members provide churches new leaders and congregants to manage the current needs of the church. If the families have children, the church has youth to rear in the principles and beliefs of the church to manage its future needs. The rearing of youth in a congregation builds a foundation for future sustainability.

As with any other group or organization, the training of youth is critical to the overall growth of the church. Organizations which ignore any sector of the group compromise their future abilities (Black, 2008). This is true of religious organizations, as well. The focus of my study is the sector of religious organizations which includes youth, specifically African American young adults. The group of young adults includes members who have graduated from high school and are either attending college (near the church or at a distance from the church) or have entered the work force. Naturally, they may leave home to attend college or begin their professional endeavors. However, my study sought to determine if, when they return home, are the youth also returning to the church home

their families attend and where they were reared. I sought to determine what tenets of the spiritual upbringing contributes to how they are coping in their adult lives and is it related to their spiritual upbringing.

This age of development, according to Erikson (1980) is a period of finding self (as cited in Capp, 2009). Psychologically, spiritual development is noted to play an important role in the lives of African-Americans. Boyd-Franklin (2010) noted that African-Americans often have used spiritualism to overcome difficulties as a survival mechanism. Considering how much is required of youth during this stage of development, a study of their outlook on spiritual affiliation is warranted to determine if they are returning to the familiar or choosing something new. Also, I sought to understand how what they are using to overcome difficulties helping them cope with their adult responsibilities.

There are many more distractions for young adults than in yesteryear, for example, social networking, technology, ease at relocating, and drugs (Yaconelli, 2007). Another reason may be related to society's increasing focus on spirituality rather than religion (Lovelace, 2006). With the distractions readily available, a study of the tenets of youth membership is warranted to determine if the distractions are preventing the youth from maintaining childhood coping mechanisms throughout this period of adult emergence between 18 years and 30 years of age.

Adult church members may be concerned about youth participation in church for societal reasons, as well. After the national trauma of the 9-11 attacks on American soil, many African-Americans sought refuge in the church (Uecker, 2008). Children who had

not regularly attended church or been exposed to spiritual development witnessed their families' increased religious expression during this troubling time (Uecker, 2008). Adults may also be concerned about the growing drug abuse problem and the legal, medical, and societal problems associated with it (Sinha, Cnaan, & Gelles, 2007); adults may be especially concerned about youth who were initially deemed low-risk because they were raised in suburbs, performed well in school, and were athletically inclined. In an effort to combat the attraction of the fast or hip lifestyle often associated with drug usage, more people are utilizing spiritual tactics to mentor children, teaching youth to rely on a higher source and to develop a sense of religious community for direction (King, 2008).

Adult church members may also be concerned about the way society has moved away from teaching youth solidarity in their communities, social networks, and families. Youth are encouraged to excel and aim for perfection, whether it is achievable or not. However, without spiritual guidance, the long-term consequences may be a greater dependence on self regardless of how faulty the perception of self may be.

In his dissertation, Washington (2005) analyzed the importance of addressing spiritual needs within the church community. He focused on the needs of African American youth, noting that the church has the biggest impact in reaching youth within this race; indicating the church's success versus other community programs. Further, Washington stated even when there are a multitude of churches in a community continued outreach to youth is still needed. Through a spiritual connection, an avenue is created to form a framework for personal, moral, and spiritual development that will aid in improving the state of the overall community (Washington, 2005). Washington

explained that a “healthy church cannot be manufactured, it must grow organically” (p. 126): Time and energy are required to develop a comprehensive and sustaining fellowship. Most contemporary churches today appear to cultivate the overall congregation; however, it is not clear how much they cultivate the participation of young adults, who comprise only a small sector of the church.

Chapter 1 includes a review of this study, which includes a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, operational definitions, assumptions made by the researcher, and the limitations noted in this study. Chapter 2 will provide an extensive review of the literature concerning the social identity theory. Chapter 3 will describe the procedures used to gather the data necessary to analyze the research questions. It will also detail the instrument used to survey the young adults. Chapter 4 will evaluate the statistics gathered from the survey. Chapter 5 will provide a summary and interpretation of the results from the data in order to formulate this study’s conclusions.

Background of the Problem

Compared to their less-religious counterparts, religious youth are more hopeful about the future and find life more meaningful; they are also proud of their religious affiliations (Smith & Faris, 2002). A survey study of over 700 urban youth also found that the coupling of religion with significant social interactions based on trust and support was associated with more positive moral outcomes (King & Furrow, 2008). In their findings, King and Furrow (2008) concluded youth require a supportive network to develop relationships that are trusting and interactive on which to build sound moral

principles. Jeynes (2009) also studied 160 youth (grades 7-12) in public and private schools, and found that youth reared in a religious environment showed better academic performance.

Yet, in 2005, only 60,000 young adults (aged 18–24) were baptized in Southern Baptist Churches across America, whereas 100,000 were baptized in these churches in 1980 (Lovelace, 2006). The African American church has questioned for years how to increase the attendance of youth who have grown up in the church once they returned from college or attended local colleges (Powell, 2008). Church elders have invested considerable resources of time and money in youth programs (Powell, 2008). However, the retention rate for adults does not reflect the number of children reared in the church. As church members age, fewer will be available to carry on the work of the church with the same level of intensity and sense of solidarity as in the past years (Taylor, 2010). This study is necessary to assist church leadership with understanding the extensions required to effectively address the needs of young adults regarding their coping mechanisms utilizing the foundation established during childhood.

Statement of the Problem

The retention rate of young adults in the church in which they have been reared is lower than is necessary to ensure the future sustainability of the church (Black, 2008). According to social identity theory (Brown, 2000), people tend to associate with others who are like-minded and have similar interests or values. According to this theory, one would expect young adults to retain the religious practices which have been taught and developed during their childhood instead of opting to disassociate from their childhood

worshipping locale. If youth have developed other identities or values that contribute to less interest in the church, it would be important to understand what these values and identities were. This study will assess the retention rate and reasons for lack of retention in the sector of the African American church which includes young adults. Church affiliation is associated with coping styles which directly impacts the psychological health of every human being (Black, 2008). If church attendance falls, it is possible that emerging adults are faced with a deficit in their set of coping skills which will indirectly affect their psychological well-being. Based on reports gathered directly from young church members or former church members, it is hoped that this study will help the church recognize that there is a viable voice among young adults and that more measures are necessary to address young people's needs than the measures the church has historically utilized.

Additionally, considering the level of support offered through church membership, it is of interest to determine how emerging youth are coping with the adversities of life. Perhaps, if leadership recognized and reiterated how much of a tool church affiliation is while youth are actively involved in services, the youth will have a greater understanding of their church associations and how it helps to balance life. If church attendance falls, so does the resilience factor of an effective coping framework which directly impacts psychological health.

Researchers have actively studied the affiliation between spirituality and psychological stability among African Americans for years, as discussed in Chapter 2. There are repeated outcomes which identify the correlation between the two. However,

the research is limited when specifically addressing the rate of return for African American youth to the church fold during their adult emergence after years of attendance as a youth. Furthermore, an analysis of how this variant impacts the coping mechanisms of young adults is limited. By studying the two components – attendance and coping mechanism – youth ministers and clinical practitioners will have another useful variable to consider when determining.

Boyd-Franklin (2010) completed a study in which college students were one of three groups and prior church affiliation was not the focal point. Nevertheless, Boyd-Franklin concluded that church affiliation was a specific determinant for psychological well-being as dictated through a case study. As well, Constantine, Miville, Warren, Gainor, & Lewis-Coles (2002) interviewed 12 college students and assessed the impact of their current rate of religious and/or spiritual development on parental influence. Again, this was but a subset of the entire study which focused on career development.

In 2004, Barry and Nelson studied 445 undergraduate students specifically to evaluate the role of religion in the lives of males and females across several ethnic groups. African American students totaled 13 out of the 445 participants. The study was very detailed in assessing the level of importance religion had in their lives, how religion impacted their engagement in risky behaviors (driving style, drinking habits, drug usage, and drunk driving) (Barry & Nelson, 2004). It also critically assessed the level of independence for each participant. Although a comprehensive study, the limitations indicated it could not be generalized to noncollege students. As well, considering the

focal point of this study, Barry and Nelson's study did not directly correlate the current religious and/or spiritual practices of those during childhood.

Research is readily available regarding the level of attendance for African-Americans in the church through all age groups . There is also research assessing the retention of African-Americans following adult emergence . However, there is little evidence addressing the correlation between coping styles of young African American adults based on their historical and current religious practices. This study will explore that relationship with the intent of introducing church leaders to the importance of teaching the correlation for all age groups.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the rate of affiliation of young adult attendance at church services after a substantial affiliation with the church during childhood and how much of a coping mechanism it is for managing daily issues which directly affects psychological well-being. This study examined reasons for retention or lack of retention of African American young adults within their church home following their graduation from college or emergence into adulthood and their coping styles and outcomes. The design for the study was quantitative and comprised of correlational measurements, as there were no manipulated variables. Demographic variables and variables about social participation, spiritual attitudes, and reasons for attending church were correlated with the lasting faith scale and self-reported religious attendance.

Research Questions

I based the following research questions on social identity theory and on a literature review on home church attendance for young adults who return to the community based on a sample for participants between the ages of 18 years and 30 years who maintain they had regular church attendance prior to turning 18 years of age.

Research Question 1. Among young adults who attended church as children, is there a relationship between how often they currently attend church and their use of a spiritual coping style?

H_01 : Among young adults who attended church as children, there is a no relationship between how often young adults attend church and their use of a spiritual coping style.

H_a1 : Among young adults who attended church as children, there is a positive relationship between how often young adults attend church and their use of a spiritual coping style.

Research Question 2. Among young adults who attended church as children, is there a negative relationship between the amount of spiritual influences they experienced prior to the age of 18 and how often they currently attend church?

H_02 : Among young adults who attended church as children, there is no relationship between the amount of spiritual influences they experienced prior to the age of 18 and how often then currently attend church.

H_a2 : Among young adults who attended church as children, there is a positive relationship between the amount of spiritual influences they experienced prior to the age of 18 and how often then currently attend church.

Research Question 3. Among young adults who attended church as children, does spiritual influence prior to 18 years of age moderate the relationship between current church attendance and positive spiritual coping style?

H_{03} : Among young adults who attended church as children and frequently attend church as young adults, there is no difference in positive coping styles between young adults who had either high or low spiritual influence prior to 18 years of age.

H_{a3} : Among young adults who attended church as children and frequently attend church as young adults, those who had high spiritual influence prior to 18 years of age have higher positive coping styles than young adults who had low spiritual influence prior to 18 years of age (see Figure 1).

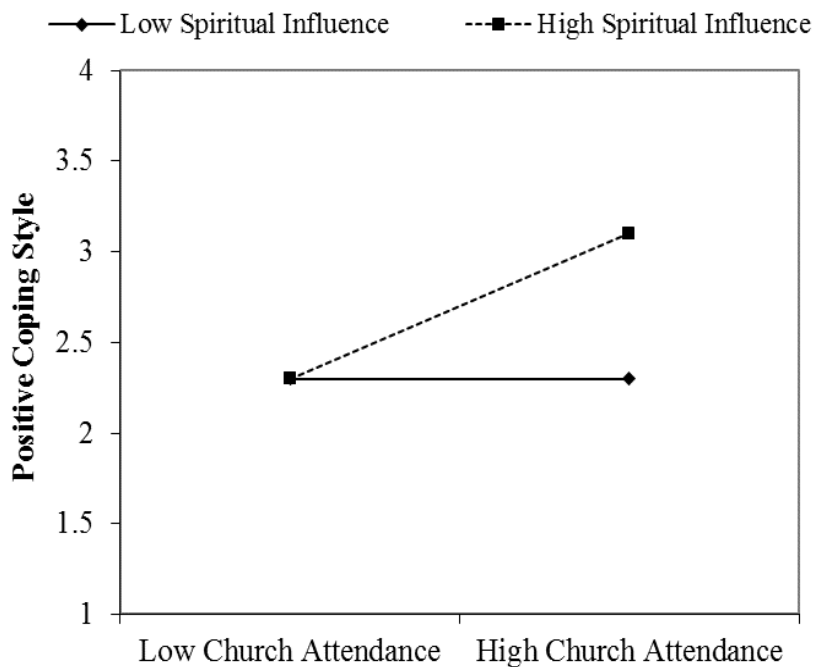


Figure 1. Proposed moderation model for Hypothesis 3.

Theoretical Framework

The study assesses the factors which support youth spiritual maturation and adult retention as it relates to the psychological aspect of development through an analysis to the social identity theory. Social identity theory pertains to the shaping of self-perception: how people classify themselves within a category of people or compare themselves with others in another category (Reid, 1996; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell 1987). Hogg and Terry (2000) postulated that an individual derives a sense of social identity based on some sense of belonging to or identifying with a group because of similar characteristics shared with others in the group. These characteristics not only shape the social identity of the individual but also establish a foundation for judging others who are not in the group and for behavior.

Young adults, considering this theory, have a greater likelihood of returning to the familiar based on the association with persons who have similar values and tenets of association with the group (Hogg and Terry, 2000). The information gathered will lend insight into the extent at which the theory applies when considering spiritual preferences.

Chapter 2 will provide an extensive review of the literature concerning the social identity theory.

Nature of the Study

The design for the study was quantitative and comprised of correlational measurements, as there were no manipulated variables. One survey, the Lasting Faith scale, was utilized to assess the level of commitment to faith development while another questionnaire was utilized to determine current church attendance. Demographic

variables and variables about social participation, spiritual attitudes, and reasons for attending church were correlated with the lasting faith scale and self-reported religious attendance.

The participants were sampled using Survey Monkey based on the demographic qualifications of the study; between the ages of 18 and 30 years old ($M=25.09$, $SD = 3.59$), and attended church regularly (at least twice monthly) prior to turning 18 years old, and are living or have lived independently from their parents. The survey was posted on Survey Monkey and completed by 141 respondents. Respondents were removed due to missing items on the Brief Religious/Spiritual Coping Inventory or Private Religious Practices inventory ($n=9$) or skipping all of the items for at least one subscale of the Lasting Faith Scale ($n = 11$). Seventeen respondents were also removed because they still lived with their parents and had not lived independently, and one respondent was removed for being over 30 years old. The majority of the remaining 103 participants were currently a member with an organized religious group ($n = 71$). Current church attendance was not a qualifying factor for this study. Survey Monkey is a user-friendly web-based program which can universally deploy surveys to a large population with specific delineations specific to the needs of a study. The web-based program allows for the inclusion of the informed consent document and the survey.

Operational Definitions

The following definitions are offered for this project:

Adolescence/adolescent is the period of time between childhood and adulthood involving the beginning and ending of puberty (Walsh, 2004),

Coping style is a "disposition that reflects or characterizes an individual's tendency to respond in a predictable manner when confronted with certain types of situations, such as the degree of perceived stress intensity or perceived control " (Hock, 1993).

Dissatisfaction with ministerial programming is defined as the participants satisfaction with the different groups within the church network especially focused on young adults between the ages of 18 and 30 years of age (Groff, 2008).

Home church identifies the religious organization in which the youth was raised (Snell, 2009).

Members of church as a child is defined as attending church services with parents/caretakers at least twice a month prior to turning 18 years of age (Levin, 1999).

Regular church attendance is defined as attending organized church services at least twice monthly as an adult. (Levin, 1999).

Religion is defined as an institutional construct or personal experience which is the result of long-established concepts or ideas (Hill & Pargament, 2008). A church or worship center would qualify as an institutional construct, making it a vehicle to develop religion (Hill & Pargament, 2008).

Spiritual growth is a measurement of lasting faith which indicates the sustainability of spiritual and church influences of childhood through adulthood and the impact it has on the person's lifestyle. It is a process involving expansion of knowledge and experience related to spiritual or religious identity (Gallagher, 2009).

Spiritual influence are experiences which contribute to the spiritual growth of an individual such as; church attendance, bible study, praise and worship, and church fellowship (Hill & Pargament, 2008).

Spirituality is regarded as a more personal approach to religious affiliation that does not require belonging to a church or religious institution (Hill & Pargament, 2008).

Young adults are generally people in the age range of 20 to 39. The specific age defined for this study will be 18 to 30 years of age (Erikson, 1980).

Youth Ministry is a program which involves classes, study groups, or worship time specifically designed to meet the spiritual and religious needs of youth (persons between the ages of 0 and 18 years) (Hill & Pargament, 2008).

Assumptions and Limitations

It was assumed that all who volunteer to participate in this study would answer the survey truthfully and completely. It was additionally assumed that the instrument utilized serves as the appropriate tool for the task of this study. The participants for the study came from Survey Monkey who has a large database of persons who volunteer to complete surveys. The limitation would be that all participants would need access to the internet to complete the survey.

Scope and Delimitations

This study was limited to a convenience sample of participants between the ages of 18 years and 30 years who indicated they regularly attended church prior to turning 18 years of age. However, other large churches with similar congregants and similar

ministerial programming may utilize the results to assess the efficacy of their programming for young adults.

Significance for Social Change

The church environment is steadily changing, much to the dismay of many traditional church leaders (Taylor, 2010). As the experiences of youth change, they are seeking church experiences that differ from those that have traditionally been offered within the church, causing the church to fall short in reaching out to this group (Taylor, 2010). There are innovative methods of reaching today's youth without compromising the integrity of church (Ewaskowitz, 2010). With this research, I present statistical data which may increase church leaders' understanding of this sector of the congregation's needs, especially as they relate to church affiliation. In assessing the needs of young adults and determining some measures to meet those needs, the church will benefit from a greater retention of the people they have reared over the years. In turn, this will aid in ensuring the long-term viability of the church while nurturing youths' spiritual development. In the African American church, spirituality is an integral component of psychological wellness. The rate of retention in the church of their childhood or another worship area may have an impact on the overall psychological wellness of emerging young adults.

Summary

Chapter 2 reviews literature on socialization and religious socialization beginning with a description of social identity theory. It will discuss influences on religious affiliation in early adulthood and distractions which may contribute to reduced interest in

church affiliation. Chapter 3 describes the procedures used to gather the data necessary to analyze the research questions. It will also detail the instrument used to survey the young adults. Chapter 4 evaluates the statistics gathered from the survey. Chapter 5 provides a summary and interpretation of the results from the data in order to formulate this study's conclusions. The chapter will also discuss areas that are currently being met through the church and those areas which need addressing.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Bisset (1992) identified four reasons why youth may leave their church home upon entering adulthood. First, they may have troubling, unanswered questions about their faith: “Unwilling to ‘just believe,’ they opt for ‘intellectual honesty.’ To do this they believe they must leave their childhood faith behind in order to find real answers in the real world.” (p. 22). Second, their faith may not work for them:

Disillusioned with the church and their fellow Christians, and ultimately disappointed with God these believers go through painful emotional and spiritual meltdown that leaves them unable to think or function as a Christian. They leave by default; they simply can’t do it anymore. (p. 22)

Third, other things in life may become more important than faith, including “business, pleasure, material ambitions, personal problems, or other hard realities that are part of life itself” (p. 22). Finally, youth may leave the church because they never personally owned their faith: “... they conformed to the spiritual expectations of others, especially parents and church leaders. But they never consciously and willfully embraced Christ and the way of the cross for themselves” (p. 22).

Boyd-Franklin (2012) examined the importance of spirituality and religion among African-Americans as a coping mechanism for loss, adversity, racism, and trauma. The author carefully outlines case studies of African American through several developmental stages of life detailing how the church has been a strong support system throughout history. Of college students and young adults, Boyd-Franklin cited research from several

authors over the last decade which reiterate the impact the church has on the psychological well-being of African-Americans. Constantine et al. (2006) indicated ignoring the role of religion in African-Americans could impede the development of motivation and resilience in college students. This issue is more of a concern with African American college students who have had highly religious and/or spiritual lives, such as those who would have been raised in the church (Constantine, et al. 2006).

This study inquired why youth, and especially African American youth, reduce their level of church attendance upon leaving home, and what factors might encourage church attendance among young adults. The literature review was initiated by a search within electronic databases in psychology, social work, and education—specifically, PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, SocINDEX, and Academic Search Premier. The initial search focused on *social identity theory* coupled with *church*, but returned zero responses. Other terms used were *youth*, *young adults*, *church*, *attitude*, *attachment theory*, *church attendance*, *religion*, *church membership*, and *social influences*. Primarily, peer-reviewed journals and dissertations were utilized for this study.

The literature review begins with an analysis of the social identity theory and how it pertains to the subject matter of this dissertation. Specifically, there is a discussion on group identification and the different identity types of social identity. Following is a review of the more specific psychological principles of development according to Erikson's (1980) stages of development. Also included in this chapter is an examination of the multitude of distractions youth of today encounter and become much more accessible in those first few years of independence. The chapter progresses with a review

of literature considering the relationship between psychology and spiritual development. Specifically, how religion contributes to coping styles of African Americans.

Social Identity Theory

Importance of Identification With a Group and In-Groups

According to Reid (1996), the self is either the individual characteristics of a person or the collective components which are defined by aspects of social group membership. Social identity theory pertains to the shaping of self-perception: how people classify themselves within a category of people or compare themselves with others in another category (Reid, 1996; Turner et al., 1987). Hogg and Terry (2000) postulated that an individual derives a sense of social identity based on some sense of belonging to or identifying with a group because of similar characteristics shared with others in the group. These characteristics not only shape the social identity of the individual but also establish a foundation for judging others who are not in the group and for behavior.

Tajfel, an especially important and pioneering social identity theorist (as cited in Dumont & Luow, 2009), maintained that persons identify with a specific group based on positive images of self within that group (Dumont & Louw, 2009; Roccas, 2002).. In one study, Tajfel and his colleagues studied children to analyze the way in which social identity affected their behavior (as cited in Vaughn, Tajfel, and Williams, 1981). Children were randomly assigned to groups and simply told that they belonged to either a Red group or Blue group, without any particular characteristics assigned to either group (as cited in Vaughn, Tajfel, and Williams, 1981). However, the children were later individually instructed to deposit three coins into either a red or a blue box. The children

tended to deposit the coins into the box of the same color as the group with which they previously identified (as cited in Vaughn, Tajfel, and Williams, 1981).

Roccas (2002) also asked how individuals respond when identifying with a social group does not result in positive outcomes. Roccas assumed that most people belong to more than one social group and sought to determine how a person manages the multiple alliances between the groups. Roccas' study involved 233 first-year students within an undergraduate social science university program. The students were asked to complete a survey on their choice of major(s). Because the admission standards were higher for some of the departments than others (causing a perceived hierarchy among the students), the students were asked to quantify their perception of the status of the department(s) in which they were studying. Another part of the study involved the assignment of students to two experimental groups which they believed were either high- or low-status (Roccas, 2002). The study indicated that people were affected by the status of their groups (whether these were real or experimental groups), which in turn determined how they responded or interacted with others in another group. Students perceived the groups of which they were members as having higher status than outside groups. However, the results were not as dramatic when people had multiple group memberships. Consequently, students who were identified as being in a low-status group tended to identify more with the group which had a higher status, rejecting the lower-status group (Roccas, 2002).

According to Tajfel and Turner (1986, as cited in Roccas, 2002), a person may respond to unfavorable outcomes in a group in one of three ways:

- The individual may terminate the relationship with the group or redefine his or her role in the group by identifying less strongly with the group.
- The individual may redefine characteristics of the group so that these are more agreeable to what is desired, thereby lessening guilt or ill feelings associated with the group.
- The individual may initiate activities to encourage more positive or desired outcomes.

However, Study 2, which involved one real group and one experimental group, found an inconsistency in status perception (Roccas, 2002). The experiments recognized that the failed association in the second group study may have been related to the differing types of groups used in the study (academic versus artistic) and relayed a need for further research in this area (Roccas, 2002). Add summary and synthesis to fully conclude the section and connect back to your study.

Types of Social Identities

Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi, and Ethier (1995) further developed social identity theory by conducting a two-part study that generated a list of different types of social identity groups and then identifying five distinct categories of identities. In the first part of the study, 50 graduate students were asked to assign people to a category based on similar attributes. At least two persons were required to formulate an identity. The second part of the study involved having 250 students complete a questionnaire to rate the identity traits on a 7-point scale (Deaux, et al., 1995) Through a cluster analysis of the identified traits by which people identified their social groups, the team learned that individuals define

their social identity by personal relationships, vocations, political affiliations, ethnic/religious affiliations, and stigmatized qualities (Deaux, et al., 1995).

The Deaux et al. (1985) study also indicated that social identities were fluid across different contexts, and that a personal relationship was not enough to sustain cohesion with an identified social group (for example, an ethnic/religious group). Hogg and Terry (2000) also noted that early in life, the individual may be a member of a social category based on familial identification. However, as personal identity develops, individuals begin to associate with groups in which they feel a sense of belonging based on their likes and dislikes, in contrast to historical associations (Hogg and Terry, 2000).

Using the social identity theory, my study assesses the factors which support youth spiritual maturation and adult retention as it relates to the psychological aspects of development. The research questions consider and assess not only attendance location but also the satisfaction with the youth ministerial programming. Through the assessment of satisfaction regarding church experience, youth's determinations may be based on the attributes associated with the church home and how willing they are to continue identifying with that group. Young adults who opt not to return to the childhood church home may determine they no longer want their social identity associated with this sector because of dissatisfaction with the programming. The multiple components of the social identity theory offers insight into what factors contribute to the final decisions regarding church affiliation.

Identity Development in Adolescence

In writing about developmental stages, Erikson (1980) also described adolescence as a period in which individuals examine their identity. Erikson wrote that up until 12 years of age, development is largely shaped by the actions of others towards the individual. In adolescence, development is increasingly shaped by what the person does himself or herself (Erikson, 1980). In the period between 18 and 25 years of age, youth/young adults are finding self (Erikson, 1980). They also begin to seek and establish closer relationships with others—primarily outside of their direct circle of family interactions (Erikson, 1980). Furthermore, a sense of fidelity is at stake as the defining of self causes one to examine the genuineness of others and relationships, as well as loyalty with preattained value systems, which may be religious (Capp, 2009). If youth are unsuccessful in this stage, then they are likely to experience role confusion, which may lead to difficulty forming lasting relationships (Erikson, 1980).

In the next stage, the intimacy vs. isolation stage, youth are further developing intimate relationships as they seek companionship and love with like-minded persons (Erikson, 1980). The input of others is particularly important to youth as they make important life decisions. During this period, youth are selective in relationships (Capp, 2009) which could contribute to greater selectivity in worship alliances, as well. As youth begin to define their identity, they may scrutinize multiple areas of their lives that they have previously participated in out of habit (Capp, 2009).

Membership in different groups may affect an individual's behaviors and social identities in different ways (Deaux et al.,1995). As individuals enter the work force or

college, they begin to expand their pool of associates beyond those their parents know. As youth build associations with new groups, such as fraternity or sorority organizations, professional organizations, and social organizations, they may need to decide whether to continue associating with groups they previously participated in, including church. Whether they do so may depend in part on previous influences on their religious affiliation (Deaux et al.,1995). As young adults, youth may have different sources of affiliation. Lovelace (2006) reported that 47% of nonaffiliated young adults related that they valued having a sense of community with others their age.

Influences on Young Adults' Religious Affiliation

Parental involvement. With regard to religious affiliation, youth are likely to be influenced by their parents, peers, schools, internal struggles, and youth ministry affiliation (Bunge, 2008). In particular, families are a primary source of religious introduction and influence for adolescents (Bunge, 2008). However, the type of influence is multifaceted and not based on instruction alone. The type of parent/child relationship also serves as a conduit for spiritual development of a child (Desrosiers, Kelley, & Miller, 2010). Desrosiers et al. asked 615 youth and adolescents to complete the parental bonding instrument (PBI), the parental spiritual support scale, the friends spiritual support scale, and the relational spirituality scale. They found that both maternal and paternal religious displays were associated with youths' developing spiritual stance (Desrosiers, et al., 2010). Maternal displays appeared to facilitate youths' spiritual individuation, while paternal displays tended to contribute to the development of a

personal relationship with God (Desrosiers, et al., 2010). Youth spiritual development was also associated with the ability to have intimate conversations with mothers about differing topics and with having affectionate or attentive fathers (Desrosiers, et al., 2010).

Bunge (2008) also reviewed the role of parental religious influence and religious education in youths' religiosity, and determined that parents are one of the primary resources for faith formation in youth. It is through parents' regular engagement, encouragement, and support that youth develop their religious practices (Bunge 2008). Bunge found that children were more likely to report religious values when the family engaged in consistent discussions of the Bible and regular praise and worship in front of and with children; displayed good examples overall; engaged children in service projects and other helping projects outside the home; spent time singing together, taught children to revere God's creation; taught children the values and differences between an education and a vocation and a healthy outlook towards marriage and relationships; listened to the children and appreciated opportunities to learn from them; and understood the limitations of parental authority especially as children mature. Bunge also addressed difficulties in instilling religious practices because of busy schedules, outside influences, and the complexities of different parental arrangements (e.g., step-parents, grandparents, and caretakers).

With regard to exposure to the media, religious teens have also been shown to be less likely to watch sexually-related programming than their religiously disengaged counterparts (Bobkowski, 2009). The teens' self-reports of watching these shows were not related to the level of parents' or teens' religious behavior but to the greater diligence

religious parents demonstrated in monitoring media programming (Bobkowski, 2009). The researcher determined that religious practices served as an “omnibus measure made up of a range of beliefs and attitudes, along with social skills and relationships, that motivate and restrict the activities their adherents engage in” (Bobkowski, 2009, p. 67).

Peer influences. Peer influences are another critical determining factor with youth. Social activities give young people time to develop their sense of self outside of the family, helping them understand how they fit into the culture of their peers and how these relationships fit in with their family, church, or neighbors (Arnon, Shamai, & Ilatov, 2008). Youth may be influenced by peers met through school, neighborhood alliances, after-school programs, or independent recreational time, such as visiting the local mall or movie theatre, dining out, or partying (Sirles, 2009). Youth ministries, which are discussed later in this chapter, are another positive source of support for religious youth. However, youth must juggle outside peer influences which may be contrary to sources of religious affiliation.

Emerging into adulthood, youth may be influenced not only by peers but by their own internal struggles. Barry and Nelson (2005) surveyed 445 undergraduates (age 18-20) attending Roman Catholic, Mormon, and public institutions to explore the role of religion during this transitional period. They found that those youth attending religious institutions further developed their religion within the institution, demonstrating the importance of support gained through identification with others who shared similar religious practices. However, compared to students in Roman Catholic and public institutions, Mormon students more readily adopted pre-determined values and beliefs

rather than exploring them (Barry & Nelson, 2005). The study showed that young adults used specific criteria in determining what was necessary for further growth rather than blindly accepting what had been taught to them (Barry & Nelson, 2005). The study also demonstrated that young adults were attempting to follow the practices and beliefs they believed necessary to display certain behaviors (independence, interdependence, self-oriented, and norm compliance) in their lives. Barry and Nelson wrote:

Emerging adulthood may best be characterized as a time during which young people (a) question the beliefs in which they were raised, (b) place greater emphasis on individual spirituality than affiliation with a religious institution, and (c) pick and choose the aspects of religion that suit them best (Barry & Nelson, 2005, p. 246).

Youth ministries. Youth ministry is a relatively new concept considering the age of the church. Youth ministry groups can encompass bible study programs, activity programs, community service programs, and worship services (Grate, 2009). Consider that adolescence was not identified as a separate sector of the human life cycle until the 19th century. Prior to this time, people went quickly from childhood to adulthood as they were needed in the workforce; family farms, and factories (Grate, 2009). Grate wrote that Dr. Francis Clark, who began the Christian Endeavor Society in 1881, was the first to directly minister to youth in providing biblical training and opportunities for fellowship, bible study, and evangelism. These days, entire programs are focused solely on reaching youth in creative and innovative ways to draw them into the spiritual fold of the community (Ewaskowitz, 2010).

Youth who have regularly attended church and experienced religious support and development from their parents will likely maintain some level of church affiliation after becoming adults; however, association with a youth ministry during the teen years influences church affiliation during early adulthood, as well (Snell, 2009). Snell used data from the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) to study youth between the ages of 13 and 17 and between the ages of 16 and 20 (2009). As expected, youth who continued regularly to participate in a youth ministry during the late teen years, were more likely to stay within a religious organization during early adulthood (Snell, 2009).

The religious development of youth is undergoing a rapid change. Bunge cited a difference between 'Theologies of childhood' and 'Child theologies' (2008). She explained the effort to explain the theological understanding of children is 'Theologies of childhood'. However, the practice of interpreting scripture so children can understand is 'Child theologies' (Bunge, 2008). 'Child theologies' has served as the cornerstone for program development in youth programs to attract children to religious development within the church. When children begin to understand the theological principles and are able to have life applications to their current experiences, they are more likely to reap the benefits of church affiliation (Collins, 2006). Collins explored the efforts of collaborative efforts between church programs and community resources. Collins concluded youth who are members of a socially conscious programs within their religious institutions have a greater self-worth and are less apt to engage in negative behaviors (2006). Collins identified different programming type such as mentoring, peer tutoring, job readiness training, and educational funding programs (Collins, 2006).

The African American church has been the cornerstone of the African American community with approximately eight denominations comprising almost 20 million members; African Methodist Episcopal (AME), African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ), the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME), the National Baptist Convention of American, Unincorporated (NBCA), the National Baptist Convention, Incorporated (NBC); the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC), and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) (Collins, 2006). Cook learned after studying male African American youth of the importance of the African American church. She concluded those who regularly participated in religious programming experienced less psychological hardships and less stress than their counterparts who did not have any religious affiliation (Cook, 2000).

Religion and Mental Health

Diener and colleagues concluded that the association between religion and mental health contributes to an individual's subjective well-being (SWB) and social relationships (Diener, Tay, and Myers, 2011). As discussed earlier in this chapter, the church is a source of social exposure especially with the expansion of youth ministries. The study conducted a comprehensive analysis by calling over a 1,000 people in the United States in 2009. With only one question, "Is religion an important part of your daily life?," the researchers measured the following concepts: personal and societal circumstances and subjective well-being (Diener, et al., 2011).

Of interest to this study is the subjective well-being rating. This rating factors in life satisfaction and emotional wellness. Through the use of a multivariate analysis, the

researchers found that the correlation between religiosity and SWB was positive (Diener, et al., 2011).

Particularly in the African American community, religion has been instrumental in helping with the psychological management of hardships such as racism, adversity, and loss (Boyd-Franklin, 2010). Interestingly, Boyd-Franklin and her team learned that many African-Americans view psychological treatment as “antispiritual” There was a failure to identify the correlation between psychology and religion (Boyd-Franklin, 2010). She included case studies within her study of individuals who were facing common challenges with a strong background in relying on religious structure to cope with adversity. In therapy, their spiritual precepts were conjoined with the therapy process to reduce the presenting stressors (Boyd-Franklin, 2010).

Also in this study, Boyd-Franklin specifically discussed the impact of religion and coping styles amount college-aged and young adult African-Americans (2010). There was a detailed case study of an African American college student and the coping mechanisms utilized concerning the separation from her family (Boyd-Franklin, 2010). Feelings of loneliness, inadequacy, and sadness were related. Part of her feelings of loneliness were related to her isolation from her church family as she had been involved prior to leaving home for college. The therapist made this a part of the treatment plan which was successful in getting the student more involved in a local church and other religious activities on campus (Boyd-Franklin, 2010).

Constantine, et al (2006) worked with twelve African American undergraduate students and explored the impact of parental influence on religious and spiritual beliefs.

They found it was typical of this age group to have been highly influenced by their parents practices during their childhood rather than voluntarily attending church. As an extension of this finding, the authors learned it was also typical for those who were forced to initially resist attending during their initial adult years, only to return to the church after a few years of absence voluntarily (Constantine, et al, 2006).

The final conclusions of the Constantine, et al study determined religion and spirituality were important in the coping styles of the African American young adults. Their belief system also served as an intermediary during challenging ordeals related to their educational experience (Constantine, et al, 2006).

Summary

Modern-day church readily recognizes that reaching out to youth is a serious and complicated endeavor as they compete with a multitude of other interests which are holding the attention of young adults. The Christian Index released a publication in 2007 stating the following reasons why youth stopped attending organized church: 25 percent cited moving away from home to attend college; 23 percent cited work reschedules; and 22 percent stated they moved too far away from their church home. Organized religion is one component of a youth's life which competes with education, employment, peer relationships, romantic relationships, career development, and exploration of their environment and where they fit in to their environment (Sinha, Cnaan, & Gelles, 2007). This literature review has presented some of the influences on youth development and a small spectrum of the diversions.

A quantitative study analyzing the level of association with the childhood church home or another church and how this effects coping style will aide in developing programming for the young adult population in response to the current coping measures which may be based in the aforementioned distractions readily available to this generation. The purpose of the study is to explore young adult attendance at church services after a substantial affiliation with the church during childhood and how much of a coping mechanism it is for managing daily issues which directly affect psychological well-being.

Chapter 3 details the design for this research project. It includes an analysis of the responses of youth reared in this church along with their level of attendance. The chapter describes the demographics of the population including information on gender, educational background, location, church attendance, and church satisfaction.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to explore young adult attendance at church services after a substantial affiliation with the church during childhood and how much of a coping mechanism it is for managing daily issues which directly affect psychological well-being. Churches are faced with the greater challenge of more diversions for the young adult population as they emerge into adulthood (Black, 2008). Many young adults may have developed relationships with church homes during their childhood years (Black, 2008). One question at the forefront of church leaders' minds is why youth are not returning to the church and how leaders can address this predicament (Black, 2008).

This chapter explains the design of the study used to research the reasons young adults do or do not return to a congregation following their emergence into adulthood. It will also explain the process by which data collection will occur regarding level of church attendance and coping practices for participants. The chapter will also describe the sample population, the instrumentation utilized, the process for data collection, the strategy for data analysis, and consideration of ethical matters.

Research Design and Approach

This study examined reasons for retention or lack of retention of African American young adults within their church home following their graduation from college or emergence into adulthood and how it impacts their coping style. The design for the study was quantitative and comprised of correlational measurements, as there were no manipulated variables. The survey included questions from the Lasting Faith scale to

assess the level of commitment to faith development and questions specifically assessing the adult level of church attendance. Demographic variables and variables about social participation, spiritual attitudes, and reasons for attending church were correlated with the Lasting Faith Scale questions, Private Religious Practices questions, Brief Religious/Spiritual Coping and Organizational Religiousness scales.

I measured current church attendance and how it affects spiritual coping style by the Positive Religious/Spiritual Coping Subscale and the Negative Religious/Spiritual Coping Subscale. To assess the relationship between spiritual influences prior to turning 18 years old and current church attendance, the Lasting Faith Scale was used to gather data. Finally, the Private Religious Practices subscale was used to assess the relationship between current church attendance and spiritual coping style.

Prior successfully executed studies have use a survey method of gathering data as the most efficient means of data collection. The Lasting Faith Scale is specifically designed for the teens and young adult population with recognition of how much of an impact family of origin has on spiritual development and retention (Sirles, 2009). The questions offer opportunities to ask about familial contributors to independent adult choices. It also has questions which can expand beyond the focus of this study should additional research needs arise (Sirles, 2009).

Methodology

Population

The target population for this study was African American male and female adults between the ages of 18 and 30 who attended church regularly during childhood. The

adults necessary for this study were those who attended church services at least twice a month with their family of origin during early childhood, adolescence, or teenage years prior to graduating from high school. There were no specific requirements for church attendance as an adult. However, current attendance was analyzed for the purpose of this study. An online survey company, Survey Monkey, was to host the questionnaire.

Sample Size

The sample population determination was based on the statistical data available through the United States Census Bureau. There were a total of 365,366 people with 18.8% of those being African American (Bureau, 2010). The population for individuals 18 years and younger was at 27.9% totaling 101,937 youth (Bureau, 2010). The number of those specifically identified as African American was 19,164 youth (Bureau, 2010). The Association for Religion Data Archives, as of 2010, indicated church attendance for African-Americans was 33,665 persons which equates to almost half of the African American population in Arlington, Texas. The youth attendance calculates to 9,390 if the percentage of African American population is considered at 27.9%, which equates to 5,347. Based on a random sample with a 95% confidence interval, the sample population based on 5,347 African-Americans in the Arlington, Texas under age 18 is 359 for the purpose of this study. The number was pulled from the number of African American youth between the ages to determine the number of person from 18 - 30 years in the Arlington area.

An a priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power 3.1.9 to determine the minimum sample size required to find significance with a desired level of power set

at.80, an α level at.05, and a lower-moderate effect size of.10 (f^2). Based on the analysis, it was determined that a minimum of 114 participants are required to ensure adequate power for the multiple linear regression model. Preliminary and primary analyses, including Pearson's product-moment correlations, will need minimum sample sizes within the 114 participants (Cohen, 1988; Erdfelder, Faul, & Buchner, 1996; Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007).

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

The participants were selected based on the demographic information provided to Survey Monkey which aligned with the needs of this study: being between the ages of 18 – 30 years old, having some attendance in church services prior to turning 18 years of age, and living independently or have lived independently. Survey Monkey is a user-friendly, web-based program which can universally deploy surveys to a large population with specific delineations specific to the needs of a study. The web-based program allowed for the inclusion of the informed consent document and the survey. All information was time-stamped. Each respondent was provided an option of withdrawing from the study as their right to withhold information if they deem at any time they do not wish to participate. Survey Monkey was a secure site with measures in place to protect the participants and the researcher's data. The data was transferred from the Survey Monkey server directly into a database. The data was not encrypted during the transmission phase. The researcher did not collect the IP address for the data, only the outcomes were collected.

Individuals were sent an invitation via email through Survey Monkey which included a summary of the study. For any participant who did not complete the survey, one follow-up email was sent repeating the request to participate in the survey. The email contained a link to the survey site which includes an electronic informed consent. Potential participants were told that the identities of each person who participates in the study shall remain confidential. Prior to data collection, each volunteer participant signed an informed consent explaining the intent of the study, the proposed procedures, the right to withdraw participation, and the risks involved in participating. Following agreement to the informed consent, the participant was directed to complete the survey online. The online survey should not have taken more than 20 minutes to complete for a person who reads above a seventh grade reading level.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection

The data for this research was gathered from an online resource, Survey Monkey. The participants received information through a webpage instructing them of the needs for the survey. After all informed consent procedures were met, the participant was directed to begin the study with information that they may opt out of the study unconditionally at any point in the study. The questionnaire consisted of 55 questions. Three of the questions were to ensure appropriateness for the research at the beginning of the survey. There were five questions at the end of the survey regarding current living arrangements, current religious practices, and satisfaction with current religious practices. The positive or negative coping style of each participant was addressed through ten

questions on the Positive Religious/Spiritual Coping Subscale and the Negative Religious/Spiritual Coping Subscale. Through seven questions, inquiries were made regarding current religious practices on the Private Religious Practices subscale. The Lasting Faith Scale, through thirty questions, measured the participants religious experiences prior to turning 18 years of age.

Analysis Plan

Descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables, comprising means, standard deviations, minima, and maxima for continuous variables (e.g., subscale scores), and frequencies and percentages were calculated for all categorical variables (e.g., gender, whether or not participants live with a parent/guardian). Distributions of the continuous variables were examined to determine if normality assumptions are met and if parametric testing was appropriate, or whether transformed data or nonparametric tests should be used. Also, extreme outliers were investigated for technical or clerical errors. If the size of the measurement could not be attributed to such an error, it was included in the analysis, and the effect of deleting the observation was reported. The data was analyzed using SPSS 22.0. An alpha (α) level of .05 was used to determine significance levels. Preliminary analyses were conducted to assess simple/bivariate relationships among independent variables (IVs) and dependent variables (DVs) and assessed for potential covariates that need to be included in the primary analysis. For the primary analysis, the research questions and hypotheses were analyzed using the following techniques outlined below.

Research Question 1. The first research question asked: Among young adults who attended church as children, is there a negative relationship between how often they currently attend church and their use of a spiritual coping style? The first hypothesis stated that, among young adults who attended church as children, there is a negative relationship between how often young adults attend church and their use of a spiritual coping style. To analyze the first hypothesis, Spearman's rho (ρ) will be used to assess the correlation between General Attendance subscale scores from the Private Religious Practices inventory and the Positive and Negative Religious/Spiritual Coping subscales scores.

Research Question 2. The second research question asked: Among young adults who attended church as children, is there a relationship between the amount of spiritual influences they experienced prior to the age of 18 and how often they currently attend church? Hypothesis 2 states that, among young adults who attended church as children, there is a positive relationship between the amount of spiritual influences they experienced prior to the age of 18 and how often then currently attend church. To analyze the second hypothesis, a Spearman's ρ was calculated between General Attendance subscale scores from the Private Religious Practices inventory and the Lasting Faith scale.

Research Question 3. The third research question asked: Among young adults who attended church as children, does spiritual influence prior to 18 years of age moderate the relationship between current church attendance and positive spiritual coping style? The third hypothesis states that, among young adults who attended church as

children and frequently attend church as young adults, those who had high spiritual influence prior to 18 years of age have higher positive coping styles than young adults who had low spiritual influence prior to 18 years of age. To analyze the third hypothesis, a hierarchical linear regression was conducted using Positive Religious/Spiritual Coping subscale scores as the dependent variable and General Attendance subscale scores from the Private Religious Practices inventory and the Lasting Faith scale scores as predictors (i.e., independent variables). Prior to the analysis, independent variables will be mean-centered by taking each score and subtracting the mean. A third predictor entered in the model will be the interaction between church attendance subscale scores and Lasting Faith subscale scores. This interaction term will be calculated by multiplying the two mean-centered predictors together. If the interaction term is significant, simple slope tests will be conducted to examine relationships with Positive Religious/Spiritual Coping subscale scores at 1 *SD* above and below the mean for Lasting Faith and General Attendance subscale scores.

Instrumentation

The Lasting Faith Scale

The main independent variable in this study was the self-reported faith, as measured by the Lasting Faith scale, and the main dependent variables were self-reported religious participation and coping practices. The Lasting Faith Scale (LFS) (Appendix B) was developed by Wesley Black (2008). Black studied the likelihood that over 400 young adults would maintain their church affiliation following their graduation from high school. The Lasting Faith Scale has 30 questions presented on a 6-point Likert scale (1 =

NO! I strongly disagree, or this is not true for me at all to 6 = YES! I strongly agree, or this is true for me all the time). Examples of items used in the measure include: I didn't think about God much outside of church or youth group; I would have described the spiritual life of my MOTHER as a sincere Christian faith; My parents spent time helping me know how to make the right decisions; and I did not have any real friends at church. The instrument demonstrated a test-retest reliability of .85 over a x-week period (Black, 2008). Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .30 as all items with a correlation below .30 were deleted (Black, 2008).

LFS Reliability. The Lasting Faith Scale was administered to the exact same group with a two week time span between administrations. There were 78 teenagers in the sample size and the responses from each administrations were analyzed. The matched responses resulted in a Pearson's r of .851. This is considered a strong correlation coefficient (Black, 2008).

LFS Validity. The Lasting Faith Scale is a new instrument and will require a substantial amount of additional research to further support its findings. The research, thus far, has been conducted with various youth groups around the country (Sirles, 2009). In improving the validity of the scale, the initial list of 80 items was refined to 33 items which were determined to measure what it was intended to measure. The validity was addressed through a sample group of 121 teenagers in the pilot study (Black, 2008).

Private Religious Practices

The current religious practices of each participant were determined based on responses from the Private Religious Practices inventory developed by Jeff Levin, PhD,

MPH (Levin, 1999). "The items are designed to assess private religious and spiritual practices, a conceptual domain or dimension of religious involvement often characterized by terms such as non-organizational, informal, and non-institutional religiosity (Fetzer Institute, 2003). There were four simple items on the scale which require 60 seconds to complete, on average. The responses for three of the four were presented on an 8-point Likert scale (1 - Several times a day to 8 - Never). The last response was on a 5 point Likert scale (1 - At all meals to 5 - Never). A sample question of this inventory: How often do you read the Bible or other religious literature? For the purpose of this study, the General Attendance subscale will be utilized, which is two items. The two items chosen are, " How often do you attend religious services?" and " Besides religious services, how often do you take part in other activities at a place of worship?"

In a study of college students assessing their attitudes towards sexual practices, an abbreviated version of the Private Religious Practices inventory was used as it connected "people to the transcendent (Brelford, Luquis, and Murray-Swank, 2011). The 970 college participants between the ages of 18 and 25 years received a packet with the questions included in a master questionnaire pulling items from other inventories. They learned that self-rated spirituality was more of a factor for men in determining their sexual attitude than it was women (Brelford, Luquis, and Murray-Swank, 2011). The tool proved to be useful in assessing the variables analyzed by the researchers.

PRR Reliability. The Private Religious Practices scale has four simple items. The reliability factor is based on the applicability of the items in prior surveys which demonstrated reliability. The premise presented stated that the use of four items is a

desirable psychometric baseline (Fetzer Institute, 2003). The alpha for private practice domains was .72 using a z-score analysis.

PRR Validity. The Private Religious Practices scale has not been validated. The author quoted information from prior measurements with similar questions regarding prayer life, usage of religious information, and spiritual acknowledgment during meals. The team of researchers working on the Fetzer Institute project determined that any inventories assessing religious practices should have the following principles: "1) be widely applicable, 2) assess the most prevalent behaviors, 3) use a common metric, and 4) include at least 4 items (Fetzer Institute, 2003)." This scale covers the religious spectrum across the religious traditions common in the United States. Additionally, the items are easily read and easily scored. Although this scale has not been validated, variations of the items are have been included in other scales which have been validated (Fetzer Institute, 2003).

Brief Religious/Spiritual Coping Inventory

The Brief Religious/Spiritual Coping Inventory (Brief RCOPE) was incorporated into the survey to assess the participants' patterns of copings with stressful life events. The inventory, designed by Kenneth Pargament, Ph.D. has 14 items to measure religious coping with life stressors (Fetzer Institute, 2003). It is the most commonly used instrument to assess religious coping practices according to a review written in 2011 (Pargament, Feuille, and Burdzy, D.). One of the key components of Pargament's work with religious coping applicable to this study is the association with the Social Identity Theory under inspection for this study. Pargament's theory states, "religious coping

serves multiple functions, including the search for meaning, intimacy with others, identity, control, anxiety-reduction, transformation, as well as the search for the sacred or spirituality of self." (Paragament, et al., 2011). The instrument was utilized in a 2013 study on African American women's coping responses when they are struggling with breast cancer treatment. Seventeen African-American women were administered the Brief Religious Coping Inventory along with other measures. The Brief RCOPE allowed the researchers to assess the negative and positive religious coping perspectives for each participant. They found that the participants who used positive religious coping perspectives had a greater spiritual well-being feeling as if their lives and struggles had meaning (Gaston-Johansson, Haisfield-Wolfe, Reddick, Goldstein, Lawal, 2013).

The responses for the scale are on a four point Likert scale (1 - A great deal to 4 - Not at all). Sample statements of this inventory: I feel that stressful situations are God's way of punishing me for my sins or lack of spirituality and I try to make sense of the situation and decide what to do without relying on God).

Brief RCOPE Reliability. Research based on over 5000 subjects who were administered the scale in studies indicate it is a reliable measure. It demonstrated internal consistency within the samples utilized. The studies included samples from different populations; African American women with a history of domestic violence, cancer patients, older adults, and different religious affiliations. The highest alpha for the scale was .94 within the studies analyzed which involved more than 5000 participants (Paragament, et al., 2011).

Brief RCOPE Validity. The Brief RCOPE has demonstrated concurrent and predictive validity thereby indicating the Brief RCOPE will also have similar outcomes. Multiple variables were considered in assessing the level of validity for the instrument; race, financial worries, gender, and age. Repeatedly studies supported the instrument's internal validity and accuracy in assessing anxiety, depression, paranoia with specific regulations of demographic variables (Paragament, et al., 2011).

Procedures

The survey was administered electronically via <http://surveymonkey.com>. The participants were asked to electronically sign the informed consent in order to participate (Appendix A). Participation was voluntary in the study. Survey Monkey utilized the data indicators of the study to invite a sufficient number of respondents to acquire the required subjects to meet the sample population needs. The respondents were gathered from a database maintained by Survey Monkey which are recruited through their member site called Survey Monkey Contribute. They also maintain a collaboration with Global Partner Network to access millions more respondents. The audience was a diverse group reflective of the general population.

Individuals who volunteered to participate in the study were provided information about the study and consent forms prior to proceeding with the research. After they signed the consent form, they were given directions to take the online survey. The consent form was the first page of the survey and requirement of acknowledgement is necessary prior to proceeding with the survey.

The study was deemed to be one of minimal risk to participants and the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research will not be greater than any ordinarily encountered in daily life, or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. Each participant was voluntary and may choose to exit the survey without any negative consequences to the participant at any time of the survey.

The data was collected directly from Survey Monkey as the internet based program compiles the results. The results were then be utilized for the purpose of this study. Following completion of the survey, each participant received a courtesy statement thanking them for participation. There were no follow-up interviews or treatments planned for the participants of this study.

Ethical Considerations

I obtained Walden's Internal Review Board (IRB) approval (#05-06-16-0100712) before collecting any data. This study intended to address the declining numbers of young adults in the church. It was important each participant understood the data collected was strictly confidential, would not be directly submitted to anyone within the church, and would not affect their church affiliation. Confidentiality was maintained through the acquisition of data from Survey Monkey and no identifying information was released. The survey results from Survey Monkey were only available to the researcher. The informed consent letter was available at the beginning of the survey to describe the procedures and reiterate the voluntary nature of the study.

Data Analysis

Frequencies were run to obtain percentages, means and standard deviations for the demographic items, social participation items, spiritual identity items, religious attendance items, and Lasting Faith scale. To test the hypotheses, Spearman's two-tailed correlations were run to obtain correlations between the Lasting Faith scale and reported religious attendance, as well as between these measures and the social and spiritual items. Spearman's two-tailed correlations were run to obtain correlations of the dependent variables with the demographic items, as well as among the social and spiritual items.

Summary

Quantitative analysis using the Spearman's one-tailed correlations was utilized to assess the frequency of adult attendance for persons who attended church during their childhood. The information was based on the results of the survey. The results of the study are presented Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to explore young adult attendance at church services after a substantial affiliation with the church during childhood and how much of a coping mechanism it is for managing daily issues which directly affect psychological well-being. Each participant completed an online survey assessing the impact of variables on their current religious practices. These procedures were discussed in Chapter 3. The outcomes of each participant's contributors are explained in this chapter. Descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) were calculated to describe the sample of African American young adults between the ages of 18–30 who have a childhood history of some level of religious association. Primary analyses were then calculated to answer the study's research questions.

Description of Sample

Participants were African American adults between the ages of 18 and 30 years old ($M = 25.09$, $SD = 3.59$) who attended church at least two times per month prior to turning 18 years old and currently or previously lived independent from their parents (see Table 1). The survey was posted on Survey Monkey and completed by 176 respondents over a course of 41 days. However, 73 respondents were removed from the data because they did not meet the required components for the requested participants. Respondents were removed due to missing all of the items for the primary measures ($n = 35$); missing items on the Brief Religious/Spiritual Coping Inventory or Private Religious Practices inventory ($n = 9$); or skipping all of the items for at least one subscale of the Lasting

Faith Scale ($n = 11$). Seventeen respondents were also removed because they still lived with their parents and had not lived independently, and one respondent was removed for being over 30 years old. The majority of the remaining 103 participants were currently a member with an organized religious group ($n = 71$).

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages for Demographic Variables

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Current member of a religious group		
No	25	24.3
Yes	71	68.9
Decline to answer	7	6.8
Live with parents/guardians		
No	64	62.1
Yes	32	31.1
Decline to answer	7	6.8
Live independently		
No	32	31.1
Yes	64	62.1
Decline to answer	7	6.8
Age		
<i>N</i>	103	
<i>M (SD)</i>	25.09 (3.59)	
Range	18–30	

Preliminary Analyses

Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each scale to assess scale reliability (see Table 2). These coefficients revealed acceptable reliability for each of the scales, although the reliability for the Negative subscale from the Religious/Spiritual Coping Inventory was borderline. Cronbach's alpha may underestimate the scale reliability for two-item measures (Eisinga, Grotenhuis, & Pelzer, 2013). Consequently, the Spearman-Brown Coefficient was calculated for the Private Religious Practices inventory ($\rho = .83$), and the two measures provided comparable indicators of reliability.

As shown in Table 2, Religious/Spiritual Coping Inventory scores ranged from 5 to 20 for both the positive and negative subscales with a mean of 17.33 ($SD = 3.40$) and 7.37 ($M = 2.24$), respectively. General Attendance subscale scores ranged from 3 to 18 with a mean of 11.42 ($SD = 3.88$). For the Lasting Faith Scale, scores ranged from 75 to 178 with a mean of 134.37 ($SD = 23.04$). For the individual subscale scores of the Lasting Faith Scale, Discipleship ranged from 9 to 47 with a mean of 35 ($SD = 7.63$), Family Influence ranged from 11 to 48 with a mean of 34.75 ($SD = 10.26$), Mentor Influence ranged from 12 to 36 with a mean of 29.17 ($SD = 5.09$), and Peer Influences ranged from 16 to 56 with a mean of 35.44 ($SD = 8.11$).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Scales

Statistic	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	Cronbach's <i>α</i>
Positive RCOPE	17.33	3.40	5	20	.88
Negative RCOPE	7.37	2.24	5	20	.61
PRP	11.42	3.88	3	18	.83
LFS	134.37	23.04	75	178	.92
Discipleship	35.00	7.63	9	47	.80
Family Influence	34.75	10.26	11	48	.86
Mentor Influence	29.17	5.09	12	36	.79
Peer Influence	35.44	8.11	16	56	.79

Note. $N = 103$; Positive RCOPE: Positive subscale from Religious/Spiritual Coping Inventory (RCOPE); Negative RCOPE: Negative subscale from RCOPE; PRP: General Attendance subscale from Private Religious Practices inventory; LFS: Lasting Faith Scale, Discipleship: Discipleship and Spiritual Depth subscale from LFS, Family Influence: Family Influence subscale from LFS, Mentor Influence: Mentoring and Intergenerational Influences from LFS, Peer Influence: Peer Influences subscale from LFS.

Primary Analyses

The first research question asked, among young adults who attended church as children, is there a relationship between how often they currently attend church and their use of a spiritual coping style? This research question was addressed using Spearman's rho (ρ) to assess the correlation between the General Attendance subscale from the Private Religious Practices Inventory and the subscales from the Brief Religious/Spiritual Coping Inventory. Discipleship, Family Influence, and Mentor Influence scales violated normality assumption when using the critical ratio from skewness and kurtosis (i.e., statistic divided by standard error); this finding was confirmed using Kolmogorov-

Smirnov tests, $p < .05$. Spearman's rho was used to address the scales violating assumptions required for parametric approaches such as Pearson's product-moment correlations. These analyses showed a positive association between church attendance and the positive subscale, $\rho(103) = .444, p < .001$. There was a negative association between church attendance and the negative subscale, $\rho(103) = -.278, p < .01$.

The second research question asked, among young adults who attended church as children, is there a negative relationship between the amount of spiritual influences they experienced prior to the age of 18 and how often they currently attend church? This research question was addressed using Spearman's ρ to assess the correlation between the General Attendance subscale from the Private Religious Practices inventory and the Lasting Faith Scale as well as the subscales. These analyses showed a positive correlation between church attendance and each of the subscales except Family Influence (see Table 3).

Table 3

Spearman's Rho Correlations for Church Attendance and Lasting Faith Scale

Variable	LFS	Discipleship	Family Influence	Mentor Influence	Peer Influence
Church Attendance	.270**	.293**	.121	.225*	.325***

Note. $N = 103$; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; LFS: Lasting Faith Scale, Discipleship: Discipleship and Spiritual Depth subscale from LFS, Family Influence: Family Influence subscale from LFS, Mentor Influence: Mentoring and Intergenerational Influences from LFS, Peer Influence: Peer Influences subscale from LFS.

The third research question asked, among young adults who attended church as children, does spiritual influence prior to 18 years of age moderate the relationship

between current church attendance and positive spiritual coping style? A hierarchical linear regression was used to answer this research question. The scores for the Lasting Faith Scale and General Attendance subscale from the Private Religious Practices inventory were entered on the first step, and the interaction term for the mean centered scores from these two variables was entered on the second step of the regression. The results showed a significant overall regression equation, $F(3, 99) = 13.68, p < .001; R^2 = .541, R^2_{adj} = .272$. The addition of the interaction term significantly improved the regression model, $F(1, 99) = 4.74, p < .05, R^2 = .293, \Delta R^2 = .034$. Each of the predictors significantly contributed to the final model (see Table 4). Specifically, there was a significant main effect of General Attendance (as measured by the Private Religious Practices Inventory) on positive spiritual coping scores, $\beta = .314, p < .01$. As general attendance increased, so did positive spiritual coping when controlling for the other predictors in the model. In addition, there was a significant main effect of Lasting Faith Scale scores on positive spiritual coping, $\beta = .270, p < .01$. Increases in lasting faith were associated with an increase in positive spiritual coping scores. Finally, there was a significant interaction between lasting faith and general attendance on positive spiritual coping, $\beta = -.188, p < .05$. The impact of spiritual influences prior to age 18 on positive spiritual coping were most pronounced when current church attendance was low (see Figure 2). At the upper end of current church attendance, spiritual influences prior to age 18 appeared to have little or no effect on current ratings of positive spiritual coping.

Table 4

Hierarchical Regression Analysis with Positive RCOPE as Outcome

Predictors	R^2	F for Model	ΔR^2	F for ΔR^2	β
Step 1	.259	17.498*** (2, 100)	.259	17.498*** (2, 100)	
PRP					.349***
LSF					.275**
Step 2	.293	13.680 (3, 99)	.034	4.736* (1, 99)	
PRP					.314**
LSF					.270**
PRP*LSF					-.188*

Note. $N = 103$; *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$; Positive RCOPE: Positive subscale from Religious/Spiritual Coping Inventory; PRP: General Attendance subscale from Private Religious Practices inventory; LFS: Lasting Faith Scale.

The simple slope test was conducted to further evaluate the interaction effect.

This test was conducted in R (version 3.3.0) using the pequod package. This analysis showed that individuals with low scores on the LFS (i.e., 1 *SD* below the mean) had a slope that was significantly different from 0, $t(99) = 4.46$, $p < .001$. In contrast, the slope for the high LFS group (i.e., 1 *SD* above the mean) was not significantly different from 0, $t(99) = 1.14$, $p = .26$.

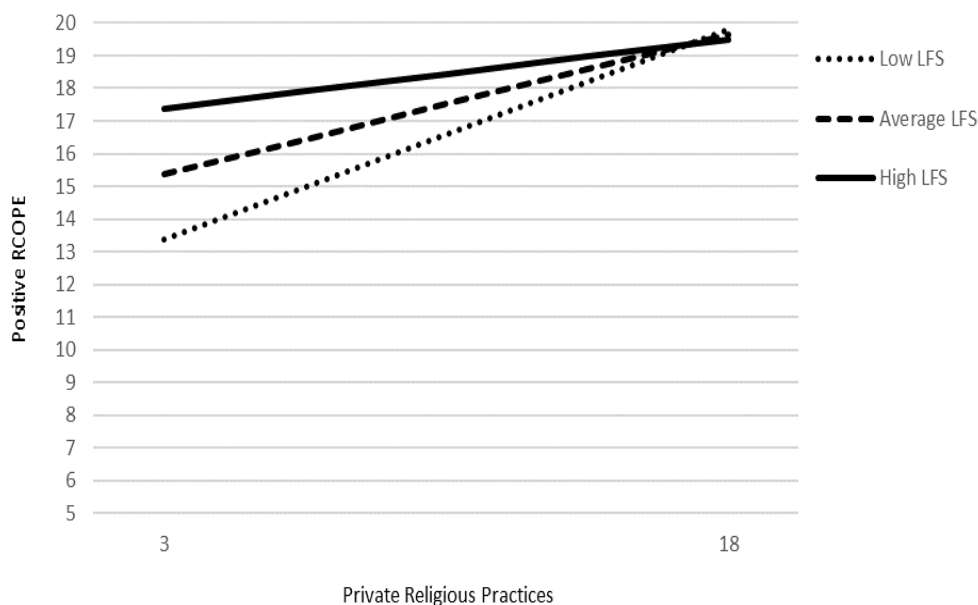


Figure 2. Predicted values for Positive RCOPE using PRP, LFS, and interaction. Positive RCOPE: Positive subscale from Religious/Spiritual Coping Inventory; PRP: General Attendance subscale from Private Religious Practices inventory; LFS: Lasting Faith Scale; Low LFS: 1 *SD* below mean, Average LFS: mean, High LFS: 1 *SD* above mean.

Conclusion

Overall, among young adults who attended church as children, there was a significant positive relationship between church attendance and positive spiritual coping, such that the higher participants' general church attendance, the higher their positive spiritual coping scores. In addition, there was a significant negative relationship between church attendance and negative spiritual coping among young adults who attended church as children, such that higher general church attendance was related to lower negative spiritual coping scores. There was also a significant positive relationship between church attendance and lasting faith, discipleship, mentorship influence, and peer

influence. Higher lasting faith scores, discipleship subscale scores, mentorship subscale scores, and peer influence subscale scores was associated with higher current church attendance scores. Finally, spiritual influences (as measured by lasting faith) was a significant moderator between current church attendance and positive spiritual coping. Specifically, among participants with low lasting faith scores, there was a significant positive association between current church attendance and positive spiritual coping. However, among participants with high lasting faith scores, there was no relationship between current church attendance and positive spiritual coping. Overall, these results suggest that prior spiritual influences affect current church attendance and positive spiritual coping among young adults who attended church as children.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to explore young adult attendance at church services after a substantial affiliation with the church during childhood and how much of a coping mechanism it is for managing daily issues which directly affect psychological well-being. In an effort to explore the participation of young adults between the ages of 18 – 30, this quantitative study was designed to investigate the variables which affect the level of participation. The study was purposed to provide churches with information that may prove helpful in identifying what programs would increase the return rate of young adults to the church home once they are able to make decisions about their worship locations. The future of the church depends on the contributions of the younger generations. The literature relayed that churches are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain attendance in this population once they leave their parent's home due to multiple distractions: social networking technology, ease at relocating, and drugs (Yaconelli, 2007).

Additionally, the study explored the coping styles of young adults between the ages of 18 – 30 as related to their spiritual experiences and development. Churches will find this information valuable in developing programming to minister to this population which is directly applicable to their needs.

This quantitative study was comprised of correlational measurements as there were no manipulated variables. The data was obtained through questions presented on a questionnaire through Survey Monkey online. In summary, there was a positive relationship between early church attendance and spiritual coping styles. Also, lower

church attendance indicated negative spiritual coping styles with young adults who participated in the study. In addition to those outcomes, there was a finding of a positive relationship between church attendance and lasting faith, discipleship, mentorship influence and peer influence. Finally, the study found early church affiliation affects how current church attendance influences positive spiritual coping among young adults.

Interpretation of the Findings

Current Church Attendance and Spiritual Coping Style

The null hypothesis stated there is not a relationship between how often young adults attended church as children and their use of a spiritual coping style. The data was analyzed using the Spearman's rho (ρ) to assess the correlation between the General Attendance subscale from the Private Religious Practices Inventory and the subscales from the Brief Religious/Spiritual Coping Inventory. Discipleship, Family Influence, and Mentor Influence scales violated normality assumption when using the critical ratio from skewness and kurtosis (i.e., statistic divided by standard error); this finding was confirmed using Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests, $p < .05$. Spearman's rho was used to address the scales violating assumptions required for parametric approaches such as Pearson's product-moment correlations. These analyses showed a positive association between church attendance and the positive subscale, $\rho(103) = .444, p < .001$. There was a negative association between church attendance and the negative subscale, $\rho(103) = -.278, p < .01$.

The results indicate there is a relationship between how often young adults attended church as children and their use of a spiritual coping styles. This is aligned with

previous research in this area and provides pertinent information on which church leaders can build programs to promote healthy coping styles in the youth.

Current Church Attendance and Spiritual Influences

In this particular area, the null hypothesis stated there is a negative relationship between the amount of spiritual influences experience prior to age of 18 and how often young adults currently attend church. This research question was addressed using Spearman's ρ to assess the correlation between the General Attendance subscale from the Private Religious Practices inventory and the Lasting Faith Scale as well as the subscales. These analyses showed a positive correlation between church attendance and each of the subscales except Family Influence.

Spiritual Influences and Coping Style

The null hypothesis for this segment of the study stated there is no difference in positive coping styles between young adults who had either high or low spiritual influences prior to 18 years of age if they attended church as children and frequently attend as young adults. A hierarchical linear regression was used to answer this research question. The scores for the Lasting Faith Scale and General Attendance subscale from the Private Religious Practices inventory were entered on the first step, and the interaction term for the mean centered scores from these two variables was entered on the second step of the regression. The impact of spiritual influences prior to age 18 on positive spiritual coping was most pronounced when current church attendance was low. At the upper end of current church attendance, spiritual influences prior to age 18 appeared to have little or no effect on current ratings of positive spiritual coping.

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Implications for Social Change

This study has contributed to the literature by examining the relationship between early church attendance and spiritual coping styles through the lens of the social identity theory. It provided significant correlations between the positive contributions of early church influences with coping patterns of early adults. The initial purpose of the study was to assess the lapse in retention of young adults in childhood church homes following their graduation from college or emergence into adulthood. It became evident through the research that it was more complicated than the decision to return or not to the origin of worship. It was also necessary to assess the impact of early church affiliation. The study can provide substantial information for youth ministry development as they struggle to compete with multiple variables in and out of the church.

Recommendations for Action

The youth ministry curriculum can include practical and core constructs for families to use that will directly address the challenges of spiritual growth; social media, easy portability, and the shift from organized religion to interpersonal spirituality. The church is about fellowship and building relationships within that community. If families can readily see the lessons regarding coping, relationship building, and spiritual growth, perhaps they would have more success with retaining the young adults when they are of

an age to make a decision about where to fellowship. As well, the young adults would understand the connection between their place of worship and their coping practices because it was introduced directly to them while growing up in their church home.

Another area for social awareness is for the young adults themselves. They may not be aware of how much of a distraction other variables are and how this indirectly impacts their coping style. Understanding the importance of having a healthy coping style could contribute to lower stress levels overall.

Recommendations for Further Study

This area of research is popular in the faith-based community. However, combining the spiritual and psychological components of the young adult community is not as widespread. The efforts are more focused on church retention and the distractions that are compromising the growth of the church body. More research correlating the spiritual and psychological components may prove useful, as well, to faith-based communities and provide relevant insight into the specific needs of the young adult population.

Conclusion

The training of youth is an integral component of the church body and the results of this study provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the early instruction can facilitate a healthier psychological well-being in adulthood. Researchers have explored the barriers in holding the attention of young people as they emerge into adulthood. There are distractions from social media to portability which contribute to a larger exodus from the churches than yesteryears. As well, our society is more focused on

spirituality than religion which shifts the focus from organizational worship services to interpersonal spiritual growth. Of particular interest in the African American community, spiritual connections provides a framework for personal, moral, and spiritual development that ultimately enhances the quality of the community (Washington, 2005).

The idea that youth would not return to their church home in which they were raised was of particular interest for this study because not returning would be contrary to the tenets of the Social Identity Theory which postulates an individual derives a sense of social identity based on a sense of belonging to or associating with a group because of similarities with the group (Hogg and Terry, 2000). However, when considering Roccas' (2002) findings indicating most people belong to more than one social group, then one would understand some of the contributors believed to be the reason for fellowship change in early adulthood. As stated above, diversions include social media technology, ease of relocating, and more focus on spirituality than religion (Yaconelli, 2007). This information is helpful for the purpose of this study as it is directly aligned with coping responses to changes in adulthood. Early church attendance directly affects the coping style of young adults. Future research would be helpful to determine if the diversions aforementioned serve as a coping mechanism for adult stressors and how this impacts religious selections in young adulthood.

Furthermore, in terms of social identity, research has shown people use five categories to establish their social identity; personal relationships, vocations, political affiliations, ethnic/religious affiliations, and stigmatized qualities (Deaux et al, 1985). As one category of social identity, religious affiliation, may prove of less importance when

compared with the other areas in this modern day society. During this stage of development according to Erikson's Intimacy versus Isolation, the input of others is important which impacts the selection process (Capp, 2009). As the church struggles to find innovative ways to teach and engage young people, they are in a multi-faceted battle with these other areas that are fighting for attention; vocation, politics, and extraneous activities. If they do not modernize their approach to reaching young people, the information is not as stimulating as other interests and may fail to have the same impact as the other variables mentioned above.

With the questions asked in this study, the outcomes supported an approach in which ministries begin looking at the practical application of doctrine to enhance the likelihood of a return to the childhood congregation upon reaching adulthood. First, there is a positive relationship between how often young adults attend church and their spiritual coping style. The coping style was measured with the Positive Religious/Spiritual Coping Subscale and the Negative Religious/Spiritual Coping Subscale to assess how young adults deal with responsibilities, problems, and difficulties. The results show young adults who regularly attend church have a healthier coping style than young adults who attend less frequently. God is more often seen as a source of strength and those who assign to this spiritual construct find comfort through confession of sins and forgiveness. Of the latter group, they tend to view stress as punishment and rely less on God and more on themselves.

Regarding current church attendance and spiritual influences, early church influences played a role in adult attendance in all areas with the exception of family

influence. Discipleship, mentor influences, and peer influences contributed to current church attendance as an adult. Ministries can utilize this to focus on the areas considering they have a higher impact of influence than family influence.

Young adulthood is a pivotal moment as they begin to establish norms for their lives which may or may not be different from what they have lived with their parents. There are many stressors during this period simply due to the changes of finishing school and establishing independence. By understanding what is beneficial for the spiritual development at an early age, they may be better equipped to handle the stressors of this phase of life. The ministries teaching youth can include in the curriculum information that will prove useful during this phase of life. In turn, they can utilize that information in conjunction with other coping mechanisms learned.

The results of this study were informative in addressing the relationship between spiritual beliefs and psychological principles. In looking at the tenets of the Social Identity Theory, it expanded beyond the tendency for people to associate with those who are like them. It addressed the coping style as it related to the spiritual experiences allowing for a look into the contributions of all the areas.

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Proquest LLC (UMI Number: DP15594)

Appendix A: Survey Items

1. Are you between the age of 18 and 30 years old?
If yes, the survey will continue.
If no, the participant will be thanked for their time and directed out of the next survey option.
2. Did you attend church prior to turning 18 years old?
If yes, the survey will continue.
If no, the participant will be thanked for their time and directed out of the next survey option.
3. How old are you?

Positive Religious/Spiritual Coping Subscale

4. I think about how my life is part of a larger spiritual force.
 - 1 - A great deal
 - 2 - Quite a bit
 - 3 - Somewhat
 - 4 - Not at all
5. I work together with God as partners to get through hard times.
 - 1 - A great deal
 - 2 - Quite a bit
 - 3 - Somewhat
 - 4 - Not at all
6. I look to God for strength, support, and guidance in crises.
 - 1 - A great deal
 - 2 - Quite a bit
 - 3 - Somewhat
 - 4 - Not at all
7. I try to find the lesson from God in crises.
 - 1 - A great deal
 - 2 - Quite a bit
 - 3 - Somewhat
 - 4 - Not at all
8. I confess my sins and ask for God's forgiveness.
 - 1 - A great deal
 - 2 - Quite a bit
 - 3 - Somewhat

4 - Not at all

Negative Religious/Spiritual Coping Subscale

9. I feel that stressful situations are God's way of punishing me for my sins or lack of spirituality.

- 1 - A great deal
- 2 - Quite a bit
- 3 - Somewhat
- 4 - Not at all

10. I wonder whether God has abandoned me.

- 1 - A great deal
- 2 - Quite a bit
- 3 - Somewhat
- 4 - Not at all

11. I try to make sense of the situation and decide what to do without relying on God.

- 1 - A great deal
- 2 - Quite a bit
- 3 - Somewhat
- 4 - Not at all

12. I question whether God really exists.

- 1 - A great deal
- 2 - Quite a bit
- 3 - Somewhat
- 4 - Not at all

13. I express anger at God for letting terrible things happen.

- 1 - A great deal
- 2 - Quite a bit
- 3 - Somewhat
- 4 - Not at all

Private Religious Practices

14. How often do you attend religious services?

- 1 - Never
- 2 - Less than once a year
- 3 - About once or twice a year
- 4 - Several times a year
- 5 - About once a month
- 6 - 2-3 times a month

youth group

20. If it were completely up to me and my parents did not care, I would have attended church or youth group activities LESS than I did.
21. The people at my church did not allow me to think for myself
22. I often talked to a Christian friend about my faith
23. The sermons in our church and/or youth group meant a lot to me.
If you did not live with your birth mother, consider the female parent you lived with the most for the following three questions:
24. My MOTHER attended church two or more times a month.
25. I would have described the spiritual life of my MOTHER as a sincere Christian faith.
26. People considered my MOTHER as an active leader in our church
If you did not live with your birth father, consider the male parent you live with the most for the following three questions:
27. My FATHER attended church two or more times a month.
28. I would have described the spiritual life of my FATHER as a sincere

39. I believed it was important to choose friends who were Christians.
40. Most of the friends of my family DID NOT go to church.
41. My close friend(s) attended church or youth group two times a month or more.
42. In general, most of my closest friends had a sincere, Christian faith.
43. I did NOT have any real friends at church
44. Church leaders were too concerned with church programs and events and NOT concerned with people.
45. My friends tended to follow my suggestions about thing to do together

Questions at the end of the survey.

51. Do you live with your parents/guardians?
52. If so, have you ever lived independently?
53. Do you currently have a membership with an organized religious group?
54. Do you attend church as often as you would like to attend?
If yes, continue to the next question.
If no, what contributes to your not attending as frequently as you would like to attend?
55. How satisfied are you with the ministry program for your current age group?
1) Strongly satisfied
2) Satisfied

- 3) Neutral
- 4) Dissatisfied
- 5) Strongly dissatisfied

Appendix B: Flyer to Announce Study

Academic Announcement

Walden University Doctoral Student
Stacia' Alexander, LPC
Is seeking participants for Dissertation

“Examining the Retention of African American Young
Adults in Their Childhood Church Home Using the Social
Identity Theory”

Candidate Qualifications

Between the ages of 18-30 years of age
Attended church with family members regularly during
childhood

Requirements:

Complete an online survey

Please contact the researcher for more information:
Stacia' Alexander, LPC